

THE PERSONALITY OF THE  
ORGANISATION:  
A PSYCHO-DYNAMIC EXPLANATION OF  
CULTURE AND CHANGE

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**A B S T R A C T**

The primary aim of this thesis is to put forward what is believed to be an original conceptualisation of culture relevant to understanding organisational change. There are essentially two interrelated areas of research. The first is an explanation of organisational culture. In this, I seek to show what organisational culture is, how it develops, how it is perpetuated and how it is represented. The second is the application of this concept of culture to the management of change. Here I seek to show the effects of culture on organisational change and how an understanding of it is necessary to achieve this.

The conscious and unconscious processes of culture are researched from a psycho-dynamic perspective. Relying on a mixture of personal reflection and psychoanalytic theory concepts of organisation, boundaries, symbolism, learning, socialisation and creativity are put forward as background data which supports an original explanation and understanding of organisational culture. This knowledge is then applied to the management of change: first in a theoretical manner and then to an action research project in the Metropolitan Police Service. The psycho-dynamic model provides the necessary ability to examine the transference and counter-transference within the relationship between consultant and clients. The role of consultant is also viewed in regard to power and ethics.

By providing what is considered to be an original conceptualisation of culture, the main contribution to knowledge is to the theory of organisations and the management of change. There are also specific contributions in the application of psychoanalytic theory of symbolism to organisations, and what is considered to be an original conceptualisation of creativity.



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*For the purpose of clarity, this thesis has been written in the masculine gender. All references to he, him and his should be read to include the female equivalents.*



## *CHAPTER 1*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As an organisation consultant I have experienced many occasions when attempts to change the formal systems of goals, strategies and structures of an organisation have – to varying degrees – been unsuccessful because what was intended did not take place or that unintended consequences occurred. I came to believe that this had something to do with what is commonly called the 'culture' of the organisation, although why and how this should be so was not at all clear. I have therefore sought to gain an understanding of the processes involved. In doing so I have discovered that there is a wide range of literature on both culture and change but it is my analysis that current theory has not provided me with a satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon. Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to put forward what I believe to be an original conceptualisation of culture relevant to understanding organisational change.

What then do we mean by 'culture'? The term has been used in common, everyday language for many years to designate the way of life of a society, or part of society, such as an organisation, but what is meant by the term is far from clear. That there is a wide divergence of views immediately becomes apparent when we refer to Kroeber and Kluckholm's (1952) revelation that they had identified 164 different definitions of culture. Commenting on the fact that the concept of culture had been borrowed from anthropology, "where there had been no consensus of meaning" (p.339), Smircich (1983) was of the view that we should not be surprised that there is also a variety in its application to organisation studies. More recently, Sackman (1992) also refers to the anthropological source of the term and the problems of diversity. In addition, several other writers have commented on the lack of a sound theoretical base for the concept of organisational culture (for example, Turner, 1986; Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; and, Young, 1989).

Looked at from an historical perspective we discover that until about 1970 there were infrequent and often indirect references to the subject of organisational culture. For example, one of the first references to something like 'culture' was made by Sherif (1936) when he referred to a 'concept of social norms'; in 1951 Lewin referred to 'group



atmosphere'; Cartwright and Zander (1953) to a 'group mind', collective unconscious' and 'culture', (although it was not seen as worth indexing the latter term); and, Cyert and March (1963) to 'an organisation mind'. In the 1970's the notion that organisations have 'cultures' was proposed fairly frequently (for example, Turner, (1971); Handy, (1976); and Pettigrew, (1979)).

In the early 1980's there was a surge of interest in organisational culture and a number of books were published on the topic. There followed a vast array of articles and publications, many lacking in theoretical rigour, seeking to popularise and simplify the phenomenon, and many making claims that a reified culture could be manipulated by managers in a manner similar to changing the structure or strategy. This, not surprisingly, led Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) to warn that,

"This may turn a complex, difficult concept into a superficial fad, reducing it to an empty, if entertaining, catch-all construct explaining everything and nothing" (p.194).

The state of theory seems to have been influenced by the fact that this was a period of organisational history that seemed to be characterised by a belief that everything could be resolved by a 'quick fix' (Kilmann 1989).

Little wonder that Turner (1986) catching the mood of the time, described the organisational culture literature as comprising two broad categories, 'pop culture magicians' and 'honest grapplers'. Categorising the various views is not easy as the whole field has become complicated by other difficulties such as different writers using concepts in different ways and some concepts in different ways (see Sackmann, 1992). What can be said, though, is that organisation theory of culture has been largely derived from anthropological theory. Consequently, I shall use that as my point of departure in trying to make sense of this complex data with a view to locating the approach taken in this thesis in the existing theoretical bases.

The schools of thought in cultural anthropology can first be usefully categorised by making a distinction between those theorists who view culture as a social phenomenon and those who conceive of it as a conceptually separate phenomenon. In the former view, culture is seen as a component of the social system, manifested by behaviour and products



of behaviour: the culture and social realms are integrated into a sociocultural system that grows and changes as one. The cultural is swallowed into the social and vice versa. The ways of life, or manifest behaviour, are the product of this sociocultural system.

In examining the concept of organisations as sociocultural systems I find that it does not provide an explanation as to how such sociocultural systems can foster 'cultures' different from those of the surrounding society. If 'culture' consists of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, how do we get different patterns? Furthermore, the view that actors, who are members of these proposed sociocultural systems, are treated as passive recipients who learn 'culture' from the sociocultural systems ignores other bodies of theory that suggest that learning is an activity that is influenced by both subject and object. These include, for example, the learning theories of Piaget (1951), Bion (1967), and Bateson (1973); and the psychoanalytic theory that subject-object relations emerge out of a lifelong development, both of which will be taken up in the Chapters on 'Learning' and 'Organisational Culture', respectively. These theories treat individuals as active participants in the process of learning and development; an approach more in keeping with the second view of culture.

The second view sees culture and social systems as distinct but interrelated. Culture is seen as an ideational system that is located in the minds of culture-bearers or as the products of minds in the form of shared meanings. That is, being located in the minds of, or products of the minds of, individual members of a particular society. As the various schools that view culture as systems of ideas are somewhat different I shall briefly comment on each of them. The 'cognitive school' views culture as a system of knowledge, of learned standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting (see for example, Goodenough, 1971). In the 'mutual equivalence' school, culture becomes a set of standardised cognitive processes which create the general framework for the mental prediction of behaviour among individuals interacting in a social setting (see for example, Wallace, 1970). The 'structuralist school' views culture as made up of shared symbolic systems that are cumulative products of mind, a reflection of unconscious processes of mind that underlie cultural manifestations (see for example, Levi-Strauss, 1973). The fourth school, the 'symbolic' or 'semiotic', take the view that culture should not be looked for in people's heads but in the meanings and thinkings shared by social actors. Here



significant symbols or products of mind constitute the raw materials for the interpretation of the ordered system of meaning in terms of which social action takes place (see for example, Geertz, 1973).

At this stage, I would simply comment that I agree with all these views. My view is that culture may be simultaneously conceived as an idea held in the mind, as an inter-subjective phenomenon, as developed out of the inter-relatedness to symbolic objects, and, as an unconscious as well as a conscious process. However, it also follows that if we conclude that each of the theories is 'correct' then we may also conclude that each is only partially 'correct'. Each of the theories may be helpful in its own way but each is also self-limiting by not recognising the existence of the other. The notion of culture seen as an ideational system will be further commented on again shortly when I refer to organisational theories of culture which is what I turn to now.

As stated earlier, organisational theories of culture have largely been derived from the anthropological theories referred to above. Many theorists have borrowed from only one of the anthropological traditions. As Lyn Meek (1988) and Allaire & Firsirotu (1984) have both stated, the theoretical basis on which the idea of corporate or organisational culture rests is frequently that of culture as a sociocultural system, as a social phenomenon. For example, Allaire & Firsirotu have stated,

"A first and striking observation is that the large body of literature, including many of the classics on organisation theory, tacitly assumes that the social and structural components are (must be) fully integrated, synchronized and consonant with the ideational, symbolic dimensions of the organisation" (p.199).

Several writers have taken the view that 'organisation culture' is a unifying force within the organisation that exists in a real and tangible sense and that management can identify and manage it as a controllable variable to enhance organisational effectiveness. For example, Peters and Waterman (1982) and Deal and Kennedy (1982) both talk of 'excellence' and 'winning' by having internalised uniform corporate values. Others have produced studies that on the face of it are more sophisticated. For example, the concept of 'organisational climate' as an individual's cognitive map, (Schneider, 1979); organisational learning, (Argyris and Schon, 1978); the role of history and founders,



(Pettigrew, 1985); and, basic assumptions, (Schein, 1987). However, on closer examination all of these theorists promulgate the idea that culture is the collective consciousness of the organisation and that it is available to management to manipulate.

To use Young's (1989) terminology, be they 'pop culture magicians' or 'honest grapplers' both start from the basis that there is a universal homogeneous 'culture': a unitary concept expressing, on the one hand, social cohesion and integration and, on the other hand, organisational effectiveness. Viewed in this way culture can be seen as something the organisation HAS (Smircich, 1983): something that is imported into an organisation from the broader society or something created by management that can be manipulated by them. This approach tends to ignore those anthropological schools of thought that see culture as systems of ideas where the actors play a central part in the development of culture.

The view taken in this thesis corresponds with organisation theories that are derived from the ideational schools that were referred to above. These treat culture as emerging from social interactions, as the product of negotiated and shared symbols and meanings, as something that the organisation IS (see for example, Young, 1989; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; and Morgan, 1980), rather than something the organisation HAS. Following Khan (1976), human organisations are seen as having no structure other than the patterns of behaviour that are also their internal functions. When these patterns of behaviour stop, the organisation ceases to exist. Being patterns of behaviour, it therefore follows that they are contrived, and being of human construction they are infinitely susceptible to modification.

This raises the problem identified by Lynn Meek (1988), that while it seems necessary to consider culture as something the organisation IS,

"..... it still begs the question of how (or if) culture is to be demarcated from other social aspects of the organisation" (p.464).

There is reason to suggest that culture and social structure can be distinguished. For example, the experience of attempting to change the formal systems of goals, strategies and structures, referred to in the opening paragraph of this thesis, would suggest that in such circumstances the organisation's cultural system was not congruent with the



sociostructural system – an experience that I feel sure is shared by many others working in organisations. In circumstances where attempts at change have resulted in industrial disputes the lack of congruence between the cultural system and the revised sociostructural system may be reasonably obvious. On other occasions the distinction may be far more subtle but none the less of considerable relevance.

I would therefore argue that in developing a theory of culture that helps us to understand organisational change there is a need to maintain a conceptual distinction between culture and social structure. In doing so, however, we need to bear in mind that culture and structure are both constructs, not tangible entities. As culture and social structure are not concrete entities but abstract concepts used by members of organisations and theorists to interpret behaviour we need to bear in mind the need of the researcher not only to study the culture or structure developed by the members of an organisation but more importantly, the behaviour of individual actors (a view also shared by Critical Social Theorists such as Habermas, (1976)). An organisation, or part of an organisation, may be viewed as an association of individuals, and it is those individuals who develop the constructs that we categorise as structure and culture. Consequently, the behaviour of individual actors is considered to be a key concept in the study of culture.

In viewing the role of the individual in the development of the concept of culture, there are few references to unconscious processes of individuals. The 'structuralist' school of Levi-Strauss (1958) believe that there are universals in human culture which will be found only at the unconscious level. Others, notably Mitroff (1989), and Kets De Vries and Miller (1987) have also viewed culture from the unconscious psychological perspective. Mitroff draws on Jung's work on archetypes in trying to discover structural patterns that link the unconscious human mind with its overt manifestation in social arrangements. Kets De Vries and Miller are concerned with shared fantasies, especially the shared fantasies of a dominant coalition, which has an effect on the culture of a group. What they do best is to describe particular types of culture (Kets De Vries: neurotic types, and, Mitroff: archetypes), but both fail to provide any explanation of the bases of culture.

Faced with the complex situation of proposing a framework for the understanding of the human mind, Freud stated that what was required was,



"A division into a number of portions to which it is possible to attribute a number of differentiating characteristics and methods of operating" (1923: p.343).

Given the dynamic nature of the phenomenon currently under review there is a need for a similar approach. If we are to study the behaviour of individuals we need to develop a theoretical framework that relates to both conscious and unconscious processes. Over the years, psycho-analytic concepts have been used by researchers exploring various aspects of organisations, (for example, Bion (1961); Menzies Lyth, (1959); Jaques, (1953); Miller, (1976); Kets De Vries, (1987); and, Trist, (1990)). Following their example, I intend to show that there can be a theoretical approach in which psycho-analytic ideas are used to interpret cultural data, one which is derived from clinical psychoanalysis, but independent of it and parallel to it. Although psycho-analytic theory is frequently the point of origin of many of the ideas in this thesis, it is not necessarily their point of destination. The aim is to translate them into the theory of organisation culture and its relevance to managing change in organisations.

It will be acknowledged that there are many criticisms of psycho-analytic theory. Not least is the criticism that it is a purely subjective theory that is not capable of empirical confirmation and validation, or that it is self-monitoring and self-confirming so that it "comes out right" whichever way experimental evidence happens to point (for example, Gelner, (1985); and, Eysenck & Wilson, (1973)). Against this, psycho-analysis has become "the dominant idiom for the discussion of the human personality and of human relations" (Gelner: p.5). That affect or feelings influence our behaviour is hardly contestable. It has also been accepted by even those who are most critical of psycho-analysis that, although there may be disagreement as to its form, the unconscious is a necessary construct for exploring mental processes. Psychoanalytic theory about infant development, as formulated by Melanie Klein, Winnicott and Bowlby, is considered to be particularly valuable in providing the means for greater understanding of mental activity and will be related to throughout the thesis.

As the title of this thesis signifies it essentially relates to two interrelated areas of research. The first is to try to develop an explanation of the concept of organisational



culture from the perspective of studying both the manifest behaviour and the members of the organisation. In this, I seek to put forward a view of how the concept of organisational culture develops, how it is perpetuated and how it is represented. The second is the application of this concept of culture to the management of change. Here I seek to show what effect, if any, the culture has on organisational change, and, if indeed there is a relationship between culture and change, how an understanding of it is necessary to achieve constructive change in organisations. The first part of the thesis up to the chapter on 'Organisational Culture' (Chapter 10) relates to the former and subsequent chapters deal with the latter. This will be expanded on shortly when I shall give a brief explanation of the various chapters and through this describe the structure of the thesis.

Before doing so, however, there is another construct that I wish to refer to, namely, 'personality'. There are many definitions, and many uses of the notion, some common and others technical. However, like culture it is also a complicated system and even with the theoretical frameworks that have been developed it is still difficult to gain an interpretation of this phenomenon. Sutherland J D (1985) informs us that there was then no accepted means of appraising the functioning of personality in a comprehensive way. To obtain a better understanding of the characteristics of personality development we need to look at the various aspects of individual development in considerable depth. This is an issue that is taken up at various points throughout the thesis but particularly so in the chapter on 'Symbolism'.

It is the view expressed in this thesis that if we are to obtain a better understanding of the characteristics of organisational culture we need to take a similar approach to that of studying personality. Hence the title 'Personality of the Organisation'. It will be seen, however, that there are many other factors that cause me to opt for this title. Not least is the constant interaction between the individual and culture which is fundamental to the study of both culture and personality. As will be shown, the individual and environment are related to each other in such a way that they can be said to be interdependent. I therefore argue that it is not possible to understand organisational culture without understanding individual behaviour. Therefore, running right through the thesis will be an interlinking between the individual and culture. It follows that if we are to gain the



understanding required we need a methodology that is capable of providing a compatible understanding of both individual and culture.

As has been stated, one of the predominant means of exploring the phenomenon of personality, is psychoanalysis. It is therefore considered that a similar approach will be of benefit here. The next chapter, on 'Methodology', explains why it is felt that any research approach using the empirical-analytical paradigm is unlikely to provide the information required to give us an understanding of culture. It is argued that the use of an approach using the hermeneutic paradigm will provide better and more valuable information, and, moreover, that in order to obtain the depth of understanding required – one which permits an understanding of both conscious and unconscious processes – it is necessary to look at culture from a psycho-dynamic perspective.

Taking the view that culture is a transitive process that is continually undergoing change it is considered that the essential area of study is the course of change. Consequently, we need to understand the factors that affect this course of change. The chapters that precede and follow that which describes 'Organisational Culture' look at those aspects and provide the necessary background information for us to achieve the main objective of understanding organisational culture. The following paragraphs serve as a brief introduction to those chapters by describing their nature and purpose.

The chapter on 'The Nature of Organisations' is written from the viewpoint that it is not only important to know what we are talking about in terms of organisations but more importantly, as the title of the chapter suggests, the nature of the phenomenon, as such, it sets a sort of benchmark. Relying on psychoanalytic writings on individual development and relating this to the psycho-dynamic writings of group relations practitioners it concludes that what is organised in human organisations is human behaviour, and thus when an organisation ceases to exist, its traces, buildings and equipment and the like, will give very few clues to its life. Perhaps more importantly, from the perspective of culture, it also shows how the members of organisations or parts of organisations treat them 'as if' they are real. For its members the organisation is a perceived object.



A particular development arising from the fact that organisations are perceived as objects is the issue of 'Boundaries'. The significance of boundaries is highlighted by the fact that it is at the boundary that differences are expressed. In this relatively short chapter I seek to explain the processes involved, why and how boundaries develop, and their nature. By relating a wide range of views to the subject matter it is shown that boundaries, like organisations, are artificial creations. It is the need to reduce the whole rich world of infinite variability to a manipulable and bearable size which leads to the formation of boundaries. This should not disguise the fact that boundaries should be seen as momentary points in a dynamic process; however, for those concerned it is the boundaries that matter.

The system that we mainly choose to categorise our world is by naming. The following chapter, then, deals with the issue of 'Symbolism'. One of the results of symbolism is the development of condensed symbols that have significance for an organisation. This account will provide some explanation of condensed symbols, but it seeks to go much deeper than this in order to not only understand the symbols themselves but more importantly, to understand how those symbols come about. This chapter attempts to provide an explanation of organisational symbolism by tracing the process of its development in the individual from reference to the psychoanalytic theory of symbolism.

Klein showed how important it is to have an understanding of symbolism in her conclusion that symbolism is the foundation of all sublimation and of every talent. Winnicott concluded that the transitional object is the first use of a symbol and that this object gradually gives place to an ever widening range of objects and to the whole cultural life. The psychoanalytic account of this process, therefore, provides us with useful information about the development of culture. Understanding the developmental process also provides us with information about what happens when an individual or a group regresses to infantile behaviour.

From an organisational perspective, the use of 'Language and Words as Symbols' is highly significant, consequently, a short chapter looks at this specific issue. Here I particularly recognise the fact that we may experience different uses and meanings of the



same language. I explore the issue of how condensed symbols are developed and I also show that the usual way for an individual to constantly affirm his identity with those around him is through the use of words or language as symbols. Thus language is society specific. The language is a symbolic representation of the world as the members of that society, or part of society, such as an organisation, have learned to experience it at that time. A difficulty may be that if we are not familiar with the particular way of life we may not understand the symbolic representation and thus language may be a barrier to communication.

Any change involves some level of learning, we therefore need to understand what is involved. The next chapter looks at 'The Process of Learning' in terms of how we learn, the levels of learning, and the possible blocks to learning. Using a mixture of personal reflection and theory I demonstrate once again the interrelatedness of subject and object. By linking various theories such as Bateson's Hierarchy of Learning and Kuhn's Paradigms some useful insights are provided. Looking at the various situations that can create blocks to learning provides information regarding change.

Not only does change involve learning, it inevitably involves a loss as well. The following chapter examines this aspect of loss by looking at 'Organisational Socialisation'. As in the last chapter a mixture of personal experience and theory is used to show the effect of socialisation on individuals. In doing so this provides an unusual perspective for viewing organisational change and the effects of culture. By examining the phenomenon of 'culture shock' we are able to view culture from a perspective which shows the effects of the loss of loved objects and the problem of adjusting to and acquiring new loved objects.

The next chapter deals with another of those factors that shed light on the phenomenon of culture, that is, 'Creativity'. Here I commence with a substantial review of other writers, viewing creativity in the most commonly used categories: as a mystical process; as a drive; as similar to play; as requiring an holistic view; as resulting in something new; and, as involving imagination in bringing about this something new. I then put my own original interpretation of creativity which includes an explanation of the anxiety and guilt associated with the process which is seldom if ever referred to by others.



Creativity is highly relevant to organisational culture and change because it is largely through creativity that growth can occur. Creativity is about testing reality and as we shall see, the drive to create is one of the factors that results in the dynamic nature of culture.

At this point, I attempt to pull the essential aspects together in order to provide an explanation of the phenomenon that we refer to as 'Organisational Culture'. It will be seen that this is no easier a task than that of providing an explanation of personality. Culture, like personality, is constantly changing and is distinguished by its uniqueness. This uniqueness is of the very essence of culture but it nevertheless makes it most difficult to categorise. It is, indeed, the 'Personality of the Organisation'. Doubtless this helps to explain why it is that countless writers discuss organisation culture but none have previously adequately described how it develops.

This original view provides an explanation and understanding of the phenomenon. Of those questions posed at the outset, the crucial question seems to be that concerned with how culture develops. Until a satisfactory explanation is provided for this we shall never achieve an understanding of culture, let alone apply it to the management of change. The psycho-dynamic approach provides us with such an explanation by relating to findings regarding personality development and the infant's interrelatedness to the maternal holding environment. In like manner, an explanation is also provided for the way that culture is perpetuated using the concept of infantile and mature dependence. As to the representation of culture this was generally explained in the chapter on 'Symbolism' but is added to here as a result of these further explanations.

In short, it is postulated that the adult is a member of several holding environments. The organisational holding environment is not the organisational culture; it is how the members of the organisation interact, or their interrelatedness with the holding environment that results in the culture. It is how the members of the organisation perceive the holding environment that results in the unique and distinct culture that is the feature of every organisation. If they perceive it as good enough and they have a basic trust in it they will develop a task culture, however, should the reverse apply, the result may be an anti-task culture.



Culture, like personality is very difficult to define. However, we can say that culture has the following characteristics: it is a psycho-social process; it is a dynamic process; it is evidenced by sameness and continuity; it is unique to every organisation or part of an organisation; it is influenced by conscious and unconscious processes; and, it is such as will enable the members to produce forms of behaviour that will be advantageous to them under the circumstances imposed by the environment. In view of these characteristics it is neither possible nor desirable that we should generalise but awareness of these characteristics should provide sufficient knowledge of the culture of each specific situation.

As to perpetuation, in the same way that the maternal holding environment affects the development of mature dependence in the infant, so the organisational holding environment will affect the existence of mature dependence in the group. In what might be called the 'mature' situation the culture will be perpetuated and characterised by gradual and smooth change because of the ability of members to differentiate and adapt to change. In the 'immature' situation the culture will be perpetuated with little or no change because of the inability of the members to differentiate and adapt. As change involves the very creating of new objects (a process of differentiation) as well as our relating to it (a process of integration) it is a necessary condition that a 'mature' situation exists.

Representation of culture is chiefly through words and language used as symbols. Each culture is represented by its own unique language, its own private language, or idiom. Where an immature situation exists there is more opportunity to synthesise and develop a more and more private form of language. Mechanisms of condensation and pictorial representation are more likely in view of the lack of adaptability. In the mature situation the opportunities for adaptability and differentiation will result in a less concrete language.

Having established what culture is, how it develops, how it perpetuates itself, and how it is expressed, the remainder of the thesis is related to the second essential area of research, that is, the application of culture to the management of change. Here, as stated, I seek to show the effects of culture on organisational change and how an understanding of the phenomenon is necessary to achieve this.



In the next chapter this knowledge is applied to 'Managing Organisational Change' in a theoretical manner. Here I look at how it can be seen to affect learning, symbolism, creativity, boundaries, and socialisation. I also look at the role of the consultant and his relation to culture. Here there is further development and explanation of the proposition, first referred to in the 'Methodology' chapter, that it is not possible to establish both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the culture without deliberate intervention and the deciphering of the responses to the consultant. Seen from the perspective of personality, this seems an obvious remark. We could no more determine the personality of an individual by only observing him than we could determine the nature of an organisation by only observing it. It is only when there is a direct intervention that we can determine either personality or culture.

The psycho-dynamic model provides us with a means of examining the transference and counter-transference within the relationship between consultant and clients. Action research provides the opportunity to engage the client system in a manner which provides similar results to personal psychoanalysis. So that the manner in which the consultant is used and experienced will provide the consultant with important information in regard to unconscious processes.

This and the previous findings are then applied to an actual change. In the chapter titled 'Application' I describe my findings in regard to culture when working in the capacity of internal consultant, carrying out an action research project in the Metropolitan Police Service. This project involved working with several different groups over a period of more than a year. The findings provide valuable data not only on the process of managing change but also on the nature of police culture.

In the penultimate chapter I take a particular look at the role of consultant in regard to 'Power and Ethics in the Consulting Role'. Here I argue that rather than viewing power from a 'zero-sum' perspective it is more constructive for the consultant to view it from a pluralistic perspective. This pluralistic view of power is then related to various aspects of the interrelatedness of consultant and client, such as dependency, manipulation, and social control, in each case drawing attention to the ethics of the situation. In this very



apt way I hope this will leave the reader with a reminder that all the theory in the world is only valuable if it can be applied in an ethical manner.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **METHODOLOGY**

In dealing with the issue of methodology it seems that there are two important considerations – the matter of what is being considered and the various methods that are available. Both aspects are complicated and therefore deserve more than passing comment. Furthermore, they are both inextricably linked and will therefore immediately begin to shed light on the phenomenon of culture.

Since this is a study of organisational culture, it may be useful to briefly consider the nature of organisations. In the first instant we need to recognise, as Khan R L (1976) has shown, that organisations have no structure apart from patterns of human behaviour and that when an organisation ceases to exist there are few clues to its nature in life. The implications of this view of human organisations are many, but as Khan particularly states,

"If organisations are essentially patterns of human behaviour, it follows that they are contrived; they are of human construction and they are infinitely susceptible to modification" (p.72).

In other words, what is organised is human activity and this inevitably raises the well documented and historical arguments about subjectivity and objectivity. The drawing of distinctions between the natural sciences and the social sciences and the differences between the nature of physical reality and human reality has been discussed among anthropologists and sociologists for many years. (For example, see Benedict R (1935), Caudwell C (1937), White L A (1949), Berger P L & Luckmann T (1966), Doise W (1978), Tajfel H & Fraser C (1978), and Berger P L & Kellner H (1981)). More recently, organisational researchers have also raised the issue to a level of prominence (for example, see Douglas J D (1976), Burrell G & Morgan G (1979), Van Maanen J (1979), Morgan G (1983), Gummesson E (1991) and Reason P (1988)). However, for the origins of the arguments we have to consider the philosophical views of 'reality' formulated over the years.



The dominant view of scientific method has evolved out of logical – positivist philosophy as it was formulated at the beginning of this century and is one which seeks a unified method for all sciences. This method is a logical consequence of the empirical – analytical approach to 'reality', whereby it is assumed that 'reality' may be broken up into logically independent variables. By doing so, it is theorised that these meaningful and distinct categories may be subjected to observational precision, theoretical prediction and subsequently, validation. In other words, it is considered that statements are meaningful only when their truth can be verified and this criterion has come to be known as the principle of verifiability.

As is now well known this view was challenged by Karl Popper (1934) who took the view that as observation is theory laden there can be no such thing as certainty in scientific knowledge and conclusive verification of general propositions like laws of nature is logically impossible. In his view a scientific hypothesis or theory must be falsifiable. Popper raised considerable doubts about the prevailing philosophy but he appears to have been insensitive to the non-rational aspects of human knowledge.

It was Khun T (1962) who drew attention to this problem with his influential theory of scientific paradigms. In short, Khun concluded that scientific knowledge goes through phases. A field proceeds from an immature pre-paradigmatic phase into a period of paradigmatic science once agreement is reached concerning the proper way of study. Once such a paradigm has been created, methodological issues come to an end and scientists may proceed to solve the 'puzzles' left unsolved by the paradigm. This is called normal science. After a certain period, however, the number of anomalies that arise become a threat for the paradigm and the need for another paradigm will be felt. In turn, this state of crisis will lead to a revolution as soon as a new convincing paradigm has been articulated.

In considering how this 'scientific revolution' comes about it will be useful to recall that organisations are about human activity and this is also the case with science. Scientific knowledge is made by people for people and the scientist as observer or communicator is an indispensable element of that knowledge system. Ziman J (1978) explains just how, when he writes,



"Its contents and quality depend on the powers and functions of scientists as observers, as communicators, as assessors and assimilators of knowledge and eventually as believers and as authoritative experts" (p.95).

In other words, in any scientific endeavour, subjectivity and more particularly inter-subjectivity, will play a key role. This has long been the view of philosophers of the hermeneutic tradition who have maintained that traditional empirical-analytical research is based on implicit interpretations. Therefore scientific knowledge cannot be justified or validated by logic alone. Even the most objective research is dependent on interpretive choices which are often left implicit. Consequently, they argue that an atomistic approach is simply not adequate as it is necessary to construct or reconstruct meaning relations between significant parts of the context and the context as a whole.

Khun's valuable work has shown that in order to change methodology a revolution is necessary. However, this will not occur easily and this is clearly demonstrated by the fact that over forty years ago White (1949) was saying,

"We must, in short, view science as a way of behaving, as a way of interpreting reality, rather than as an entity in itself, as a segment of that reality" (p.6).

Yet, that same debate is still going on today and the arguments between those who insist on the use of quantitative methodologies and those who insist on qualitative methods to establish 'reality' in regard to human activities are no less strong.

The relative arguments are in themselves interesting but equally – if not more interesting – is the process. For example, we might well enquire why it has taken so long for the qualitative type of research to be acceptable – if indeed it is acceptable to all. In some ways Khun has explained this. However, we also need to understand the natural psychological tendency for individuals to cling to previously successful paradigms even in the face of contrary evidence. What Freud refers to as the conservative instinct is an important concept and one which I shall return to in some detail later in this thesis. We also need to be aware that any change must inevitably mean unlearning much of our previous 'reality'. There are therefore implications for learning which will also be referred to in detail later.



The reliability of empirical scientific knowledge in regard to physics, chemistry, astronomy, or for that matter, engineering or manufacturing, is not really in doubt. It is when we extend science to the extreme difficulties of biological behaviour, human emotion and social organisation that it becomes inherently unsound. It is then that other sources of insight and other methodologies beyond those of the empirical-analytical scientific method must be sought. This view was typified by Maslow A (1971), when he wrote,

"I am convinced that the value-free, value-neutral, value-avoiding model of science that we inherited from physics, chemistry and astronomy, where it was necessary and desirable to keep the data clean, is quite unsuitable for the scientific study of life" (p.5).

To provide some understanding of these other sources of insight we need to turn to a brief summary of the views of the hermeneutic philosophers. According to Kant the mind makes knowledge by forming, that is, by imposing general concepts upon the raw unstructured data of experience. So Kant internalises (or more accurately, makes transcendental) the creation of the world. In his Critical Philosophy he sets out to reverse the old assumptions when he states that knowledge comes first and reality must then conform itself to our knowledge. Theory shapes perception. Reality doesn't come first and then get itself copied by our knowledge; rather reality becomes itself for us in our knowledge of it. Hegel points to a world where everything is shifting, horizontal, interconnected, human, a game with constantly moving goal posts, a world without any enduring and objective meanings, values or truths.

Others, such as Gadamer (1962) and Wittgenstein (1969) have argued that human practices and rationality exist largely within frames of language and forms of life that remain unnoticed and unconscious most of the time; and even if some parts and aspects become an object for reflection it is doubtful whether they may be so easily changed, even if we would wish this. For Berkeley philosophy starts from a perceptual situation, whereby a perception is presented to a perceiver. So the world already contains two kinds of entity, perceivers and things perceived, minds and presentations, knowing subjects and objects known, spirits and ideas. This intersubjective view is shared by



Habermas J (1976), who considers that social action depends upon the agent's 'definition of the situation', and this is not solely a matter of subjective motivations. The meanings to which social action is oriented are primarily intersubjective meanings.

Weber was undoubtedly of the old philosophical school, nevertheless he was of the view that human phenomena do not speak for themselves; they must be interpreted. This was very much in accord with the views of Nietzsche which he expressed in his most influential slogans, such as, 'There are no facts only interpretations'. It was Nietzsche's view that there isn't any firm ready made world out there independent of us. Apart from our activity there is only a 'fuzziness and chaos of sense impressions', sometimes 'formless and unformable'. So truth is the product of our own logicalizing, adapting and construing, a continuous activity which must take ever new forms. On Nietzsche's account, knowing, creatively forming, interpreting and producing truth are all different names for the same activity. The world is an interpretation – our interpretation – and it is plural and continually changing. We are continually re-inventing ourselves, immersed in a world of fictions and re-interpretations.

Under the empirical–analytical philosophies it was supposed that matter could be completely described in terms of itself, and since man is made of matter, these terms would describe him also. However, when we abandon the empiricist assumption that there is a fixed reality that can be described objectively, the aims of scientific research must be redefined. This is precisely the stance of the hermeneuticians who make it clear that there is no fixed 'reality' other than that interpreted by our perception. In addition, such 'reality' as there is, is a continually changing phenomenon. It is a continuum, a stream of events, that flows freely through time. Furthermore, for it to become 'reality' it must be intersubjective, it must be a shared 'reality'. There is no taxonomic framework for human behaviour, individual or social, in which the categories are both meaningful and distinct. Consequently, the old scientific approach is of little, if any, value in researching such human activities as culture. As Maslow (1969) says,

"One trouble with classical science applied to psychology is that all it knows how to do well is to study people as objects, when what we need is to be able to study them also as subjects" (p.54).



Unfortunately, human behaviour is always so complex and varied that we can seldom make a sharply confirmable (or disconfirmable) prediction from the model.

Not surprisingly, these approaches to philosophy have called for and have triggered entirely different methodologies than those employed in the empirical analytical paradigm. Habermas (1976) explains the requirement in the difference of approach as follows,

"I should like to begin with the distinction between sensory experience or observation and communicative experience or understanding (*verstehen*). Observation is directed to perceptible things and events (or states); understanding is directed to the meaning of utterances.....The interpreter who understands meaning is experiencing fundamentally as a participant in communication, on the basis of a symbolically established intersubjective relationship with other individuals" (p.9).

Above all, we can see that language plays a key part in any hermeneutic endeavour.

In contrast to formal structures and causal laws, the hermeneutic approach seeks to elucidate and make explicit our practical understanding of human actions by providing an interpretation of them. The hermeneutic method is well documented (for example see Bleicher J (1980), Giddens A (1976), Palmer R E (1969), Mueller-Voller K (1986), Terwee S J S (1990) and Messer S B et al (1988)). It is characterised by the following features. First, there is no presuppositionless knowledge. We cannot ask fruitful questions unless we know something about a topic. Second, in attempting to understand other persons we must do so on their own terms. Third, both the interpreter and the interpreted have a conception of the world and truth. A complete understanding may aim for a fusion of horizons. Fourth, coming to understanding involves a continuous circular movement from the part to the whole and back again from the whole to its parts. Thus, it will be seen that in hermeneutics understanding only comes through dialogue. Steele R S (1979) says,

"Only through open dialogue, through the exploration of one's own as well as the other's presuppositions, can understanding be improved." This he says, "is not easy" (p.393).



It may now be appropriate to consider what we mean by perception and to try to obtain an understanding of what it is. To do so, we need to start at the beginning, to start from the point of the individual. Freud S (1921) reminded us that,

"Only rarely and under certain exceptional conditions is individual psychology in a position to disregard the relations of this individual to others. In the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent, and so from the very first individual psychology is at the same time social psychology as well" (p.95).

Equally, the point is made by Tajfel & Fraser (1978) that "man is a creature both of his biological evolution and of his social and cultural development" (p.25). It is this issue of development that will provide the necessary data about the nature of perception. It will be necessary later in the thesis to refer to certain aspects of development such as learning, creativity, language and symbolism in much greater detail. The following is a fairly brief and highly selective view of human development with the sole aim of providing background information in regard to perception.

Among others, Fairbairn W R D (1952) described how, from the outset, the self-system is structured by the internalisation of the relationship with mother and child. The long period that the young child is dependent on its mother and the early structuring of the personality is inevitably dominated by the physical closeness in which the mother's attitudes are communicated through innumerable signals. Erikson E H (1959) describes how the individual requires constant affirmation of its identity from the social milieu. While Miller E J (1976) describes how individuals need and use social systems as means of maintaining their identity and protecting themselves against intolerable internal conflict.

Thus we can see how the child originally internalises the relationship with the mother, including the language, and then as he matures and learns to communicate with his elders and his peers, he learns certain modes and manners of expressing himself and fulfilling his requirements, and he also learns to expect consistent behaviour from others. Bohannon P (1962) reminds us of Freud's comments regarding the relationship of individuals to others when he writes,



"In order for either culture or personality to exist, there must be two or more individuals, with their personalities who affect one another. Culture is the idiom of society just as it is the idiom of the personality" (p.23).

As we have seen, social reality is what somebody – usually several somebodies – may make of it. It lies in the image that the actors have of it, and teach one another about it.

As Berger and Kellner (1981), explain,

"Organised life is organised in the minds of all who participate in it, and this organisation takes place by means of a conceptual framework, even though they may not be aware of the framework" (p.43).

The most effective means of communication is by language. For this purpose, language is split up into bits or to put it more eloquently, into a categorical framework. Several authors have recently written about human behaviour from the standpoint of language. For example, Elias N (1991) points out,

"From early days on every individual experience has a language aspect. Thus the specific language learned by a child is society specific, that is, predetermined by the social group within which a child grows up" (p.37).

Another writer concerned with language is Cupitt D (1990), who explains,

"Learning the language, we learn the local customs and assumptions so the programming within which our identity is constituted is in effect our linguistic programming, our induction into the network of human communication" (p.161).

Because the biological disposition of humans provides for a great variety of both sound patterns themselves and of whatever they symbolically represent, the language of one human group can be completely incomprehensible to another. This means that in order to have an understanding of human beings there must be a familiarity with the particular form of life. Furthermore, whilst a people's language itself is a symbolic representation of the world as the members of that society have learned to experience it, at the same time, it affects their perception. So that it would not be wrong to state that what you are determines what you see. What you see is very often a judgement upon what you are. In this way language may not only be a means of communication but may equally become a barrier to such communication.



From this brief look at development we can draw some useful conclusions. First and foremost, we need to be aware that different people see different worlds. Thus it is only through categorical frameworks that I can produce anything of my own that is intelligible to others. This consequently means that true communication is fruitless between people who do not share a categorical framework. In addition, I cannot interpret another's meaning without changing, albeit minimally, my own meaning system. Because of this ever changing 'reality' it also means that any discovery has meaning only in relation to the knowledge available to the discoverer at the time. Thus, 'reality' is within the current knowledge of any particular human group. Hence we return to the fundamental point that the bodily senses are the only link between a human mind and the world that he or she inhabits. I have no way of perceiving reality save through my senses and the instrumental extensions of them that I create. Therefore I must work with my perceived reality.

Quantitative and qualitative methods are not mutually exclusive; nevertheless, it has progressively become accepted that a qualitative, interpretative, or hermeneutical approach to research and analysis is – if not more effective – a useful methodology for dealing with the many variables associated with human activity. This new methodological approach has advanced our knowledge and understanding considerably, though the proliferation and variation of such methods has tended to cause confusion and may detract from its value. However, whilst there has come of age the realisation that qualitative methods are of significant value we also need to consider the time span involved in gaining this acceptance.

It seems that one of the reasons for the long delay will undoubtedly be the 'conservative instinct' referred to earlier. Equally certain is that other matters such as the problems of a lack of a shared language and a shared perception will have played their part. Educated in the language of the empirical – analytical tradition, it seems most likely that the perception of scientists has been affected by limiting their understanding as has been described above. However, these considerations do not relate solely to the controversy about quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The implications extend beyond the current debate, because, there is yet another methodology that has not thus far been referred to.



For almost a century, the psychoanalytic methodology of Freud has been available to scientists of all persuasion, especially those concerned with the problems of researching and analysing human activity. In Khun's terms psychoanalysis was a true paradigmatic revolution. Bearing in mind the prevailing philosophy, Healy D (1990) reminds us that the notion of evolution of the psyche was a most dramatic development as this was a new emergent level of organisation, a psychological system, that is, a system with capacities for intelligent behaviour, perception, memory and learning, imagination and emotion. Freud showed that much of ourselves was hidden from ourselves or was not immediately given to awareness: that there were a conscious and an unconscious which are shaped by previous experiences, previous solutions, and what is unique for each individual. As Healy explains,

"Freud had established a new territory to be explored, the dynamic unconscious, a new science to explore it, depth psychology, and a set of new methods for the new science" (p.49).

This new methodology provided a wonderful opportunity to provide explanation to what had previously not been possible.

Yet why is it that this new methodology has not been embraced by all? One of the reasons could be that the lack of a shared language (and, it follows, of a shared perception) has seriously interfered with the advancement and use of a psychoanalytic approach. Indeed, it would appear that Freud himself foresaw potential difficulties and attempted to head them off by his continual insistence that his method was truly scientific. As is reported by Blight J G (1981),

"From the very beginning of his career as a psychoanalyst until the very end, Freud maintained that he practised a natural science which did not differ in any essential way from physics. He projected this as a goal in the most unequivocal fashion in his Project for a Scientific Psychology (1895): 'Psychology .....shall be a natural science' (p.295). He stated it was an accomplished fact in Some Elementary Lessons in Psycho-analysis (1940): 'Psycho-analysis is a part of the mental science of psychology (which is).... a natural science. What else can it be?' (p.282)" (p.151).

Doubtless being aware of the difficulties that psychoanalysis presents to their own particular brand of philosophy, it would seem that an attempt has been made by some to accommodate it within the existing perceptual framework. (For example see Ricoeur (1970) (1974), and Habermas (1968)). Arguments surrounding its appropriate scientific



category also abound. For example, while Blight argues strongly that psychoanalysis should be regarded as complementary to science and scientific explanation, there are others such as Steele, who argue, equally strongly, that psychoanalysis should be regarded as a form of hermeneutics. There is merit in both arguments but it is my view that psychoanalysis can best be viewed as differentiated from other methodologies and should be regarded as a method of its own (*sui generis*).

Building on Freud's work, others such as Melanie Klein, Fairbairn, and Winnicott, have greatly enhanced the original theories, so that psychoanalysis is now highly influential in the clinical setting. In the 1940's Foulkes and Bion began to apply the principles of psychoanalysis to group analysis. Originally used for therapeutic purposes, Bion, through his involvement at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, began to influence a wider application, forming groups with industrial managers and with people from the educational world. Throughout the 50's and 60's this resulted in many highly influential writings being published. Particularly relevant are those relating to organisations as open systems and the socio-technical perspective of organisations as developed at the Tavistock Institute. (For a full account of this work see Trist E and Murray H (1990)).

In spite of their undoubted success and continued influence the concepts of group dynamics have not enjoyed the same widespread usage as personal psychoanalysis. The reason may be as stated by Trist E (1985), when he wrote,

"(Bion's work), promised to do for group dynamics what psychoanalysis had done for personality. Yet neither he nor anyone else has contributed much to its development since 1952" (p.34).

However, personal reflection seems to suggest that a more likely reason is that it is a difficult concept and one which is not in the conceptual framework of very many people. Gaining an understanding of such matters as 'projective identification' or 'basic assumption groups' requires experiential as well as theoretical knowledge. Even then, they can be extremely difficult concepts to fully grasp.



In this respect, we should be aware that paradigms are time and space bound. The information (and misinformation) stored within the individual, arising from past experiences and inborn needs, sets the standards by which we both evaluate new experiences and establish their meaning. When we encounter new, or otherwise unknown experience, we can only find the meaning by comparison with our known reality. I am especially mindful of this problem myself in trying, as far as possible, to present to the reader an understandable account of psycho-dynamic processes.

It may now be useful to take a further and much deeper look at the nature of human activity in organisations. Thus far, we have largely been concerned with conscious human activities, whereas we also need to be aware that aspects of ourselves which conflict with consciously held ideals may be denied, suppressed or disowned and become more or less unconscious. An idea may be unconscious because it is actively repressed owing to its unthinkable nature – a memory, fantasy, thought, or feeling which conflicts with our view of ourselves and of what is acceptable, and which could cause too much anxiety, guilt, or psychic pain if it were acknowledged. Anxiety has been a central issue in nearly all organisational projects I have worked on. An understanding of that anxiety and the defences to it are important factors in determining human activity in organisations.

Each individual responds to and defends against that anxiety in different ways. Not only is it likely that ignoring anxiety will create a barrier in the communication process; the anxiety itself can be a valuable source of data about the significance of issues that arise in the course of the interaction. When the phenomena under study are influenced by unconscious feelings and fantasies the observer learns that he needs to attend to two levels of mental activity; the manifest conscious and the latent sub-conscious and unconscious. As Schein E H (1987a) explained,

"The primary source of organisational data is not what is 'out there' to be observed, but is in the careful analysis of how members of the organisation relate to the outsider, the clinician" (p.30).

When we recognise that the research encounters are, as Hunt J C (1989) says, "mediated by unconscious psychological as well as conscious sociological processes"



(p.17), we can appreciate that they are the counterpart of what psychoanalysts would identify as the analysis of the 'transference relationship'. In precisely the same way that how the patient relates to the therapist directly may prove more valuable as a source of information than what the patient reports about various other situations, so also is the way that the client responds to the organisational consultant more important than what is said about various other situations. The transference is the enactment of the unconscious.

This has been but a very brief reference but it suffices to show that the phenomena under study are frequently influenced by unconscious feelings and fantasies. Further references will be made to other unconscious processes throughout the thesis as is necessary. However, what this does show is that if we are to successfully deal with these important aspects we need a methodology that is able to provide us with an understanding of these complex phenomena – a methodology that will bring the irrational, the illogical, the exclusively emotional, under rational understanding and control. Clearly, this is beyond the scope of the quantitative methodologies. As for the qualitative or hermeneutic methodologies, these take us further but they are not capable of providing an understanding or interpretation of the sort of phenomena described. Any methodology for getting at this truth must include some form of what psychoanalysts call 'analysis of the resistance'. I argue that the only way to understanding, therefore, lies through deliberate intervention and the deciphering of the responses to the intervention.

In view of the nature of organisations, it is important not to use the 'old' – mechanistic – language; it is more appropriate to speak of processes of human behaviour. A process may be defined as a dynamic phenomenon that exists in a state of flux and one which is characterised by spontaneity, freedom, experience, conflict and movement. Such a phenomenon is not easy to understand. However, Bion showed that a psychoanalytic approach permitted the exposure of unrecognised, irrational, and powerful relationships that were specific to group situations.

As Sutherland J D (1985) has stated, "The precise interpretation is not as important as long as enough of the underlying dynamics of the total situation are articulated" (p.81). The way this is achieved is to focus exclusively on the group as a



whole. That is why I choose to look at the issue of organisational culture from a psycho-dynamic perspective using, for practical purposes, an action research model. In doing so, I follow Freud's conviction that the greatest value of psychoanalysis to society in the long run will not come from therapeutic endeavour but from what it can offer as a general psychology to primary prevention in its broadest sense, as promotion of a state of individual and social well being.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE NATURE OF ORGANISATIONS**

We all have some experience of organisations and many of us work or participate in them. On the face of things, they are varied in size and shape, in their task and purpose, and in many other less obvious ways. For example, they may be viewed as systems of communication, power and politics, strategy, technology, and structure. Alternatively, they may be viewed as functional groupings such as, marketing, finance, personnel, research and development and manufacturing.

Traditional texts books and academic courses on organisational behaviour tend to regard organisations as mechanistic. For example, Child J (1984) refers to 'decision mechanisms' and to 'operating mechanisms' (p.4), while Buchanan D A and Huczynski A A (1985) refer to "...instruments to accomplish the purposes for which they were intended" (p.xi). The language and approach used leaves one with the impression that if only we could find the part of the machinery of organisation that needs fixing we would be okay. This even seems to be the approach to human problems which are addressed by such responses as, stress training, leadership training, management competencies and courses on how to achieve success.

In many ways the empirical–analytical paradigm reigns supreme when it comes to the analysis of organisations. Yet, as has been previously stated, this is the least suitable paradigm for this purpose. As I will show, what is organised in human organisations is human behaviour. Consequently, even viewing organisations from the hermeneutic or interpretive paradigm will still not provide an understanding that is more appropriate to issues of change. My proposition is that this only becomes possible when we view them from a psychoanalytic perspective, one that provides explanations for human behaviour in unconscious processes rather than only in stated intentions.

As Khan R H (1976) points out biological and mechanical structures have a physical boundedness so that when the animal dies or the automobile stops running, the physical parts are still there, connected to each other as before, and the mechanic or



pathologist can perform a post-mortem analysis. In contrast, human organisations have no structure other than the patterns of behaviour that are also their internal functions. When these patterns of behaviour stop, the organisation ceases to exist. Not even the traces of equipment and buildings that remain will provide us with many clues as to its nature in life.

From this view organisations are essentially patterns of behaviour. It therefore follows that they are contrived, and being of human construction they are infinitely susceptible to modification. They do not conform to the laws of growth and death that characterise biological organisms; there is no particular size and shape they must attain, or life cycle that they must follow. Organisations are not held together by functional branches or systems, the cement that holds them together is ultimately psychological. In order that the organisation is to exist, people must be motivated to engage in the stable recurring patterns of behaviour that define the organisations and give them continued existence.

Both Khan and Rioch M (1985) considered that a useful concept for describing these patterns of behaviour in organisations and for understanding their motivational bases was to view them as systems of interrelated roles. Astrachan B M & Flynn H R (1976), take the view that almost every organisation or institution is a group of groups, be those formal or informal. Sadler P (1976), refers to influences such as values, beliefs, attitudes, which members of the organisation share in common – values and beliefs which will vary from group to group and from role to role. A further, most valuable view is that of Turquet P M (1974), who stated that an institution was an idea held in the mind.

It will be seen that these ways of looking at organisations are all very different from the traditional approach. From this view we should perhaps conclude that organisations are what their members make them. They exist only in the perceived reality of the members of the organisation. It is very much a matter of an idea held in the mind of the members, of people held together by a psychological cement. The groups of groups of people, formed for all manner of reasons, are artificial creations. Some of the influences, such as values, beliefs and attitudes may operate against



effectiveness. It is a view of organisations as perceived objects. As we shall see later in the thesis, this concept is very much in line with the view expressed regarding boundaries – they are artificial conceptions. Be they spatial, temporal or whatever, they are artificially constructed in the mind.

In this chapter and elsewhere I use the terms 'group' and 'organisation' as interchangeable on the basis that organisations consist of 'groups of groups'. It is with these groups that individual members of the organisation primarily identify even though they may also identify with the larger organisation. It is my experience, as has also been the reported experience of others, that the culture of different groups in the same organisation varies from group to group, sometimes considerably. Consequently, for the purpose of viewing organisations from the perspective of culture and change it is felt that this approach will provide the most useful data.

In spite of their artificial creation, we all treat institutions as if they exist, and for all of us they are exceedingly real. The family, the school, the college, and the Metropolitan Police are all very much real objects for me. However, to be aware of the phenomenon is one thing but to understand it is another. To be able to explain it and get a better understanding of why this should be so we need to look at the processes that lead to this 'idea held in mind', and at how a group identity is created. In doing so it will inevitably be necessary to look at the manner in which an individual identity is formed.

One of the processes is undoubtedly identification, of which Freud S (1921) tells us that it, "is known as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person" (p.134). He further explains that during the process of emotional maturation, the child gradually adopts the standards and values of the parents by identifying himself with them. This is added to by Flugel J C (1921), who explains that the identification with the parents is transferred to other important individuals. Later, however, this identification may no longer be with individual persons, but through a process of identification of the individual with a group or institution. Here we can see that identification is with a perceived object, for example, the school, the college, the university, or the Metropolitan Police.



In his explanation of groups Freud spoke of intense identification of group members with both the leader and with the group as a whole. The libidinal ties arising from these intense identifications and strongly dependent mutual attachments make, what he terms, a psychic cement that, although operating outside awareness, often leads to the adoption of a common ideology. The result of the individual's group identification is that he reacts to the attributes of the group as if these attributes were also his.

The concept of an 'idea held in the mind' was previously referred to as an artificial creation. A more suitable term is that used by Anzieu D (1990), namely, a 'group illusion'. This he describes as a necessary illusion, one which sets up a group object that is at once internal and external to each member creating a collective consciousness. He explains that the group illusion corresponds to the founding moment in which the group forms itself as such. That is, a collection of individuals becomes a group when they are gripped by the collective imaginative belief that the group exists, as a reality that is both immanent and transcends each of them. In Anzieu's terms, "there is no group without a common skin, a containing envelope, which makes it possible for its members to experience the existence of a group self" (p.97) – that is, a notion of 'other', 'not-us'.

If we accept the notion of a collective consciousness we are getting very close to treating the perceived group object 'as if' it were an individual. Indeed, Anzieu goes on to make the link between individual and group object–relations when he tells us that Klein's description of the individual psychic apparatus is still at present the best available model both for thinking about groups and the phenomena that unfold in them, and for building up an effective method. By this account we are needing to consider groups in terms of a self, containing somehow or other an innate ego, an acquired superego, and disparate internal objects that are more or less accepted or rejected by the ego and variously cathected by the drives.

A further view also tends to offer support for treating an organisation 'as if' it were an individual. Reed B and Palmer B (1976), explain how the displacement of attachment instinct from mother to an illusory object such as a work group can result in organisations becoming a subordinate attachment–"figure" for some people, and a



principal attachment—"figure" for others. If that be the case, we need a better understanding of the process preliminary to this displacement onto the illusory object. In order to gain this understanding, and to prepare our understanding for what is to follow, it is necessary to digress at this point to look at various aspects of individual personality development.

In various publications Melanie Klein refers to the process of integration in regard to object–relations theory. (See Klein M (1948), (1952), (1955), & (1960)). She shows how, from the earliest stages of life there is an instinctual need for an integration of the self as a whole person with boundaries. She describes how, even during the paranoid–schizoid position, that is, during the first three or four months of life, when splitting processes are at their height, such splitting processes are never fully effective; for from the beginning of life the ego tends towards integrating itself and towards synthesizing the different aspects of the object. There appear to be transitory states of integration even in very young infants – becoming more frequent and lasting as development goes on.

As the small child begins to be aware of himself as a separate entity, and at the same time to be aware of other people as separate, another important mechanism comes into operation. Until this time the infant is in a state of primary identification: that is, when the distinction between 'I' and 'you' is meaningless. Awareness of separate identity results in secondary identification: that is, the process of identifying with an object the separate identity of which has been discovered. Unlike primary identification, secondary identification is a defence since it reduces hostility between the self and the object and enables experience of separation from it to be denied. Nonetheless, secondary identification with parental figures is held to be part of the normal development process.

This is explained by Jacobson E (1964), who helps us to understand this better when she states that,

"The adult ego will make extensive use of introjective and projective mechanisms, based on such fusions between self and object images, for the special purpose of establishing feeling and fantasy identifications at any level, not only with our love objects but with our whole environment." She continues, "Such temporary fusions induced in the service of the ego do not normally weaken the boundaries between the images of self and objects" (p.40).



When the infant enters into what Klein called the depressive position and is able to establish the complete object, increasing integration brings about changes in the nature of his anxiety, for when love and hatred become more synthesized in relation to the object, initially the mother, this gives rise to great mental pain – to depressive feelings and guilt. Here, as Freud A (1966) explains,

"The instinctual impulses can no longer seek direct gratification – they are required to respect the demands of reality and, more than that, to conform to ethical and moral laws by which the superego seeks to control the behaviour of the ego" (p.7).

At the same time the progress in integration and in object–relations enables the ego to develop more effective ways of dealing with the destructive impulses and the anxiety to which they give rise.

Storr A (1963) explains the anxiety involved as follows,

"The realisation of separateness leads, I believe, to anxiety and fear; for, in the infant, this realisation is necessarily attended by the simultaneous realisation of dependence and helplessness.....The fear of being abandoned leads to an attempt to re–identify with the parents and to an introjection of their standards and attitudes.....'I must be the same as they are or they will be angry', is the operative phrase. 'Good' is what parents approve of; and 'bad' is what they dislike; and, naturally, they like themselves and their opinions" (p.85).

A different view of the same process is put by Winnicott D W (1988), who explains,

"Then there develops the theme of a ME and a not–ME. There are now ME contents that depend partly on instinctual experience..... A meaning comes to the term 'relationship' as between the person, ME, and objects" (p.68).

He describes how the infant develops from what he terms an unintegrated state at the theoretical start, at a time when there is a lack of wholeness both in space and in time, indeed, when there is no awareness. What he appears to be saying is that in the beginning there are no temporal, spatial, or other boundaries – just a continuum – but gradually, out of the inner world there is produced some sort of pattern, order out of chaos.



He also describes how progress is made when out of the unintegrated state comes integration for moments or brief periods, and only gradually is a general state of integration achieved. During this process dependence becomes lessened. Gradually, as integration becomes a maintained state of the individual so the word disintegration rather than unintegration becomes appropriate for the description of the negative of integration. Disintegration as we shall see is a chaotic and painful experience.

Both Klein and Winnicott explain the importance of integration. For example Klein (1955) tells us that,

"One of the main factors underlying the need for integration is the individual's feeling that integration implies being alive, loving, and being loved by the internal and external good object; that is to say, there exists a close link between integration and object-relations. Conversely, the feeling of chaos, of disintegration, of lacking emotions as a result of splitting, I take to be closely related to the fear of death" (p.144).

Winnicott (1988) tells us that, "Integration feels sane, and it feels mad to be losing integration that has been acquired" (p.118).

Having referred to object-relations I feel that some explanation is necessary. Object-relations theory relates to the subject's need to relate to objects as opposed to instinct theory which centres round the subject's need to reduce instinctual tension. Melanie Klein developed and expanded the conception of introjection and projection in such a way as to represent the mental life of the child in terms of a constant interplay between the introjection of external objects and the projection of internal objects. Klein (1959) explains this as follows:

"By projecting oneself or part of one's impulses and feelings into another person, an identification with that person is achieved, though it will differ from the identification arising from introjection. For if an object is taken into the self (introjected), the emphasis lies on acquiring some of the characteristics of this object and being influenced by them. On the other hand, in putting part of oneself into the other person (projecting), the identification is based on attributing to the other person some of one's own qualities" (p.252).

For Winnicott (1988), "Integration means responsibility, and accompanied as it is by awareness, and by the collection of memories, and by the bringing of the past, present and future into a relationship, it almost means the beginning of human



psychology" (p.119). This is further explained by Klein (1960) who states, "A well integrated personality is the foundation for mental health" (p.268). She then goes on to enumerate some of the elements of an integrated personality, namely: emotional maturity, strength of character, a capacity to deal with conflicting emotions, a balance between internal life and adaptation to reality, and a successful welding into a whole of the different parts of the personality.

It is Winnicott (1988) who provides the best explanation of what happens in disintegration, when he tells us that,

"....disintegration is chaotic, being an alternative to order, and it can be said to be a crude kind of defensive organisation, defensive against the anxieties that integration brings" (p.135).

In a far less dramatic way, many of us will have experienced individuals who have almost literally 'gone to pieces' when faced with a sudden traumatic experience. And, while it may not appear a very sympathetic response, the advice to 'pull yourself together' may not be entirely inappropriate.

A somewhat different view of the process is put by Anzieu D (See (1989), & (1990)), which provides us with further valuable insight. The approach taken by Anzieu has been to view the body boundary in conjunction with the boundary of the psyche. In "The Skin Ego" (1989) he explains the titular notion as follows,

"By skin ego, I mean a mental image of which the ego of the child makes use during the early phases of its development to represent itself as an ego containing physical contents, on the basis of its experience of the surface of the body" (p.40).

It is Anzieu's view that the psyche gradually comes to terms with the body, so that in health there is eventually a state of affairs in which body boundaries are also the psyche boundaries.

From his perspective, the skin is universally obviously important in the process of the localisation of the psyche exactly in and within the body. Anzieu (1990) explains this as follows,



"For the moment let us say that the baby's original fantasy in relating to his mother is one of having a common skin with her. In imagination each of them develops in different parts of a single skin, which allows them immediate exchange and contact."

From this point, Anzieu then goes on to suggest that this is also the basis of the development of the ego when he writes,

"The surface of the body allows us to distinguish excitations of external origin from those of internal origin; just as one of the capital functions of the ego is to distinguish between what belongs to me myself and what does not belong, between what comes from me and the desires, thoughts, and affects of others, and between a physical (the world) or biological (the body) reality outside the mind; the ego is the protection in the psyche of the surface of the body, namely the skin, which makes up this sheet or interface, to speak in modern scientific terms" (p.63).

For Anzieu, the boundaries of the body image are acquired in the course of the child's detaching itself from its mother and they are, according to him, to some degree analogous to the Ego boundaries. He suggests that we take the body image not as a physical agency or function, but simply as a representation elaborated at a quite early stage by the Ego itself while in the process of becoming structured. He therefore considers that what is involved here is a symbolic process of representing a boundary which functions both as a stabilising image and as a protective envelope. This procedure, he suggests, poses the body as an object which must at all costs be kept intact. Here he seems to be in agreement with both Klein and Winnicott by suggesting that the function of setting boundaries connects with the necessity for bodily integrity. Thus for Anzieu (1989), "The body image belongs to the order of fantasy and secondary development; it is a representation acting upon the body" (p.32).

I have referred to the chaotic state of disintegration as described by Klein and Winnicott. Thus far the discussion has been largely theoretical. However, Menzies Lyth I (1988), supports the theory by providing practical examples of the very real terrors experienced by young children and the need for maintenance of various boundaries. These provide us with an explanation as to why adults need and form all manner of temporal, and spatial boundaries. As to temporal boundaries, she explains how the child's rudimentary time sense and the connection of the mother's absence with his own aggression make it only too easy for him to believe that she has gone for good. This,



of course, is an unbearable and terrifying experience which may act as a dreadful confirmation of the fantasy of permanent loss and lead to obvious states of depression and despair even in quite small babies.

In referring to children in hospital she provides a fine example of the need for spatial boundaries in the development of children. She shows how the importance of boundary control gives a stronger sense of belonging to what is inside the infant, of there being something comprehensible for it to identify with, of their being 'my place', or 'our place', where 'I' belong and where 'we' belong together. If there are no boundaries or the boundaries are drawn too wide children cannot get identity from or identify with such a large institution. It does not offer enough sense of being bounded and contained within something comprehensible. Menzies Lyth explains that small children not only need this holding together by space but also by attached people in terms of consistency in modes of communication and response. If not, they may feel lost internally as well as possibly getting lost in fact. Recalling the chaotic state described earlier she tells us that they literally feel all over the place.

In other words, there must be clear boundaries of various categories in order that the child has a consistent picture such as will permit integration. It is this process of constant testing of reality that helps the child to build an effective identity. The baby comes to be and to know himself as he is known and reflected back to himself by others, both the quality of the other's response and its consistency being important. An aspect of healthy development in the individual is therefore the establishment of a firm boundary for the self and others across which realistic and effective relationships and transactions can take place and within which a sense of one's own identity can be established.

This need does not cease with development to adulthood. For example, whilst researching this thesis my father was admitted to hospital in a terminal condition. After an initial admission to a general hospital he was moved to a geriatric unit. My father was very ill, and unable to communicate verbally, but my mother seemed quite certain that he was informing her that he was not happy in this location. In discussing this with my wife, who had recently retired from a career in nursing, she stated that it was a well



known phenomenon that elderly patients frequently reacted badly to a change of location. In many cases, their condition would be seen to deteriorate quite dramatically, following a move. It would appear that the likely explanation is that the boundary changes from familiar to unfamiliar result in disintegration, in a feeling of chaos; this coupled with increasing physical fragility results in the rapid deterioration.

A further example is provided by Bruno Bettelheim (1960) who recounts how, despite the dreadful conditions of the concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald, with all its horrors, he still suffered terrible anxiety because he was unable to put in being temporal boundaries in relation to the work activities that he was forced to carry out. The experience of disintegration was vividly portrayed by the hostage Brian Keenan, who, describing his experience just after his release from Lebanon, said, "A hostage is a man clinging with his fingernails over the edge of chaos", and, "It's like someone comes and tears your right arm off and walks away." (The Times 28-8-90). I feel that this shows that throughout life the matter of integration is vital to all of us. A violent disruption to the individual's identity will appear as chaos and result in disintegration. No one who has seen Keenan or his fellow hostages can doubt this.

There is another aspect of personality development which is felt to be relevant to the issue of boundaries. In common with Freud, Marris P (1974), referred to a conservative instinct which results in an attachment to objects which remains with us through life. In this sense he tells us that conservatism is an aspect of our ability to survive in any situation: for without continuity we cannot interpret what events mean to us, nor explore new kinds of experience with confidence. He goes on to explain that the process of attachment influences our perceived reality of the world. He describes how in order to construct meanings, a growing child must be able to identify, classify and compare, to perceive relationships and conceptualise them in abstraction. Attachment influences the development, not only as our first and for a long time our most crucial experience of security and danger, order and predictability, but as the guarantor of all other learning.



Freud S (1921), had referred to the conservative instinct as paramount, but he also acknowledged that there may be others which push towards progress and the production of new forms. This is the view of Bowlby J (1969) and others who show that the child has an instinctual need for attachment. This is more than just conservatism: Reed B and Palmer B (1976), explain that Bowlby's concern is with the nature of the child's tie to its mother. In Bowlby's view this bond manifests itself in attachment behaviour. This is behaviour, on the part of the young child, directed towards gaining proximity to certain specific people referred to as 'attachment figures'. The infant's first attachment figure is usually his mother. Bowlby identifies a number of patterns of attachment behaviour: sucking, clinging, following (bodily or with the eyes), crying, calling and smiling.

These relationships of attachment are crucial to a child's well being, even its survival. Because we are born very helpless and throughout childhood remain primarily dependent on our parenting figures to protect, feed and care for us, the attention of our parents is our only weapon of defence. Hence a child's most crucial task, for its own survival, is to make its attachment relationships secure. Since attachment is so overwhelmingly important to us, above all in the early years, it underlies all our understanding of how to survive in and manage the world we inhabit.

It is difficult for us as adults to imagine the feelings associated with infancy. However, Anzieu (1989), tries to explain this when he writes,

"The catastrophe haunting the nascent psyche of the human baby would then be that of letting go of this clinging grip. When that happens the child is plunged into what Bion called a 'nameless dread'" (p.23).

Menzies Lyth explains what happens when the attachment is broken and the effect that this has on the child when she describes the experience of separation of the young child from its mother, notably when the child is put in an institution. The effect, says Menzies Lyth is, that immediate and often inconsolable distress is almost universal.

The foregoing has been a brief and selective view of individual personality development but it has nevertheless described some important aspects which it will be helpful to summarise. We can say that, right from the start, the infant has an instinctual need for an integration of the self as a whole person with boundaries. From an



unintegrated state, there is gradually produced some sort of pattern – order out of chaos. An order in terms of space and time, which eventually leads to a state of affairs in which the body boundaries are also the psyche boundaries. This is a precarious state and one which is protected with great care, as disintegration is experienced as madness. Out of this process the individual builds an effective identity which is itself a reassurance against fears of death or madness. To achieve this, there must be spatial and temporal boundaries that limit the degree of inconsistency experienced by the infant. There must also be a consistency in the authority boundaries and of the consistency of the mother. Hence a child's most crucial task, for its own survival, is to make its attachment relationships secure. This is aided by an attachment instinct which results in both conscious and unconscious processes of attachment, and both physical and psychological attachments.

From the foregoing, we can see just how crucial to individual identity formation and retention are both the attachment instinct and the instinct for integration which must be supported by the formation of boundaries. The boundaries are essential to preserve the wholeness of the individual, both physically and psychologically, without which we would not be able to function properly. The attachment instinct by clinging to those boundaries supports this process by defending the predictability of life and our very survival. For without this continuity we should not be able to interpret what events meant for us, nor explore new kinds of experience with confidence. However, in making these points I should not wish to infer that this is in anyway anything other than a dynamic process. Integration is a continuing process that is never complete even in adult life, as is the case with introjection and projection. As will be further explained in due course, conservatism and adaptability are both necessary for survival.

Having shown how integration and attachment are so vitally important to individual identity, the question is, can we also relate this to group identity? I believe we can and will show that the perceived group object is treated by the group members in more or less exactly the same way. The basis for this belief is the interdependence of the individual with the group. Freud asserted that there was no dichotomy between individual and group psychology because the psychology of the individual is itself a function of the individual's relationship to another person or object. Bion W R (1961)



stated that the individual was a group animal and in order to study the individual it required that he be looked at from the position of the group and the group from the position of the individual. There were a 'socio-' and a 'psycho-' perspective which were interdependent.

In a paradoxical way, the need of the individual to constantly affirm his identity with those around him results in the perceived group object. Bion said, the interdependence of group and individual was the subject of his inquiries. The individual perpetually requires and seeks personal relationships for his development and maintenance. The anxieties inherent in the primitive phantasies, described earlier, are instinctively responded to by an attempt to find 'allies', figures with whom the feeling of a close contact can bring reassurance. So that, as Sutherland J D (1985) states,

"The origin and nature of the individual's 'groupishness' is thus no problem. From the very start he cannot survive without his needs for social relatedness being met" (p.75).

The logical extension of this view is that put by Erikson E H (1959): that of a group identity which refers to the group as a social collective with a sense of shared human qualities, a commonality with others, an ideology, goals, and in a broader sense to the group's basic way of organising experience. Thus the ego identity is based on the common perception of an individual's self-sameness and continuity. Put another way, personal identity is based on two simultaneous observations; the immediate perception of one's self-sameness and continuity in time; and the simultaneous perception of the fact that others recognise one's self-sameness and continuity.

I feel quite sure that our personal reflection provides us with confirmation of the foregoing, but by way of affirmation Marris P (1974), describes research where students were studied when taking their place at university. It was found that the students looked for their own kind, on the basis of signs which were immediately perceptible: for example, accent, manner, and dress. The greater the differences, the more likelihood of difficulties between the students. Many of these perceptible signs were centred upon language. Students from different social backgrounds felt the strain of communicating



across subtle distinctions of class-bounded cultures. Konig K (1985) explains that when we enter 'stranger groups', we try to manoeuvre the other group members into positions which correspond to our internal objects.

A slightly different approach is taken by Anzieu (1984), who it will be recalled, referred to a 'skin ego' in regard to the individual. In much the same way, he refers to a 'group envelope'. He explains that the only way a group can protect itself from the extreme anxieties that it faces, is to fabricate an overarching group psychical apparatus on top of those of the individuals composing it. He tells us that,

"....to exist at all the group needs an overarching agency that envelops it. Thus the group is organised around the same agencies as the individuals composing it. The conscious and unconscious functioning of the group will differ depending on the agency that serves as envelope to the group psychical apparatus; the enveloping agency also affects the behaviour of the group, its goals and attitudes towards external reality" (p.101).

At this point I should wish to stress that while these matters of integration and group membership are important and are thus accentuated to make the necessary points, equally important is the dynamic nature of the process and the fact that we pass through a series of identifications which are constantly changing and shifting. As to the group, we need to appreciate the interrelatedness between the group and the individual. Thus the individual is required to be looked at from the position of the group and the group from the position of the individual. This will become clearer as the thesis develops.

Anzieu also helps us to understand the formation of the group illusion when he explains how the group situation awakens the image of limitless fragmentation or splitting of the individual's body and personality. He tells us that it summons up the oldest of phantasies, that of dismemberment and that the group draws the individual far into his past, to early childhood where he did not yet have consciousness of himself as subject, where he felt incoherent. We are aware that one of the deepest anxieties is that of losing one's physical and psychological unity. Experience such as has been described by Anzieu has led us to realise that the group constitutes a primary threat to the individual. A human being can exist as a subject only if he feels physically and psychologically coherent.



This leads us to one of the most important developments in group relations training: the observation of Turquet P (1974) that the possibility of a participant emerging from anonymity and isolation and becoming a subject involves establishing contact (visual, gesture, or verbal) with his neighbour or his two closest neighbours. In this way is formed what Turquet calls "the relational frontier of the 'I' with my neighbour's skin" (p.99). This tends to support Bowlby's theory by showing how the attachment drive operates in humans. We all look for protection both against external dangers and against an internal psychical state of distress, in doing so we search for contact (in the double sense, both bodily and social, of the term) which enables signs to be exchanged in a reciprocal process of communication in which each partner feels himself recognised by the other.

What we are saying here is that the boundaried group serves as a defence against both external dangers and internal distress. This aspect is touched on by Marris who refers to the setting up of tribal and territorial boundaries to withstand the threat to the meaning of our lives. Turquet also introduced the concept of bodily and social attachment. It is upon the skin that a first picture of reality is registered – that is, biologically. Socially, an individual's membership of a social group is shown by incisions, scarification, skin painting, tattooing, by his make up and hair style, and by his clothes, which are another aspect of the same thing.

These boundaries do not resolve the problems of social coherence. But they protect people from having to confront the confusion as an aspect of their own uncertain identity, unmediated by any given sense of where they belong. If these boundaries are threatened, the tensions will once again press upon people directly, and may provoke panic stricken violence or flight. Conversely, the more nakedly people are exposed to the anxieties of change, the more uncompromisingly they will try to erect protective barriers about their precarious sense of self. That is, they may, as Marris has suggested, seek to invent a tribe – a collective identification – where none has existed, and project their internal conflict upon society in these terms.



It seems that the foregoing provides support for Bion's assumption that there is a 'socio-' aspect of interdependence between individuals and groups. The issue that now arises is whether the group can be seen to have a 'psycho-' aspect in a manner similar to an individual. Some positive indication is provided by Anzieu D (1989), who, talking about his findings from group work describes how participants tend to fill up empty space by huddling in a corner, by putting tables in the middle, or by removing empty chairs. I believe that what is being described here shows quite clearly the need for the group to create a clear spatial or territorial boundary. It will doubtless be noted that the activity described by Anzieu is very similar to the needs expressed earlier by Menzies Lyth in relation to children in hospital. Faced with a broken boundary there is considerable effort to reduce the anxiety caused. It would seem then that the individual needs groups to be 'integrated'; indeed he needs several groups to enable him to feel integrated.

A further description of how members of groups act in a manner similar to individuals is provided by Anzieu D (1984), when he describes how participants in any group situation may regress to the situation of the infant. In Anzieu's view this explains the phenomenon, which Freud discovered, of the common substitution in a group of the group ego ideal for the individual ego ideal. This idea of group regression was very much a part of the theory of Bion in his view of groups. He regarded a group in the state of basic assumption as acting irrationally because of regression. The basic assumption states are ways of dealing with impulses so as to satisfy the defensive needs of the group.

Bion postulated that the basic assumption states were based on the processes which established themselves in earliest infancy. He saw the anxiety that provoked them as deriving from much earlier phases in which the fears were of disintegration, a loss of the self or madness. They crystallised for him replicas of the emotions with which the infant related to the mother, and later, the family. Sutherland explains that the task of establishing contact with the emotional life of the group would appear to be as formidable to the adult as the relationship with the breast appears to be to the infant, and the failure to meet the demands of this task is revealed in his regression.



Bion describes how the work of the group, its functioning and task performance, is impaired with deterioration of the ego functioning of the members. The realities of the situation and the task are lost sight of, reality testing is poor, secondary process thinking deteriorates and more primitive forms of thinking emerge. There is new organisation of behaviour which seems to be determined by fantasies and assumptions which are unrealistic and represent a failed struggle to cope with the current reality situation. Thereby the group survives as such at the expense of the individual though its essential functioning and primary task are now altered in the service of a different task.

It will be appreciated that there is an element of defence in the regression described by Bion. Likewise, Anzieu referred to the need for an envelope as a means of protection for the group. A different view is put by Menzies Lyth (1959) and Jaques E (1953), who have developed a concept that they have referred to as 'social systems as a defence against anxiety'. They describe how, in its development, a social organisation is influenced by a number of interacting factors – above all, for the support in the task of dealing with anxiety. To this extent the nature of the organisation is determined by the psychological needs of the members. The characteristic feature of the social defence system is its orientation to helping the individual avoid the experience of anxiety, guilt, doubt and uncertainty.

Bion's argument is that basic assumption activities are difficult to sustain beyond the small group level; therefore the members of the larger group need a more complex configuration to deal with their anxieties. What is being described is not a regression or a sudden reaction to an anxiety provoking threat to the group. On the contrary, a social defence system develops over time as the result of collusive interaction and agreement, often unconscious, between members of the organisation as to what form it shall take. It is a gradual build-up more in the nature of a seeping into the group fabric like a process of osmosis. However, once in place, the socially structured defence mechanisms then tend to become an aspect of external reality which old members of the institution take for granted and with which new members must come to terms.



In 'normal' organisations we still find the same anxieties. However, in these cases there are various institutional defences which serve to reduce the danger of identity loss. We go to considerable lengths to ensure that anxiety is reduced to a minimum. This is achieved by various defensive structures: for example, participants identify themselves before they speak, the roll is called, name tags are distributed, lists of participants are handed out. This is the world as we commonly see it on the surface but we should be aware that these are only defences to those not so easily seen phenomena.

It would appear then that there is also a *prima facie* case for regarding the group 'as if' it were an individual. As we have seen, in precisely the same way as in relation to individuals, we also go to great lengths to create and maintain our boundaries in institutions. It is just as important to protect the group boundaries as it is to protect individual boundaries. The institution as a whole must control its external boundaries and regulate transactions across them so as to protect and facilitate the maintenance of the primary task. In addition, any institution is divided into subsystems some of which perform different tasks. The way these subsystems control their boundaries and conduct transactions across them is of equal importance for the performance of the sub group task.

It can be seen that integration and synthesis are as relevant to the group as they are to the healthy individual. In terms of managing change this would appear to be vital. Should we not be aware of the need to control anxiety, those involved will undoubtedly suffer from some form of disintegration. An example of this is in the comments of those involved in an organisational change at AT & T, as is helpfully reported by Tunstall W (1983). These comments show just how dramatic and painful the process of changing the social structures of an organisation can be. The views expressed included: "angry, sad, a little scared"; "as if I've been through a forced divorce, and that I could not control the outcome"; "sad, and somewhat resentful"; "a sense of loss"; "my feelings were ambivalent, I was hurt"; "anger, frustration, a sense of personal loss"; "a kind of identity crisis"; and "a very real sense of loss".



A further example witnessed by the author concerns a recent change situation in the Metropolitan Police where two different members of the group involved were heard to comment, "It was just like going through a divorce" and "I don't mind bleeding, provided they (senior management) are also prepared to bleed". In both instances, it will be noted that quite apart from the very real expressions of pain, there is also a very strong expression of being 'out of control', of chaos.

There are many other reported cases that support the above, some even more dramatic than those already expressed. For example, Deal T (1985) says,

"We rarely recognise that changes in the nature of work also create losses that trigger powerful individual or collective reactions. The costs may not be immediately obvious nor reflected in tangible ways, but left unattended over a period of time, pressure builds up and can become a silent killer in organisations – much like hypertension in the human body" (p.293).

## Summary

Through a process of identification, which first applied to the mother, attachment feelings and instinct are displaced onto groups. The group becomes either a subordinate or a principal attachment figure. The result is that a collection of people become a group when they come to the illusory agreement that the group exists. Thus, the group is to be seen in the same manner that any other object is in object relations. This object is seen to have a common skin in the same way as an individual and has the same needs as an individual to create spatial, temporal and other boundaries. Indeed, we can say that integration and synthesis are just as important to the group as they are to the individual.

Furthermore, the need to protect the boundaries of the group is the same, and, should there be a breach of these boundaries the result is precisely the same for the members of the group as for an individual – disintegration, and it will be recalled just how painful this is. In addition to the reasons for identification with the group given above, the group itself creates anxiety for individuals which in turn results in a stronger identification. The attachment instinct leads to a search for both a bodily and social contact, and this in turn helps us to withstand the threat to the meaning of our lives.



The outward signs of dress, hairstyle, etc., permit a ready recognition of other like minded persons, of others in the same social boundaries, and this reduces the confusion and the anxiety. Should the group boundaries be threatened, the result may well be a regression to an infantile state, perhaps even moreso than in the case of an individual.

From the foregoing, I believe that we can state with some confidence, the existence of a group identity. Whether we call it a common skin, a containing envelope, an idea held in the mind or whatever, the actions of groups indicate such an identity. In the same manner as individuals, it is essential for the group to create and maintain boundaries such as will ensure a continuity and thus reduce or avoid anxiety. It is equally clear that should change be imposed on the group the members will experience the same chaos and suffer the same dreadful anxieties as individuals. Thus these boundaries are the social structures which are created as a defence against the group's anxieties. Again, as with the individual, these boundaries may be spatial, temporal, psychological, or in terms of authority, role, or whatever. They may be based on phantasy or illusion, and to others, appear to be nonsensical. However, to the group, they are all important.

I believe that it is also reasonable to state that the structures resulting from the boundaries created as a defence against anxiety, are what may be termed the group identity, that is, an unconscious and partly conscious construct of its members. In order, then, to understand the culture of the group we need to understand the boundaries. That is, what boundaries exist and why. Some, such as spatial or temporal, may not be too difficult to discover. However, this should not diminish our understanding of the effect that will result from changing them. Others, such as psychological boundaries, may be more difficult to locate and understand.

It will be appreciated that this view of organisations is most relevant to organisational culture. Precisely how, will be explained in the chapter on 'Organisational Culture'. However, in the next chapter the issue of boundaries will be looked at in greater detail.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **BOUNDARIES**

An old proverb tells us that you cannot swim in the same river twice. In like manner, experience is kaleidoscopic and the experience of every moment is unique and unrepeatable. This means that unless we are able to classify our experience on some basis of similarity we shall be unable to make sense of that experience. Without some sort of categorisation we should be imprisoned in the uniqueness of the here and now. Such categorising activity is aptly described by Sapir E (1961) as the reduction of experience to familiar form.

In the following chapter on 'symbolism' I will describe in some detail how the infant develops to a position where he is able to distinguish the complete object – to a position where there is increasing integration, a greater degree of awareness of differentiation and of the separateness of the ego. A situation where the infant is able to distinguish between ME and not-ME and meaning comes to the term 'relationship' as between the person ME and objects. At the same time, the infant develops the use of symbols – in particular, speech symbols – which enables the infant to make rapid progress. In the meanwhile, however, I shall largely assume this situation.

I have previously referred to boundaries. In this chapter I want to take a closer look at this phenomenon, to try to establish why and how boundaries develop and to learn more about their nature. As was stated earlier, the establishment of a personality system as a separate entity with a well functioning boundary across which input and output are possible is vital to the healthy development of any individual. This is further explained by Lofgren L B (1975) who points out that personality boundaries and reality testing – that is, the ability to discern the outside from the inside so that the individual has adequate perception and the ability to deal with incoming material – are vital features if there is to be progression.



Without some system of making sense out of total chaos the uniqueness of the here and now would be intolerable. The result is that we classify or categorise. As Tyler S A (1969) puts it, "It is through naming and classification that the whole rich world of infinite variability shrinks to manipulable size and becomes bearable" (p.33). This, of course, is a highly selective process. We do not live in a world where we discriminate among all the possible sensory stimuli in our environment, nor do we react to each stimulus as if it were new and foreign. In effect we choose to ignore many of those perceptual differences which make each object unique. The system that we mainly choose to do this by is naming. By doing so we put objects which to us are similar into the same category, even though we can perceive differences among them.

It will be appreciated that the objects of our world do not present themselves to us ready classified. The categories into which they are divided are categories into which we divide them. This point is made by the anthropologist Leach E (1976) who says that,

"When we use symbols to distinguish one class of things or actions from another we are creating artificial boundaries in a field that is naturally continuous" (p.33).

In other words, we are still referring to perceived objects, or ideas held in the mind. Moving on from here it will not be too difficult to imagine that some experiences could not be classified if it were not for the use of language. Language is our principal means of classifying the representations of our experience.

In principle the created boundaries have no dimensions yet they are as real for you and me as the groups referred to earlier. Leach explains that these boundaries apply to time as well as space. By way of example he cites neighbouring gardens, and national frontiers as spatial boundaries and the segmentation of time into hours and minutes as temporal boundaries. He also explains how social time is similarly segmented as an individual moves from one social status to another in a series of discontinuous jumps. For example, from child to adult, unmarried to married, or sick to healthy. Leach explains how,

"The occupancy of each status constitutes a period of social time of social duration, but the ritual that marks the transition – wedding, funeral, healing ritual – is an interval of social timelessness" (p.34).



The view that people seek to impose order upon what they see is also shared by the Gestalt psychologists. For example, Nevis E C (1987) is of the belief that complex human behaviour cannot be explained as an additive building up of simple components. For Gestalt psychologists, the true data of experience are organised wholes. The world of sensory data is arranged in an organised manner, and people react to the overall pattern of unitary organisation of objects, not to specific bits or parts. In his view this is not a passive response, on the contrary, people work hard to impose order on what they see.

Gestalt psychology also maintains that we often comprehend objects as units before we have any way of knowing what they are like. It is the view of Katz D (1969) that this applies in vision in comparative darkness and in strange surroundings when we come upon objects we have never seen before. This tendency to perceiving wholes leads to what Nevis refers to as the fixed Gestalt which in turn leads to the difficulty for individuals of forming fresh, new figures in the present moment. In his view, hanging on to past perceptions of people or events prevents comprehension of what would be the most useful behaviour in the here and now.

Nevis also came to realise that people cannot have appropriate interactions until tensions derived from the past are released in some way. It seems that in order to confirm this concept we have only to attempt to complete a crossword puzzle. Anyone who has experienced the situation where the insertion of a wrong entry has prevented new thinking, or where they have erased a wrong entry thus permitting new thinking, will be aware of the correctness of this assertion. The interesting thought is how we 'erase' old thinking when it comes to managing change.

The nature of a boundary is that it separates two zones of social space-time which are normal, timebound, clear-cut, central, secular, but the temporal and spatial markers which actually serve as boundaries are themselves abnormal, timeless, ambiguous, at the edge, sacred. Consequently, the ambiguity which exists at the boundary, is a source of anxiety and it is the boundaries that matter. We concentrate our attention on the differences not the similarities, and this makes us feel that the markers of such boundaries are of special value, or as Leach has observed, 'sacred' or 'taboo'.



A further valuable approach to the nature of boundaries is the Gestalt view of individual boundaries of Merry U and Brown G I (1987), who point out that contact is the point where the boundaries of the individual meet other boundaries, such as those of social systems. The boundary is at the location of a relationship where the relationship both separates and connects. In contemporary terms the boundary is at the interface. Without interrelation of some kind, there can be no boundary. The contact point, at the boundary, is where awareness arises. With awareness the individual can mobilise energy so that the environment can be contacted to meet a need. The contact boundary is where one differentiates oneself from others.

This is further explained in a more general way by Nevis who says that 'boundary' is a term used to designate the phenomenological moment in which one entity is experienced as separate or different from another. To have a boundary of any kind is to define or set the limits of interaction (contact) between the individual or system and its environment. Thus, for Nevis, boundary is a relational concept that summarises the state of affairs between reasonably discrete objects or people but it is important to see these states as momentary points in a dynamic process, not as fixed structural conceptions. The concept of a dynamic process is similar to the concept of a 'boundary region' referred to by Miller E J and Rice A K (1967).

Systems theory as described by Miller and Rice also deals with the concept of boundaries. In regard to 'systems of organisation', they describe a system of activities as that complex of activities which is required to complete the process of transforming an intake into an output. The term 'system' as they use it here, implies that each component activity of the system is interdependent in respect of at least some of the other activities of the same system, and the system as a whole is identifiable as being in certain, if limited, respects independent of related systems. Thus a system has a boundary which separates it from its environment.

In common with the views previously stated they also observe that a system boundary implies a discontinuity. This discontinuity of the boundary may constitute a differentiation of technology, territory, or time, or some combination of these. They further explain that in a simple system there are no internal boundaries either between



one operating activity and another or between operating activities on the one hand and maintenance and regulatory activities on the other, whereas, a complex system contains such internal boundaries, which is the nature of most enterprises. Such complex systems include a number of identifiable sub-systems of activities through which the various processes of the enterprise are carried out. These constituent systems, like the enterprise as a whole, are open systems which acquire intakes from the environment, transform them, and export the results.

The notion that groups distinguish boundaries is one of the most important characteristics that students of group relations experience and study. Group relations training has therefore provided some very useful data in regard to the concept of boundaries. For example, Redlich F C & Astrachan B (1975) distinguish three types of boundaries: spatial, temporal and psychological. The spatial boundary is the most obvious one. Here the group begins to consider the room its own territory and is often willing to safeguard it against strangers. Within the group territorial arrangements are observed and seating arrangements are important to the group. It will be recalled that Anzieu reported similar behaviour.

Of temporal boundaries they describe how the study group learns to appreciate time boundaries. This is experienced quite vividly when – out of a group of strangers – a cohesive and distinctive group emerges and ends quite abruptly at a given time. In addition, the 'death' of the group is usually experienced with anxiety, anger, and most of all with some grief, expressed overtly and covertly. However, the most important boundaries are the psychological boundaries of the group, which define who belongs to the group and who does not. They explain how the group members distinguish external boundaries, separating members from non-members, and internal boundaries where the phenomenon of scapegoating is frequently observed. This acceptance and rejection of group members is related to the development of inner psychological boundaries.

These three types of boundaries, spatial, temporal and psychological, are social structures created by the group. It is of passing interest to note that I am using the words 'spatial', 'temporal', and 'psychological', to categorise or classify groups of sensory data, that is, to put boundaries around them. Without doing so I could not possibly



comprehend them myself, let alone communicate them to the reader. I am also using conventionalised symbols, symbols that are known to both me and hopefully to the reader. Furthermore, had I chosen to create totally new symbols for the sensory data that I refer to as 'spatial' or whatever, I should have needed to explain that to the reader.

Our system of conventionalised symbols provides us with various categories for explaining organisations. For example, Goodenough W H (1964) concentrates on the division of organisations by means of rights and their duty counterparts. Every individual has a number of different social identities. What his rights and duties are varies according to the identities he may appropriately assume in a given interaction. This raises interesting issues regarding power and authority which will be dealt with later in the thesis. A further categorisation is that used by Lofgren (1975) who prefers to use the classification of roles. He describes roles as being claimed labels, from behind which people present themselves to others and partially in terms of which they conceive, gauge, and judge their past, current and projected action. Roles are also imputed labels, towards which and partially in terms of which, people likewise conceive, gauge, and judge other's past, present and projected action.

Yet a further view is also put by Goodenough W H (1964), that of identities, some of which are ascribed and some 'achieved'. In describing how one comes to possess a particular social identity as a matter of social fact he explains how everyone has many more identities than he can assume at one time in a given interaction. This means that the individual must select from among his various identities those in which to present himself. Several considerations govern the selection of identities. An obvious consideration is an individual's (or group's) qualifications for selecting the identity. Does he in fact possess it? An individual may masquerade as a policeman for example, donning the symbols that inform others of such an identity, and yet not be one.

It seems clear that we all need to create boundaries, either individually or as groups, and that we are in some difficulty when we cannot do so. The feelings of disintegration referred to earlier in regard to Bruno Bettelheim (1960) are partially explained by the fact that life in the concentration camp resulted in the removal of temporal boundaries which brought him severe hardship. He informs us that nobody had



a watch, consequently, in regard to most of the work it was not possible to gauge how soon the horror of forced labour would end. In this case the 'anonymity' of time was a factor which was destructive to personality. On the other hand, it was possible to know that in regard to one particular type of work that "each trip of the carrier column took half an hour which meant that one knew exactly when the noon break would come with its half hour rest, and when the work day would finally be over in the evening" (p.140). In this case the ability to 'organise time' was a strengthening influence as it permitted some initiative or some planning.

While I should not wish to draw comparisons with the experience referred to above, the question of boundaries also causes me to reflect on life as a young boy, when I often had to walk along a country road for about a mile in total darkness. In such circumstances I was frequently very frightened, because I could not distinguish anything. I could not put boundaries around anything. This is, of course, precisely what Katz was saying above. Taking this forward I cannot help thinking that to metaphorically keep people in the dark about change could be equally frightening for them.

## **Summary**

It is important to understand the need to impose order on our world, it is also important that we understand the process involved. The function of boundaries is to create separate entities, and a well functioning boundary permits logical thinking. However, disintegration will result in malfunctioning boundaries and regression. A boundary is a relational concept that summarises the state of affairs between reasonably discrete objects or people. The fact that groups have boundaries is an essential factor, these boundaries may be of various types, and between subgroups. Gestalt psychology shows that we comprehend objects as units before we have any way of knowing what they are like. It is as though everything has to be an object. People work actively to impose order upon what they see.

The boundaries created are to be seen as momentary points in a dynamic process; they are artificial interruptions to what is naturally continuous. Yet to us it is the boundaries that matter. Concentrating on the differences makes us feel that the markers



of the boundaries are 'taboo'. These boundaries are created by feelings, assumptions, and fantasies, which in many cases are unconscious. In order for change to occur, the boundary must be confronted in order that a new experience of the avoided or unknown can take place. In order to do this we use language which has been used to categorise our world, by now tying the component elements together again, by putting things and persons into relationship to one another.

By naming we classify and put objects which are similar into the same category. We classify because life in a world where nothing was the same would be intolerable. It is through naming and classification that the whole frightening world of infinite variability becomes manageable and bearable. Naming can refer to rights, to roles, or to social identities: all permit us to make sense out of the world and to reduce anxiety. Whatever the categories are that we create, be they spatial, temporal, psychological, or social structures, they all result in "the way that we do things around here".

Naming and classification are achieved by the use of language and words as symbols. In the next chapter I shall look at the concept of 'Symbolism' with a view to understanding how culture is expressed.



## *CHAPTER 5*

### **SYMBOLISM**

The relevance of the concept of symbolism immediately becomes evident when we refer to the following views of Klein and Winnicott. Klein (1930) came to the conclusion that symbolism is the foundation of all sublimation and of every talent. Winnicott (1971) concluded that the transitional object is the first use of a symbol and that this object gradually gives place to an ever widening range of objects, and to the whole cultural life. On these views, we can begin to see that the development of symbolism shadows the development of culture. Consequently, the study of symbolism is of the utmost relevance if we are to understand culture.

To develop an understanding of symbolism I shall trace it as a process in the individual through the various psychoanalytic writings. However, in order to provide some sort of context I first need to describe two different periods of infant development. Freud referred to two types of mental functioning – primary and secondary processes – the former being characteristic of unconscious mental activity and the latter being characteristic of conscious thinking. The primary process is governed by the pleasure principle, which leads to avoidance of pain and unpleasure by hallucinating the satisfaction necessary. This process ignores categories of space and time, and images tend to become fused and can readily replace one another. This is a period before ego formation and integration. The secondary process on the other hand is governed by the reality principle, which leads to the avoidance of pain and unpleasure by adaptive behaviour: that is, the capacity to discriminate between subjective images and external percepts. Freud considered that the secondary process developed at the same time as the ego and that this was closely connected to verbal thinking.

Roughly analogous with the primary and secondary processes are the Kleinian concepts of the paranoid–schizoid position and the depressive position. In the former the individual deals with his innate destructive impulses by primitive defensive responses: by splitting both his ego and his object representations into good and bad parts and by projecting his destructive impulses on the bad object by whom he feels persecuted. In



the depressive position the individual becomes aware of his ambivalence when he realises that both his love and hate are directed towards the same object. In this position, the individual is able to distinguish the complete object and is able, as was previously stated, to progress towards integration.

These two periods of development, whichever choice of terminology we use, are relevant not only to an understanding of symbolism but also to the wider issue of culture as was mentioned at the commencement of this chapter in the views of Klein and Winnicott. The significance will perhaps be appreciated if we recall that in the chapter on 'The Nature of Organisations' we referred to regression – of both individuals and groups – to the situation of the infant. It will also be recalled that this regression brought about fears of disintegration, a loss of the self or madness. In other words, the regression referred to is from the depressive position or secondary process, to primary process or the paranoid-schizoid position.

In the first instant the infant progresses from a situation of unborn dependence to one of born dependence. Ferenci S (1952) postulates that in the former situation the infant must be under the impression that he is omnipotent: that he has all that he wants and there is nothing left to wish for. This continues after birth, but now this is achieved in a hallucinatory way. The infant feels himself in possession of a magical capacity that can realise all his wishes by simply imagining the satisfaction of them. Ferenci calls this, 'The period of magical hallucinatory omnipotence'. He then describes how the child makes use of crying and gestures with the same result: that is, satisfaction promptly arrives. He calls this, 'The period of omnipotence by the help of magical gestures'.

During this period the thinking is not in accordance with reality but has all the archaic and magical features that have been described. This is explained by Fenichel O (1946) who considers that primitive symbolism is a part of the way in which conceptions are formed in prelogical thinking. At this stage, comprehension of the world radiates from instinctual demands and fears. The first objects are possible means of gratification or possible threats; stimuli that provoke the same reactions are looked upon as identical;



and the first ideas are not sums built up out of distinct elements but wholes comprehended in a still undifferentiated way, united by the emotional responses they have provoked.

It seems that the child passes through an animistic period in the apprehension of reality, in which every object appears to him to be endowed with life, and in which he seeks to find again in every object his own organs and their activities. It will be recalled that this period is governed by the pleasure principle, and, during this period the pleasure is derived from bodily functioning. As Ferenci reminds us, the child's mind is at first exclusively concerned with his own body. This is in line with the view of Anzieu previously expressed. During this period the child is also experiencing many 'unpleasant' experiences as Ferenci would describe them. This is further referred to by Klein M (1930) when she describes how, "...the wholly undeveloped ego is faced with a task which at this stage is quite beyond it – the task of mastering the severest anxiety" (p.220).

This anxiety leads to the use of primitive defence mechanisms. This is perhaps best explained in regard to the infant's first object relations. As Segal H (1981) puts it,

"It is the time of the hallucinatory wish-fulfilment, described by Freud, when the mind creates objects which are then felt to be available. According to Melanie Klein, it is also the time of the bad hallucinosis when, if the ideal conditions are not fulfilled, the bad object is equally hallucinated and felt as real" (p.53).

This leads to the defence of splitting where the object is seen as split into an ideally good and a wholly bad one. The aim of the ego is total union with the ideal object and total annihilation of the bad one, as well as the bad parts of the self. Omnipotent thinking is predominant and reality sense intermittent and precarious. The concept of absence hardly exists. Whenever the state of union with the ideal object is not fulfilled, what is experienced is not absence; the ego feels assailed by the counterpart of the good object the bad object, or objects.

It is the anxiety arising in this early stage of mental development which also sets going the mechanism of identification. As was previously explained, the child passes through an animistic period in which every object appears to him to be endowed with



life, and in which he seeks to find again in every object his own organs and their activities. Klein M (1923) was of the view that it may very well be this that makes possible the comparison between different organs and areas of the body and that this comparison would be subsequently followed by the process of identification with other objects. From this she developed the view that we are probably justified in assuming that these objects and activities, not in themselves sources of pleasure, become so through identification, a sexual pleasure being displaced on to them.

A further leading defence mechanism in this phase is projective identification. Segal describes how in projective identification, the subject in fantasy projects large parts of himself into the object, and the object becomes identified with the parts of the self that it is felt to contain. Similarly, internal objects are projected outside and identified with parts of the external world which come to represent them. Here the infant deals with discomfort and anxiety by projecting it into mother, who feels the discomfort on the infant's behalf. This is an important concept that will be referred to again later.

From here we can begin to understand how these first projections and identifications are the beginning of the process of symbol formation. We can see how the 'severest anxiety', as Klein refers to it, leads to the infant equating the organs in question with other things. Because of this equation, these other objects in their turn become objects of anxiety, and so the child is impelled constantly to make other and new equations. This process not only forms the basis of the child's interest in new objects but also of symbolism. Ferenci is of the view that earlier processes explain the origin of symbolism: that is, the impulse to represent infantile wishes as being fulfilled, by means of the child's own body. As he states, "In all probability this is even the more primary kind of symbol creation" (p.275). Whichever view we take, not only does symbolism come to be the foundation of all fantasy and sublimation but, more than that, it is the basis of the subject's relation to the outside world and to reality in general.

It is important to remind ourselves however, that as has been pointed out by Segal, these early symbols are not felt by the ego to be symbols or substitutes but to be the original object itself. It will be recalled that in the paranoid-schizoid position – or primary process – the differentiation between the self and the object is obscured. The



object is identified with the parts of the self that it is felt to contain. Since a part of the ego is confused with the object, the symbol – which is a creation and a function of the ego – becomes, in turn, confused with the object which is symbolised. I cannot do better than to quote Segal,

"In the symbolic equation, the symbol-substitute is felt to be the original object. The substitute's own properties are not recognised or admitted. The symbolic equation is used to deny the absence of the ideal object or to control a persecuting one. It belongs to the earliest stages of development" (p.57).

In like manner Winnicott reminds us that at the earliest stage the symbol is at the same time both the hallucination and an objectively perceived part of external reality. He was therefore of the view that this way of stating the meaning of the transitional object made it necessary for us to use the word 'illusion' – the fact being, as was previously referred to by Anzieu, that an external object has no being for you or me except in so far as you or I hallucinate it. Winnicott felt that this gave us a meaning for the word 'omnipotence' which we really need because when we talk about omnipotence of early infancy we do not only mean omnipotence of thought but also an omnipotence which extends to certain objects and perhaps extends to cover the mother and some of the others in the immediate environment.

The transitional object is a symbol of the union of the baby and the mother (or part of the mother). Winnicott tells us that this symbol can be located at the place in space and time where and when the mother is in transition from being (in the baby's mind) merged in with the infant and alternatively being experienced as an object to be perceived rather than conceived of. In other words, the transitional object forms the link between the two phases described at the outset of this chapter.

Thus the 'transitional object' is very much as the term implies. In the first instant we can see that the infant's use of an object can be in one way or another joined up with body functioning, and indeed one cannot imagine that an object can have meaning for an infant unless it is so joined. What is more, here Winnicott is in almost direct agreement with the later views of Anzieu who considered that this is another way of stating that the ego is based on a body ego. As the child develops, so do the object-



relationships: the infant has a fist in the mouth, then a thumb, then there is an admixture of the thumb or fingers, and some object which is chosen by the infant for handling. Gradually there is a use of objects which are not part of the infant nor are they part of the mother.

Klein M (1923) explains that when the step is taken from identification to symbol formation, this process affords an opportunity for libido to be displaced on to other objects, hence we arrive at the mechanism of sublimation. The progressive use of transitional objects as described above results in energy being displaced from the self onto other objects. This process initiates the infant's capacity for using symbols, and where growth is straightforward the transitional object is the first symbol. The piece of blanket (or whatever it is) is symbolical of some part-object, such as the breast. Nevertheless, the point of it is not its symbolic value so much as its actuality. Its not being the breast (or the mother), although real, is as important as the fact that it stands for the breast (or mother).

It is also explained by Winnicott (1971) that the gradual use of objects extends to teddies and dolls and hard toys. Indeed, this is eventually extended so that in favourable conditions this object gradually gives place to an ever-widening range of objects, and to the whole cultural life. That is,

"...into activities of play, and of artistic creativity and appreciation, and of religious feeling, and of dreaming, and also of fetishism, lying and stealing, the origin and loss of affectionate feeling, drug addiction, and the talisman of obsessional rituals" (p.6).

Thus we can draw a direct link from symbolism right through to the whole of cultural life. When we witness an infant's employment of a transitional object, the first not-me possession, we are witnessing both the child's first use of a symbol and the first experience of play. Cultural experiences are in direct continuity with play, the play of those who have not yet heard of games. Klein also explains how the child constantly advances from his original primitive symbols, games and activities, so that we find symbols at work in increasingly complicated inventions and activities, leaving the former ones behind. This brings her to the conclusion that symbolism is the foundation of all



sublimation and of every talent. Accordingly, we see that identification is a stage preliminary not only to symbol formation but at the same time to the evolution of speech and sublimation.

In these past few paragraphs we have seen how the child's use of symbolism progresses through early object relations to games and other more advanced activities, to the point where it is regarded as the basis of those skills by which we relate to the world around us. This continues until we reach the stage where there is a recognition that words, which started to develop in object relations, are in fact symbols by means of which the world is comprehended.

Just as there is a steady transition from 'bodily' objects to objects which are not part of the child or mother, so there is a gradual transition from gestures to speech as a means of representation. Ferenci explains that speech is originally imitation, certain series of sounds are brought into close associative connection with definitive objects and processes, and indeed gradually identified with these. Hence, as the infant starts to use organised sounds there may appear a 'word' for the transitional object. Speech symbolism thus gets substituted for gesture symbolism. Having reached this stage, the child then thinks himself in possession of magic capacities and is in what Ferenci calls 'The period of magic thoughts and magic words'.

The acquisition of the faculty of speech, of the understanding that certain noises are used as symbols for things, and of the gradual capacity for rational use of this faculty and understanding is a decisive step in the formation of the ego. However, we are reminded by Fenichel (1946) that we still need to bear in mind that at this stage symbolic thinking is vague, as it is directed by the primary process. It is not only a method of distortion; it is also a part of the primal prelogical thinking. However, from the development of words as symbols accrues the great progress. The imagination and representation of the series of sounds that we call words allow a far more specialised and economic conception and expression of the wishes. At the same time conscious thinking makes speech symbolism possible by becoming associated to thought processes that are in themselves unconscious, and lending them perceptual qualities.



With the development of words the infant is able to make much faster progress towards the development of the ego and to integration. The main characteristic of object relations when the depressive position has been reached as explained by Segal, is that the object is felt as a whole object. In connection with this there is a greater degree of awareness of differentiation and of the separateness of the ego and the object. This brings with it other problems: since the object is recognised as a whole, ambivalence is more fully experienced. The ego in this phase is struggling with its ambivalence. New anxieties are experienced; its relation to the object is characterised by guilt, fear of loss, or actual experience of loss or mourning, and a striving to re-create the object. At the same time, processes of introjection become more pronounced than those of projection, in keeping with the striving to retain the object inside as well as to repair, restore and re-create it.

Segal (1981) points out that the word 'symbol' comes from the Greek term for throwing together, bringing together, integrating. Of this she states,

"The process of symbol formation is, I think, a continuous process of bringing together and integrating the internal with the external, the subject with the object, and the earlier experiences with the later ones" (p.60).

She then describes how the ego in the depressive position has the important task of dealing not only with the depressive anxieties referred to above, but also with unresolved earlier conflicts. In the depressive position the individual has the capacity to symbolise and in that way to lessen anxiety and resolve conflict.

By 'symbolise' I here mean the use of the symbol proper, which is now available for sublimation and furthering the development of the ego. Here the symbol is felt to represent the object; its own characteristics are recognised, respected, and used. Bion W R (1967) explains that the capacity to form symbols is dependent on:

"The ability to grasp whole objects; the abandonment of the paranoid-schizoid position with its attendant splitting; and the bringing together of splits and the ushering in of the depressive position. Since verbal thought depends on the ability to integrate, it is not surprising to find that its emergence is intimately associated with the depressive position which, as Melanie Klein has pointed out, is a phase of active synthesis and integration" (p.26).



True symbolism develops when depressive feelings predominate over the paranoid–schizoid ones, when separation from the object, ambivalence, guilt and loss can be experienced and tolerated. Here the symbol is used not to deny but to overcome loss. Anxieties which could not be dealt with earlier because of the extreme concreteness of the experience with the object and the object substitutes in symbolic equations, can gradually be dealt with by the more integrated ego by symbolisation. In that way they can be integrated.

When a substitute in the external world is used as a symbol it may be used more freely than the original object, since it is not fully identified with it. In the depressive position the symbol is distinguished from the original object and recognised as an object in itself. Its own properties are recognised, respected, and used because no confusion with the original object blurs the characteristics of the new object used as a symbol. The symbols, created internally, can then be re–projected into the external world, endowing it with symbolic meaning. And as the symbol is acknowledged as a creation of the subject, unlike the symbolic equation, it can be freely used by the subject. In Segal's view, the formation of symbols in the depressive position therefore become available for sublimation.

The development of symbols as speech brings rapid progress. Symbol formation governs the capacity to communicate, since, of course, all communication is made by means of symbols. However, there is another important aspect to symbols, that is, the fact that they are needed not only to communicate with the external world, but also in internal communication. In regard to this internal communication Segal (1981) thinks that the capacity to communicate with oneself by using symbols is the basis of verbal thinking. However, as she informs us, not all internal communication is verbal thinking; symbols already formed and functioning as symbols may revert to symbolic equations.

When this stage of development has been achieved, it is, of course, not irreversible. If the anxieties are too strong, a usually temporary regression to the paranoid–schizoid position can occur at any stage of the individual's development and projective identification may be resorted to as a defence against anxiety. Then symbols which have been developed and have been functioning as symbols in sublimation revert



to concrete symbolic equations. This is mainly due to the fact that in massive projective identification, the ego again becomes confused with the object; the symbol becomes confused with the thing symbolised and therefore turns into an equation.

It seems that apart from the vital knowledge that anxiety can result in regression to child-like behaviour, the other important aspect is the use of symbols as speech. Rycroft C (1968b) tells us that words are a special class of symbols, which, when operating as words, form part of the secondary process. They arise in exactly the same way as do other symbols, that is as explained above, by displacement of cathexis from the imago of the object onto the imago of the word.

For Rycroft, words owe their special significance to three characteristics which enable them to be differentiated from other symbols. One of those characteristics is particularly significant, the fact that they are conventionalised symbols. The way in which they are acquired, that is the simplest instance, by the child repeatedly hearing their sound made in connection with what they signify leads to the development of a community of symbols, i.e., to a tendency for each individual to use symbols which are common to him and to other members, both past and present, of his group.

Here we have another important point: "the tendency for each individual to use symbols which are common to him and to the other members, both past and present, of his group". This has a distinctly Wittgenstinian flavour – "The limits of my language are the limits of my world" – save that to be more accurate this should be reversed to read, "The limits of my world are the limits of my language". This appears to be precisely what Khun was saying when he referred to paradigm changes. It also tends to signify 'limits' or more appropriately 'boundaries'.

Before speech there is no conception: there is, as Langer S (1951) tells us, only perception, and a readiness to act according to the enticements of the perceived world. It is by means of symbols that we form concepts. This is a remarkable advance because once we have a concept of a piece of reality, we can play with it, think about it, and,



most importantly, relate it to other pieces. As Storr A (1972) points out, this inter-relating of concepts is the principal way in which new scientific discoveries are made. The symbol, therefore, increases our grasp and mastery of reality.

For an experience to come into awareness, it must be comprehensible in accordance with the categories in which conscious thought is organised. Fromm E (1962), explains,

"I can become aware of any occurrence, inside or outside of myself, only when it can be linked into the system of categories in which I perceive" (p.108).

Jaques E (1970), similarly states,

"The process of verbalising percepts requires that they be organised in accord with man-made rules to form concepts. In effect what we do is to agree among us that this percept and that, and any others like them, shall be included within a given concept which we identify and to which we allocate a word. The perceptions may be things, actions, or relationships" (p.117).

One of the most significant benefits of the use of words as symbols is the fact that words can symbolise instinctive acts and objects and carry cathexis ultimately derived from them. Rycroft points out that it is this which makes psycho-analytical treatment possible. More importantly in the context of this thesis, it is this that makes it possible for the organisational consultant to analyse how the client responds to him, to analyse from the transference the enaction of the unconscious.

## **Summary**

In our development we all go through two different periods of infant development – the primary process or paranoid-schizoid position and the secondary process or depressive position. At first sight, as adults, it might not appear relevant as to why we need to refer to such distant events. The fact is that these events have a direct bearing on our life as adults and affect the way we behave.



Freud referred to primary and secondary processes, as two types of mental functioning. The former being characteristic of unconscious mental activity and the latter being characteristic of conscious thinking. The primary process is governed by the pleasure principle, which leads to avoidance of pain and unpleasure by hallucinating the satisfaction necessary. The secondary process is governed by the reality principle, which leads to the avoidance of pain and unpleasure by adaptive behaviour, that is, the capacity to discriminate between subjective images and external percepts.

Roughly analogous with the primary and secondary processes are the Kleinian concepts of the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position. In the former the individual deals with his innate destructive impulses by important defensive responses: that is, by splitting both his ego and his object representations into good and bad parts and by projecting his destructive impulses on to the bad object by whom he feels persecuted. In the depressive position the individual becomes aware of his ambivalence when he realises that both his love and hate are directed towards the same object. In this position, the individual is able to distinguish the complete object and is able, as was previously stated, to progress towards integration.

In the primary process the infant goes through periods of 'hallucinatory omnipotence' and omnipotence by the 'help of magical gestures'. During this process the child is subject to extreme anxieties which lead to the use of important primitive defence mechanisms whenever the holding environment is not felt to be good enough. These are: identification, splitting, where the object is split into ideally good and wholly bad, and projective identification. It is through these processes that symbolism begins to develop. However, we are not here referring to the development of true symbols but of concrete symbols or 'symbolic equations'. These early symbols are not felt to be symbols or substitutes but are felt to be the original object itself.

Such omnipotence therefore extends to cover the mother and some of the others in the immediate environment. Gradually the infant comes to perceive the mother and other objects as separate. The transitional objects which progress from thumb, to blanket, to teddy bear, form the links between subjective and objective experience. This continues until we reach a stage where there is a word for the transitional object. Just



as there is a steady transition from bodily objects to objects which are not part of the child or mother, so there is a gradual transition from gestures to speech as a means of representation.

With the acquisition of words, there is a rapid progress in infant development. The main characteristic of the depressive position is that the object is felt as a whole object. It is something separate and distinct from the subject. This brings new anxieties as the child's relations to the object are experienced as guilt, fear of loss, or actual mourning and a striving to re-create the object. At the same time the process of introjection is used to retain the object inside, to repair, re-create and restore it.

When depressive feelings predominate over the paranoid-schizoid ones, anxieties can be dealt with by the more integrated ego by the use of true symbols. In this position the symbol is distinguished from the original object and recognised as an object in itself. The development of symbols brings rapid progress, not least the capacity to communicate. That is, to communicate not only externally but internally also. Having successfully reached the depressive position the child will have progressed towards integration. Now there is a need for reality testing and ego support, for continuity, consistency and confirmation.

Where these matters become important to the adult and to organisational change is the fact that when this stage of development has been achieved, it is, of course, not irreversible. If the anxieties are too strong, a regression to the paranoid-schizoid position can occur at any stage of the individuals' development and projective identification may be resorted to as a defence against anxiety. Then symbols which have been developed and have been functioning as symbols in sublimation revert to concrete symbolic equations. This is mainly due to the fact that in massive projective identification, the ego again becomes confused with the object; the symbol becomes confused with the thing symbolised and therefore turns into an equation.

Another important aspect is the use of speech as symbols, here the symbols are conventionalised symbols. The way in which they are acquired leads to the development of a community of symbols, that is, to a tendency for each individual to use symbols



which are common to him and to other members of the group, both past and present. The means of categorising the order that we impose on our world is by the use of words as symbols.

This is an important area as it is the means of confronting or testing the boundaries in order that a new experience of the unknown or avoided can take place. In doing so, we also create boundaries by the language used and by the designation of identity relationships, status relationships and the ways in which they are mutually described. In looking at words it is important to remember that they are symbols, that they represent individual or group views, and are not themselves objects. They are not the only symbols that we use; nevertheless, they are the most frequently used and therefore the most important. It seems right, then, that we should look at this matter next.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **LANGUAGE AND WORDS AS SYMBOLS**

It may be useful to recall, as was explained by Ferenci (1952), that words are originally imitation, and as Rycroft (1968b) further explained, that they are conventionalised symbols. They are acquired by the child repeatedly hearing their sound made in connection with what they signify and then lead to the development of 'a community of symbols': that is, a tendency for each individual to use symbols which are common to him and to other members of his group.

This is very much in accordance with the views of Bion in regard to the interdependence of the individual and the group. The usual way for an individual to constantly affirm his identity with those around him is through the use of words and language as symbols. A 'community of symbols' has a highly distinctive nature in regard to particular groups. This has been commented on by the anthropologist Leach E (1976) who explained that,

"...the grammatical rules which govern speech utterances are such that anyone with a fluent command of a language can generate spontaneously entirely new sentences with the confident expectation that he will be understood by his audience" (p.11).

This is to be distinguished from non-verbal communications which will only be understood if they are highly familiar. Furthermore, private symbols, such as language symbols not familiar to the individual concerned, will fail to convey any information until they have been learned. It will be recalled here that language is society specific, that is, predetermined by the social group within which the individual is situated. In order to have an understanding of human beings there must be a familiarity with the particular form of life. The language is a symbolic representation of the world as the members of that society have learned to experience it at that time.

The world we respond to, the world towards which our behaviour is directed, is the world as we symbolise it, or represent it to ourselves. Changes in the actual world must be followed by changes in our representation of it if they are to affect our



expectations and, hence, our subsequent behaviour. As is explained by Britton J (1970), "I look at the world in the light of what I have learned to expect from my past experience of the world" (p.15). In the chapter on 'Boundaries' it was noted that we put objects which to us are similar into the same category, even though we can perceive differences among them. Britton explains that without such patterns the world appears to be such an undifferentiated homogeneity that man is unable to make any sense out of it. Even a poor fit is more helpful to him than nothing at all.

The great benefit or – as we have referred to it – progress, lies in the fact that symbolic expression can yield the possibility of prospect and retrospect. What is fixed in consciousness is there to go back to: a prediction, an expectation, is formulated by reference back. It is a continuing sense of the world that is continually brought up-to-date. We habitually use talk to go back over events and interpret them, to make sense of them in a way that we were unable to while they were taking place. However, we may opt out of the handling of reality for a time and improvise to our own satisfaction upon our represented world. That is, we may operate directly upon the representation itself.

By the use of language and words as symbols we impose a scheme for classifying and conceptualising our reality. This scheme of things has been referred to by several authors who have commented on the 'taken for granted' nature of language. For example, Whyte W F and Braun R R (1968) are of the view that,

"The most important things about a people are the things they take for granted. One's own language and culture fall into the category of things taken for granted" (p.120).

Schein E (1987b) has used the term 'taken for granted assumptions' in describing culture. Langer S (1951) tells us that they, fit so neatly into the frame of our ultimate world picture that we can think with them and do not have to think about them.

This is graphically illustrated by Koestler A (1964), who considers that there is less difference between the routines of thinking and bicycle riding than our self-esteem would make us believe. Both are governed by implicit codes of which we are only dimly aware, and which we are unable to specify. A further example might be a soldier who



carries out his drill whilst fighting a battle. Or indeed, a consultant who deals with his own anxieties whilst dealing with those of the client. Without these indispensable codes we would fall off the bicycle or whatever and thought would lose its coherence.

However, the fact that we, who are familiar with our symbols, do not have to think about them when we think with them should not hide the fact that all these symbols have to be supported by a vast intellectual structure. This structure is composed of the stock of knowledge that results in our perceived reality. Because the symbolic representation is as the members of a particular society have learned to experience it, we can appreciate that words are used differently in different societies. As has been previously stated, in this way language may not be a means of communication but rather a barrier to such communication.

Whyte and Braun describe the different use of words in the United States of America and Peru. In the former, words are looked upon as instrumental, as means of getting things done. In this society, actions speak louder than words. In Peru, however, words are not instrumental nor can they be taken lightly. Words carry more weight and are fraught with peril. This is a good example of words and language as symbols. From my casual knowledge of both societies I feel that I could also say with some certainty that the various non-verbal symbols, such as gestures, are also totally different. I might also add here Winston Churchill's famous quotation regarding Britain and America, 'two nations divided by a common language'.

We normally think of a speech community as one whose members speak closely related varieties of the same language. This may be the norm, but the distinctiveness of the language may not be confined to one language. Gumperz J J (1969) is of the view that there is ample reason to suppose that whenever two or more languages are regularly employed within the same social system, they differ significantly from the same languages that are spoken in separate social systems. Thus the particular society applies its own distinctiveness to the language, a distinctiveness that reflects the society that they have learned to experience – their perceived reality.



When we refer to different groups speaking different languages it is not readily obvious that the words and language are different. There would be no problem accepting this if we were speaking in two very different languages such as, German and French. The difficulty arises in accepting that different versions of any particular language are in fact very different. The fact is, we would be better advised to treat them as being just as different as German and French. As Wittgenstein (1953) stated, "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (p.223), on the basis that, in the end, understanding human beings depends on a familiarity with a particular society.

If speech and words are but symbols it is not surprising that one homogeneous group uses a different language or languages than another homogeneous group. Reflection of my early experience in the police service provides a good example of this. When I joined I was confronted with a private language of reliefs, beats, area cars, serials, CRO, CO and many others. All this was totally mystifying and left me totally confused and no doubt not a little anxious. I was not part of this organisation. I could not share with them, and could not communicate with them. I was at the boundary and it was uncomfortable. I then joined the CID and was confronted with another private language, of blaggers (robbers), peters (safes), and plenty more. Again, I was not part of it; I could not communicate with them. I was at the boundary and again it was not very comfortable.

From this we can conclude that if two groups show marked differences at certain points, then we can also expect to have difficulty in finding exact translations at these points. At first sight this would seem to have grave consequences for organisations where there is disagreement between different groups of workers. However, since our reality is not static but constantly changing we can expect to find changes in the meanings of words and phrases and changes in the style of discourse. It therefore follows that it is possible for both parties to change their perception of reality and in doing so to adopt a shared language.

Though there is a clear need to categorise and to create boundaries in order to make sense of our reality these are a matter for constant negotiation. The explanation by Winnicott of the ME and the NOT ME infers an experience of 'discovering' a



boundary, the infant creating the mother and vice versa. This implies that there is a period of 'negotiation' before the boundaries are drawn. This leads us to look at both sides of the boundary, because, as is implied by the word, negotiation is a two way event. For example negotiation from inside can be achieved by the impact of an individual in a group on the boundary of the whole group. We also need to look at the nature of influence in the negotiation, for example, reinforcement of the boundary from outside can be negative or positive.

This leads us to the consideration that every interpersonal relationship is a political relationship. This will be commented on later in the thesis when I refer to power and authority. For the present I want to look at the nature of the negotiations. In this regard Szmidla A (1975) helpfully explains that negotiations or transactions can occur across four different boundaries. That is, between: Me (my inline) and you as I see you (your outline); You (your inline) and me as seen by you (my outline); Me (my inline) and me as seen by you (my outline); and, you (your inline) and you as seen by me (your outline).

Quite apart from the influence of negotiation or transaction, there is also the issue of the influence of the environment on our perceived reality and its symbolic representation in words and language. Bettelheim B (1960) writes of the influence of the environment in a most powerful manner when he states, "I could no longer doubt that environment can and does account for important aspects of man's behaviour and personality" (p.14). Within a very short time his experience in the concentration camps taught him that he had gone much too far in believing that only changes in man could create changes in society. He had to accept that the environment could, as it were, turn personality upside down, and not just in the small child, but in the mature adult as well.

In the chapter on 'Boundaries' it was explained that our perception of reality is a very selective process. We choose to ignore any perceptual differences and put objects which to us are similar into the same category, even though we perceive differences in them. We learn by assimilating experiences and group them into ordered schemata, into



stable patterns of unity in variety. They enable us to cope with events and situations by applying the rules of the game appropriate to them. The matrices which pattern our perceptions, thoughts, and activities are condensations of learning into habit.

Condensation of habit, assimilation and grouping into stable patterns recognisable to the individual and other members of his group leads to the development of theories, myths and ideologies. Lawrence G and Miller E J (1976) describe the reassuring nature of such condensed symbols which they point out are insensitive to change. When they are built into the structures of relationships, they provide the participating individuals with mechanisms of defence against anxiety.

It is the view of Kaes R (1971) that myths and ideologies are compromise formations to be found only in group or social situations. This process is explained by Anzieu who observes that the primary psychic processes, which, in the group, become objects of wishes shared by its members, are displacement, condensation, symbolisation, and reversal into the opposite, in the same way as in dreams. Furthermore, again as in dreams, secondary elaboration re-arranges the results of the primary processes; in groups this takes the form of the production of myth-like narratives or intellectual constructions of an ideological type in which forbidden wishes are displaced.

A further explanation is provided by Erikson E H (1968) who sees it as a product of identification and integration when he describes how the synthesising function of the ego constantly works on subsuming in fewer and fewer images and personified 'gestalten' the fragments and loose ends of all infantile identifications. In doing so it not only uses existing historical prototypes but it also employs mechanisms of condensation and pictorial representation which characterise the products of collective imagery. Here we have the myths and ideologies referred to above. Indeed, I am reminded of the tidying up operation referred to by Anzieu whereby the group stopped up gaps and shut windows in a physical attempt to draw boundaries. Whereas here, by mechanisms of condensation the loose ends are tidied up so that we are left with images of good and bad. It is between good and bad that the boundaries are drawn.



Erikson (1968) also describes how the ego,

"...in the course of its synthesising efforts, attempts to subsume the most powerful ideal and evil prototypes (the final contestants as it were) and with them the whole existing imagery of superior and inferior, good and bad, masculine and feminine, free and slave, potent and impotent, beautiful and ugly, black and white, tall and small, in one simple alternative in order to make one battle and one strategy out of a bewildering number of skirmishes" (p.59).

He therefore concludes that the unconscious associations of ethnic prototypes of good and evil with moral and sexual ones are a necessary part of any group formation. In this way, men who share the concerns of an ethnic group, who are contemporaries in an historical era, or who compete and co-operate in economic pursuits are also guided by common images of good and evil. Infinitely varied, these images reflect the elusive nature of societal differences and of historical change.

The concept of condensed symbols is valuable in terms of providing us with clues in regard to the representation of culture. However, there are problems associated with condensation. One of the problems is that condensation, habit, or whatever we choose to call it, can be inhibiting to change. Thus the question for Laing R D (1967) is whether we remain the masters of the rules by which we want to make things more manageable or whether the rules master the ruler. Maslow A H (1970), points out the paradoxical nature of condensed symbols. He describes how,

"Habits are simultaneously necessary and dangerous, useful and harmful. They are problem solutions and yet in the long run they are the antonyms of fresh, uncategorised thinking, that is to say, of solutions to new problems" (p.203).

To the extent that language forces experiences into categories, it is a screen between reality and the human being.

Koestler agrees that habits have varying degrees of flexibility which if often repeated under unchanging conditions, in a monotonous environment, tend to become rigid and automatized. Yet a further view is that of Jaques E (1970) who makes the point that knowledge is man-made and therefore that is why we can be sure of it as we have made the rules, and set the limits. It is these rules and limits which allow us to

reduplicate it with such precision. However, the constant danger is that the word to some extent becomes the thing, and we dull and inhibit to the same extent our capacity to perceive.

Thus we can see how an inhibiting situation arises if we reify the myth, habit, or ideology, or if we become so comfortable with them that we do not wish to conceive of change. This leads to another problem which is related to the activity just described. We resent having our cherished illusions shattered, that is, illusions in regard to myths and ideologies which are defenses against chaos and disintegration. Should these (ideological) boundaries be disturbed it may result in the group regressing in the manner previously described. It is only when the group is acting in the secondary process, in the reality principle, that words are used normally, that is, with their symbolic significance. Where the group regresses into primary process behaviour, words, by contrast, are used by the group as a mode of action – that is, as concrete symbols – and are thereby deprived of the flexibility of thought that progression requires.

This was the experience of Bion W R (1961) who in regard to 'basic assumption activity' explained how he had been forced to the conclusion that verbal exchange was a function of the work group. Furthermore, that the more the group corresponded with the basic assumption group the less it made any rational use of verbal communication. Words served as a vehicle for the communication of sound. For Bion the work group understands that particular use of symbols which is involved in communication; the basic assumption group does not. He also observes that the language of the basic assumption group is primitive and in the group state that he is describing, appears to be relevant to Klein's breakdown of a capacity for symbol formation.

In terms of managing change it should become evident that a knowledge of symbolism is relevant to any consultant. Regression to the primitive behaviour referred to by Bion means a reversion to the paranoid–schizoid position and to infantile defenses of splitting and projective identification – a world opposed to the world of progression that we should be seeking. It literally prevents the group from conducting meaningful



communication, as the members revert to near primary processes of the sort used in infancy. Furthermore, as will be explained later in the thesis, it also removes the ability of the group and the individuals concerned to accept their own authority.

## Summary

The usual way for an individual to confirm his identity with those around him is through the use of language and words as symbols. Non-verbal communications will only be understood if they are highly familiar. Private symbols, such as language symbols not familiar to the individual concerned, will fail to convey information until they have been learned. Language, which is society specific, may be understood by those who are familiar with that particular way of life.

A language imposes its own scheme of classifications and concepts for describing the world. Language is part of our taken for granted assumptions. Each bounded group either has a different language or has a different version of a language. The concept of private languages in homogeneous groups is important in displaying the diversity of groups. Language being the most widely used symbolic system is thus vital to our understanding of culture. The synthesising function of the ego constantly works on subsuming in fewer and fewer images. In doing so it employs mechanisms of condensation and pictorial representation which characterise the products of collective imagery.

Condensed symbols are valuable in terms of providing us with clues in regard to the representation of culture. However, condensation or habit can be inhibiting to change. To the extent that language forces experience into categories, it is a screen between reality and the individual. Where these habits or myths become so ingrained that we do not wish to change we resent having our cherished illusions shattered and resist change. Should this be the case, there is a likelihood that the group will regress to primary process type behaviour. This may well be identified by Bion's 'basic assumption activity' in which case there will be no progression and the language will be in the nature of concrete symbols. Members will be prevented from conducting meaningful communication.

We can draw a direct line from the development of symbols right through to the whole of cultural life. The capacity to communicate with oneself by using symbols is the basis of verbal thinking. With the development of speech, conceptualisation becomes possible, the symbol thus increases our grasp and mastery of reality. However, as the language is a representation of the world as we have learned to experience it at that time, what happens when we want to change something? What happens when the world as we know it changes? In the next chapter I shall be looking at such matters in regard to learning.



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **THE PROCESS OF LEARNING**

To obtain an understanding of culture we also need to understand how it develops and how it is perpetuated. Here I want to build on the previous chapters by taking a specific look at learning. I shall do this by looking at three particular aspects, namely: the process of learning, the levels of learning, and possible blocks to learning. I shall commence with a personal reflection on some of the more difficult moments that I experienced whilst I was studying material for this thesis. In doing so I shall describe in my own words what that learning process meant to me. Having done so, I shall then use this reflection as a basis for a theoretical understanding.

First the personal reflection of the process, which I believe was something like that described below:

(a) On the first read, I sometimes did not understand what I was reading. It was almost as though I was reading a foreign language.

(b) On the subsequent read I understood the words and tried to link them. In this respect I could understand them in the context that they were written.

(c) At the next reading I struggled to make sense of the meaning of what was written. I could read the language but did not understand the meaning of it.

(d) I then wanted to use it but could not until I had fully mastered the reading: this was usually, after verbalising my understanding. By discussion and assimilation the text gradually made sense.

(e) It was only at the stage of understanding the material fully that I was able to conceptualise and to use elements to create new meaning.

Let me start with the position of not understanding what I was reading. Bateson G (1979) explains that what is subliminal will not be grist for our mill. Knowledge at any given moment will be a function of the thresholds of our available means of perception. It follows therefore that what we can perceive is always limited by threshold.



It also follows that a response is always a response of a living organism, always something constructed in part according to determinants that are intrinsic to its own structure. A stimulation is something intrinsically related to the structure, or as Piaget (1951) says, something that can be 'assimilated' by the structure.

Taking Piaget's view of a response being determined by the organism's own structure, it is clear that my structure, my world of reality, my boundaries, the threshold of my knowledge at that given moment was such as to limit my perception of the material that I was studying. From this we can also conclude, as does Furth H G (1981) in interpreting Piaget, that a reaction of an organism is therefore not merely a response to an outside stimulation, but is always and at all levels also the response of the underlying structure within the organism. In order to explain a response, one must investigate the underlying structure that makes that response possible and adaptively appropriate.

In this respect, Piaget holds that behaviour at all levels demonstrates aspects of structuring, and he identifies structuring with knowing. This is also the view of Bettelheim B (1967), who observes that "human experience is built up out of our sense of space, time, and causality, Kant's a priori categories of mind" (p.51). He explains that it is our ability to extract from contiguity in time and space a sense of causality that takes us into the human adventure. What makes us what we are is not simply that we recognise causal relations, but what follows from it: the conviction that a sequence of events can be changed through our influence.

Yet a further view is that of Bion who described the process through which a new idea is born as the mating of a pre-conception with appropriate sense data (a realisation) to produce conception. Palmer B (1972) explains that the word pre-conception has here no negative overtones. Merely that it is impossible to enter any experience without pre-conceptions, and that if it were possible it would, by the same token, be impossible to make sense of the experience. Again referring back to my first point, it seems clear that my pre-conceptions were such that at that time I could not mate them with the sense data that I was reading. Thus I could not produce a conception at that time.



Here I want to add to the views expressed earlier in the chapters on 'Boundaries' and 'Symbolism' when it was stated that the infant gradually develops a concept of the self as an entity that has continuity and direction. The reality principle and secondary processes become more dominant. Or as Bettelheim would have it, to begin to function as human beings, one must have learned how to arrange one's life in terms of space, time, and causality. He explains that, "These categories of mind are not just metaphysical; there is a definite historical-genetic sequence in which they appear" (p.52). Orientation in space and time precedes a sense of causality but there is some doubt as to which of the two comes first. Most certainly the infant's feeding is a crucial time experience because it brings some order into life by creating temporal boundaries at a very early age. However, if we take a Gestalt view we come to the conclusion that spatial boundaries take precedence by an ordering in space on the basis of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic experiences.

To return to Piaget these boundaries or as he calls them 'regulations', serve to keep the organism in a 'state of dynamic equilibration'. That is not the static equilibrium of an unchanging, rigid balance which needs an outside pull to make it move. Rather, the living equilibration of a biological organisation, as described by Piaget, is ever in a state of flux, if not growing, at least constantly interacting with new elements of the environment, always exercising previously acquired structures. This is borne out by the fact that the boundaries that I had formed, which were initially stopping me from understanding and conceptualising the data, were not of a rigid nature. If this were not so I should not have been able to eventually reach a stage where I could conceive the information presented.

From here we can conclude that learning is not solely a matter for me, but equally it is not a matter for the subject matter to be learned. This notion corresponds with the thesis that knowledge is neither solely in the subject, nor in a supposedly independent object, but is constructed by the subject as an indissociable subject-object relation. As Furth (1981) states,

"Knowledge is in Piaget's theory never a stage, whether subjective, representative, or objective. It is an activity. It can be viewed as a structuring of the environment according to underlying subjective



structures or as a structuring of the subject in living interaction with the environment" (p.20).

From the foregoing we can conclude that learning does not appear now to be a process during which the subject's activity is limited to receiving or reacting automatically to what is received, rather; learning seems to be a complex construction in which what is received from the object and what is contributed by the subject are indivisibly linked. This is very similar to the interdependence of the group and individual described by Bion. In regard to my learning experience, it seems clear that the process described shows how, in the subsequent stages, my contribution and the construction of the object of my study were indivisibly linked to form a new concept.

That is not to say that this produced a new static concept; on the contrary, this was a new concept which would now permit further concepts to be developed. This is in common with Piaget's view that everything that we commonly connect with objective, stable reality, such as perception, identity, spatial co-ordination, objective time, and causality, are constructions and activities, that is, living operations. In his view the more differentiated and the more diverse the objective contribution of operational intelligence is, the more differentiated and the more objective the resulting knowledge becomes.

At this stage it will be helpful to explain two of Piaget's most important terms, that is, 'accommodation' and 'assimilation'. 'Accommodation' operates in an outward direction, and it defines the object of knowledge, while 'assimilation' operates in an inward direction, and it defines the subject of knowledge. Here we can see that before I could assimilate the knowledge that I sought to learn I had to accommodate it. Put another way, knowledge is therefore a relational concept; it relates the subject to the object.

The relative use of these terms is helpfully explained by Marris P (1974) who describes how normal events can be assimilated, roughly at least, by the present structure, which then accommodates to features of the event for which its previous experience had not prepared it. However when we are faced with critical events these cannot be assimilated at all, until the structure accommodates. It will be appreciated that this is



much more difficult, because the less assimilable events are, the harder it is to see what kind of accommodation will be successful. I would suggest that this was the situation that I was in. The difficulty is that in trying to accommodate, the ability of the structure to grasp events which were formerly assimilable may be undermined. While I would hasten to add that this was not my experience, the whole structure may then be threatened by radical confusion.

Perception has to do with the appearance of the external world in its momentary, yet always changing characteristics. It thus constitutes a particularly clear form of accommodative behaviour, accommodation being the outward-directed activity of intelligence adaptation that applies general schemes to the particular here and now situation. Assimilative activity transforms a given input into objects that correspond to the person's structure of knowing. Accommodative activity transforms the organism according to the particular characteristics of the input.

Although opposed in direction, assimilation and accommodation by no means function against each other. On the contrary, it is characteristic of biological, and particularly of human, knowledge that they go together in depth and extent. In simple language the better you understand a particular topic, the better you attend to its particular characteristics. Furthermore, accommodation by itself does not mean the permanent change of a scheme in response to external pressure, rather, the near opposite: the episodic adjustment of the same scheme to the constantly changing contents to which it is applied. Obviously both assimilation and accommodation can and do become obligatory occasions of developmental changes of schemes.

Thus we can see that the process of learning is an activity that is governed by the indivisible relationship of the subject and object. Not only is our learning affected by the threshold of our perception but also by the nature of the object. Should our pre-conceptions be too few or too rigid or should the nature of the object be new to our existing reality then the learning experience is likely to be difficult.



The foregoing, particularly the references to Piaget's theory, provides us with a sound basis for understanding the process of learning. I want now to extend that understanding by looking at what is being learned. In doing so I shall rely greatly on 'Bateson's Levels of Learning'. As Palmer B (1979) has explained, one of Bateson's interests is in our apperceptive habits, how we acquire them, and how we modify them. Palmer explains that by the term apperceive we mean "to unite and assimilate a perception to ideas already possessed, and so comprehend and interpret" (p.169). From this definition it will be seen that this terminology is very much in line with the indissociable subject-object relation described earlier. I shall also relate Bateson's views to my personal experience as is appropriate.

Palmer points out the value of Bateson's work when he states,

"The value of Bateson's theory of learning is that he brings together in a single scheme the processes of learning which give rise to the complexities of our apperceptive habits, and the more simple learning processes which have been described by experimental psychologists" (p.169).

If now we accept the notion that all learning (other than zero learning) is in some degree stochastic that is, contains components of 'trial and error', it follows that an ordering of the processes of learning can be built upon an hierarchic classification of the types of data which are to be apperceived in the various learning processes.

The first of Bateson's logical categories of learning is 'Zero Learning'. At this level the person simply absorbs more facts, more simple information. There is no progress and no change. Zero Learning is shown in habituation. There is no new habituation, only the pre-existing known categories of meaning. Information in Zero Learning expands only arithmetically. This is most certainly not the type of data that I was seeking to learn. At this level of learning it is almost a matter of assimilation only.

The second category he calls, Learning One. At this level this is learning when one has progressively more clues to fit facts into, and hence one's learning expands geometrically. This is learning of habituation, that is, one is aware of one's habituation, or as Palmer explains, the individual finds a new response or pattern of responses to a given situation. "The process is one of correcting errors of choice within a set of



alternatives" (p.174). One acquires new connections between 'stimulus' and 'response' but always in familiar patterns of connection. There are no new patterns of connection. Palmer tells us that rote learning is of this sort. May R (1977) informs us that most of what we call learning in psychology is also of this variety. The important thing here is that one is aware of the context markers, but the context itself does not change.

The third level, Learning Two, is learning 'propositions about contexts'. At this level the context itself changes. The premises on the basis of which one learns now shift. Contexts which are new to the learner may induce such learning. One 'learns to learn' in a new way. An example given by Palmer is transference in psychoanalysis, when the context (the background, the screen against which one is learning) and all of the facts one has learned take on a new meaning. This is the changing of the 'context' through which one sees the facts in a new light. People can avoid this learning – that is they can cling to the old 'context' – by hallucination or repression.

This was my experience in regard to the data that I was seeking to learn. It was a totally new experience to me and one which totally changed my context. As explained by Bateson G (1973) in the original text, "Learning Two is a change in the process of Learning One, for example, a corrective change in the set of alternatives from which choice is made" (p.264). Using Khun's terminology, this type of learning is a true 'paradigmatic revolution'. The objects do not fit into the subject's known categories or classifications and therefore this type of learning requires the subject to revise his known boundaries before he is able to assimilate the material. As is described above, my struggle to make sense of this data meant that I had to develop a new context, to advance to a new level of learning. However, it is of significance that, when learned, I could reasonably expect the context to remain 'the same' when I encountered the material again. This also raises the important issue of loss of known and loved objects. This will be referred to in greater depth in the next chapter but suffice to say at this stage, that this is why people may avoid learning at this level and cling to the old context.

The fourth level, Learning Three, occurs in such situations as religious conversion or in Zen experience. As May explains,



"When there is a contradiction of 'contexts', Learning Three may occur and be the discovery that all that pain and joy of fitting one's self to the perceived world was premised upon personal perceptions of the world...a system of 'glosses'. Or perhaps some other discovery about 'glosses'" (p.87).

At this level the context as a matter of fact may be somewhat fluid. Learning Three may involve a oneness with nature, or an identification with what one is learning. There is an absorption in life in a new and different way. This seems to require a kind of eruption of the unconscious, that is, some kind of conversion.

Bateson also included a fifth level which is of little use for our purposes but nevertheless deserves mention, it is best described by May who explains,

"There is a fifth level, Learning Four, which Gregory Bateson says human beings perhaps never attain. I then asked him why he put it in. He assured me it was to keep the learning categories open ended, and to indicate that his learning theory takes in not just human beings but the whole of nature" (p.87).

The open ended nature of the categories is an important aspect of Bateson's theory. From the application of my own experience, it seems clear that different processes of learning are necessary in regard to the type of learning involved. However, once the learning has taken place the process of learning may revert to a lower level. This is precisely what Khun indicated when he explained how following a paradigmatic revolution there is a period of 'normal science' when puzzles may be solved using the new paradigm. Having reached the last stage referred to in my reflection, I am able to understand and use the concepts of my new paradigm. In doing so I am now able to operate at the level of Learning One.

In regard to the object of knowledge which the subject will 'accommodate' to use Piaget's terminology, this will also vary and may usefully be distinguished. I refer to the distinctions (referred to by Miller E J (1976)), made by William James between 'knowing about' and 'knowledge of acquaintance'. The former type of knowledge, we could refer to as cognitive knowledge, this can be communicated through words and symbols which may be understood in the same way. In all probability, learning this type of knowledge will not cause great anxiety, though should it be inconsistent with the subject's current



perception, it could be anxiety provoking. As to the latter, this presents a totally different problem. Knowledge of human behaviour cannot be communicated as if it were an extraneous, objective entity: it cannot be learned by reference to a text book.

Knowledge of acquaintance is an important concept: it is a prerequisite to knowing more about the roles and relationships that we are involved in. As Miller states,

"Learning by experience – acquiring knowledge of acquaintance – starts with oneself. As a prerequisite of knowing more about the roles and relationships in which I am involved, and about managing myself in them, I have to learn more about me" (p.22).

This is not easy, as it affects the personality boundaries and can therefore be threatening. The responsibility and authority for forming his own views rest with the individual. He is learning when he catches a glimpse of the way in which a unique patterning of his own internal world is affecting his perception of phenomena.

A further view of the nature of the object of knowledge is that of Jaques E (1970) who reminds us that real life problems are open ended in the sense of not having correct answers – that is, answers that may be shown by subsequent experience to have been better or worse. Here lies the difficulty, because open ended problems are inevitably accompanied by worry and uncertainty, and never end with a reassuring sense of completeness. As Rice A K (1963) has observed, this being a process of 'internalisation', of incorporating felt experience into the inner world of fantasy and reason, the individual will resist learning if the process makes him anxious or frightened or if the rewards are insufficient.

This leads me to the third aspect of learning that I wish to cover in this chapter; the blocks to learning. Jaques makes the observation that because knowledge is man-made there is a constant danger that the word to some extent becomes the thing, and that this dulls and inhibits to the same extent our capacity to perceive. He describes how the acquisition of knowledge brings with it a sense of closure, as is described by the Gestalt psychologists. Of this he states,

"It is this sense or sureness, of completeness, of reproducibility, that gives the psychological experience of the concept being the thing itself – a fact of experience as against a psychological fact. This sureness can block creative perception and inhibit flexibility in thought" (p.118).

This was also the view of Blay-Neto B (1985) who observed that knowledge can be utilised as a property and that once acquired, it confers on its owner the same sensation that one feels when obtaining the advantages of retirement. "That means, no more work to be done, no more thinking, and no more progress" (p.254). Much therefore depends on the pre-conceptions with which we work. They constitute the spectacles through which we view the world. If our pre-conceptions are too few or too rigid, then learning will be blocked.

It seems then, that in situations concerning human behaviour there will always be a temptation to take what might be termed the easy way out. Jaques observes that Freud suggested many years ago that it is not necessarily to be assumed that the reality principle will inevitably dominate in human affairs. At best there will always be some conflict between the demands of reality-testing and the demands of those more primitive qualities within us that seek for magical solutions in accord with what Freud termed the pleasure principle. A particular expression of these magical impulses is the process of reification. To know the word is to possess control over outer concrete reality. To control the word is to control the thing.

This may be so, but we should not forget the purpose of forming boundaries as defences against anxiety. It is also important to recall that those boundaries were created to enable us to distinguish inside from outside and that any disturbance of the boundaries may be seen as chaos and result in disintegration. This is explained by Maslow A (1943), when he states,

"Any thwarting or possibility of thwarting of these basic human goals, or danger to the defences which protect them or to the conditions upon which they rest, is considered to be a psychological threat. With a few exceptions, all psychopathology may be partially traced to such threats. A basically thwarted man may be defined as a 'sick' man" (p.21).

This is a very powerful statement and one which is very relevant to our discussion of culture and change. He explains that in children it may be particularly obvious and be represented by, for example, vomiting. However, when adults feel their safety to be threatened, we may not be able to see this on the surface.



Anxiety has always been a response to perceived danger. The threat to the boundaries, that of disintegration, is danger. Seen in this light it may be easier to understand why there may be blocks to learning. A child confronted with a difficult situation may recourse to a temper tantrum, on the other hand by acquiring certain skills a person can retain boundaries even in difficult situations. As we have seen, the concept of boundaries touches on learning theory in general. The real problem arises when we feel our boundaries threatened but have little or no control over the activities posing the threat. Bettelheim (1967) also makes this point when he states, "It is when we feel we cannot influence the most important things that happen to us, when they seem to follow the dictates of some inexorable power, that we give up trying to learn how to act on, or change them" (p.51).

On the other hand, knowledge can be used as a stimulus to approach the 'not knowing', allowing us to put up with ignorance as a basic condition for achieving mental development. The word 'learning' undoubtedly denotes change of some kind. To not learn means to stay in a state of sameness. If sameness is preserved, time must stop in its tracks. Thus time is the destroyer of sameness, things do not remain the same. Provided that we allow sufficient time for the boundaries to be realigned knowledge will permit further development. Time also implies hope. If things can be different, they may also be better. However, by the use of phantasy we may attempt to stop time in its tracks. Without time there is no hope but also no disappointment nor the fear that things might even get worse.

We can conclude that learning is a complicated and at times difficult task. The pleasure principle may dominate over the reality principle especially when the individual or group is presented with a difficult task. In this respect, we can recall Bion's basic assumption activities as an example of groups regressing from the reality principle. In such a case there will be a block to learning as opposed to progression and learning should that be desirable.

## Summary

What we perceive is limited by the threshold of our available means of perception. In other words, something only has meaning in relation to our current knowledge. Thus, as Piaget theorises, the response of the individual (or group) is determined by the organism's own structure. This may also be linked to Bion's theory of a pre-conception mating with sense data to produce a conception.

The individual forms boundaries to manage the relations between inside and outside or between reality and phantasy, or as Piaget says, to maintain a 'state of dynamic equilibrium'. Such boundaries are not static but are in a state of flux, constantly interacting with new elements of the environment. Knowledge is therefore to be considered as an activity rather than a state. The subject and object are indivisibly linked.

The process of 'accommodation' defines the object of knowledge and the process of 'assimilation' defines the subject of knowledge. Perception is a form of accommodation. Assimilation activity transforms a given input into objects that correspond to the previous current knowledge. Accommodation activity transforms the organism according to the particular characteristics of the input. Thus we can see that the process of learning is an activity that is governed by the indivisible relationship of the subject and object. Not only is our learning affected by the threshold of our perception but also by the nature of the object. Should our pre-conceptions be too few or too rigid or should the nature of the object be new to our existing reality then the learning experience is likely to be difficult.

Bateson's 'Logical Categories of Learning' help us to make sense of the complexities of our apperceptive habits. His theory that all learning, other than Zero Learning, is in some degree stochastic, provides that processes of learning can be built upon an hierarchic classification of the types of data which are to be apperceived in the various learning processes. Linking Bateson's categories to Khun's theory of paradigms sheds light and understanding to both theories. It also shows how difficult the process



of learning can be at the 'higher' levels. Furthermore, by demonstrating the open ended nature of learning we can better understand that context and paradigm also act as bases of learning.

Learning is affected not only by the complexity of the data but also by the type of learning. A distinction is drawn between 'knowing about', that is, cognitive knowledge, and 'knowledge of acquaintance', which is knowledge of human behaviour. The latter is a particularly difficult process because it acts directly on the personality boundaries.

There will always be conflict between the demands of reality testing and the more primitive qualities associated with the pleasure principle. It should not be assumed that the reality principle will inevitably dominate. In this regard we will recall that boundaries were formed in the first instance as defences against anxiety and as a means of reality testing. Consequently, any disturbance of these boundaries, such as may result from a difficult learning experience, may result in extreme anxiety. In such circumstances, the learning process can create resistance and blocks to learning may develop. Knowledge can be used as a property which once acquired brings closure. Reification is another block: here to know the word is to possess control over concrete reality; to control the word is to control the thing.

A particular type of learning which may be considered most relevant to culture, is organisational socialisation. The experience of entering a culture is a unique opportunity to study both culture and to further our knowledge of learning. It is this aspect that I turn to next.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **ORGANISATIONAL SOCIALISATION**

Organisational socialisation is an important area of study in regard to culture as it provides extremely relevant data. The fact that it involves movement from one social grouping to another permits a heightened awareness of at least one side of the equation, that is from the perspective of the individual as opposed to that of the group. It also involves a process of learning the new culture. As in the last chapter, I shall begin with a description of my own experience and then relate that to a theoretical explanation.

I have described elsewhere (in the chapter on 'Language and Words as Symbols') how, on joining the police, I was confronted with a different – unfamiliar – language. This was also the case when I moved from one part of the organisation to another – from uniform to CID. What I was describing was the single fact that the world of those I was joining, as represented by the language as symbols, was very different from the world of my then current experience. Here I shall take this explanation further by describing the effect that socialisation had on me.

Joining the police service was a new and difficult experience. I was confronted with new colleagues, new buildings, new working systems, a new public environment, new streets, new people, and above all a new role. A new role which was, of course, very public, and one which carried over into 'off-duty'. A role which carried with it widely ranging expectations depending on the position of the perceiver. On the one hand, the 'non-law abiding' would view the role holder with discomfort and rage through to fear, whilst at times regarding him with respect and even reverence. On the other hand, the 'law abiding' would view the role holder with such high esteem that it might be to the point of embarrassment.

Nevertheless, every experience is relative; and joining the police from the Royal Air Force, was not such a difficult 'conversion' as joining the Royal Air Force. That was an extremely stressful experience. From a work situation where I was expected to use my own initiative and was able to make decisions, I was thrown into a world where



others had total control of my actions. If I can recall my feelings and attitude: it was at times frightening, disorienting, frustrating, and degrading, and I would often feel lonely, afraid, and frustrated. This experience was an affront to my then known world.

In the previous chapter referred to, I also described my initial move from being a uniform officer to that of CID. In that situation whilst the structure and surroundings remained the same, this was still a new experience. Attitudes and values of those I was joining were somewhat different from those of my uniform colleagues. This was also the case in regard to those non-law abiding members of the public that my new role was bringing me into contact with. The attitudes and values of the habitual criminal were somewhat different from the average offending motorist. Therefore this 'conversion' also had its problems.

Since then I have experienced several role changes in the police. Most of them have not resulted in the same sort of feelings. I believe that the reason for this is that most changes, usually promotions, were in the same area, and as Csikszentmihalyi M (1975) explains, they were within my capabilities and were simply stimulating. In other words, all that changed was some of the boundaries but most remained intact. However, I was eventually promoted into a position that I was not familiar with, as the uniform officer in charge of a division. This was again a difficult 'conversion'. Values, attitudes, and structures had all been present in my close environment; however, with the heightened awareness that impacting with this new world brought, they took on a totally new meaning.

Other situations, such as a two-month long work experience in West Africa, where I was investigating fraud, created similar, if slightly different problems. Prolonged educational courses such as my MSc course also created a need for readjustment. During the course the students were faced with the imposition of a tight schedule, of an impossibly heavy reading list, and of the assignment of problems which were likely to be the most difficult for them to solve. It had the effect of informing me (and the other students) that I was not so smart and that there were a lot of things to be learned. This, in turn, had the effect of destroying many aspects of my self-image.

From my various experiences referred to above, it seems that socialisation operates at various levels and degrees of intensity. These may usefully be related to Bateson's 'Logical Learning Categories' that were referred to in the last chapter and it will help to briefly apply them at this stage. At the level of Zero Learning we can move sideways into the same or a similar role and it is simply a matter of absorbing new facts. There is no new habituation as the pre-existing responses still operate. At the level of Learning One there are more cues to fit facts into, here we become aware of our familiar surroundings as a result of our heightened awareness.

At the level of Learning Two the contexts are totally different and it is necessary to see the facts in a new light. This means a considerable change. Certainly this was true of one such as the socialisation into the Royal Air Force and possibly that of entry into the police. As regards to the level of Learning Three and Learning Four, I do not feel that these apply, though, I would suggest that socialisation into the Royal Air Force gets close to the religious conversion described as typical of this level by Bateson.

Further reference to Bateson's levels of learning will be made as is appropriate throughout the chapter. However, it seems that there is another categorisation which may help us to understand the process of socialisation. These are the categories of 'reality shock', referred to by Louis M (1980), and 'culture shock', variously referred to by multiple authors. In particular, I believe that these categories provide us with some idea of the degrees of complexity involved.

Louis defines organisational socialisation as, "the process by which an individual comes to appreciate the values, abilities, expected behaviours, and social knowledge essential for assuming an organisational role and for participating as an organisational member" (p.229). She describes how the experience is characterised by disorientation, foreignness, and a kind of sensory overload. Schein E (1988) defines it as the process of 'learning the ropes', the process of being indoctrinated and trained, the process of being taught what is important in an organisation or some part of it.



The first thing that comes to mind from these descriptions is that it is an extremely anxiety provoking experience. This is where Louis coins the term 'reality shock' to explain the situation. She explains that it is clear that the newcomer's senses are inundated with unfamiliar cues. It would seem that the term 'reality shock' might well be applied to many of my socialisation experiences, but not to those that were the most stressful. Louis also usefully relates to stages of socialisation. The first of these is that termed by Merton R (1957) as 'anticipatory socialisation'. At this stage, recruits still outside the organisation, anticipate their experiences in the organisation they are about to enter. When beginning work, the individual passes from outsider to newcomer and enters the encounter stage. Differences between anticipation and experiences become apparent and contribute to reality shock. Coping with such difficulties and learning the ropes of the new setting typically takes six to ten months on the job.

As to content, Louis says there are two basic kinds of content that can be distinguished in socialisation. The first is role related learning, and the second is a more general appreciation of the culture of an organisation. In this regard Schein says that socialisation refers to the process of learning the value system, the norms, and the required behaviour patterns of the organisation, or group that he is entering. Both authors basically agree that this usually involves the basic goals or mission of the organisation, the strategy or means of achieving organisational aims, the behaviour patterns that are required for effective performance in the role, and a set of rules or principles which pertain to the maintenance of the identity and integrity of the organisation.

From my own experience it seems reasonable to say that in most socialisation processes there will be varying degrees of anxiety. For example, Berger R and Luckmann T (1966) and Schein give the example of the extremes that organisations such as religious orders go to in the initiation rites of novitiates. As Schein reminds us it may be comforting to think of activities like this as being characteristic of primitive tribes or total institutions such as the military, but closer examination reveals it happens to a lesser degree in all organisations. This will clearly not be the case with many socialisation

experiences which will be merely a ruffle of our boundaries. However, it is the anxiety provoking situations that we are most concerned with and it is to the issue of 'culture shock' that I now turn.

Others, such as sociologists and anthropologists, also face the problem of socialisation. As has been said, many writers refer to this experience as 'culture shock'. Hunt J C (1989) refers to culture shock as "the experience of being a stranger in an alien and unfamiliar world" (p.33). She goes on to explain that, immersion in an alien culture is an intense experience, and that, most researchers report feeling some mixture of confusion, anxiety, excitement, frustration, depression, and embarrassment. Which all sounds very familiar to my own experiences. Hunt also describes how some researchers have compared this experience to dying and that others also report frequent anxieties about body health. As was my experience, some of the discomfort stems from the fact that the researchers have lost their bearings, do not know how to communicate in the new setting, and often feel like helpless children.

A further explanation of 'culture shock' is given by Berger P B and Kellner H (1981), who state, "All forms of culture shock are ipso facto relativizing. Indeed, at the core of the shock is the insight that perceptions and norms previously taken for granted are now revealed to be highly relative in terms of space and time." They then go on to quote Pascal's famous words, 'what is truth on one side of the Pyrenees is error on the other'. "The implication is" (they state) "that our own notions of truth and error are dependent on our location in geography and history" (p.60): that is, where out of the continuity of time and geography, we have sought to draw artificial boundaries as a means of making sense out of our particular world. The 'shock' comes when we enter the world of another group of people who have created different boundaries, or vice versa.

It seems clear that the reason for 'culture shock' is, in its simplest terms, one of creating new boundaries. In order to gain a better understanding we need to explain what is involved in this process. As a convenient starting point it will be recalled that in every change there is a loss of the currently known. As is well known the growing child passes through a series of identifications, constantly changing and shifting, creating out



of bits of personalities of others the unique mosaic of the self. But what occurs within that mosaic when one or more of the crucial love objects on which it has been partially patterned is irrevocably lost.

In the concluding paragraphs of his excellent book on bereavement, Parkes C M (1972) spoke of the need to relate his findings to the whole range of life changes. Indeed, he went further because he ends by saying that "we can no longer deny that research into the effects of change is an essential area of study" (p.213). I am pleased to have the opportunity to do precisely that, as least, in regard to organisational change. It is also acknowledged that I shall rely heavily on the work of Parkes and Bowlby J (1969) in looking at culture shock.

It will be recalled that in the chapter dealing with 'The Nature of Organisations', I referred to the process of integration. Here we need to determine precisely what happens to the integrated personality when we go through the process of dramatic organisational socialisation, such as what happened to that unique mosaic that is my self when I joined the Royal Air Force or the police. Whatever it was, the process is central to the issue of culture shock and I now need to refer to the process again in greater depth.

Klein (1940) was of the view that when the infant has advanced to the 'depressive position' this brings about the intrapsychic integration of 'good and bad objects'. Once the infant has solidly established his 'good objects' within himself, a sense of reliance and trust upon them will protect him from annihilatory guilt, arising out of separation from or abandonment of his loved objects. Erikson (1959) defined identity formation as a transforming dynamic concept, a lifelong, largely unconscious process, always in modification in accordance with the social reality of a given moment. Introjection and projection he suggests, are the preceding steps for later childhood identification.

Jacobson E (1964) describes a gradual evolvement of object relations, beginning with a symbiotic mother-child unit, in which fusion of object-representations and self-representations exist, and there is, therefore, a blurring of ego boundaries. Her schema of identity formations, like that of Erikson, is conceptualised as a dynamic process in a

state of constant transformation. Kernberg O (1966) describes a model that links the processes of internalisation of object relations with the vicissitudes of instinctual drive derivatives, on the one hand, and the building up of intrapsychic structures, on the other. Introjection, identification, and ego identity constitute, he suggests, three different sequential levels, in that order, in the process of internalisation of object relations.

For Kernberg, ego identity represents the highest level of organisation in this sequence of the development of the 'identification systems'. Whereas introjections and identifications are structures of the psychic apparatus at large, ego identity is a structure specific to the ego which evolves out of its synthesising functions. Ego identity as a final consolidated organisation is characterised by the following three aspects: (a) an awareness of a sense of 'continuity' of the self, (b) a sense of 'consistency' between the external representational world of objects in relation to the concept of the self, and vice versa, and (c) a sense of 'confirmation', that is, a corroboration of one's own identity in interaction with the environment and the individual sensing of this environmental recognition.

There are several themes which run through the above views, not least the structuring of the ego as a dynamic process and the shared nature of ego development. Parkes (1972) has most helpfully described this process in greater depth. He starts from the position of asking,

"Who is the real me? Am I the person I believe myself to be or the person the world believes me to be? Is there an essential unalterable me?" (p.113).

He then goes on to describe how many of the possessions, attributions, and characteristics that we term ours are ours only by consent. That is, they are part of a shared reality.

How then, asks Parkes (1972), does someone come to recognise this self, see themselves as an individual separate and different from their fellow human beings? The being that each of us infers from observing our own organism and behaviour and comparing it with that of others is what we call the 'self'. For example, following Parkes, I see myself as a policeman, husband, commuter, and academic – each of these aspects of my identity stems from my roles. I am also identified by my bodily characteristics –



tall, white, male, and balding, – and by my behaviour – punctual, even-tempered, and dog-loving. Finally, I have the attributes of my English nationality. Each of these characteristics defines both similarities and differences from other people. They enable me to be identified and they indicate to the world and to me that I have a certain status, certain powers, and responsibilities, and certain possessions that are essentially my own.

That I require the continuity, consistency and confirmation of my world that Kernberg (1966) refers to, is without doubt but Parkes (1972) reminds us that many of the tools by which I act upon that world, 'my hands', 'my language', 'my motor car', span the boundary between my 'self' and 'others'. He then poses the further question, "Since I can share many of these 'possessions', what is the boundary of me?" If the possessions and the roles by which we gain our continuity, consistency and confirmation are shared, then we can assume that if I lose my ability to predict and to act appropriately, my world begins to crumble, and since my view of myself is inextricably bound up with my view of the world, that too will begin to crumble. If I have relied upon other people or possessions to predict and act in many ways as an extension to myself then the loss of those people or possessions can be expected to have the same effect upon my view of myself as if I had lost a part of myself.

As Parkes (1972) reminds us, "once again we are forced to realise that the skin is not the only boundary around the self and that the home we live in and the people to whom we are attached are, in some sense ours – they are parts of ourselves" (p.210). He also explains that there are several published accounts of the way in which people who have lost a home often try to build another in the same place and manner. Similarly immigrants in an alien culture commonly attempt to recreate around them the culture they have lost. It is clearly not possible for a person to identify with a lost home in the same way that one can identify with a lost person, but the loss of multiple loved objects resulting from a career change might be every bit as stressful.

What Parkes (1972) did not refer to, and what I believe was the further research that he was encouraging, was the fact that the loss of a group while not as painful as that of an individual can nevertheless be painful and result in the same processes of bereavement. The chapter on 'The Nature of Organisations' explained how the group

acted 'as if' it were an individual and displayed precisely the same behaviours. For the members of the group, the group exists as an 'idea held in the mind' or as a necessary 'group illusion'. Whichever terminology we choose to use, the proposition is that groups and organisations are experienced as a 'group self' – a group with a common skin. This is a fact made clearer by the above explanation of Parkes.

Group relations training provides further support for this proposition. As has been well documented, and experienced by me, the closure of a conference brings with it a clear sense of mourning. If this is the experience after the relatively short period of a week or two then we can be sure that this will be magnified over a longer period of perhaps years. In all the situations described, I was faced with the need to give up one mode of life and accept another. In varying degrees I was saddened at the loss of my previous group, I missed going to work in the same place and with the same people and performing the same tasks.

Parkes is of the view that if those involved in change identify it as a gain, acceptance may not be hard, but when they see it as a loss or a 'mixed blessing' they will do their best to resist the change. It is his belief that, "resistance to change, the reluctance to give up possessions, people, status, expectations, is the basis of grief" (p.31). He then asserts that how someone copes with the challenge of change in their life will determine not only their view of the world but their view of themselves. He then further explains that it is not an exaggeration to assert that personality is both a resultant and a determinant of change.

In the chapter on 'The Nature of Organisations' I also made reference to the fact that although organisations are no more than 'an idea held in the mind' or a 'group illusion' they are nevertheless experienced and regarded by their members as real. As such, organisations provide their members with the continuity, consistency and confirmation that Kernberg referred to. An organisation becomes for its members a universal truth – it is 'as if' this is the way of the world and that no other way exists. One of the effects of culture shock is to destroy that fantasy and thus discredit much of what was previously considered to be reality. The effect is to leave the individual with



a limited means of reality testing. This may be seen as the state of chaos which Winnicott described as disintegration and which was related to children in hospital by Menzies Lyth (1959).

From the moment of birth a child is related to the world around and the roles that a person performs in life are made up of a complex series of focal action patterns which constitute a repertoire of problem solutions. This repertoire, because it is based on experience, assumes that reasonable expectations of the world will be fulfilled. As time goes by, the individual's stock of 'solutions for all eventualities' grows greater, and novel solutions become rarer. Parkes (1972) explains that nearly all these roles, bodily characteristics, powers, and possessions may be affected by a major loss such as a bereavement. It is my view that any major change in life will have this effect and this includes organisational socialisation involving culture shock. In such a case, the change not only alters expectations at the level of the local action patterns but also alters the overall plans and roles of which these form a part.

In order that we may fully understand the impact of such a major loss it will help to take a further look at the processes of introjection, projection and identification. Klein M (1959) explains that,

"Introjection means that the outer world, its impact, the situations the infant lives through, and the objects he encounters, are not only expressed as external but are taken into the self and become part of his inner life. Inner life cannot be evaluated even in the adult without these additions to the personality that derive from continuous introjection. Projection, which goes on simultaneously, implies that there is a capacity in the child to attribute to other people around him feelings of various kinds, predominantly love and hate" (p.250).

Jacobson E (1964) informs us that while becoming more and more subtle and refined, projection and introjection continue to play an essential part in the processes of identification and in the advance from primitive fusions to those selective identifications on which ego and superego development rests. More significantly she tells us,

"The adult ego will make extensive use of introjection and projection mechanisms, based on such fusion between self and object images, for the special purpose of establishing feeling and fantasy identification at any level, not only with our love objects but with our whole environment.

Our subtle, empathetic understanding of others, especially those we love, depends on such temporary – either short lived or more lasting – identifications" (p.40).

Explained in this way, we can see that the loss experienced in culture shock results in not only those introjected loved objects but also those familiar objects that we have come to use for projection: That is, for attributing to other people around us feelings of love and hate. In such a situation we are left with no such receptacle for our projections; furthermore, we are left to take back our projections. We are left with those parts of our feelings that we wished to get rid of, thus causing us further discomfort.

Such a change is a huge upheaval, and one which will very likely result in disintegration. Parkes has described how the world of the bereaved is in chaos. The individual joining a group may well be in the same state, if all the objects that provided his continuity, consistency and confirmation are no longer present he will also be in a state of chaos, or disintegration. In regard to this state, Parkes (1972) explains that in bereavement the first stage is one of numbness, which gives place to pining, and pining to disorganisation and despair, and it is only after the stage of disorganisation that recovery occurs. The process he is describing is that of mourning as referred to by Freud (1917).

It is to the process of mourning that I now turn. Here, Bowlby's (1969) view of the process as an adaptational process is most valuable. He describes the process of mourning as having three phases. Phase one is characterised by the urge to recover the lost object. Phase two is one of disorganisation. Behaviour that was organised in synchronicity to the lost object, now, lacking it, becomes disorganised. The third phase is that of reorganisation: the acceptance of the objects lost and readiness to accept new objects; here discrimination between inappropriate behavioural patterns oriented toward the lost object and appropriate striving toward new objects takes place.

I shall use Bowlby's three phases as a loose structure for describing the process of culture shock. At phase one the process is characterised by the urge to recover the lost object, or more accurately, the lost objects. Garza-Guerrero A C (1974) classifies



this stage as the 'encounter stage', because, he says, "this is the phase that indeed deserves the name 'culture shock', for shock implies a sense of suddenness, acuteness, abruptness" (p.418). This is the phase where Parkes suggested a state of numbness that gave place to pining. Exposed to this new reality, the newcomer's interaction with it fails relatively and temporarily to provide the basic elements upon which his own identity is solidly maintained.

Reflecting on my experience on entering the Royal Air Force, all previous knowledge was of little or no use to me. The previous experiences out of which I had constructed my unique self provided me with few clues as to how I should cope. My whole world was in relative chaos, I did not know how to react to this new environment. No doubt I spent many a night yearning to recover that which was lost, the multiple lost objects of my previous existence. My status, powers, responsibilities and possessions were all affected by the loss of my known reality. My sense of continuity, consistency, and confirmation, to use Kernberg's terms, were in danger in this phase of culture shock.

Both Parkes (1972) and Garza-Guerrero (1974) refer to the use of identification as a defence at this stage. The latter describes how mechanisms of identification are geared to recover what was lost by alleviating both mourning and the menace to identity. Parkes is of the view that "most of the phenomena that are referred to as defences have an important function in helping to regulate the quantity of novel, unorganised, or in other respects disabling information" (p.90). This is in accord with the view expressed in the chapter on 'The Nature of Organisations' where secondary identification was seen as part of the normal development process yet also served as a defence to reduce the hostility between the self and object enabling separation from it to be denied.

In order to buy time the individual must defend himself against the complete realisation of his loss. Identification with the internal world of good objects, those past good objects that once resulted in integration, can be seen as part of the process of coming to grips with the new situation in a relatively safe way. By literally clinging to those good aspects of our past provides us with the strength, support and time to handle

this chaotic situation. In a previous chapter I posed the question, 'How do we erase previous thinking in regard to change?' It would appear that the sensible consultant would answer, 'Not in a hurry'.

The second of Bowlby's phases was that of disorganisation. For Parkes (1972) this is a period when a bereaved person reacts to both loss and deprivation. Deprivation implies the absence of a necessary person or thing as opposed to loss of that person or thing. We are told by Parkes that this reaction is what is termed 'grief'. When this starts to diminish there seems to follow a period of uncertainty, aimlessness, and apathy which Bowlby has called the phase not only of disorganisation but also despair. Here the characteristic emotion is one of depression. This period of depression is not a clear cut period of grief but occurs again and again in one context or another.

We now get into the third phase, that of reorganisation. For Garza-Guerrero (1974) this is his second phase, here he describes how once the initial shock of the cultural encounter is over, a gradual acceptance of the new culture develops. As has been said before, every change involves a loss and a gain. This phase is very similar to Winnicott's transitional space in as much as there is a transition from disintegration to integration, from loss to gain. Furthermore, there is the process of taking in new transitional objects and of learning new symbols. In Bateson's terms an organisational socialisation process that resulted in severe culture shock would be learning at the level of Learning Two. The individual has to learn in a completely new way, the context itself has changed.

This phase encompasses the working through of the process of mourning described earlier and the subsequent intrapsychic reorganisation. Successful interactions will gradually reinforce disengagement with the past culture. Mourning with its adherence to the past and resistance to indiscriminately accepting the new culture, allows for a process of reorganisation to take place. Thus, the mourning process refers to a 're-shaping' of internalised object relations under the influence of the new reality. The individual gradually returns to secondary process activities and an integrated personality on the basis of reaffirmation and reintegration of his own identity in interaction with the new culture.



This leads to what is termed by Parkes as 'a new identity'. This is also the case with Garza-Guerrero, who uses this title for his third phase. However, he clarifies this statement when he observes that the new identity refers neither to a total engulfment in the new culture nor to the mere sum of bicultural endowments. Neither does new identity mean a stable achievement, but rather, as has been stated by Erikson (1950), it denotes a continually re-edited process: it is a dynamic ever changing process. Nevertheless, at this stage the new object-relations have become introjected into the individual to the extent that the ego identity comprises a stable and integrated concept of the new self. Or to use Piaget's terminology, to reach this stage the new objects will have needed to be accommodated into our structure in order for them to become assimilable objects.

What began as a threat to identity, mourning, and low self esteem ends in a confirmation of both ego-identity and self-esteem. Subjectively, the experience of this phase could be depicted as a gradual feeling of 'belonging' to the new reality, a comfortable growing sensation of fitness reflected in interpersonal interaction with the new world. Even in the least stressful experiences of organisational socialisation this is a slow process. In those career changes that I referred to which did not cause me great anxiety, it nevertheless took me some six to ten months to 'learn the ropes'.

'Learning the ropes' differed in intensity in regard to the circumstances. For example, following the period of basic training in the Royal Air Force we had developed ways of dealing with the anxieties, largely by learning to conform to the requirements, and had built our own social structures, our own boundaries, which provided us with a defence to our anxieties. The academic experience was similar as we also developed a peer culture, a kind of banding together of the students as a defence against the anxiety posed by the College and as a problem solving device to develop norms of what and how to study. In both these instances, the experience was shared by a number of individuals. In other situations, such as joining the police, I was very much on my own and could not rely upon mutual support.

As with so many aspects of culture, the response of the individual will be influenced by subjective and objective factors. Using Piaget's (1951) terms, should the knowledge which I am confronted with be not so different from my current knowledge, I shall be able to 'assimilate' that knowledge. That is, I can absorb it into my own viewpoint, which will not have changed very much in consequence. However, should the knowledge be very different from my own, I shall have to 'accommodate' my point of view to the other. This will involve substantially changing my own viewpoint. In either case, I shall see the world differently after the experience. Here we can see how individuals and groups are constantly changing.

## **Summary**

Organisational socialisation can be a chaotic experience resulting in a considerable degree of disintegration. Personal reflection and views of others shows the painful nature of the process. Culture shock can be a stressful, anxiety provoking situation, a violent encounter – one which puts the newcomer's personality functioning to the test, thus challenging the stability of his psychic organisation. It is accompanied by a process of mourning brought about by the individual's gigantic loss of a variety of his loved objects in the abandoned culture.

Organisational socialisation is a valuable area of study as the process provides a deep insight into the processes of change. In examining the relative ease or difficulty associated with socialisation processes of different complexity we are afforded an insight into the various degrees of learning required in change. What is more, it provides information in regard to the effect that such changes have on individuals.

At the simplest level, change can be stimulating and have little if any effect on our personal boundaries. Slightly more difficult changes will be associated with what may be termed 'reality shock'. Here there will be a need for some adjustment to the individual's personal boundaries, in the nature of Bateson's Learning One level. However, it is when the change is of such a nature that the unique mosaic which is the



self is utterly and totally confronted and found to be inadequate for dealing with the new reality, that we experience the more serious process, that of 'culture shock'. In this situation, the continuity, consistency and confirmation of the individual can no longer be relied upon.

The skin around the self is not the only boundary that we need to protect. Group and psychological boundaries or 'skins' are equally important to the process of reality testing. Many of these boundaries are shared by others who are then within that particular 'skin'. From birth, continuing through life, an individual is related to the world around him. It is this shared world that provides for the continuity, consistency and confirmation required of reality testing.

All change involves a loss and a gain. When the loss is of such a nature as to be totally chaotic it will most likely result in the experience that we have previously referred to as disintegration. In the first instant this will result in the process of mourning. There seems to be general agreement that mourning is a reaction to a real loss of a loved object – or perhaps more accurately to the loss of multiple loved objects. In this respect, we can imagine that if an individual's identity is so painfully threatened by mourning related to an individual single object loss, then the vicissitudes of the mourner's identity in a mourning following a multiple object loss, as in the case of culture shock, is also likely to be considerable but not of course as great.

The painful yearning to recover what was lost is reminiscent, affectively and adaptively, of earlier infantile object loss or separations. In like manner the individual uses the defence of identification with internal good objects which provides time to adjust to the change. Thus defence mechanisms may be seen not to have a single purpose of protection from anxiety but also a secondary purpose of providing time for the individual to adjust to the 'conversion' process. Eventually, the individual may come to terms with the new reality by adapting to a new identity. This will be a slow process which will possibly take some six to twelve months.

Thus we have seen that culture shock is a violent encounter – one which puts the newcomer's personality functioning to the test, thereby challenging the stability of his psychic organisation. It is accompanied by a process of mourning brought about by the individual's gigantic loss of a variety of his loved objects in the abandoned culture. As such it provides valuable information about the process of defence mechanisms and about the process of change, which will be dealt with in a later chapter. In the next chapter I shall look at 'Creativity'.



## CHAPTER 9

### 'CREATIVITY'

In "Beyond The Pleasure Principle" (1920) Freud postulated the existence of a conservative instinct. That there is much to support this view is well demonstrated by the manner in which we seek to form and create boundaries. We also, quite paradoxically, appear to have an exploratory or creative instinct. Indeed, the history of man could be seen as supporting such an idea. In this chapter I shall be looking at the relationship of these seemingly paradoxical instincts in an attempt to explain what is meant by 'creativity'. Creativity is highly relevant to culture and change as it is largely through creativity that growth can occur. Creativity, as we shall see, is about reality testing and the drive to create is one of the factors that results in the dynamic nature of culture.

I shall commence with a substantial review of other writers, and, in order to provide some structure I shall group those views according to the main categories that those other writers have used to explain the phenomenon. These are: viewing creativity, as a mystical process; as an instinct or perhaps more accurately as a drive; as being similar to play; as requiring an holistic view; as resulting in something new; and, as involving imagination in bringing about this something new. I shall then put my own interpretation of the process, referring back to other views where appropriate.

An example of the mystical explanation is shown in this extract from Jung C G (1961), when he states,

"The experience that furnishes the material for artistic expression is no longer familiar. It is a strange something that derives its existence from the hinterland of man's mind – that suggests the abyss of time separating us from pre-human ages, or evokes a super-human world of contrasting light and darkness. It arises from timeless depths; it is foreign and cold, many sided, demonic and grotesque. A grimly ridiculous sample of the eternal chaos – it bursts asunder our human standards of value and aesthetic form. The disturbing vision of monstrous and meaningless happenings that in every way exceed the grasp of human feeling and comprehension makes quite other demands upon the powers of the artist than do the experiences of the foreground of life" (p.180).

I agree with Weisberg R W (1986) that we should jettison the persistent myths that we use to explain the phenomenon of creativity. In view of the difficult nature of the subject matter it is easy to understand why people look for a mythical solution. If something does not easily fit into our known categories we have to find some way to explain it and myth is an easy option. But, as the scientist Peter Medawar stated (in Evans P and Deehan G (1988)), "That 'creativity' is beyond analysis is a romantic illusion that we must now outgrow" (p.14). This is the position taken here, and one which I hope to fulfil.

A more useful way of looking at the phenomenon is to view it in the way that Miller E J (1983) has done, that is, as a drive. That there is such a drive appears to have been accepted by several writers. But it is variously seen as a reproductive instinct, a creative instinct, or an exploratory drive, as the following selection of views shows. For example, Fromm E (1955) & (1962) observed that man can create life, a miraculous quality which he shares with all living beings, but with the difference that he alone is aware of being created and of being a creator. Man or more correctly, man and woman, can create by planting seeds, by producing material objects, by creating art, by creating ideas, and by loving one another. Life itself is seen to be a creative process elaborating and maintaining order out of the randomness of matter.

Much the same is said by others, such as Maslow A (1970), who was of the view that we are dealing with a fundamental characteristic, inherent in human nature, a potentiality given to all or most human beings at birth, which most often is lost or buried or inhibited as the person gets enculturated. This is also the view of Henry J (1991), who observes that the capacity for creative action seems to be a basic feature of life, and of May R (1975), who feels that we express our being by creating, and that creativity is a necessary sequel to being.

Koestler A (1964) refers to an exploratory drive. However, it would appear that he means the same thing when he observes that satisfaction presupposes the existence of a need or appetite. Intellectual curiosity, the desire to understand, is derived from an urge as basic as hunger or sex; the exploratory drive. This, feels Koestler, is the prime



mover behind human exploration and research. Quite apart from the views referred to above, we should not need too much convincing of the existence of a process that we would relate to as a creative drive.

Storr A (1972) reminds us of Freud's remark that psychoanalysis could throw no light upon the technique or the gift of the artist. Yet Freud would have been the first to agree that artists are, like the rest of us, only human and that the same conflicts and the same disappointments afflict the artist as plague us all. In agreeing with Storr, I feel that it is important to extend his argument from artists to everybody. If indeed there is such a thing as a creative drive, it seems that it must be available to all and not just a select few.

In my view, this means that we are literally referring to everybody. Again Storr helpfully reminds us that creativity is more closely bound up with what might be called a 'dynamic of the normal' than with psychopathology. This is partially recognised by Pruyser P W (1979), who is of the view that the moment we consider including more ethereal products of the human mind in a list of creative entities, the way is open for a complete tilting of the customary perspective on creativity. We should not be arguing from specimens of creative work but should be attributing a potential or actual creativity to everybody and then to spot creative features in any and all of their activities. This is precisely what Maslow has done.

Maslow discovered that he had, like most other people, been thinking of creativeness in terms of products, and that he had unconsciously confined creativeness only to certain conventional areas of human endeavour. That is, he had unconsciously assumed that any painter was leading a creative life, as was, any poet, any composer. Furthermore, theorists, artists, scientists, inventors, writers could be creative, but not others. His unresearched view was that you were in or you were out, all or none, as if creativeness were the sole prerogative of certain professionals. Following his research, however, he was of a contrary view – all were creative.

I believe this to be an important point. Creativity is not limited to a special class of people or to special products or to special circumstances, as some have argued. Rather, creativity is a drive possessed by all. As Storr points out, it is a perfectly normal activity for perfectly normal people. The interesting point may be why some are more 'creative' than others, why some of us may find that the rules that govern our reality are such as to prevent us from moving to other realities. This is a point that I will refer to again later.

Another way of looking at the process and one which is perhaps the most frequent, is to liken it to the play of children. Many other writers have referred to play and the following are but a selection. For example, Maslow A H (1970), made the link when he observed that creativeness in self-actualised people was in many respects like the creativeness of all happy and creative children. It was spontaneous, effortless, innocent, easy, a kind of freedom from stereotypes and cliches. For him it seemed to be made up largely of 'innocent' freedom of perception and 'innocent' uninhibited spontaneity and expressiveness. Commenting on his research involving creative people he was of the view that it was in this childlike sense that the subjects were creative.

This is also the case with Pruyser, who proposed that the primordially creative human act is analogical to what children think and do when they say to each other, 'Come on, let's play'; this call being an invitation to leave temporarily the realistic world and move into the world of illusion where the individual submits himself to new, super-imposed rules. A less direct view is put by Csikszentmihalyi M (1975), when he observes that man at play is at the peak of his freedom and dignity. Davis M & Wallbridge D (1987), introduce us to the most important work of Winnicott when they remind us that the preoccupational playing of young children was seen by Winnicott as a further step in a sequence of activities in the area of illusion or the potential space between the inner self and the environment that leads to a mature capacity for participation in and contribution to the world's cultural fertility.

Thouless R H (1958), felt that play could be seen as a rehearsal of activities which would later be put to use in the serious business of life. On its psychological side, play in itself is enjoyable, but playful activity is also one which is a rehearsal of



an instinctive activity, and it is an activity which is undertaken for its own sake, and not with the conscious aim of rehearsing useful activities. To support his view he provides the examples of analytic play – pulling things to pieces – and of synthetic play – building up new things. Of these he observes that they look like rehearsals of the adult behaviour of curiosity and of construction respectively. This is something which Storr agrees with. He feels that one of the biological functions of play is to teach young animals how to ritualise their primitive impulses of aggression in such a way that they can fit into a social group, whilst at the same time preserving their capabilities for serious fight in reality should the occasion call for it.

A different view of play is taken by Bohm D & Peat F D (1991), when they explain that new thoughts generally arise with a play of the mind, and that the failure to appreciate this is one of the major blocks to creativity. Thought is generally considered to be a sober and weighty business. But here it is being suggested that creative play is an essential element in forming new hypothesis and ideas. Their view is that thought which tries to avoid play is in fact playing false with itself. On this view it appears that play is of the very essence of thought, or as Henry explains, creative ideas flow where new ideas and challenges are welcomed and where people are encouraged to play.

Erikson E H (1977) refers to the fact that the adult plays for recreation. He steps out of his reality into imaginary realities for which he has made up arbitrary but nonetheless binding rules. But an adult rarely gets away with being a playboy. Social norms dictate that only he who works shall play. Games are formalised and therefore non-creative, they are transformations of (defences against the open-endedness of) play. Erikson also explains how the content of infantile play often proves to be the infantile way of thinking over difficult experiences and of restoring a sense of mastery, this is comparable to the way in which we repeat, in ruminations and endless talk, in daydreams and in dreams, experiences that have been too much for us.

Pruyser took the view that there was what he referred to as an 'illusionistic world' and the 'realistic world'. For him, play was located in the 'illusionistic world'. In formulating this view Pruyser has relied on Winnicott's writings to develop his own original view of creativity the basis of which is stated in the following quotation,

"If one accentuates Winnicott's terms object and sphere and follow his speculation that the child's transitional activities are the origins of art and religion, one is bound to infer that Winnicott envisaged a perennial human penchant for seeking special relations with special objects in a special atmosphere over and beyond the 'subjective nonsense' of autism and the 'cold hard facts' of realistic sense perceptions. I have interpreted Winnicott's intentions in the latter sense and have made bold to speak of a 'third world', trying to define the relationships, objects, and atmosphere that prevail in it" (p.322).

Winnicott (1971) also expressed some significant views on play which I feel is captured in the following, "It is in playing and only in playing that the child or adult is able to be creative and use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self" (p.62). However, to conclude this short look at play it is interesting to note that in "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" (1915), Freud asked the question, "What instincts should we suppose there are, and how many?" In answer to his own question he stated, "No objection can be made to anyone's employing the concept of an instinct of play" (p.120). There are many important points that have been raised in regard to play that provide us with useful information regarding the process of creativity. Not least, it suggest a sort of freedom from 'normal' constraints.

A further view frequently put is in regard to the intensity of the experience. For May R (1975), this is a matter of total awareness and he describes the intensity of the encounter as one of absorption or being caught up in, wholly involved and so on. The encounter is with the world of the creator, that is, the pattern of meaningful relations in which a person exists and in the design of which he or she participates. Following this line of thought, May defines 'creativity' as the encounter of the intensively conscious human being with his or her world.



In describing how to identify creativity Csikzentmihalyi observed that it required an holistic approach which took into account a person's goals and abilities and his subjective evaluation of the external situation. Pruyser took the view that a creative work is something called into being, something with a holistically unique character that transcends the ingredients from which it is made. Koestler refers to a sort of total awareness when he observes that full consciousness must be regarded as the upper limit of a continuous gradient from focal awareness to total awareness of an event. Awareness is a matter of degree, and, as has been previously stated, only a fraction of our multi-levelled activities at any moment enters the beam of focal consciousness.

The intensity of the experience is described in yet another way by Jaques E (1970), who uses the ancient Greek concept of 'nous', that is, mind comprising both heart and soul, intellect and feeling, thought and impulse. On these views, to achieve contact with our creative source in this holistic manner is no easy task as is explained by Fromm (1962) who asserts that this can only be achieved if we recognise that we are unable to focus our attention on the particulars of a whole without diminishing our comprehension of the whole, conversely we can focus on the whole only by diminishing our comprehension of the particulars which constitute the whole.

Another of the essential elements of creativity is that something new is created. Again, there is general agreement from a wide range of writers on this point. For example, Evans P and Deehan G (1988), inform us that first of all, we certainly expect something new to result from creativity and that we expect the world to be different as a result of the process. Henry J (1991), observes that creativity is concerned with developing new ideas, and that to do this we need to see the problem from a fresh perspective, which involves escaping from old ideas. In this respect we are reminded that there is a loss and a gain.

This is added to by Pozzi L (1990), who provides us with a definition when he writes, "Let us take a brief look at the word 'creativity'. Its most commonly accepted meaning is 'something that did not exist before is made to be'" (p.150). This is also the case with Storr A (1972), who has defined creativity simply and concisely as, "the ability to bring something new into existence" (p.11). What this does not imply is that

the 'something new' need not be new to everyone, or, indeed, new to anyone else save the person who creates it.

That creativity does produce something new, be it a new product, a new theory, a new work of art or whatever, can hardly be in doubt. However, the very act of bringing something new into being brings its own difficulties. It would seem that coming to terms with something totally new and different is not a simple matter and this raises the issue of anxiety. May referred to this when he wrote of the experience of encounter which brought with it anxiety. It is interesting that he uses the word 'encounter' in the same way that it was used in regard to culture shock. The anxiety referred to here is a result of the shaking of the self-world relationship that occurs in the encounter when our sense of identity is threatened. As a result of this encounter the world is not as we experienced it before, and since self and world are always correlated, we no longer are what we were before.

In this regard, May describes how the creative instinct comes into conflict with the conservative instinct. The conservative instinct demands order in our world – that our sense of identity, our world of reality, remain the same – whereas the creative drive demands that something must change in order for the new to come into being. This would appear to be the essence of the dynamic process that is life. The past, present and future form a new Gestalt, a new reality. The anxiety that we experience is a temporary rootlessness, disorientation, or as May says, the 'anxiety of nothingness' because order comes out of dis-order, form out of chaos. Paradoxically, ordering is disordering as it involves the destruction of pre-existing notions of reality.

In terms of creating something new we need to consider whether it is something new for the individual or something new for society. Miller E J (1983) points out that,

"The socially defined categories of sin, disloyalty, crime and craziness and the social sanctions against deviants guilty of such acts provide a mechanism whereby the individual can split off and disown uncomfortable parts of himself and not have to judge on his own what is creative and what is destructive" (p.7).

The social categories vary from society to society or, as Miller states, 'A flower in one man's garden is a weed in another'. Where there is a new reality for the individual, this



will shake his self-world but he can take his own authority for that change. Where the change affects others, however, it also affects their authority and will therefore be much more difficult.

It will be recalled that Pruyser P W (1979), examines three worlds: the autistic world of the infant, the realistic world of the adult, and the illusionistic or transitional world of the 'creator'. From the psychoanalytic concepts of transitional objects and preconscious spheres of mental activity, he constructs an illusionistic world which is not delusion, hallucination, or phantasy, but is, rather, a world in which the person mentally interacts with and partakes of both the real and the unreal.

This is very similar to the concept put forward by Storr A (1988) who considered that we all possess an inner world of phantasy which is part of man's biological endowment, and that it is the inevitable discrepancy between this inner world and the outer world that compels men to become inventive and imaginative. He asserts that there are good biological reasons for accepting the fact that man is so constituted that he possesses an inner world of the imagination which is different from, though connected to, the world of external reality. It is the discrepancy between the two worlds which motivates creative imagination. It is from phantasies which originate in the imagination and then connect with the external world that new ways are developed which illuminate the external world and make it more comprehensible.

At this stage, I believe that I have gone far enough in my review of other writers to provide a useful backcloth for formulating my own views on the process of creativity. Before doing so, however, it may be useful to summarise the foregoing. First, there does appear to be a clear drive to create: if this were not the case human nature would not be the dynamic process that it is. We can also say that the process has some sort of relationship to the play of children. It is a complex process that requires total awareness to come into being. It has been said that in order to achieve this it requires that we take an holistic approach. The process is about bringing something new into being, that is, order out of formlessness. Furthermore, this something new is the result of some sort of imagination, illusion or phantasy.

Thus far I have not referred to symbolism in regard to creativity, yet it will be recalled that in the chapter on 'Symbolism' such a relationship was stressed. A brief review will remind us that symbolism, albeit not using true symbols but symbolic equations, commences when the infant is still influenced by the primary process. Fenichel considers that original symbolic thinking is directed by the primary process. It being not only a method of distortion but also part of the primal pre-logical thinking. Klein considers that symbolism flows from identification. Anxiety sets going the mechanism of identification and this contributes to make the infant equate the bodily organs in question with other things. From here there is a gradual development from symbolic gestures to speech symbolism.

The development of true symbols occurs with the development of play which we have seen is most relevant to creativity. Winnicott tells us that when we witness the infant's first employment of a transitional object, the first not-me possession, we are witnessing both the child's first use of a symbol and the first experience of play. Klein then describes how the child constantly advances from his original primitive symbols, games and activities, so that we find symbols at work in increasingly complicated inventions, leaving the former ones behind. For Klein symbolism is the foundation of all sublimation and every talent.

Highly relevant to creativity is the fact that speech symbols allow us to form concepts, so that once we have a piece of 'reality' we can play with it, think about it, and, most importantly, relate it to other pieces. The benefit lies in the fact that symbolic experience can yield the possibility of prospect and retrospect. What is fixed in consciousness is there to go back to: a prediction, an expectation, is formulated by reference back. What is more important in terms of creativity is the fact that we may opt out of the handling of reality for a time and improvise to our own satisfaction upon our represented world. That is, we may operate directly upon the representation itself, in other words, we may use our imagination to create.

Words and language used as symbols will have a considerable effect on our ability to create. For an experience to come into awareness, it must be comprehensible in accordance with the categories in which conscious thought is organised. Thus the



concept of a discovery will have meaning only in relation to the knowledge available to the discoverer at the time. By penetrating into unknown territory with revolutionary changes such as Kuhn's paradigms, there will be disturbing consequences for previously settled opinions. This will be commented on again later.

In formulating my own view I shall follow the sequence of categories as in the above summary. However, in order to get a proper understanding of what is involved, it will require considerable explanation over and above what has already been discussed. I have not found it easy to document this explanation, nevertheless, as stated at the start of this chapter, I consider the process of creativity to be a key element in coming to an understanding of culture and therefore it will be worthwhile.

That there is something in the order of a creative drive is not difficult to accept. The difficulty lies in the paradoxical nature of the conservative instinct to the creative instinct. That they exist side by side is explained by Allport G W (1955) who points out that nothing could be more evident than the fact that the conservative instinct represents demands for tension reduction. However, while we certainly learn habitual modes for reducing tension, this is only half the problem. We also come to regard many of our past satisfactions to be worthless, because although we want stability we also want variety. While we learn dependable modes of reducing tension we also abandon old habits and take risks in searching out new courses of conduct. It is only through this risk taking and variation that growth can occur. Storr A (1988) agrees and asserts that (societal) survival cannot be ensured unless intelligence and imagination take over from innate patterns in making provision for basic needs.

In previous chapters we have referred to these innate patterns as the world of reality, or the world as perceived by the individual. This world is constantly reality tested against the social milieu in which the individual exists. And while this is a changing, dynamic world, we should not forget that the loss of part or parts of that world can cause disintegration. It is against this background that we need to view the process of creativity. It is not this aspect that we need to explain; rather it is that of risk-taking or imagination referred to above. The important point is that we do not forget that it is taking place in the context of our world of reality.

The views of other writers, referred to above, have been valuable in describing the similarity of the process of creativity with that of play. What they do not do is to provide an explanation for the process, which is what I shall now do. It will be recalled that both Winnicott and Klein described symbolism as the basis of all creative endeavours. It therefore seems appropriate to return to the views of Winnicott who also stated that creative experience begins with creative living first manifested in play. Of play, Freud (1908) wrote that every child at play behaves like a creative writer. That is, he creates a world of his own by rearranging things in a new way which links things of the real world in a way which pleases him. This linking, said Freud, is all that differentiates the child's play from 'phantasying'.

This linking, as Freud called it, is taking place in what Winnicott has referred to as the 'transitional space' – the potential space between the individual and the environment. Winnicott (1971) informs us that the special feature of the potential space is that it depends for its existence on living experiences, not on inherited tendencies. The tangible and visual things to which Freud referred may also be termed 'transitional objects'. These transitional objects are a link between the inner and outer worlds, belonging wholly to neither, yet clearly pertaining to both. Consequently, they may be presumed to be an advance upon phantasy which has no relation at all to the world outside the object.

This advance on phantasy is what has been termed 'imagination'. In regard to imagination, Erikson E H (1977) shows that the growing child's play is the training ground for the experience of a leeway of imaginative choices within an existence governed and guided by roles and visions. The use of transitional objects suggests that the process of imagination begins very early in life. Sinnott E W (1959) terms it, 'the great gift of imagination', which he describes as man's most distinctive trait, for it makes possible his creativeness. New experiences could not have appeared unless there had been someone who could imagine a situation never yet experienced, who could picture in his mind something he had not seen or discover a new way of looking at what is already there.



We know that the potential space is concerned with symbols – with the complex matter of the meaning of meaning. It is the place where symbols are used for the different concepts of experience. These concepts of experience include both conscious and unconscious processes – primary and secondary processes. Therefore, using symbols is a way of being in touch with the inner psychic reality – of discovering the self – and is an aspect of what Winnicott calls 'creative apperception'. The ability to form and use symbols, then, brings meaning to the world of both imagination and the world of shared reality. Creative apperception depends upon linking subjective and objective, upon colouring the external world with the warm hues of the imagination.

I believe that it is here that we begin to understand both the process of imagination and subsequently that of creativity. By reference to the two types of mental functioning – the primary and secondary processes we have the genesis of an explanation. By nature, one provides the origination, the other the rational basis of living. Primary process thought is unconscious and it operates outside the bounds of logic and reality. Secondary process thought operates consciously and it is subject to all the controls imposed by our conscious minds.

In the primary process we are oblivious to the categories of space and time. The Id has no organisation, produces no collective will, the logical laws of thought do not apply, contrary impulses exist side by side without cancelling each other out. There is nothing in the Id that corresponds to the idea of time. Freud considered that the pleasure principle was only gradually replaced by the reality principle. Since no mental content is ever completely expunged, traces of the pleasure principle lingered on and could, so Freud believed, be detected not only in dreams, but also in play. Rycroft C (1981) reminds us that Darwin and Richter emphasise the imagination's independence of the will. A similarity between dreams and products of the waking imagination is that this production is independent of the will.

I agree with Storr when he asserts that Freud was right in linking play and phantasy, but that he was wrong in believing that play and phantasy should be abandoned in favour of rationality. Storr was also of the view that there are good biological reasons for accepting the fact that man is so constituted that he possesses an

inner world of the imagination which is different from, though connected to, the world of the primary process. It is this activity that resembles play, it is this spontaneous, uninhibited, and innocent activity that is free of the 'normal' constraints.

This is where the views regarding the intensity of the experience come in, because the primary process is only available through the means of total awareness described earlier. It is only by means of an holistic approach that we can gain access to this world of imagination. Rogers C R (1954) explains that in order to gain access to this inner world it means there must be a lack of rigidity and permeability of boundaries in concepts, beliefs, perceptions, and hypothesis. It also means a tolerance for ambiguity where ambiguity exists. In a person who is open to experience, each stimulus is freely relayed through the nervous system, without being distorted by any process of defensiveness. This means that instead of perceiving in predetermined categories the individual is aware of all of the experiences in his world imaginary and shared.

Should we have any doubts that the primary process is still available to us all we need only refer to its role in dreams. Or perhaps more accurately, to give due regard to Rycroft's views, to primary process-like activity. For Rycroft, dreaming is an imaginative activity and all imaginative activity, waking or sleeping is independent of the will. Coming at it from the opposite direction, Sinnott observes that creative imagination is especially active at the mind's unconscious level. Here, he says, mental work is being done. Here, quite without mental participation (that is, of the secondary process type) choices are being made and ideas fitted together into patterns. Thus the unconscious mind is able to solve problems and to lay at least the foundation for creative activity.

On this view, the living system here is exercising its ability to integrate and organise a pattern out of formlessness, an achievement which rational thought, being somewhat removed from its primitive living source and bound with habit and convention, may be incapable of doing. In other words this is not secondary process activity which would apply all sorts of limitations, but primary process activity which is not inhibited by the restrictions of shared reality. Thus the process of imagination is



a primary process activity. The creation of something new occurs originally in primary process activity.

This tends to be supported by the experience reported by many authors where a creative notion, or 'discovery', has come into being on waking in the morning or earlier. Indeed, I can recall several occasions in the process of writing this thesis where this has been the case. This is associated with another experience. Here, despite the importance of the 'discovery', it has been lost to awareness unless committed to paper or tape quickly. This tends to suggest that there might be a different part of the mental process involved, one that does not operate the process of memory: However, this is but speculation. Another reason may be that on achieving consciousness the secondary process takes over, that process not being independent of the will. The result may be anxiety which is dealt with by a denial of the 'discovery'.

This calls to mind Ornstein's (1977) theory of left brain and right brain activity. Here it is considered that the left brain is predominately involved with analytic, logical thinking, especially in verbal and mathematical functions. In contrast, the right brain seems specialised for holistic mentation and artistic endeavour. Jung C G (1956) also adds support for the above view when he states,

"We have, therefore, two kinds of thinking: directed thinking, and dreaming or fantasy thinking. The former operates with speech elements for the purpose of communication, and is difficult and exhausting; the latter is effortless, working as it were spontaneously, with the contents ready to hand, and guarded by unconscious motives. The one produces innovation and adaptation, copies reality, and tries to act upon it; the other turns away from reality, sets free subjective tendencies, and, as regards adaptation, is unproductive" (p.18).

It is here that I depart from the views of others. The anxiety associated with creativity is seldom mentioned, it is far more likely that there will be references to play as I have shown above. While not dismissing the relationship to play, I believe that where creativity is viewed solely from the perspective of play and without reference to the extreme anxieties that may occur in the process, we are only viewing one half of the picture. To be creative requires the courage to overcome the inevitable guilt that will be associated with the process. I can perhaps explain this best by personal example.

While working on a paper for my MSc I came to the conclusion that a particular phenomenon did not exist. In myself I was quite confident, until I started to consider what the tutor would say. I suffered considerable feelings of guilt that I ought not to be expressing such a view because it was contrary to established belief.

In common with Rogers I do not believe that many significantly creative products are formed without the feeling, 'I am alone'. 'That no one has ever done just this before'. 'That I have ventured into territory where no one has been'. 'Perhaps I am foolish, or wrong, or lost, or abnormal'. A highly appropriate example is the creative activity of Bion which involved him in taking very considerable personal risks as regards his professional reputation. Trist E (1985) describes how, "Bion asked if he was a bit mad to be giving serious consideration to such ideas?" Trist replied that "he had to have the courage of his own logic". "Freud", he went on to say, "must have given himself some bad frights when he found the key concepts of psychoanalysis arising in his head for the first time" (p.33).

While we create in the imaginary world of the primary process we exist and bring our creations into being in the world of reality which is governed by the secondary process, a world that includes the super-ego. According to Abraham the super-ego takes on those functions of criticising the behaviour of the ego which form the individual into a social being. Of those functions, the one we call conscience interests us most at present. The super-ego instructs the ego by means of that function as to what it may do or not do, in the same way as the persons in authority over it used formerly to do. Toward the end of his life, Freud (1940b) extended his view in regard to persons in authority when he stated that what is operating in the super-ego "is not only the personal qualities of the parents but also everything that had a determining effect on themselves, the tastes and standards of the social class in which they lived and the innate dispositions and traditions of the race from which they sprang" (p.378).

Thus the conscience that is instructing us what we may do or not do is developed from the world of our reality. Consequently, to create something radically new will almost certainly result in conflict with our conscience which will be instructing us how we ought to behave. That is, in a manner consistent with the known reality. In this



regard, Rank O (1945) points out that we see in the creative impulse not only the highest form of individual will affirmation, but also, the most mighty will conquest of the individual will over the will of his society. For Rank this explains the guilt which the creative process necessarily produces. It is this going beyond the limits set by the world of reality to which the ego reacts with guilt. Guilt is experienced in regard to those others that he opposes through his 'discovery', new paradigm, or whatever we choose to call it. Guilt is also experienced in regard to himself, as was explained above, for daring to step 'out of line'.

Allport tells us that guilt is a 'poignant suffering' that we experience when decisions are made which we feel are inappropriate. Thus to be creative requires a good deal of courage. A resilient pioneering courage and single-mindedness are necessary if new ideas are to be spread – the sort of courage that is able to override the conscience, one which is able to handle the feelings of guilt. This is where we come back to the conservative instinct: in order to have the necessary courage to create we need to be secure. It is the secure infant who later exhibits the greatest interest in toys and other impersonal objects in the environment. It is also here that knowledge can be used as a stimulus to approach the 'not knowing', allowing us to put up with ignorance as a basic condition for achieving mental development.

The secure infant is one who has, in Winnicott's terms, a basic trust in his mother. Winnicott (1988) says of this trust, "The word trust in this context shows an understanding of what I mean by the building up of confidence based on experience, at the time of maximal dependence, before the enjoyment and employment of separation and independence" (p.120). To achieve this position of trust the mother needs to hold the infant unanxiously while the infant is itself anxious. The function of holding in psychological terms is to provide ego-support, in particular, at the stage of absolute dependence before integration of the ego has become established. Or, to use Bion's terminology, the mother acts as a 'container' for the anxieties of the infant and as such, the infant introjects the maternal object as a container capable of containing anxiety and conflict.

As Segal H (1981) reminds us, independence is never absolute. The healthy individual does not become isolated, but becomes related to the environment in such a way that the individual and environment can be said to be interdependent. In Winnicott's view, the 'holding environment' is primarily something to do with infancy. However, in an address to social workers he referred to their role as being one of providing a holding environment. In my view there is not one holding environment that occurs during infancy but a succession of holding environments throughout life. This being a lifelong activity of differentiation and integration. The creating of the object, a process of differentiation, is followed by our relating to it, a process of integration.

When I refer to a succession of holding environments I feel I should explain that when the infant is in an unintegrated state, the holding environment provided by the mother is both physical and psychological. Integration, as Winnicott informs us, means the beginning of human psychology. Consequently, from hereon we need to consider the external physical holding environment and the internalised psychological holding environment. This is a concept which I shall show is most relevant to my view of organisational culture.

It seems clear that if we are to create there must be a sufficient trust based on our experience. Such experience is to be found in the environment of the creator. Should the organisation environment be such as to provide trust it will permit creativity, whereas, should the contrary pertain, it is unlikely that we will have the confidence to do so. When we speak of differentiation or creativity it seems important to bear in mind that we are not usually speaking of sensational 'discoveries'. More likely, we shall be referring to small, relatively inconsequential developments which are, nevertheless, all part of the dynamic process of life.

The reader may well ask, What about rebelliousness? Where does this fit in? The first point that I should make is that creativity does not have to be task related it may equally be anti-task. Similarly, it does not have to follow social controls: for example, there are many examples of creative behaviour that have been considered to be criminal and have been deliberately anti-social. Where individuals or groups perceive themselves to be marginalised they do not consider themselves subject to the



social controls pertaining to either an organisation or to society in general. They will experience no guilt in regard to violating what for others are regarded as social controls. Consequently, while these marginalised individuals or groups may appear rebellious from the reality existing for others, from their own reality they are not. So they have greater freedom to be creative.

Thus far I have related creativity to the individual but I would point out that the conditions that enable or inhibit individual creativity also apply to groups or organisations. In the same way that I referred to the interrelatedness of the individual with the organisation holding environment so the same applies to groups. If they have developed a basic trust and perceive their holding environment as good enough there is a likelihood that they can be creative. Where the reverse applies then we are unlikely to encourage creativity.

I say 'likely' because much will also depend on creative pairing with individuals and groups of other sizes. Where there are individuals with a 'resilient pioneering courage' able to override their conscience and to handle their inevitable feelings of guilt, this will encourage creativity. Trist provides a good example of this when he describes how Bion used him and others in creative pairings when he was developing his highly creative views on groups. In like manner, I have had the much appreciated benefit of creative pairing with my adviser, tutor and fellow students. The process of verbalising and discussing concepts, of sharing them with someone else acts to reduce anxiety by making known the unknown. The anxiety arises from the fact that the reaction of others to the concepts is unknown and thus I am left with fears that they may be considered nonsense. I should add that the reverse of creative pairing is also likely: where others do not have the same pioneering courage they may deter and suppress creativity.

The example of creative pairing referred to above may also be seen as a situation where the other person or persons provide a holding environment for the individual's creativity. There is also the situation where out of a creative pairing something new may be produced as in the act of reproduction. This creative pairing differs from the previous example by virtue that it is a fusion of imaginative thoughts that results in the new product.

In the chapter on 'Learning' I referred to the fact that learning was 'an indissociable subject-object relationship' and in the last chapter on 'Organisational Socialisation' I made extensive reference to the loss involved in change. In terms of loss; there can be no creating of a new object without the loss of an existing object, in any learning there must be an unlearning of much that one thought one knew – even, in exceptional situations, of almost returning to the ignorance of the child. In terms of learning; this can present problems because if the language of the new concept cannot be understood, if there is no shared categorical framework, then the concept of intersubjective communication will be null.

From the foregoing it seems clear that there are considerable barriers to the process of creativity. As if the difficulties of conscience and guilt are not enough there is still the problem that learning anything new must involve some unlearning. Our knowledge and understanding forms a consistent whole which must undergo some modification, however slight, when incorporating something new. Creation cannot be achieved without death: integration is not possible without some fragmentation of the previous, incomplete, or incorrect, integration of a level, or set of informational levels. Eros and Thanatos are twin brothers, inseparable. Thus we see a similar situation as in regard to socialisation, save that in this case, the change is self imposed and not imposed by outside forces.

## **Summary**

The views of other writers may be summarised as follows. Firstly, there does appear to be a clear drive to create; if this were not the case human nature would not be the dynamic process that it is. We can also say that the process has some sort of relationship to the play of children. It is a complex process that requires total awareness or full consciousness to come into being. It has been said that in order to achieve creativity it is necessary that an holistic approach is taken. The process is about bringing something new into being, that is, order out of formlessness. Furthermore, this something new is the result of some sort of imagination, illusion or phantasy.



The drive to create operates alongside the conservative instinct. Thus creativity takes place in the context of our world of reality. Creative experience is first manifested in play. In play the infant links his imagined objects with the real world, a process to be distinguished from phantasy which has no relation to the external world. This linking is what has been termed imagination which develops from early in life and takes place in the transitional space. The transitional space is concerned with symbols and is the place where symbols are used for the different concepts of experience – the primary and secondary processes.

It is through these two processes that we begin to understand the processes of imagination and hence creativity. It is from this point that my original view of creativity is developed. My view is that the inner world of imagination is the world of the primary process. It is here that we have the freedom to create and it is this activity that resembles play. However, to be in touch with the primary process requires a total awareness or an holistic approach. The primary process has the ability to organise patterns out of formlessness; being unconscious activity, it is not restricted by the limitations imposed on secondary process activity. The difficulty arises when the 'creation' is brought into consciousness, here secondary process activity becomes dominant. This may result in anxiety arising from feelings about being wrong or mad or whatever, which may in turn result in, for example, denial.

Anxiety is seldom mentioned in regard to creativity but here it is regarded as an important consideration. Our conscience that is instructing us what we may or may not do is developed from the world of our reality. Consequently, the process of creativity may well result in conflict with our conscience which will be instructing us how we ought to behave. Such conflict will inevitably be experienced as the poignant suffering that we know as guilt.

Thus to be creative we need a good deal of courage but, above all, we need to be secure. This means, to use Winnicott's term, there must be a 'holding environment'. Winnicott hinted at such holding environments existing throughout life, life being an activity of differentiation and integration. I believe he was right and that there is not only a succession of holding environments but that we all belong to multiple holding

environments. Whether they are good enough to provide the 'basic trust' required will determine if creativity will occur. Finally, the process of creativity is a difficult process that may be inhibited by or result in guilt and anxiety, it will also inevitably result in loss as well as gain.

These concepts will be further developed in the next chapter when I address the issue of 'Organisational Culture'.



## ***CHAPTER 10***

### **ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

In this chapter I shall address the central issue of this thesis – organisational culture. The foregoing chapters will have thrown light on the phenomenon, certainly in a general way, and at times, in a more specific way. As such, they will provide the necessary concepts for an understanding of what is to follow. In the main, this chapter will build on those concepts to create new ideas. However, as might be expected some cross reference will be necessary. It may be of passing interest that in formulating what I believe to be a new conceptualisation of this difficult phenomenon I have suffered all the doubts and guilt associated with 'creativity', as referred to in the last chapter. The feeling that I might be wrong has frequently crossed my mind. In this regard, the 'basic trust', provided by my adviser and tutors during my study, has been valuable.

The formulation of this new concept will cover those matters that I referred to at the outset as being important if we are to understand organisational culture; namely: what culture is, how it develops, how it perpetuates itself, and how it is represented. I am not seeking to come up with a short, simple definition, for the basic reason that culture is far too complex an issue to be trussed up in a conceptual strait-jacket. I shall commence by putting the process of culture into a context. Having done so, this will enable me to begin to answer those important questions referred to above. Of these, the crucial question appears to be that concerned with how culture develops. Consequently, this is where I shall start, first with an overview and then a detailed description of the process.

Culture, like personality, is less a finished product than a transitive process. While it has some stable features, it is at the same time continually undergoing change. It is this course of change, which can be of a sudden or dramatic nature or a long, slow change more in the nature of osmosis, that results in the development of culture and is our special concern. The first fact that strikes us is the uniqueness of both the process and the product. Each culture is an idiom unto itself which develops in its own particular context, and this context must be understood in order to comprehend the idiom.

The constant interaction between the individual and culture is fundamental to any study of either culture or for that matter, personality. They are indivisibly linked and consequently, it will be necessary to refer to both processes. Indeed, we may take as our first premise that the function of the personality as a whole is to enable the individual to produce forms of behaviour which will be advantageous to him under the conditions imposed by his environment. We will then take as our second premise that, other things being equal, this function is performed most effectively when the advantageous behaviour is produced with a minimum of delay and involves a minimum of effort.

The conviction that personality development occurs in the context of interactions between the organism and the environment, rather than through the internal processes of maturation alone is a view supported by many. For example, it is reflected in Erikson's psychosocial approach (1950) and among object-relations theorists, who have brought the relationship of self to other (or subject to object) to centre stage. Fairbairn (1952), Winnicott (1965), Klein (1959), Guntrip (1971), and others consider that 'object-relating' is an intrinsic interest of persons, rather than an extrinsic one. From the point of view of these theorists the very essence of ego activity is object-relations, and ego activity is presumed to begin immediately at birth.

In a previous chapter I referred to Churchill's famous remark about Britain and the United States of America: 'Two nations divided by a common language'. That the norms for personality differ in different societies will scarcely be doubted by anyone who has had experience of societies other than their own. We have already seen that personality is primarily a configuration of responses which the individual has developed as a result of his experience. This experience, in turn, derives from his interaction with his environment – in the case of an organisation, the organisational environment.

The influence which culture exerts on the developing personality are of two quite different sorts. On the one hand we have those influences that derive from the culturally patterned behaviour of other individuals towards the child. These begin to operate from the moment of birth, a matter which I shall need to deal with in far greater detail later in this chapter. On the other hand, we have those influences which derive from the individual's observation of, or instruction in, the patterns of behaviour characteristic of his



society. In summary, the fact that personality norms differ from different societies can be explained on the basis of the different experience which the members of such societies acquire from contact with those societies.

Personality and culture are processes, that is human 'being' as an activity. Kegan R (1982) observes that it is not about the doing which a human does; it is about the doing which a human is. Both culture and personality insist on a recognition that behind the form there exists a process which creates it, or which leads to its coming into being: that is, each is not a thing but a process. As previously stated, the notion that we constitute reality, rather than somehow happen upon it, is most quickly and vividly brought home in the area of perception. Thus it is not that a person makes meaning, as much as that the activity of being a person is the activity of meaning making. There is thus no feeling, no experience, no thought, no perception, independent of a meaning making context in which it becomes a feeling, an experience, a thought, a perception, because we are the meaning-making context.

In terms of context, Erikson's (1959) related concepts of an individual and a group identity can be helpful. For Erikson, the sense of ego identity is based on the common perception of an individual's self sameness and continuity. In other words, such basic human concerns as, Who am I? Where have I been? and, Where am I going? are deeply ensconced in the individual's group experiences from the family on and out. He also reminded us that we cannot ignore the fact that all individuals are borne by others and born of others; that everybody was once a child; that people and peoples begin in their nurseries; and that society consists of individuals in the process of developing from children into parents. He therefore concludes that something in the ego process and something in the social process is identical.

Having set the scene, as it were, with this preliminary but necessary discussion of context we are now in a better position to begin to answer the major questions. As stated at the outset, the crucial question seems to be in regard to how culture develops and it is here that I shall start. As seems inevitable, it is necessary to commence with the processes involving the young child and then to develop the findings into adult life. For ease of reading I shall first provide an overview and then go into greater detail.

As described in the chapter on 'Symbolism', the newborn child lives in a completely undifferentiated world, one in which nothing is on the side of the object, in which nothing is other than the infant, in which everything he senses is taken to be an extension of him, and where everything ceases even to be once it is out of his sight, touch, or hearing. The child gradually moves from this omnipotent, unintegrated self, to an integrated self capable of object relating. Growth always involves a process of differentiation, of emergence from what Kegan calls 'embeddedness', thus creating out of the former subject a new object to be taken by the new subjectivity.

Winnicott would say that there is never 'just an infant'. He meant that intrinsic to the picture of infancy is a caretaker who, from the point of view of the infant, is something more than an 'other person' who relates to and assists the growth of the infant. The mother provides the very context in which development takes place, and from the point of view of the new born she is a part of the self. She provides a true psychosocial context: she is both 'psycho' and 'social', depending on whose perspective we take, and the transformation by which she becomes for the infant gradually less 'psycho' and more 'social' describes the very evolution of meaning itself.

In Winnicott's view the 'holding environment' is vital to the development of the infant. From the beginning of life, reliable holding has to be a feature of the environment if the child is to survive. It starts with and is a continuation of the psychological provision that characterises the pre-natal state. The function of holding in psychological terms is to provide ego-support particularly at the stage of absolute dependence before integration of the ego has become established. The establishment of integration and the development of ego-relatedness both rely upon good enough holding.

The infant does not go from a state of absolute dependence to absolute independence, independence is never absolute. The healthy individual does not become isolated, but continues to be related to the environment in such a way that the individual and the environment can be said to be interdependent. Although the holding phase is equivalent to the stage of being merged or of absolute dependence, ego support continues to be a need in the growing child, the adolescent, and at times of the adult, whenever there is a strain that threatens confusion or disintegration.



This is further explained by Erikson who reminds us that even in adult life we do not dare to give up our inborn need for maternal gratification. We cling to each other as if we were mothers to each other. He agrees with the view that we are never completely or successfully integrated, however healthy we may feel. The evolutionary drive for increasing integration, for improving our capabilities and capacities, brings about growth and development: and this is the principal task for a living being. Integration on any level, is never total or perfect: and death – final disintegration – is always present.

This clinging to each other is further explained by Winnicott when he describes how, in maturity, environment is something to which the individual contributes and for which the individual man or woman takes responsibility. The environment provides ego support and permits an adaptation to reality, reality testing, and a sense of reality, activities as important to the adult as they are to the infant. From here we can develop the important view, as was stated by Kegan in regard to personality, that there is not one holding environment early in life, but a succession of holding environments. They are the psychosocial environments which hold us (with which we are fused) and which let go of us (from which we differentiate).

Indeed, I will go further than this because I believe it is more accurate to state that there is not only a succession of 'holding environments' but that several 'holding environments' may be available for any one individual at any given time. In this regard, Freud acknowledged that individuals belonged to many groups, had identifications in many directions and a variety of models upon which to build an ego ideal. Such 'holding environments' will have structures, leaders and systems, they will be newly formed or old established and they will have a primary task, all of which will provide some sort of 'shape' to the particular organisation. In the chapter on 'Creativity' I referred to an 'external' and an 'internalised' holding environment, these concepts will now be developed further.

Starting with the external holding environment: this is basically the sociological holding environment. It includes; the ruling coalition, the organisational tasks – that is, the reason why the organisation exists, the roles of the various members, all forms of knowledge and skills, the private language, beliefs, values and attitudes shared by all

members. Trist E (1990) tells us that for each of the members there are external social objects which, "exist within him as material which he can use, of which he is partially aware, and which he is able to make available to himself by the normal process of recall" (p.542). In addition, an organisation does not exist in isolation, it is an open system that interacts with the external world and, depending on the degree of openness, this provides some of the external social objects.

Turning now to the internalised holding environment: this is basically the psychological holding environment. Here we are referring to internal objects which are regarded as part of the self and compose the basic social character of the individual. They relate to the deeper character level and derive from the phantasy activity of unconscious systems of internal object-relations. Trist again tells us, "They act as an internal source of influence on the patterns at a more conscious level and reach into society through them. They may also be directly, though still unconsciously, projected onto various types of external social objects which themselves are then partly fashioned by these investments" (p.542).

In the same way that the 'holding environment' provided by the mother influences the personality of the infant, so the 'holding environment' of the organisation influences the culture. The holding environment is not the culture, it is how the members of the organisation interact or their interrelatedness with the holding environment that results in the culture. It is how the members of the organisation perceive the holding environment that results in the unique and distinct culture that is the feature of every organisation. If they perceive it as 'good enough' and they have a 'basic trust' in it they will develop a task supportive culture. However, should the reverse apply the result may be an anti-task culture, as will be shown in some detail. The specific 'holding environment' provides the context in which development of the culture takes place.

What then is culture? I believe that the following characteristics help us to describe both 'personality' and 'culture'. In common with my previous approach in this thesis, I shall first relate to the individual and then to organisations. We can thus say that personality is: a psycho-social process; a dynamic process; evidenced by sameness and



continuity; unique for each and every individual; influenced by conscious and unconscious processes; such as to enable the individual to produce forms of behaviour which will be advantageous to him under the conditions imposed by the environment.

Using these same characteristics to relate to culture we can say that it is a psycho-social process. This was explained by reference to the interrelatedness of the members of the group with the organisational holding environment. It is evidenced by a sameness and continuity to provide for the self-esteem of the members and their actuality with others. But, because groups are ongoing structures as opposed to finished ones it is a dynamic and changing process. Being a psychological as well as a social process it is influenced by conscious and unconscious processes. Both the uniqueness of the collective, perceived view of the members of the organisation and the organisational holding environment results in a unique culture in every organisation and part of an organisation. The culture enables the members of the organisation to produce forms of behaviour which will be advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by the environment.

To return to the title of the thesis, organisational culture can be seen 'as if' it were 'the personality of the organisation'. It exhibits many of the same characteristics and presents us with the same sort of problems. For the organisation consultant (as for the analyst in regard to individuals) it is very much a matter of treating every organisation or part of an organisation as being unique. However, by an awareness of the characteristics outlined above it should be possible to establish sufficient knowledge of the specific situation to provide an understanding of the culture.

I would just conclude this overview with the following comments. Reliable holding is as vital to the members of an organisation as it is to the infant. If the holding environment is not 'good enough' this will be reflected in the culture of the organisation. It should also be stressed that organisations are open systems which means that they will also be affected by events in the external environment. At this point I shall now turn to a more detailed examination of the processes involved.

Where better to start with any detailed explanation of psycho-dynamic phenomena than with Freud (1921), who asserted at the very beginning of his 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' that there was no real difference between individual and group psychology. There can be little doubt, as Bion (1961) has stated, that the interrelatedness of the individual and the group is a key concept. Indeed, as will be seen from the overview the very first relationship, that of the infant with the mother, provides vital information regarding culture.

To understand how culture develops we first need to consider the most basic of all relationships – the aspect of holding. This relationship characterises the merged state when the baby and mother are not yet separated out in the baby's rudimentary mind. It is through this relationship that the infant experiences a sense of being. The infant's sense of being relies on the capacity of the mother (who is a part of the infant) to be someone 'who is' and not someone 'who does', until the infant is ready to initiate the doing. Out of these primitive beginnings comes object relating in terms of the infant's creation of the mother and the mother's care, made possible by the mother doing the right things at the right time – that is, when the infant is ready for it.

Winnicott tells us that holding is 'the basis for what gradually becomes a self experiencing being'. The very young infant does not recognise his mother as a distinct entity. He nevertheless forms particular expectations in respect to that element in his environment that succours him. Winnicott found a particular need to emphasize the actual nature of the concrete environment, especially at the stage of absolute dependence. The importance of 'good enough' holding is shown by the fact that there is no emotional or physical survival of an infant minus environment. The baby's use of the non-human environment depends upon the previous use of a human environment.

When Winnicott says there is never just an infant, he does not mean only that someone has to attend to and take care of this small creature. He means that if there is a thriving infant he or she comes 'attached to' another person. As Bowlby J (1969) has so clearly shown in the successful attachment of baby and mother, one sees that the baby is endowed with a host of abilities that seduce the mother – the baby's grasp of the mother's garment, his orientation to her eyes – and that the mother is able to attend to this



beguiling and is won over. Here we have clear data to support a two way process. It is not a case of the mother acting as an autonomous holding agent, it is, even at this stage, an interrelationship. As Winnicott said, the infant creates the mother.

Bion's (1963) formulations of these processes are also valuable. His view of this interrelationship is of the mother seen as a container who can contain what the baby projects and work with it, her capacity for what he calls 'reverie' being crucial. Bion also discussed the role of the mother in helping the baby develop his own capacity for thinking and so become more able to deal himself with these situations. Of this, he pointed out that the prior experience is of having thoughts particularly provoked by maternal absence and frustration and thinking is a development forced on the psyche by the necessity for dealing with thoughts. He also observed that if this process does not take place effectively the baby tends to introject not a comforting, progressive experience but what he called a nameless dread, severe contentless anxiety.

Very important in these interactions is the mother's capacity to feel what the baby feels and respond appropriately. This implies that she should have enough capacity to take in the baby's massive projections of intense feelings and phantasies, to accept them without undue diminishment through denials or other defences, and not to be physically overwhelmed by them as the baby feels he will be. The 'good enough' mother values and respects the reality of his feelings while making a more reality-based assessment of their phantasy content.

The aspect of 'good enough' holding is important to both personality development, and, as we shall see later, to the development of culture. The issue of holding can be examined with respect not only to the fundamental question as to whether the infant is held, but to the question of how the infant is held. How the child is held or 'hosted' may raise questions not of whether he will continue to function but of how he will. Among these questions one of the most important might be how the child comes to experience anxiety. Or, more specifically: how does the mother respond to the infant's anxiety? Is the response essentially to the anxiety or to the person who is feeling anxious? Response to the anxiety will be experienced by the infant to come from himself, whereas response to the infant may result in continuing dependency.

How the infant is held will also depend on the infant, as is pointed out by Winnicott. The capacity to form images and to use these constructively by recombination into new patterns is dependent on the individual's ability to trust. The word 'trust' in this context shows an understanding by the building up of confidence based on experience, before the enjoyment and employment of separation and independence. The potential space between baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society or the world, depends on experience which leads to trust. That is to say, there is a mutuality of experience or an overlap of potential spaces. Where there is not a basic trust it may not be possible to develop or maintain a capacity to experience a relationship to external reality.

Menzies Lyth (1988) has explained, although not explicitly, that children in hospital need a holding environment that can contain them. In her research she identified the need for close spatial boundaries in hospital, something comprehensible for the infant to identify with as 'my' place or 'our' place. She found that if the boundaries are drawn too wide or there are no boundaries the children are not able to identify with the holding environment. Small children need this holding together within a bounded space but also by attached people in terms of consistency in modes of response. Consistent testing of reality helps to build an effective identity.

The self system is thus structured by the internalisation of the relationship with mother and child, undifferentiated at the start then progressively separated throughout the long period of human dependence. Individual and environment are structured by, and within, each other. Early structuring of the personality is inevitably dominated by the physical closeness in which the mother's attitudes are communicated through innumerable signals in her whole handling of, and responses to, her child. The emotional experiences are gradually cohered by consistent reliable mothering into a 'primary or central self' reference. This integration is a labile process with threats to it producing at times intense anxiety and aggression.

Another process that comes into being during the period of maternal holding is that of identification. It will be recalled that Freud referred to identification as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person and that it is by identifying with the



parents that the child adopts their standards and values. Identification brings into play such functions as adaptation to reality, reality testing, sense of reality, the self concept (with its self and object representations) and the capacity to form object relations.

Moving rapidly on we have seen how the growing child passes through a series of identifications, constantly changing and shifting, creating out of bits of personalities of others the unique mosaic of the self. The individual is part of a group from earliest infancy – initially a group of two, the mother infant dyad; then a group of three or more as the existence of father and siblings have to be accommodated; later a series of overlapping family and social groups. These coexist in external reality and the developing individual's internal world.

Many of the possessions of his world are part of a shared reality. The infant relies on other people and possessions to be predictable and act in many ways as an extension of himself. Fairbairn has described how, from the outset, the self-system is structured by the internalisation of the relationship with mother and child. Thus we can see how the child originally internalises the relationship with the mother, including the language, and then as he matures and learns to communicate with his elders and his peers he learns certain modes and manners of expressing himself and fulfilling his requirements, and he also learns to expect consistent behaviour from others. In other words, he requires the continuity, consistency and confirmation of his world that Kernberg O (1966) refers to.

In order to ensure the healthy development in the individual in terms of the continuity, consistency, and confirmation required, there is a need, as Menzies-Lyth has stated, for the establishment of firm boundaries for the self and others across which realistic and effective relationships and transactions can take place and within which one's own identity can be established. In order to achieve this the individual needs to develop a categorical framework as it is only in this way that it is possible for him to produce anything of his own that is intelligible to others. Organised life is organised in the minds of all who participate in it and this organisation takes place by means of a conceptual framework, even though they may not be aware of the framework. Through learning the

language we learn the local customs and assumptions, so the programming with which our identity is constituted is in effect our linguistic programming, our induction into the network of human associations.

Erikson (1959) spoke of ego identity as "a sense that the ego is learning effective steps toward a tangible collective future, that it is developing into a defined ego within a social reality" (p.22). Learning the language and hence the conceptual framework of that social reality provides us with the necessary continuity for a tangible collective future. This is important because the sense of an ego identity is based on the common perception of an individual's self sameness and continuity in time, together with the perception that meaningful people recognise this self sameness and continuity. This is not to deny the fact that identity is constantly being negotiated, but we should not forget Jacobson's (1984) concept of "the capacity to remain the same in the midst of change" (p.23).

Soon the process of learning brings with it a high regard for possessions, for loved objects, and later, for ideal causes and loyalties. We are speaking here of whatever objects a person calls 'mine'. As we grow older we identify with groups, neighbourhood, and nation as well as with possessions, clothes, home. They become matters of importance to us in a sense that other people's families, nations, or possessions are not. The ego, according to Freud, has the task of keeping the organism as a whole in touch with reality, of mediating between unconscious impulses and the outer world.

To summarise, we can now better understand why Bion stated that the human individual was a group animal (albeit at war with his own 'groupishness'), to study whom one needed binocular vision: that the individual is required to be looked at from the position of the group and the group from the position of the individual; that there was a 'socio-' and a 'psycho-' perspective; and that they were interdependent. The postulated situation where the person at the personal or psychological level could be viewed as an organism perpetually requiring, and seeking, personal relationships for his development and maintenance. Of this relationship of the individual with the group Bion agrees with Freud that a group 'instinct' is not primitive and that much of his groupishness originates in his upbringing within the family.



Much of the foregoing has necessarily been in regard to the development of the individual. I now want to refer to organisations. The 'nature of organisations' was fully dealt with in the chapter thus titled; however, it is perhaps important that we recall some of the more significant aspects. Freud spoke of intense identification of group members with both the leader and the group as a whole. In his view this resulted in a 'psychic cement', which, although operating outside awareness often leads to a common ideal. Identity with a group entity goes beyond the mere perception of it and the investing of it with some emotional meaning, for identification in this sense also contains an element of responding or, more specifically, an element of individual commitment. To belong to or to feel part of a group (some people have used the term ego involved) also implies a more or less transitory giving up of some aspect of the individual's self (or self schema) to the group as a group.

Group identification has been defined as a set of preconscious and unconscious attitudes which incline each member to apperceive the group as an extension of himself and impel him to remain in direct contact with the other members and to adhere to the group standards. The result of an individual's group identification is that he reacts to the attributes of the group as if these attributes were also his own. While the belief in the group is a powerful belief on the part of its members, it is important to recall that it is only a perceived object or an illusion. For Anzieu D (1984) the group illusion corresponds to the founding moment in which the group is formed. It becomes a group when it is gripped with the collective imaginative belief that the group exists, as a reality that is both immanent and transcends each of them.

I now want to add to this previous discussion by building on the concept of an organisation as a holding environment. Erikson (1959) provides us with an indication of the way that organisations are used for reality testing when he illustrates how the synthesising function of the group constantly works on subsuming fewer and fewer images, thus making it possible that the whole frightening world of infinite variability becomes manageable and bearable. In synthesising, the group employs mechanisms of condensation and pictorial representation which characterise the products of collective

imagery. This is reinforced by the universal trend of groups towards some form of uniformity including literally special uniforms or distinctive clothing through which incomplete self-certainty, for a time, can hide in a group certainty.

The close link between personality and culture is illustrated by several writers. For example, Schindler W (1952) refers to group formation as the development of a 'group personality'. He thought that this 'common denominator' of the individual group member's characteristics could be divided into a group id, ego, and superego. For Schindler the group id pertains to common needs such as security or pleasure. The superego refers to perceptions of the father leader and mother group, while the ego 'registers' the id and the superego functions and judges whether or not they serve the group's purposes.

Relating to group relations training Schindler observes that the personalities of group members construct a group first around a common agency, for example, the id, ego, or superego; then they do so around an organising unconscious phantasy or imago. He tells us that this agency and this organisation may or may not be appropriate for realising the goals ascribed to or assumed by the group. Other factors affecting the group's destiny include the composition of the group, its educational level and the degree of contact between members, as well as the attitudes of other groups and the overall social context. These are matters that will be commented on again shortly.

Anzieu (1984) notes that regression provoked by the group often goes beyond the Oedipal structure on which Freud based his application of psycho-analysis to culture. He noted that this situation mobilises archaic persecutory and depressive anxieties linked to the dual relation to the mother. The group illusion in this regressive situation is precisely the counterpart of these archaic anxieties, just as for the infant, the phantasy of fusion with the good mother is the counterpart of the phantasies of the bad breast and the bad object. "We are all good objects in the womb of the good mother and we all love one another in her as she loves and gives birth to, feeds and cares for us" (p.153). The group elicits the phantasy that participants are equal at the all powerful and self-sufficient breast of the mother experienced as part object.



The problem of the individual coming to terms with the emotional life of the group, was likened by Bion to that of the infant in its first relationship, viz, with the breast-mother. The group identity can become for the individual the symbolic representation of a nurturing mother. Terms such as mother earth and motherland and even Alma Mater are of relevance here. In a broader sense the hypothesis can be advanced that the universal need to belong, to establish a state of psychological unity with others, represents a covert wish for restoring an earlier state of unconflicted well being inherent in the exclusive union with mother.

Money Kyrle R (1950) was the first to introduce the perception of a mother image in group formation. That the need and yearning for a 'good' mother exists in the very core of our being has been well made in the last few paragraphs above. As has also been said, there is a similar need and yearning for a father figure and for siblings, and, consequently, for the family as a group. It seems perfectly reasonable to conclude that the early holding environments are clearly very influential in our development and that they will subsequently affect our adult behaviour.

I want now to look at the relatedness of the group to the holding environment. In much the same way that the infant relates to the maternal holding environment so the members of an organisation relate to the organisational holding environment. If the holding environment is 'good enough', that is (in simple terms), if the primary task is clear enough and achievable, the culture that develops will be task supportive. However, where for any one of a variety of reasons the holding environment is not 'good enough' there may be regression or an anti-task culture.

Provided that there is a good enough holding environment, the anxiety of venturing into the unknown, the process by which maturation provokes change is not fundamentally disruptive. The anxiety can be dominated, just because the thread of continuity has not been broken, and can always be given a reassuring tug. Conceived in this way, the idea of growth does not contradict the assumption of a conservative impulse. If there is a hierarchy of needs, and the urge to explore new kinds of satisfaction is only released when

we feel confident that more basic needs are assured, then spontaneous growth follows from the consolidation of familiar patterns of expectation. The reactions of conservatism are latent, because no threat to the established structure of meaning provokes them.

In situations where the group members perceive the organisational holding environment to be good enough and to have basic trust in it, we shall have progression. Progression means not just differentiation but differentiation and reintegration, a process which is essentially that of adaptation: a differentiation from that which was the very subject of my personal organisation and which becomes thereby the object of a new organisation on behalf of a new subjectivity that co-ordinates it. We are vulnerable every time to a qualitatively new kind of separation anxiety. Paradoxically, we have the fear of being completely unseparate, of being swallowed up and being taken over; and the fear of being totally separate, of being utterly alone, abandoned, and remote beyond recall.

Recurring issues of differentiation and integration throughout life come to be understood as the consequence or reflections of the earliest period. Subject-object relations emerge out of a lifelong process of development: a succession of qualitative differentiations of the self from the world, with a qualitatively more extensive object with which to be in relation created each time. These processes are highly significant in regard to the development, and more particularly, the perpetuation of culture and will be referred to in greater detail later in this chapter.

Group relations training provides valuable information in regard to the interrelatedness of the group and the holding environment. Scheidlinger P (1980) tells us that there always develops rapidly an underlying common group problem, a common group tension of which the group is not aware, but which determines its behaviour. This common group tension seems to represent what he calls the common denominator of the dominant unconscious fantasies of all members. He describes how a remark made by one member is often not taken up by anybody, apparently because nobody can fit it into what is unconsciously at the back of his mind: then gradually a subject catches on and becomes the unconsciously determined topic of the group until the next interpretation produces closure of this particular phase of the session.



Although he does not specifically state it as being so, what Scheidlinger is describing is the formation of the group culture: the development of the culture out of the relatedness to the holding environment. Especially useful here is Bion's idea that the individual in some sense always reflects the needs of the group. At least during some periods it is as if the group was speaking through many voices and the particular individual whose vocal chords are thus utilised may be functioning primarily on behalf of the group. Every group member takes up a particular role characteristic for his personality structure, because of the particular unconscious fantasy of group relations he entertains in his mind and which he tries to solve through appropriate behaviour in the group. Furthermore, every group requires and gets certain people to act as containers for its conservative wishes on the one hand and its progressive wishes on the other hand.

Bion had described how a certain group culture puts pressure on different individuals to take a certain role, e.g., the fight group requires a fighting leader. Building on this view, Armelius K & Armelius B A (1985) believe (as did Schindler) that the individual group composition may be considered as a resource that the group has for creating different group cultures. In turn, the group culture that actually develops in the group will influence the behaviour of each individual member in the group. Some people are more likely to act in a pairing culture than others, and these people will contribute more to that culture than the others, who may merely support the culture by their passive acceptance. The individual thus influences and is influenced by the group culture.

In some respects this is correct: that is, the culture will be affected by the composition of the group. However, what is not said is that the composition alone does not create the culture. It seems clear that the composition of the group could change yet this would not result in a corresponding change to the culture. The culture is created by the interrelatedness of the group of individuals (of whatever composition) and the organisational holding environment. The result of that interrelatedness is the group or organisational culture.

This relatedness is perhaps best demonstrated by further references to group relations training. Regression in such groups is triggered by a lack of structure; the group leader refuses to act like a chairman, and since norms of behaviour in a meeting require

a chairman to act in a way consonant with them, the group leader's behaviour makes them inoperative. The group is then perceived as an unstructured and therefore confluent global object, which comes to represent the mother of a very small child who is so much bigger than her baby. This kind of transference activates a state of the self in each of the group's members (or lack thereof) which, to a certain extent, corresponds to the state of self of a baby.

The concept of relatedness to the holding environment also provides clarification of Bion's basic assumption activities. Where the holding environment is perceived by the members, at that time, as not being good enough, I believe that they regress to a temporary position where they behave 'as if' they were in the maternal holding environment. It is the interrelatedness of the group with the holding environment that produces what Bion has called the basic assumption culture. This is made clearer by Sutherland J D (1985) who describes how the group dominated by an assumption evolves an appropriate culture to express it: e.g., the dependent group establishes a leader who is felt to be helpful in supplying what it wants. Moreover the assumptions can be strong enough for members to be controlled by them to the extent of their thinking and behaviour becoming almost totally unrealistic in relation to the work task.

The group is then for each member an undifferentiated whole into which he is pressed inexorably to conform and in which each has lost his independent individuality. It will be recalled that when a group is operating in a basic assumption mode it is using concrete symbols or symbolic equations; it is not able to use true symbols. This is an indication that there is a regression to the paranoid-schizoid position as indicated by Bion above. As has been stated, in this position the child is highly dependent on the maternal holding environment. Thus we can view the three basic assumption activities in that light. Bion himself pointed out that the basic assumptions in the group crystallised for him replicas of the emotions with which the infant related to the mother, and later, the family.

I feel that it is important to distinguish basic assumption activity, in general, from the underlying group or organisational culture. Sutherland informs us that the function of basic assumptions is to defend the group against anxieties of primitive fantasies becoming too intense. In this respect they are basic underlying defences available to be mobilized



at any time. They do not conflict with each other; rather, they change from one to another and the fact that conflict only occurs between them and the work group serves to emphasise the point.

I totally accept that under certain conditions an organisation culture may be dominated by and be characterised by one or other of the basic assumption activities, but I consider that it is misleading to refer to basic assumption activities in general terms as 'cultures'. The temporary nature of such activities is shown by the fact that by showing the group how it is using basic assumption activity to avoid its task it can become more task orientated. In this regard, and to distinguish both processes, I prefer to refer to basic assumption activities as 'temporary cultures' or better still, to refer to them simply as 'activities'.

I want now to look at some examples of the effects of relatedness of groups with holding environments that are 'not good enough'. The phenomena described, for example scapegoating, are not in any way new. However, looked at in the light of this new view of culture, I believe this sheds new light on these known phenomena. Furthermore, it provides additional support for the view being put.

It was mentioned above that progression means differentiation and reintegration. Integration without differentiation solidifies but does not lead to group formation. The forming of larger aggregates, with loss of function of the components and rigidity of structure as a whole is not intergration but aggregation. We see this phenomenon before our eyes every day in bureaucracy and institutionalisation. The bureaucratic organisation disintegrates into fragments when what little information it can transmit to its various levels, due to its low degree of integration, blocks up the channels of transmission. In a mature situation (which will be described shortly), group formation increases differentiation and allows its participants greater freedom within the group than they have as separate individuals: all integration is based upon this fact. It provides greater opportunities for mutuality of experience and overlapping of potential spaces which will lead to progression.

In this situation we can see the effects of a not good enough holding environment that we choose to call a bureaucracy. Because of its fragmentary nature and lack of communication it does not provide the basic trust required of a good enough holding environment. The result is that there is no progression; the interrelatedness of the members of the organisation with the holding environment results in a regressive or concrete culture.

A further example is where frustration at the lack of a good enough holding environment engenders aggression, and when it cannot be discharged against the frustrating object – namely, the leader – it is redirected (displaced) toward substitutes. In addition to people, inanimate objects, particularly those associated in some way with the frustrating agents may be used. Thus, the destruction of property such as furniture, walls, floors, and appliances is quite often the result of displaced aggression originally intended for one or more persons or even to institutions – such as government – which one feels impotent to influence. Here is an example of adults behaving in almost the same manner as children who are frustrated by the maternal holding environment. The perceived view of the members of the organisation is that the holding environment is not good enough, they do not have basic trust and become frustrated. In infantile terms they throw a tantrum.

Similarly, the phenomenon of scapegoat formation is a manifestation of the displacement of aggressive impulses upon an individual or a group. It occurs most often when the expression of these impulses against the substitute object seems less fraught with imagined or real danger than their direct expression. We can see here similarities with the infant who uses splitting to project the bad part object. Again, the perception of the group is that the holding environment is not good enough and thus they resort to less mature, infantile behaviour.

Freud made some interesting observations about the disintegration of a group through panic. Contrary to the assumption of others, he asserted that the primary factor here was not the degree of outside danger or conflict confronting the group, but rather the breakdown of libidinal ties within it. It is of the very essence of panic that it bears no relation to the danger that threatens, and often breaks out upon the most trivial occasions.



According to Freud, such primarily egocentric demeanour – self-love instead of love for others – can be observed in groups which are in the process of disintegration, where the state of the group is such that they do not perceive the existence of a holding environment, where they feel, in infantile terms, that the mother has deserted them. It seems perfectly reasonable to assume that the natural response is likely to be panic.

As Menzies Lyth (1959) points out, unfortunately for task performance, members of institutions are also likely to seek satisfaction of personal needs that are anti-task; very often they need to mitigate the stresses and strains of the task itself and of confrontation with the human material on which the task is focused. She also informs us that members try to establish a 'social system that also acts as a defence against anxiety', both personal anxiety and that evoked by institutional membership. Jaques (1955) has referred to a 'socially structured defence system'. This will appear in all aspects of the institution both formal and informal, in attitudes and interpersonal relations, in customs and conventions and also, very importantly, in the actual formal social structure of the organisation and its management system. The danger, says Menzies Lyth, is that since the anxieties defended against are primitive and violent, defences will also be primitive.

What Menzies Lyth, and for that matter Jaques, are describing here is a situation where the interrelatedness of the group members and the holding environment is such that it is perceived with anxiety. The response to this anxiety results in a culture that will allay the fears of the group. The fact that this is anti-task is not a concern for the members. The logic is not in the supporting of the organisational task but in developing a culture that defends against the anxiety. As was stated earlier, the function of culture is to enable the members of the organisation to produce forms of behaviour which will be advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by their environment.

As well as creative and happy moments, some of the team meetings and seminars of the police internal consultants experienced tensions, crises and ruptures. I came to the conclusion that what was occurring was a notion of 'phantasies of break-up', this being the specifically group version of the hateful envy conceptualised by Melanie Klein. The anxiety aroused by breaking-apart phantasies can perhaps be best understood if we look at the situation of the infant. At a pregenital level, it is a separation anxiety. The child

who grows up resents his dependence on his mother and projects on to her his wish to be rid of her; he fantasises a bad mother who rejects her children as a bad object or lets them kill one another. What is broken apart here is the symbiotic bond between mother and child. In other words, there is a lack of basic trust in the maternal holding environment. In like manner, there was a lack of basic trust in the holding environment of the internal consultants.

To conclude this reference to 'not good enough' holding it seems highly appropriate to quote Menzies Lyth (1959) in regard to managing change. She states,

"Efforts to initiate serious change were often met with acute anxiety and hostility, which conveyed the idea that the people concerned felt very threatened, the threat being of nothing less than social chaos and individual breakdown. To give up known ways of behaviour and embark on the unknown were felt to be intolerable. In general, it may be postulated that resistance to social change is likely to be greatest in institutions whose social defence systems are dominated by primitive psychic defence mechanisms, those which have been collectively described by Melanie Klein as the paranoid-schizoid defences" (p.79).

Change is inevitably to some extent an excursion into the unknown. It implies a commitment to future events that are not entirely predictable and to their consequences, and inevitably provokes doubt and anxiety. Any significant change within a social system implies changes in existing social relationships and social structure. It therefore implies a change in the culture. The social system, the holding environment, which was previously related to by the group members, is now threatened to exist (or is now existing) in a different form. In maternal holding environment terms, this would be the same as losing or changing our mother, or the no less anxiety-provoking thought that she suddenly changed in some way.

All changes are encounters with circumstances, sensations, and emotions, for which our previous life experience cannot fully have prepared us. Rycroft C (1968a) informs us that,

"Anxiety is the expectation of something as yet unknown. Since the unknown for human beings includes alienated unconscious parts of themselves, this as-yet-unknown may be either inside or outside themselves and the same emotion, anxiety, may be evoked by either subjective or objective occurrences. The fact that anxiety is evoked by the



as-yet-unknown means that all novel experiences tend to be preceded by anxiety, regardless of whether we anticipate that the experience will be pleasant or distressing" (p.15).

Having covered much ground it may be useful to try to pull together some of the more pertinent points. In the same way that Winnicott would say that 'there is not just an infant' we can say that 'there is not just a group'. The group and the environment are structured by and within each other. It is a dynamic process that is constantly changing at both the cultural and holding environment levels. It is through the interrelatedness of the group members and the organisational holding environment that the members develop the group culture. How the culture develops will depend on the way in which the holding environment is perceived.

I want now to look at the issue of how culture is perpetuated. The first point I should make is that culture (like personality) is a process rather than a thing, it is constantly evolving into new forms. The next point is that without some system of reducing our experiences to familiar form we should be imprisoned in the uniqueness of the here and now. Thus we see that, on the one hand, culture is dynamic and changing, but on the other hand, there is a need for some system of making sense out of total chaos. In effect, we are talking about the processes of differentiation and integration which were referred to earlier.

In this chapter, and in the chapter on 'Symbolism', I have referred to the fact that the main characteristic of object relations when the depressive position has been reached is that the object is felt as a whole object. In connection with this there is a greater degree of awareness of differentiation and of the separateness of the ego and the object. Here I want to expand on this part of the developmental process to provide a background to understanding how culture is perpetuated.

Fairbairn W R D (1952) explains that,

"Ego development is characterised by a process whereby an original state of infantile dependence based upon primary identification with the object is abandoned in favour of adult or mature dependence based upon differentiation of the object from the self." He further explains this as follows: "It would not be wrong to say that psychologically speaking,

identification with the object and infantile dependence are but two aspects of the same phenomenon. On the other hand, mature dependence involves a relationship between two independent individuals, who are completely differentiated from one another as mutual objects. The more mature a relationship is, the less it is characterised by primary identification; for what such identification essentially represents is failure to differentiate the object" (p.163).

It is correct to speak here of mature dependence, rather than independence, since a relationship implies dependence of some sort. Fairbairn states that what distinguished mature dependence from infantile dependence "is that it is characterised neither by a one sided attitude of incorporation nor by an attitude of primary emotional identification. On the contrary it is characterised by a capacity on the part of a differentiated individual for co-operative relationships with differentiated objects." That is, "a relationship involving evenly matched giving and taking between two differentiated individuals who are mutually dependent, and between whom there is no disparity of dependence" (p.145). This may be an ideal picture but it is one which is never completely realised.

Just as physical maturity is an extremely complex matter so is emotional maturity complex. Winnicott D W (1988) adds to our understanding when he explains that,

"The psyche becomes something that has a position from which to become related to external reality, becomes a thing with a capacity to create and perceive external reality, becomes a qualitatively enriched being able to go further than can be explained by environmental influences, and able not only to adapt but also to refuse to adapt, and becomes a creature with what feels like a capacity for choice." For Winnicott, "Maturity means, among other things, a capacity for tolerating ideas, and parents need this capacity which at its best is part of a social maturity. A mature social system (while making certain demands in regard to action) allows freedom of ideas and the free expression of them" (p.59). This is a slow process and the child only gradually reaches the ability to distinguish between dream and reality. Winnicott continues, "In maturity environment is something to which the individual contributes and for which the individual man or woman takes responsibility" (p.152).

Much, however, can occur during the process of maternal holding that will affect the process of movement from infantile dependence to mature dependence. Winnicott reminds us that in the development of the psyche there is a possibility of failure at every point, and indeed there can be no such thing as growth without distortion due to some



degree of failure of environmental adaptation. He observes that if organised defences against anxiety are more in evidence than the instincts and their conscious control and their influence on action and imagination, then the clinical picture is of psycho-neurosis rather than of health. In like manner, Fairbairn points out that, "The persistence of a preponderating schizoid or depressive tendency arising during the stage of infantile dependency is reflected by (a) schizoid (introvert) and (b) the depressive (extravert)" (p.164).

For the infant there are fears of being completely unseparate, of being swallowed up and taken over: and conversely, the fear of being totally separate, of being utterly alone, abandoned, and remote beyond recall. Should the maternal holding environment not provide the necessary basic trust the infant is unlikely to progress satisfactorily to adult dependence. The mother's ability to aid her child in this process is determined by the extent to which she can remain open to all responses from her child, whether she feels them to be bad or good. The ideal mother, of course, does not exist. Fortunately, however, our growth to maturity as individuals does not depend upon having perfect mothers: they only have to be good enough. The good enough mother responds automatically in a complex manner.

This is explained further by Symington N (1986):

"From time to time the baby gives expression to a spontaneous gesture and this issues forth from the True Self. The mother needs to meet this gesture with an affirming gesture of her own, coming from her own True Self. The True Self does not become a living reality, is not affirmed, unless the mother repeatedly meets the spontaneous gestures of the child with a gesture of her own, but one that meets the child's. It is of the essence that no principles can be laid down about what this spontaneous response will be. The mother may get up and dance in front of her child, or pick up the child and rock it and sing, or lie him down and stroke him, or give him a feed" (p.314).

In this regard Symington points out that a mother cannot find out what to do from books or from anyone else when her baby spontaneously reaches out towards her in gesture and action, especially at certain moments. He explains,

"Of course a mother can be taught a lot; she can be shown how to hold the baby, how to feed the baby, how to wind the baby, how to bath the baby and so on, but only she can know how to respond when the baby gives her that strange look, makes a peculiar noise, suddenly throws his hand in the air or starts to look intently at some object in the room" (p.315).

Faced with such a difficult situation the parents may not provide a good enough holding environment and Winnicott's view that there is a possibility of failure at every point seems to be perfectly understandable. Where, however, the maternal and later the family holding environments are perceived by the infant to be good enough, where there is basic trust, the infant will satisfactorily progress to mature dependence. Such trust will strongly influence the perception of the holding environment, and that trust will be based on the life experiences of the infant. Thus we return to the point that the individual and the environment are structured by and within each other.

It is not possible to state precisely what is a good enough holding environment, but we can say that it is made possible by the mother doing the right thing at the right time that is when the baby is ready for it. She provides the context in which development takes place. There is never complete integration – the individual and the environment are interdependent. There is no emotional or physical survival of an infant without environment, reliable holding has to be a feature of the environment if the child is to survive. Ego support continues in adult life, especially when there is anxiety. In the same way we cannot say precisely what is not a good enough holding environment but we do know that if this process does not take place effectively, the baby tends to introject not a comforting, progressive experience – but as has been said before – what Bion called a nameless dread, severe contentless anxiety.

In the same way that the maternal holding environment affects the development of adult maturity in the infant so the organisational holding environment will affect the existence or otherwise of mature dependence in the group. Where the members of an organisation, or part of an organisation, have a basic trust, and perceive the holding environment as good enough there will exist a state of mature dependence. Where,



however, the reverse applies, there may exist a state akin to infantile dependence. For ease of reference, and in typical categorising fashion, I shall henceforth refer to these situations as mature and immature.

In the mature situation the members of the organisation will be able to differentiate objects from the self and be able to take part in co-operative relationships with differentiated objects. In an immature situation, on the other hand, the members of the organisation will not be able to differentiate between themselves and objects, there will be a one sided attitude of incorporation and an attitude of primary emotional identification. As change involves the very creating of new objects (a process of differentiation) as well as our relating to them (a process of integration) it is essential that a mature situation exists.

Where an immature situation exists there can be little or no progression. Differentiation not being possible the culture will be perpetuated in the same form until such time as a mature situation exists. Where, however, a mature situation exists the culture will provide for co-operative relationships between the members of the organisation and the organisational holding environment. Here the view of Jacobson (1964), mentioned earlier, is most applicable to the mature organisation: "the capacity to remain the same in the midst of change" (p.23). We can thus see that in a mature organisation the culture will be perpetuated and characterised by gradual and smooth change because of the ability of the members to differentiate and to adapt to change. In the immature organisation the culture will be perpetuated with little or no change because of the inability of the members to differentiate and adapt – that is, until such time as the members develop an adult dependence.

Before I leave this discussion on perpetuation of culture I should like to refer back to Bion's basic assumption activities. Sutherland (1985) describes the situation of group members as follows, "The group is for each member an undifferentiated whole into which he is pressed inexorably to conform and in which each has lost his independent individuality" (p.59). What is being described here is none other than what was described by Fairbairn as infantile dependency. This further convinces me that in the 'normal' use of the terminology we are referring to a temporary culture: it is a temporary regression

from mature dependence by the use of the defence of infantile dependency, used in the way that Parkes described as providing not only a defence to the immediate anxiety but also time to adapt to the new reality.

I want now to look at how culture is represented. Much of what I have to say has already been referred to in the chapter on 'Symbolism'. However, there are still a few points to make. If we start from the position that the function of culture as a whole is to enable the members of the organisation, or part of the organisation to produce forms of behaviour that will be advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by the environment, we can appreciate that there is a need to develop a categorical framework to represent those forms of behaviour. It is only in this way that the members of the group will be able to produce anything of their own which is intelligible to others.

Organised life is organised in the minds of all who participate in it and this organisation takes place by means of a conceptual framework even though they may not be aware of the framework. The world we respond to, or the world towards which we direct our behaviour, is the world as we symbolise it, or represent it to ourselves. Thus each group comes to have its own unique language, its own 'private language', or idiom. As Erikson reminds us, the synthesising function of the group constantly works on subsuming fewer and fewer images by employing mechanisms of condensation and pictorial representation.

Referring back to our discussion of perpetuation of culture it seems that where an immature situation exists and little progression is taking place the opportunity exists to synthesise and develop a more and more private form of language. Where there is a mature situation the opportunities for adaptability and differentiation will result in a less concrete private language. The other point that needs restating in this context, is the point regarding concrete symbols or symbolic equations. Where there is regression to the paranoid-schizoid position there will not be progression: words are not used as true symbols.



I shall conclude this chapter with a brief look at how this knowledge can be used to look at organisational problems. Two similar cases show the benefit of such knowledge. The first is the well publicised situation of the West Midlands Police Crime Squad; the other concerns a recently described problem with a division of a conglomerate. In both cases the relevant part of the organisation was seen by the ruling coalition to be not performing well or, to put it more strongly, dysfunctional. They were seen to be 'out of line' with the main organisation. The view of those at the top was that the members of those parts of the organisation were the cause of the dysfunctional behaviour.

From our knowledge of how culture develops this does not seem a very helpful view as it does not take us any further than what we know. Simply allocating blame to those groups as if they were the cause without recognising that a deeper problem exists does not provide an explanation. By using the knowledge that the culture develops through the interrelatedness of the members with the holding environment, from their perception of the holding environment, it will be possible to analyse the cause more accurately. The sort of questions we need to ask are 'How did the division of the conglomerate and the CID Crime Squad perceive their respective holding environments?' and 'Why did they perceive them in this way?' The sort of answers that we might reasonably expect would be in the nature of: 'They don't care about us'; 'They don't understand us'; 'They don't even know we exist'; or, 'They don't care what we do'.

The answers to these sorts of questions will provide an answer to why those parts of the organisations were dysfunctional. It will provide us not with just an effect but much more importantly, the cause. Armed with such information organisations may be able to prevent such occurrences happening again. On a general note, any organisation wishing to develop a task culture should pay particular attention to the holding environment, or more particularly, to how the members perceive the holding environment and any organisation wishing to positively influence the culture should aim to ensure that a mature situation exists.

We need to bear in mind, however, that organisational culture is influenced by unconscious feelings and fantasies and that the way to understand this is through deliberate intervention and the deciphering of the response. The way in which the consultant is used

and experienced and also the feelings evoked in him may offer evidence of the underlying and unstated issues and feelings in the client system. By interacting with the organisation the consultant can gain an understanding of the unconscious level and hence the culture of the organisation. This is a matter that will be referred to in greater detail in the next chapter.

## **Summary**

Culture like personality is less a finished product than a transitive process. Both the process and the product are unique. Each culture is an idiom unto itself which develops in its own particular context and that context must be understood in order to comprehend the idiom. It is not possible to produce cultures to order, they are dynamic continua and the whole is more important than any of the parts. The important thing is to discover the processes by which they develop, grow and change.

Past uses of the word 'culture' to designate a way of life of a particular society, or part of a society, such as an organisation, are exceedingly vague. Cultural differences are also seen as being in the nature of things requiring no explanation. One of the results is that functions which are not easily understood are assigned to a mysterious central agency called culture accompanied by a declaration that 'it' performs in a particular way. Culture is also an easy option to fall back on to solve all our unexplained problems. These are just some of the problems that arise when we do not have an explanation of the processes by which cultures develop, grow and change.

One of the problems involved in the definition of culture is that of delimitation. The constant interaction between the individual and culture is fundamental to any study of either culture or personality – they are indivisibly linked. The function of personality as a whole may be seen as to enable the individual to produce forms of behaviour which will be advantageous to him under the conditions imposed by his environment. Thus the norms for personality differ in different societies, and different organisations; the ego develops into a defined ego within a social reality.



The initial social reality is the maternal holding environment. Here the establishment of integration and the development of ego-relatedness both rely upon good enough holding. Independence is never absolute; the healthy individual continues to be related to the environment in such a way that the individual and environment can be seen to be interdependent. Thus integration is never total or perfect and the environment constantly provides ego support and permits an adaptation to reality, reality testing, and a sense of reality which are just as important to the adult as to the infant. From here we develop the important view that several holding environments may exist at any given time. In the same way that the maternal holding environment influences the personality of the infant so the organisational holding environment influences the culture.

Organisational culture develops out of the interrelatedness of the members of the group and the organisational holding environment. The characteristics of organisational culture are: it is a psycho-social process; it is a dynamic process; it is evidenced by sameness and continuity; it is unique to every organisation and part of an organisation; it is influenced by conscious and unconscious processes; it is such as will enable the members to produce forms of behaviour that will be advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by the environment.

Reliable holding is as vital to the members of an organisation as it is to the infant. Therefore to understand culture we need to understand the most basic of all relationships – the aspect of holding. Good enough holding is not to be seen purely in terms of the mother's actions, rather, it should be seen as an interrelationship between mother and infant. On the infant's side this will depend on trust based on his experience of the holding environment. Thus individual and environment are structured by, and within, each other. The individual is a group animal that is required to be looked at from the position of the group and the group from the position of the individual.

On becoming an adult many of the holding environments will be organisational holding environments of varying kinds. The close link between personality and culture is illustrated by several writers who variously refer to a 'group personality' and groups are also linked to maternal or family holding environments. This may not be surprising as group members relate to the organisational holding environment in much the same way

that infants relate to the maternal holding environment. It is out of this interrelatedness that culture develops. Where the holding environment is perceived by the members of the organisation as good enough the anxiety of change will not be fundamentally disruptive. Where the holding environment is not perceived as good enough the resulting culture will more likely be characterised by infant-like behaviour, such as, splitting resulting in scapegoating, and panic resulting in disintegration. In these circumstances the culture is likely to be anti-task.

A particular type of infant-like behaviour is the basic assumption activities described by Bion. These have also been referred to as 'cultures' which it is suggested is misleading, consequently, these activities need to be distinguished from what is being described in this thesis as organisational culture. They do develop as a result of the interrelatedness of the members of the organisation with the holding environment as perceived at that time but will not normally be identical to the underlying culture of the organisation. In this regard, and to distinguish both processes, I prefer to refer to basic assumption activities as 'temporary cultures' or better still, to refer to them simply as 'activities'.

Ego development is characterised by a process whereby an original state of infantile dependence based on primary identification with the object is abandoned in favour of adult or mature dependence based upon differentiation of the object from the self. Infantile dependence is characterised by a one sided attitude of incorporation and an attitude of primary emotional identification. Mature dependence is characterised by a capacity on the part of a differentiated individual for co-operative relationships with differentiated objects – by a relationship between two differentiated individuals who are mutually dependent and between whom there is no disparity of dependence.

Emotional maturity, just the same as physical maturity, is a complex matter: it means a capacity for tolerating ideas and for not only being able to adapt but also to choose not to adapt. In maturity environment is something to which the individual contributes and for which he takes responsibility. Much, however, can occur during the process of maternal holding that will affect the process of movement from infantile dependence to mature dependence. It is not possible to specify what is good enough



holding, or for that matter, what is not a good enough holding environment, but we do know that where there is not good enough holding it can result in psycho-neurosis rather than health.

In the same way that the maternal holding environment affects the development of mature dependence in the infant, so the organisational holding environment will affect the existence or otherwise of mature dependence in the group. In the mature situation the culture will be perpetuated and characterised by gradual and smooth change because of the ability of the members to differentiate and to adapt to change. In the immature situation the culture will be perpetuated with little or no change because of the inability of the members to differentiate and adapt. As change involves the very creating of new objects (a process of differentiation) as well as our relating to them (a process of integration) it is essential that a mature situation exists.

Representation of culture is chiefly by the use of words and language used as symbols. Each culture is represented by its own unique language, its own private language, or idiom. Where an immature situation exists there is more opportunity to synthesise and develop a more and more private form of language. Mechanisms of condensation and pictorial representation are more likely in view of the lack of adaptability. In the mature situation the opportunities for adaptability and differentiation will result in a less concrete private language.

Knowledge of how culture develops provides the opportunity to analyse the cause of organisational problems more accurately. We need to bear in mind, however, that culture is influenced by unconscious feelings and fantasies and that the way to understanding is through deliberate intervention and the deciphering of the responses. These are matters that will be dealt with in the next two chapters.

## *CHAPTER 11*

### **MANAGING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE**

By way of introduction to this chapter I want to add a further clarification regarding culture. In referring to how culture develops I noted the interrelatedness of the individual members of the organisation with their holding environment. The members of the organisation (or group) are of course, inseparable from the holding environment. The group and the holding environment are structured by and within each other. However, the culture and the holding environment must be distinguished from each other. In like manner, the culture is inseparable from the personality; the culture and personality are structured by and within each other, but they are conceptually distinct. Despite their interrelatedness, the personality is no more identical to the culture than the culture is to the holding environment. Thus, we can perhaps better understand the unique nature of culture.

This clarification leads to the inference that in many ways the culture can be seen 'as if' it were the 'personality of the organisation'. The effect of culture on members of the group is comparable to the effect of personality on the individual. For example, where the individual has experienced his holding environment as good enough his personality may develop to the extent that he is capable of progression. Where, however, the holding environment is not experienced as good enough his personality may lack the confidence for progression or at least for rapid progression.

Because we are all unique we all react to experiences in different ways. Some of us would find that we could not easily adapt to the culture shock of a difficult socialisation experience, or withstand the anxieties of third level learning (Learning Two), or have the courage to be creative, whereas, others might take all of these activities in their stride and with a minimum of anxiety. In other words, some will have developed satisfactorily from infantile dependence to mature dependence while others may have done so less satisfactorily. In the same manner, there are organisations which, as noted in the last chapter, may be classed as mature and immature and which have developed corresponding cultures.



In this respect, we can also regard culture 'as if' it were the personality of the organisation. What we are concerned with in regard to managing change is whether the culture is mature or immature and this will depend on whether the members of the organisation experience the holding environment as good enough or not. In general, we may say that where they experience it to be good enough the culture that develops will be mature thus permitting progression, but where the contrary exists it will be immature and be inclined to regression.

The difficulty that we have is in establishing the degree of maturity in either a personality or a culture. On the face of things, an individual or a group, may at a conscious level espouse their willingness and ability to be adaptable. However, we need to be aware that aspects of ourselves may be denied, suppressed or disowned and become more or less unconscious. Ideas may be unconscious because they are repressed owing to their unthinkable nature deriving from a memory, thought or feeling which conflicts with our view of ourselves and what is acceptable. Thus we can see that on the face of things an organisation, or part of an organisation, may appear to be mature but when examined at the unconscious level it may prove to be immature.

One other introductory point I should make is that when we refer to culture we refer to the group as a whole. Individuals in a culture take on the roles that are imposed by the culture and an individual may speak for the membership as a whole. The group may perceive the holding environment in many different ways: for example, as a warm loving mother, a stern and strict father, or a highly competitive family. The way the group relates to the consultant will provide data in regard to how they relate to the holding environment, that is, it will provide data in regard to the culture. Culture is as deep seated and all-pervading in regards to the members of the organisation (or group) as personality is in regard to the individual. In this chapter I shall look at the effects of culture in regard to managing change. In particular, I shall look at how it affects learning, symbolism, creativity, boundaries and socialisation. I shall also look at the role of the consultant and his relation to the culture. But I shall start by looking at the effect of culture on different types of change.

We can discriminate between different kinds of change. There are those which are incremental or substitutional where the culture is not disrupted. The change is routine, in the sense that the reorganisation seems compatible with the established meaning of life, and adds or subtracts very little. Whatever needs to be learned can be assimilated easily. Here we are talking about change that involves a level of learning akin to Bateson's Zero Learning. In theory this sort of change should not be difficult in most cultures. However, where there is an immature situation, and the anxiety is exceptionally high the organisation is likely to regress even in such circumstances.

From this simple type of change, there is a range of changes right through to the most complicated or disruptive where the effect of the change is that the continuity of the culture is totally broken. In these circumstances even where the most mature of cultures exists there will be a likelihood of regression unless the change is managed with considerable skill. In view of the potential difficulties in managing such changes it is this kind of change that I shall mainly refer to in this chapter.

Change is inevitably to some extent an excursion into the unknown. Even the simplest change described above implies a commitment to future events that are not entirely predictable and may well provoke doubt and anxiety. Menzies Lyth (1988) informs us that, "any significant change within a social system implies changes in existing social relationship and social structure" (p.62). Bearing in mind the all-pervading nature of culture it follows that any significant social or structural change implies a change in the culture. Despite the many popular accounts of culture, or perhaps, because of them, it is not always recognised by consultants or organisations that in almost every change we must take account of the culture.

One of the consequences of ignoring the culture is that a simplistic approach is taken as Menzies Lyth (1988) states,

"They get some kind of experts in who have a look at the situation and draw up a blueprint of what needs to be done, and then they go home." She continues, "... the blueprints don't normally take, because they don't allow for the other side. The blueprint deals with structure and role but it doesn't do the change in attitudes and cultures" (p.11).



A further consequence is that the wrong problems are addressed. Because they are only dealing with problems at their face value they frequently end up dealing with the wrong problem. To quote Menzies Lyth (1989) once again,

"The consultant who lacks a psychoanalytic orientation may well confine himself to role and structure without having sufficient understanding of the contribution of unconscious content and dynamics to them. He may well suggest changes in role and structure without the backing of the requisite changes in work culture. Indeed, attention to work culture might not support his ideas about role and structure" (p.38).

These, then, are some of the problems of dealing with the complicated processes involved. I believe that what was referred to by Menzies Lyth is a common problem in many organisations where there is a reliance on a structure, a technology, a new leader, or a new system such as MBO or TQM, which is seen as the magic to solve their problems. We should not be surprised that nothing effective happens, that the change effort fails to have any significant effect. The problem which is causing difficulty for the organisation has not been identified and has therefore been avoided.

An example of this sort of behaviour occurred while this research was being conducted. An external consultant identified the need for greater corporacy and shared purpose throughout the Metropolitan Police. What was clearly required was an organisational change that dealt with the cultural issues of the lack of corporacy. Although the culture was frequently referred to, in the event, the main decision was to provide a new structure for decision making, the setting up of various executive meetings. Other decisions included inputs on leadership and total quality, both purely cognitive and neither recognising the cultural aspect.

The type of change is also worth looking at in terms of the likely effect on the organisation. Some changes will only impact on a few of the group's boundaries and will thus not be very threatening. This is not the case with something like a major strategic change where it is felt that the nature of the change is such as to impact on most, if not all, of the boundaries created by the groups in the organisation. The nature of strategy or

purpose is to question the very existence of the organisation. Such typical questions as, 'Why are we in business?' and 'What business are we in?', go right to the heart of the reason for existing. As such, it could easily result in feelings of disintegration.

Faced with a passion for form the danger is that organisations that experience the anxiety of making a difficult decision, regarding for example strategy, are liable to look for an alternative magical solution. The real issue then, is how to deal with the situation, how to keep organisations in a learning mode where rational thinking predominates. Menzies Lyth (1988) relates to this problem when she states, "Major institutional change cannot be effected by decision making alone, or even mainly: it inevitably involves a slow, gradual and often painful evolutionary process. This process is in many ways akin to analytical forms of psychotherapy and has some of the same difficulties and rewards" (p.150). In situations of major organisational change it requires that account must be taken of the culture.

The all-pervading nature of culture is such that there is interaction between all parts of the organisation which makes each process dependent on the other. This means that any changes to one part of the organisation will cause and again be influenced by changes in the others. The disruption to the organised whole may be viewed as a highly threatening experience. In developing a culture the members of an organisation develop a structure of meaning. Any change is liable to undermine the very structure of meaning on which it has come to rely for its sense of continuity, consistency and confirmation. To give up those known ways of behaviour and embark on the unknown would be experienced as nothing less than social chaos and individual breakdown. The effects of change make more sense if we bear in mind that culture is developed to enable the group to produce forms of behaviour that will be advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by the environment.

Rice A K (1976) describes what happens during change when he states, "If chaos is defined as uncertainty about boundary definition, or more colloquially, as not knowing who, or what belongs where, then every transaction is potentially chaotic" (p.34). In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that organisations look for simplistic or magical solutions to their problems. Alternatively, they may in order to avoid the anxiety, try to



avoid change wherever possible. This is what happened in the health service as was reported by Menzies Lyth who says they would avoid change – almost, one might say, at all costs – and tend to cling to the familiar even when the familiar had obviously ceased to be appropriate or relevant. The appropriate or the relevant need to be seen in terms of the culture. Logic should be measured in terms of the development of the culture, not by an outsider's rationality. To the members of the organisation the familiar is both appropriate and relevant.

This is not to deny the paradoxical nature of the regularity that culture imposes on us. On the one hand disruption is likely to bring the chaos referred to above, on the other hand we need the sound base on which to develop. This is important, as many organisational changes will involve development in a wide range of areas. We need then to consider the relationship between culture and learning. In Piaget's terms assimilation depends upon the pre-existence of organising structure sufficiently developed to incorporate the experience. The process of assimilation may lead to modifications of structure (accommodation), but only within limits of continuity.

According to Piaget, knowledge is an activity rather than a state. However, should our pre-conceptions be too few or too rigid – should the culture be immature – this activity is likely to be very limited. It will also be affected by the type of learning: where the knowledge is, to use James's terms, 'knowledge about' it may be assimilated in most cultures. Where the knowledge is 'knowledge of acquaintance', however, there are likely to be difficulties in most cultures other than those that are mature. In this regard Fairbairn (1952) informs us that, "If a mature individual loses an object, however important, he still has some objects remaining. His eggs are not all in one basket. Further he has a choice of objects and can desert one for another. The infant, on the other hand, has no choice. The infant is completely dependent on his object" (p.47). The same may be said to apply to members of organisations that are immature.

Learning at the lowest levels of Bateson's hierarchy of learning levels should not cause difficulties in most cultures. Learning at the higher levels or on the scale of Kuhn's paradigm change require a very mature culture. These types of learning will impact on most or all of the group or individual boundaries. Thus, to attempt such learning may be

a very threatening experience, one which threatens the harmony and integration with feelings of disintegration. Equally, it can also feel exciting and challenging when it is felt to be within one's capacity. Unless the culture is extremely mature, such changes will create anxiety and this will prevent learning.

Even taking a far less difficult situation than a paradigm change, such as computer learning by the computer illiterate, there will be no purpose in immediately talking in terms of hardware, software, bytes or other much more complicated matters. There is no point in asking someone to see what they cannot see. If a paradigm is not within the perceived reality of those concerned they will not be able to understand it without some explanation, it would be like asking a blind man to see. It is only after they have, figuratively speaking, 'opened their eyes' that they can begin to see the new concept. To proceed without this assistance will only serve to create anxiety and prevent learning.

A different form of learning is experienced in 'culture shock'. Here, though, the stress in the first instance is not on learning but on loss. If grieving is a response to loss of meaning, then it should be provoked by all situations of loss, including organisational change, where the ability to make sense of life is severely disrupted. It will be recalled that the defences used in 'culture shock' served a double purpose, that of defence as such and also the provision of time to reintegrate. So wherever major organisational changes are involved we need to allow some kind of moratorium on other business, so that people can give their minds to repairing their attachments and reintegrating the culture.

This experience of loss can be most difficult, as I have described with regard to my own experience and that of others in the process of socialisation. In the first instant this will result in mourning for the loss of the loved objects. Where the change results in a massive loss of shared loved objects the vicissitudes of the mourners' identities are likely to be similar but not equal to that experienced by bereavement of a close relative. In this respect I am reminded of some of the comments of those involved in major organisational change referred to earlier which had distinct connotations of human loss.



Marris P (1974) comments further on this point, "When we argue about the need for social change, we tend to explain conservatism away as ignorance, a failure of nerve, the obstinate protection of untenable privileges – as if the resistance could be broken by exposing its irrationality" (p.6). Yet the conservative instinct is as necessary for survival as adaptability: and indeed adaptability itself depends upon it. Marris continues, "The ability to learn from experience relies upon the stability of the interpretations by which we predict the pattern of events. We assimilate new experiences by placing them in the context of a familiar, reliable construction of reality. This structure in turn rests not only on the regularity of events themselves, but on the continuity of their meaning" (p.6). In terms of the organisation this structure is the culture. However, in making the foregoing points I should not wish to present a picture of culture as being unitary. In practice some individuals are more socialised, others less and therefore more marginally committed.

The will to adapt to change has to overcome an impulse to restore the past which is equally universal. Despite the anxiety of venturing into the unknown, the process by which maturation provokes change is disruptive but not fundamentally so. Progression is made possible by the existence of a good enough holding environment. Conceived in this way, the idea of creativity does not contradict the assumption of a conservative impulse. Change in one area of our lives is possible only if other areas remain stable. In this situation the defensive reactions of conservatism are latent, because we are able to deal with the threat to the established structure of meaning. We can see, then, that an organisation will only be creative if the holding environment is perceived as good enough by the members who, in turn, develop a mature culture. It will be recalled that it takes considerable courage to create, there has to be a freedom from anxiety and a confidence to overcome the inevitable guilt associated with such activity. Above all, the members of the organisation must feel secure, they must perceive their holding environment as good enough.

In discussing learning I referred to the proposition that before a new paradigm can be conceptualised it must be explained. The way that we explain this is by language used as symbols. Therefore, before a group can begin to conceptualise they must have time to understand the symbols. In some cases, the relevant 'private language' may be easily understood and the consultant will be able to proceed in a relatively short time. However,

where the 'private language' is more complex, such as computerisation for the computer illiterate, to use the previous example, it may be a considerably longer period before the consultant can gain understanding and proceed in a meaningful manner.

The predictability of behaviour, as we have shown, is profoundly important. It depends not only on some shared sense of the meaning of relationships but on conventions of expressing this meaning. Each culture will develop its own 'private language', its own form of expression peculiar to that language, its own idiom. As Marris states, "Each symbolic grammar is a language to express the meaning of relationships – their purposes, expected patterns of interaction, the framework of assumptions about the world into which they fit" (p.7). This may bring problems for both the consultant and the group.

In many change processes those involved will understand the language being used, and will be able to freely create symbols. They will be able to mate their pre-conceptions with sense data in order to create new conceptions. Referring back to the view of Szmidla (1975) in the chapter on 'Words and Language as Symbols', under the conditions where the position of the clients (the object inline) is very different from that of those seeking to implement change (the subject inline), there is likely to be some difficulty in reconciling both horizons (inlines). Nevertheless, they will at least be able to work with the same symbols and will at least be able to communicate.

In these circumstances the task of the consultant may be by no means easy, but it is possible. What, though, of the situation where those involved do not understand the symbols that are being used? As discussed earlier in the thesis, it seems obvious that if I were to travel to, say Denmark, I would not be able to create symbols that were understandable to those in an organisation. I should therefore be of little value as a consultant. It may not be so obvious but should I go into any new organisation I will need to take account of the cultural influence on language. I will need to appreciate the uniqueness of the symbols. Before either the consultant or the members of the organisation can be expected to begin to address the issues they need to be able to use and understand the same symbols. Creating a shared language – that is a language shared by consultant and client – is often an important function for the consultant.



In this context it is perhaps of interest to reflect on the derivation of the word 'symbolic', which is explained by Segal when she states that the word comes from the Greek, meaning 'throwing together or bringing together'. Rollo May (1975) also makes the same point, but adds that the antonym of 'symbolic' is 'diabolic', meaning, 'pulling apart'. In terms of the consultant not understanding the particular language of the culture or the members of the organisation not understanding the language of the change it seems likely that anxiety may be provoked. In the circumstances it seems fair to say that this may be truly diabolical in both the academic and metaphorical senses.

Should the consultant not attend to the understanding of the symbols needed to communicate with all concerned the result may be extreme anxiety and instead of the desired progression the result may be regression. This would appear to be at the heart of the problem of managing change. Should the anxiety be such as to cause the individual or group to resort to the use of defence mechanisms, such as projective identification, the result will be a reversion to symbolic equations. The symbolic substitute will be felt to be the original object. The individual will be 'blocked' in his approach to the task. As Jaques E (1970) explains,

"If the discrepancy between reality and symbolic aspects is too great, lack of interest or hatred is aroused, and loss of incentive ensues. This hatred may be intensified by violent splitting and fragmentation, the incomplete objective being concretely introjected and identified with destroyed and persecuting internal objects. The objective itself then becomes increasingly persecutory through violent projection and concrete symbol formation" (p.87).

Jaques observes that if the depressive position has been sufficiently worked through the symbolic content of work will be connected mainly with reparation. He explains, "The more reality content of the work is consistent with the unconscious symbolic reparation activities, the greater will be the love for the task" (p.87). This again seems most pertinent to the process of change. If the level of anxiety is kept down by virtue of the reality of the task being consistent with the objectives of the individual, the "greater will be the love for the task". If on the other hand, there is a disparity between the individual's objectives and his task, the result will be anxiety and the formation of concrete symbols.

It may be helpful, at this stage, to provide a short explanation of what we mean by the notion of the 'individual's objectives'. Jaques helpfully informs us that "An objective is an object-to-be – one which has to be brought into being, to be created" (p.86). The objective may be allocated to the individual as part of his job or it may be worked for to achieve some personal satisfaction such as those described in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. As to the amount of effort applied to a task Vroom's Expectancy Theory asserts that this will depend on the individual's belief that his effort will increase the probability of his achieving the reward. Such reward may of course be intrinsic or extrinsic. Individuals will pursue their own objectives. Where they can achieve them by doing what the organisation requires, then organisation objectives are likely to be achieved as well. Work is most satisfying where both the individual and organisation objectives are in concert. It is when they are not that problems such as those described above are likely to occur.

I have emphasised the need for the consultant to understand the language of the objects of change. In my own position as an internal consultant, I have found that on most occasions I am speaking the same language as my client group. However, there are still many 'private' variations of that language which I must learn. Every group has its own distinctive version of the language, which sometimes results in the same symbols having different meanings. An equally valid point is the private language developed by consultants; we also have our holding environments from which we develop our culture which is expressed in our own private language and we must be careful that we do not take it into a different culture.

As is frequently the case, Anzieu D (1990) provides an interesting view of symbols when he states, "In 'The Ego and the Id' Freud wrote in an elliptical way that the superego derives from acoustic roots: this means that the orders, injunctions and threats that the child has heard uttered are at the origin of the superego – in short parental voices." He continues, "... the child learns not only words, but rules. Speaking means putting sounds and then words into a certain order that makes them take on a meaning." Anzieu then concludes, "The superego derives from an acoustic origin: it forms with the acquisition of speech" (p.62). Thus in the early stages the superego is influenced by the parents but later it is influenced by the social milieu. This being the case, it would appear that where for



example, there are constant demands of police for more accountability this may have a considerable effect on the collective superego of the police, as will be described in the next chapter. This, in turn, will also affect the organisational culture.

I should now like to turn to a more specific consideration of the role of the consultant. If the change presents a problem that the group does not know how to cope with, then the consultant has the task of both dealing with the tendency of the group members to regress as well as enabling them to see that they have the ability to effect the change. As Menzies Lyth (1989) states,

"The consultant's responsibility lies in helping insights to develop, freeing thinking about problems, helping the client to get away from unhelpful methods of thinking and behaving, facilitating the evolution of ideas for change, and then helping him to bear the anxiety and uncertainty of the change" (p.33).

Here Bion's (1963) concept of the mother seen as a container who can contain what the baby projects and work with it is extremely valuable. As, of course, is Winnicott's concept of a good enough holding environment. Bion discusses the role of the mother in helping the baby develop his own capacity for thinking and so become more able to deal himself with these situations. Winnicott talks of the subtle co-operation that mothers can give, which supports yet does not dominate. Menzies Lyth and others have suggested that the consultant should act as a container for a group undergoing change. In keeping with my view of culture I prefer to consider the role of consultant as one who is acting as a substitute or temporary holding environment throughout the change process.

In any extensive change process the culture and the holding environment will be severely disrupted. The consultant can assist the client by providing a substitute for that holding environment until it and the culture have reintegrated. By supporting yet not dominating the consultant can reduce the anxiety and provide the confidence for progression. The members of the organisation need a consistent picture of themselves as reflected by the others if they are to reintegrate their culture. The consultant can provide the consistency in modes of communication and response that are important if the members of the organisation are to learn to interpret responses meaningfully and benefit from them.

Menzies Lyth (1988) describes the requirements of the baby which may equally be applied to the members of the organisation.

"The baby or young child, then, needs a containing person who respects and values his anxiety and depression, assesses appropriately their content and conveys understanding, security and the tolerability of such experience: who can mourn with the baby for his losses, which may indeed coincide with her own – for example, at weaning – and set a pattern of normality for such experiences. The relationships and processes I have described are difficult and painful for both mother and baby, although rewarding when they are seen to be resolvable by the pair and set in context of the directly gratifying aspects of the relationship" (p.215).

Some of the difficulties and pain of the mother are also experienced by the consultant. It will involve being subject to and taking in the group's massive projections of intense feelings and phantasies, accepting them without undue diminishment through denials or other defences, and not being overwhelmed by them. Being a 'good enough' holding environment means keeping your head while all others about you are losing theirs. It means gaining people's co-operation before you move them forward, just as Winnicott says that the mother needs to do before lifting the child. By his reactions the consultant conveys back to the members an appropriately modified version of what they have projected. The consultant may also sometimes be the receptacle for the system's hostility, thereby facilitating informed co-operation in the task of change.

It is a major task, then, for the consultant to keep himself in a state where he is receptive to the phenomena he must work with. Freud (1911) recommends 'evenly suspended attention', not directing one's attention to anything in particular, not making a premature selection or prejudgment about what is significant. Bion (1970) recommends eschewing memory and desire, not consciously summoning up memories about the patient or what has previously happened. Bain A (1982) also stresses the value of ignorance and adds that even if one is not ignorant, a 'cultivated ignorance' is essential to the role of social consultant. Menzies Lyth (1989) talks about the need to take a fresh look at the situation, to set aside habitual ways of looking at things, to blind oneself to the obvious, to think again. The rationale for all these views is to free the consultant's mind to be receptive to the here and now and in this way to allow the evolution of understanding. Also importing and carrying confusion – avoiding the defence of premature interpretation.



This is further explained by Menzies Lyth (1989) as follows,

"If one can hold on to ignorance and evenly suspended attention, meaning will probably emerge and one will experience the reward of at least one mystery or part of a mystery solved, uncertainty and doubt dispersed." However, by way of exception and explanation she states, "One may need to give a good deal of support to the client to go along with the process, especially a client who is accustomed to using the 'expert' and expects him to produce a definitive answer quickly. If one resists this pressure, one may be bitterly attacked as though one is delinquently withholding goodies to which the client is entitled. Failing that, the client clutches at straws and magical unrealistic answers" (p.32).

In terms of culture, if the interrelatedness of the group with the holding environment produces a culture that is highly dependent it must be treated as such. There is no point, as Menzies Lyth states, in trying to deal with such an organisation in a totally unstructured way. All that this will do is to create anxiety, an anxiety that develops from a fear of being alone without support. In the first instant, then, the response of the consultant must be in keeping with the current culture.

Menzies Lyth (1989) says that "the strain of this way of working is considerable for the consultant". She also states that, "One exists most of the time in a state of partially self imposed ignorance which may feel profound, frightening and painful" (p.32). Seen in the light of personal boundaries, this is quite understandable. What is being asked is that the consultant, ignore albeit temporarily, all of the boundaries that he has created for his own development. This will undoubtedly result in temporary feelings of disintegration.

In major organisational change two or more consultants working together are more likely to deal with these painful feelings. Indeed, this will be an advantage with any change and where a person is working alone he needs his own consultant to come home to. He needs the support of being able to talk things through away from the problems of the consultancy. As regards transference and countertransference, which I shall refer to next, two people can be very useful in helping each other to sort out, check and recheck them and disentangle each other from relationships that interfere with work or from attitudes inconsistent with consultancy.

As Hunt (1989) informs us, introspection is particularly important, because, "The roles that researchers assume in fieldwork often mobilise transferences as a result of their link to unconscious phantasies." She reminds us that this is a two way process when she states, "Both researcher and subject continually impose archaic images onto the person of the other" (p.61). While we may eschew all memory and desire (or at least, try to do so), it will still not stop this unconscious process. However, provided that we are sufficiently aware of it, this will be of benefit as is described once again by Hunt: "The same clues that psychologists employ to help them recognise countertransferences in the analytic setting may be used by the researcher. Strong emotions of anger, anxiety, love or shame, boredom, or annoyance may all indicate the presence of transference" (p.61).

Transference phenomena are something that all of us show every moment of our lives to varying degrees. Freud (1910) wrote: "Transference arises spontaneously in all human relationships just as it does between the patient and the physician" (p.83). Our particular interpretations, and even distortions, of the external environment, whether physical or social, are influenced by our particular unconscious need systems. Our behaviour is therefore governed not only by conscious needs and environmental demands but also by unconscious needs.

Greenson (1965) defines this phenomenon as follows,

"Transference is the experiencing of feelings, drives, attitudes, fantasies, and defences toward a person in the present which are inappropriate to that person and are a repetition, a displacement of reactions originating in regard to significant persons in early childhood. I emphasise that for a reaction to be considered transference, it must have two characteristics: it must be a repetition of the past and it must be inappropriate to the present" (p.171).

Thus a person (subject) exhibiting transference in a relationship experiences the other (object) in a way that is not representative of the actual object and which cannot be accounted for on the basis of the current situation alone but is based on previous interpersonal experience.

Starting from this point, and following Scheidlinger (1980), the consultant needs to ask, 'What makes this client behave (speak or act) toward me in this particular way at this moment?' In other words, what role does he unconsciously try to push me into, what



sort of relationship is he unconsciously trying to establish between us? A working hypothesis is that answers to these questions will enable the consultant to establish contact with the unconscious level of the organisation, which is essential if we are to understand the culture. Lacan (1977) informs us that 'the transference is the enaction of the unconscious' – an enaction which, in the group, is very often a way forward or as Lacan terms it a 'passage l'acte'.

In the chapter on 'Symbolism' I referred to 'projective identification', I now need to refer to it again in greater depth. This primitive defence mechanism was first identified by Melanie Klein (1946) in her studies of infant development but it has since been found to be a universal phenomenon. Horwitz L (1985) informs us that unlike projection, projective identification is not limited to ridding oneself of unwanted impulses – wishes to dominate, control and devalue are also among the motives. It is when we refer to the use of projective identification in groups, however, that we realise the significance for culture and change. Bion (1961) believed that the group aroused primitive feelings in its members and that this resulted in them using the defence of projective identification.

Although the process starts with a person projecting a part of his self onto and into one or more persons, it is the impact on the other person that is of greatest interest. A phantasy is created which is a wishful one – that is it has behind it a pressure toward gratification or fulfilment. The member of a group tries to actualise the unconscious wishful transference fantasies, to make them real, to experience them as part of reality. The other person undergoes an identification or a fusion with the projected content and its unconscious meanings and has the experience of being manipulated into a particular role.

Sandler J (1987) informs us that projective identification provides an added dimension to transference, in that transference need not be regarded as simply a repetition of the past. It can also be a reflection of fantasies about the relation to the analyst created in the present by projective identification. In trying to actualise his unconscious wishful phantasy the patient – or more appropriately the member of a group – will externalise the wish into the person of the consultant. This may evoke a counter-transference response which can be meaningful to the consultant.

The valuable information to be found in transference, and countertransference can be the crucial clue to what is going on. As is stated by Miller E J (1990), "The way in which the consultant is used and experienced, and also the feelings evoked in him, may offer evidence of underlying and unstated issues and feelings in the client system: that which is repressed by the client may be expressed by the consultant" (p.171). For the understanding of culture, transference and countertransference are essential. It is only by the consultant interacting with the client system that he can gain an understanding of the unconscious level and hence the culture of the organisation.

## **Summary**

In many ways the culture can be seen as 'the personality of the organisation'. In the same way that the maternal holding environment affects the development of personality so the organisational holding environment affects the culture. Both culture and personality are unique and both can be usefully viewed from the perspective of mature or immature. The degree of maturity of culture will affect the response of members of the organisation to change. Being deep-seated and all-pervading the culture will affect every organisational change.

Different types of change, be it in terms of complexity or in depth of learning will impact on the culture in different ways. The most critical factor however is the culture itself. Any change will cause some sort of disruption to the culture, the more immature that the culture is the greater will be the anxiety and regression. Likely results are that the wrong problem or a lesser problem will be dealt with or the need for change will be totally denied. In any event the problems of the organisation will not be dealt with. It helps if the consultant has a psychoanalytic orientation; however, the relevant point is that the consultant takes heed of both the conscious level and more importantly, the unconscious level of maturity in the organisation.

Every major organisational change will affect the culture. The culture is developed to enable the members of the organisation to produce forms of behaviour that will be most advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by the environment. With this in



mind, any change that affects the culture will be potentially chaotic. Where the culture tends toward being mature this will provide the necessary base for even the most complex learning and creativity.

All changes to organisational culture will involve a loss – a loss experienced not as badly but with similar results as the loss of a relative. This is true of both mature and immature situations. The difference is in how the loss is worked with. In the same way that defences are used in bereavement not only as defences but also to provide time for reintegration so must organisational members be given time and support in order that they may reintegrate their culture.

The culture of an organisation is represented by the language. Each culture will have its own 'private language'. Dangers arise when consultants believe they understand this 'private language' but are not aware of differences of meaning. Use of inappropriate or 'foreign' language will impact directly on the culture and may cause anxiety. Consequently, creating a shared language – that is, a language shared by consultant and client – is often a necessary condition for the consultant. Should there be regression, the symbols used will not be true symbols that allow for progression but symbolic equations or concrete symbols.

The consultant has the responsibility for relating to the emotional and cognitive state of the group. A helpful approach is to see the consultant as a container as was Bion's view of the mother. My view is that the consultant should be seen as a temporary or substitute holding environment. He should temporarily replace the disrupted organisational holding environment and provide a substitute holding environment for the members to interrelate with until they have reintegrated their new culture. To fully understand what is going on in the group he should as far as possible remain in what has variously been termed a state of 'evenly suspended attention'. This is a demanding role which can be frightening and painful. It is desirable that the consultant should have a partner to provide support and help in sorting out the transference and countertransference.

An understanding of transference and countertransference are highly relevant to both culture and the management of organisational change. The way in which the consultant is used and experienced, and also the feelings evoked in him, may offer evidence of underlying and unstated issues and feelings in the client system. By interacting with the client system the consultant can gain an understanding of the unconscious level and hence the culture of the organisation.

In the next chapter many of the concepts related to will be applied to change and culture in the Metropolitan Police Service.



## *CHAPTER 12*

### **APPLICATION**

In this chapter I come to the last of the stated objectives, that of applying the explanation of culture to the management of change. In doing so, I shall be writing from the perspective of an internal consultant in the Metropolitan Police Service. This role in itself, raises some interesting dynamics which will be briefly referred to. First I need to give some descriptive data on the Metropolitan Police.

The Metropolitan Police Service is Britain's largest police service with a staff of around 45,000 which consists of some 28,000 police officers and 17,000 civilian employees. The Service has its headquarters at New Scotland Yard in Central London which is also the location of the ruling coalition, the Commissioner and his Policy Committee of senior police and civilian employees. The 'Met' provides policing for a geographic area of some 799 square miles, a population of 6.5 million with a further 2 million daily commuters and operates from 1943 different buildings. For operational purposes it is divided into eight geographic units known as Areas and these are again divided into smaller geographic units known as Divisions.

There are several differences between police and civilian employees: for example, different career structure, ranks as opposed to grades, different pay structure and rates of pay, and different conditions of employment. In the main, civilians are employed centrally in headquarters functions, such as: transport, engineers, computers, finance and, of course, clerical duties. Although there are exceptions, civilians are not generally employed at the interface with the public. One or two headquarters functions, especially personnel, are joint police and civilian departments.

The main point of interface with the public is at the divisional level which is mainly staffed by police personnel. Most of the officers employed at this level are posted to units called Reliefs which have responsibility for policing that geographic area over the twenty four hour period. In addition there is a group of officers at each division who are known as Home Beat Officers who have specific responsibility for a small geographic area

known as a Beat. There are also a number of detectives attached to each division. Detectives are also employed at the Area and Headquarters levels. At Headquarters there are a number of operational units, such as, the Company Fraud Squad, the Central Drugs Squad, the Flying Squad, and the Serious Crime Squad. At the Area level there are also drug squads, domestic violence units, and juvenile offenders units. These officers also interface with the public but the segment of the public that they interface with is, generally speaking, the non-law abiding.

In terms of the nature of organisations and from this brief description it will be seen that there are several obvious groups of people. As might be expected, there are also countless others, too numerous to mention, but reasonably easily identifiable. Each of these groups is itself differentiated by the various roles performed: for example, civilians are categorised into computer people, engineers, or finance people, while police are differentiated into uniformed officers and detective officers which can again be categorised into, for example, fraud squad detectives or flying squad detectives.

Most employees are posted to many different roles throughout their service, yet they quickly perceive themselves as a finance person or a personnel person or a uniform person or a detective person, or whatever. It quickly becomes an idea held in the mind of the members that the group exists. The finance group, for example, is a perceived object of those employed in that group and for those outside the boundary. All of these groups are artificial creations but all involved treat them as if they exist. From time to time new groups are created either on a temporary basis such as a murder squad or to meet an identified need of a more permanent nature such as domestic violence. In these cases a 'group illusion' (to use Anzieu's term) quickly develops at the moment that there is a collective belief that the group exists.

In hierarchical terms there are eleven different police ranks from police constable through to Commissioner. All but one, or arguably two, of these ranks, are seen as managerial roles. The number of civilian grades and managerial levels is slightly more complicated but is roughly similar to police. In the terms described by Mintzberg (1988) the 'Met' is a typical bureaucracy and has all the attributes that he describes in connection



with such an organisation: that is, many levels of rank, a proliferation of rules, regulations, and formalised communication throughout the organisation, and a large operating core which is the officer on the beat.

The importance of the need for attachment and for social relatedness (Bion's 'groupishness'), leads to the development of groups which in time provide the certainty without which their members could not survive. In their own way, each of these groups establishes the necessary firm boundaries for itself and others across which realistic and effective relationships and transactions can take place and within which their identity can be established.

The foregoing is all valuable information to any organisational consultant, as would be other information regarding such matters as task, technology or strategy. Analyses of these and other aspects of organisations are important to our understanding, but they do not tell us anything about the unconscious processes of culture. Most of this type of information can be obtained by a passive observer. However, if we want to learn more deeply about the culture it is necessary to take an active participation in the lives of the subjects of the culture. This being the main purpose of this chapter I shall be dealing with this in depth. First, however, I want to briefly explain my role as an internal consultant.

As stated earlier I write from the perspective of being a member of and having served in the Metropolitan Police as both a detective and a uniformed officer and for the last seven years as an internal consultant still with the status of Chief Superintendent. It has taken a long time to develop some of the knowledge and skills required to understand organisational culture, a process which continues, sometimes painfully. Since becoming a consultant I have frequently come to the conclusion that just when I think I know something I suddenly discover that I know nothing.

Being a police officer, a Chief Superintendent, and an internal consultant, inevitably creates situations where there are mismatches of identity. To refer once again to Szmidla's concept of 'inline' and 'outline', here we have a situation where me, my inline, can be somewhat different from the other person's outline of me; where the identity others confer on me and the identity I claim for myself clearly differ. In terms of junior officers

there can be issues of dependency, whereas, with senior officers, there are more likely to be issues of counter-dependency. As to being a police officer, it is interesting that even after seven years I can still be perceived in a prior role such as detective. Indeed, while engaged on this research an officer commented with words to the effect, 'and you, a detective officer, have done all this'. This may be seen as an example of how different people see different worlds, of how reality is within the current knowledge of those concerned. Nevertheless, it comes as something of a shock when one has come to be and be known oneself as a consultant only to find that this is not reflected back by certain others. The very essence of identity is, albeit momentarily, challenged. This serves to make the point that every relationship involves a negotiation of identities.

As an internal consultant and part of the organisation, I am undoubtedly also part of the organisation culture. However, it is equally clear that different groups within the same holding environment perceive that holding environment in different ways. Thus, the same holding environment can produce variations on the same culture. This is just as true for detectives, home beat officers, or engineers, as it is for the group of internal consultants. It would be impossible not to be part of the culture but the knowledge and skill of developing a 'cultivated ignorance' or of setting aside habitual ways of thinking does allow a view of the organisation that is less contaminated by the culture.

Nevis E C (1987) refers to another difficulty, that being the need for affiliation. This is a problem for an internal consultant, especially when some of his clients are previous work colleagues. Remaining at or near the boundary and not becoming engulfed by affiliation needs can be a difficult process. In the early days of my consultancy experience this was indeed a most difficult problem, but time and experience creates an awareness that if you are to succeed in helping people there is a need to stay at the boundary and not become involved. Needless to say, there must be other means of satisfying affiliation needs and this is where the role of a working partner becomes significant.

Returning to the organisation, it may assist at this stage if I apply the concept of a 'holding environment' to the 'Met'. The external holding environment of the 'Met' includes all those external social objects referred to in the chapter on 'Organisational



Culture'. For example; the ruling coalition, the private language, the attitudes and beliefs, multiple organisational tasks, and multiple organisational roles. Being an open system the external holding environment is particularly influenced by external social objects in the external environment, such as Home Office (the police authority of the 'Met'), the Crown Prosecution Service, the Judiciary, the Independent Complaints Authority, and the News Media. The internalised – psychological and unconscious – holding environment, is developed from the phantasied views of the members of the 'Met' partially based on their perception of the external holding environment. Precisely what this is will become clearer from the ensuing discussion.

Both Freud and Bion recognised that certain organisations were liable to be affected in specific ways. Freud (1921) referred to 'artificial groups', namely, the church and the army, about which he said, "A certain external force is employed to prevent them from disintegrating and to check alterations to their structure" (p.122). Bion (1955) referred to these same organisations as 'specialised groups'. In regard to these he pointed out that the task of these organisations is particularly prone to stimulate the activity of one or other of the basic assumptions. A church is liable to influence from the dependent group phenomena, and indeed takes some of the burden of that basic assumption on behalf of the wider society. The army suffers a similar liability from fight/flight phenomena. He also suggested that the aristocracy may be a specialised group that fulfils the same function for the pairing group.

Kets De Vries M & Miller D (1987) showed that various organisations reflect the attitude and character of the leaders. However, I am not so much concerned here with the effects that seem to emanate from within the organisation, or perhaps more accurately, from the members of the organisation. I am far more concerned with the view of Freud that 'external force' has an effect on an organisation. He referred to this as 'preventing disintegration' and 'checking alternatives in their structure', about which he said, "Any attempt at leaving it is usually met with persecution or with severe punishment, or has quite definite conditions attached to it" (p.122).

What Freud appears to be saying is that in the case of both the church and the army there is a control over the members which prevents them from leaving. In the case of the church this results in an anxiety arising from a fear of a phantasy authority, while in the army the anxiety is in regard to the actual authority. In both cases, the authority acts in a super-ego manner in regard to the members of the organisation. Freud (1926) explained "that the super-ego is the vehicle of the phenomenon that we call conscience" (p.284).

This was referred to earlier in the thesis but just what is meant by the term super-ego is well explained by Bettelheim (1969) who states, "Conscience, or the super-ego, is essentially a set of rules one has internalised by making them one's own without knowing where they come from. To then break such a rule is to experience guilt" (p.125). It would appear then, that while we are not aware of the fact, we are nevertheless introjecting a set of rules which are influenced not only by our parents but also by the family, racial and national traditions handed on through them, as well as the demands of the individual's immediate social milieu.

The Metropolitan Police is an open system as are all other organisations. Indeed, it may be considered that it is more open than many others by virtue of the fact that it is a public service – a result is that there is a lack of control over impingements from the environment. Other than spatial boundaries, that mark the geographic extent of the area policed, the organisation boundaries have, of necessity, to be reasonably open. The provision of a twenty four hour a day, every day of the year, service of 'helping people', makes it extremely difficult to define task boundaries. Being such an open system the external force, in the shape of public opinion (usually represented by pressure groups), can have a considerable influence on the organisation.

When we have a group of individuals who closely identify with each other, as in a police service, it seems perfectly logical that they should introject the same set of rules, that they should share what might be called a collective super-ego. This is supported by Bettelheim (1969) who states, "A collective super-ego is derived from collective demands instead of uniquely personal ones. It is still an inner voice that echoes an original external equivalent. Only, it is not a voice that shouts to me in particular 'Thou shalt not' but



rather a chorus of many voices shouting 'You (plural) must not'." Explaining that this is even more powerful than an individual conscience he continues, "Such a voice is more inescapable. We can try to hide from a parent, even from God.....but we can never hide from a control system of which we are quite consciously a part" (p.126). This has great significance in regard to an organisation such as the police which is subject to the 'collective demands' of the various segments of the public. It would appear to be rather like a process of osmosis whereby the collective demands are gradually diffused into the collective conscience and the unconscious, until they form part of the rules – which also, of course, include explicit official rules: these presumably shape and are shaped by the underlying rules.

This leads to a consideration of environmental factors. For example, the needs of the general public, as is evidenced in the old saying, "If you want to know the time ask a policeman" – the expectation being that he will be right. Similarly, the adversarial judicial system requires that police are right or wrong, with the result that police are not allowed to be wrong. There are also, most pertinently, calls for accountability, which again demand that police be right. In such circumstances there is a need to be in control, police need to make sure that they do not make mistakes. That means that they do not take chances, they follow the rules, some of which are, of course, statutory rules.

I feel certain that these 'collective demands' of the public play a considerable part in the formation of the collective conscience of the police. In addition to these usual collective demands, however, there have been exceptional demands throughout the seventies and into the eighties. Following accusations of corruption, brutality and racism, as well as riots, there were long and powerful collective demands for 'accountability'. These reached a high point with the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which introduced several measures to make the police more accountable. This served to reinforce the collective conscience and imposed an even greater control over the members of the force. The situation has changed little since that date with further allegations of corruption, racism, and brutality.

These 'collective demands' impact on all members of the organisation, police and civilian employees alike; however, for ease of reference, from hereon I shall simply refer to police. One of the results is that police cannot hide from the control system of which they are a part, and this, associated with the lack of firm boundaries, in turn, results in anxiety. Difficult though the issue of defining task boundaries may be, senior management are not at this time accepting their responsibility for clear definition of such boundaries. The fact that they are also part of the culture means that they too need to ensure that they do not make mistakes – that they are always right and do not take risks – and this prevents them from making the decisions that would permit the necessary boundaries. The effect on the members is one of considerable ambiguity. Where the ambiguity prevents continuity, consistency and confirmation, where the world is perceived as unfamiliar, vague, mysterious and unpredictable then it is apt to be threatening. Such a lack of boundaries limits reality testing. The result for the members of the organisation is that they do not perceive the holding environment as good enough. In their interrelatedness with this not good enough environment the members seek to produce a culture that will be advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by the environment. The result is a culture dominated by conscience whereby being right is all important and taking chances is far too risky to contemplate.

The culture thus imposes a sort of control on the organisation which is manifested in a demand for a static and unchanging order and structure, the avoidance of change and the restriction to activities which police feel they are good at. This is a narrow world that can be highly defended one where they feel they must be right if they pursue it. Unfortunately, the world is not static and unchanging and there are therefore continued threats to this culture. In this context, perhaps we should recall that the logic involved here is not one that should be viewed from a position of detached rationality but from the position of the culture. The effect is that greater openness and the responsiveness required generates greater anxiety, which in turn calls for more rigid defences. So that one of the most open organisations becomes in reality what can only be called a closed organisation.

From my various experiences of consultancy interventions the overwhelming impression that I have gained is of a culture that is evidenced by a considerable need for control on the part of all involved, the control being exercised to prevent the extreme



anxiety arising from the feeling of guilt that the members experience when they have doubts about the correctness of their actions. A conscience that imposes a control on its members to ensure that they are always right and that they do not do anything that might be considered a risk. The result is that those in positions of authority frequently do not accept their responsibility on the basis that if you do not do anything you cannot be wrong whereas if you do you could be wrong.

The result is that police have a serious lack of belief in themselves and low self-esteem. They seem unable to take the decisions that will begin to deal with their problems. Instead, they wait for someone else to take the decisions and tell them what to do. This is reflected in calls by various individuals and representative bodies for a Royal Commission into policing. Doubtless, if someone else makes the decision, police cannot be wrong. I am reminded of the title of the book by Rollo May "The Courage to Create": in circumstances where the collective conscience is such as to impose a strict control on the members of the organisation, it requires immense courage to create.

I referred to the issue of guilt in regard to creativity but I feel that it may now be of benefit to expand on that. Freud (1926) explained that "the unconscious sense of guilt represents the super-ego's resistance" (p.319). This is further explained by Melanie Klein (1948) when she states that, "Freud approached the problem of guilt from two main angles. On the one hand, he left no doubt that anxiety and guilt are closely connected with each other. On the other hand, he came to the conclusion that the term 'guilt' is only applicable in regard to manifestations of conscience which are the result of super-ego development" (p.33). We can therefore say that the collective demands leading to the collective conscience are extremely powerful because to act contrary to our conscience is to experience both guilt and anxiety. It follows therefore, that the collective demands of the public will have a considerable effect on the way the police behave. In this respect I am reminded of the saying, 'the public get the sort of police that they deserve'.

It will perhaps help to consider what produces the anxiety and what can be done to reduce it. As to what produces it, in general terms it seems quite clear: it is a fear of moving from a known and settled world to an unknown and uncertain one. This is in line with what Rycroft C (1968a) called the essence of anxiety when he stated, "a problem, a

danger, a test situation, or an opportunity has been encountered, but its precise nature is as yet unknown and no effective action can yet be taken". However, what he goes on to say provides us with a clue as to what we can do to reduce the anxiety when he states, "the anxiety disappears the moment the situation is fully understood" (p.12).

The process is more specifically explained by Anna Freud (1966) when she states, "The point is that, dread of the superego, is the anxiety which sets the defensive process going" (p.57). In this instance, then, the collective super-ego sets various defence processes in motion, as will be described later. When members of the organisation are asked to be creative, or to make decisions, defence mechanisms such as denial come into operation because the conscience says you will only do as you are told, you will not make your own decisions.

What happens is explained by Racker H (1968), "Members have the problem of admitting that they have desires or phantasies and this is experienced with shame, with a sense of humiliation, or of contemptibility, with feelings of guilt, or in more general terms it is experienced with pain or anxiety" (p.11). Knowing, from past experience, that to ignore the public censorship can be painful, the members oppose change by various means of resistance. That is, to quote Racker once more, "the different ways in which the ego achieves rejection are called the defence mechanisms, since in the last instance the purpose is to defend against a fantasied danger to the ego or to the object" (p.11).

In acting as a container, or a substitute holding environment, the 'bad' feelings are projected onto the consultant; the bits that the group wants to get rid of, are evidenced in the transference. Transference was referred to in the last chapter but a further description by Symington N (1986) will add to our understanding. He describes transference as the process whereby the consultant is sucked into the outer personality structure of the client group. He also reminds us that it is not pleasant to be on the end of negative transference. It is not pleasant to be misrepresented because most of us have ideas about ourselves that we wish to cherish. If we are in the business of consultancy, we all like to see ourselves as efficient, helpful and caring. Consequently, if we are not aware of the dynamics we shall be most unlikely to successfully deal with the anxieties and move forward.



As previously stated the transference will not only project onto the consultant (or another group member or the group as a whole) the present, repressed, unbearable reality, but also, the important figures from the past as they related to the client especially in childhood. The consultant becomes the bad object and becomes the recipient of the bad object's activity. This can, at times, be a very demanding experience for the consultant. An example of this type of transference will be referred to below. I shall also provide an example where the opposite applies, where the transference may be seen as positive and while in this case it can feel very pleasant, it may be too much so.

One of 'those demanding times' happened during a meeting with a group that occurred following a period where for several days before it I had been working very hard on a different project that had been proving particularly irksome. The result was that I attended the meeting feeling exceptionally tired and lacking in energy. The meeting had its share of negative transference which was not unduly expected. However, when one of the members made a particularly personal attack regarding my role my internal reaction was a strong feeling of anger. I have to admit that I needed a considerable amount of control not to communicate that feeling to the group. To have done so would of course been very harmful to the process. To have moved from a position of being at or near the boundary to one of being totally within the boundary and engulfed by the emotions of the group, would have prevented me from helping the client. This example also serves to remind us that this is not a one way process and that the consultant also takes himself into the room. 'Suspending all memory and desire' is sometimes easier than others.

As I stated above the client can also project positive transferences onto the consultant. At first sight this may appear helpful, indeed it can be very seductive but it can be equally difficult to deal with. A particular group meeting had been in progress for some time during which various members had been expressing their concerns and doubts about the way forward. All was well until one member strongly identified with the consultant (me) and 'laid down the law' that they should, in effect, get on with things, and warned against the consequences of not doing so! The result was that anxiety was raised even more rather than being contained as it was before that particular input.

The seductive nature of the input made it most difficult to deal with. On the face of things, it was intended to be helpful but a closer examination shows that this is not so. Referring back to the previous comment on control, in spite of the fact that it was not negative – on the contrary, it was in the guise of being collusive with the consultant – this may also nevertheless be seen as an attempt at control. It was rather like an elder sibling siding with mother or father saying to the younger sibling, 'you must eat your greens, or you will not grow up strong'. This was experienced in the transference as a feeling of being like a displaced parent.

What I have been referring to in the police culture is a typical immature situation, as described in the chapter on culture: one in which there is little or no progression and where differentiation is not possible because there is not a sufficient basic trust in the organisational holding environment. Consequently police introject not a comforting progressive experience but the severe contentless anxiety that Bion referred to. The members are not able to differentiate between themselves and objects; there is, as Fairbairn describes, a one sided attitude of incorporation and an attitude of primary emotional identification. The creation of new objects is not possible; identification is with existing objects; there is no capacity for tolerating or expressing new ideas, and they feel they have no choice.

This signifies that anxiety is high and the organisation itself is in a situation where the paranoid–schizoid mechanism predominates. There is a reliance on tight and rigid hierarchical roles and closely controlled tasks. There is a fear and a belief that mistakes will not be permitted and will not be admitted. The feelings of chaos experienced by the members of the organisation are disturbing in the extreme. The way that this is dealt with in the paranoid–schizoid position is to build in the systems of control, which are seen as 'good', and to project all of the 'bad' feelings onto anything which is likely to disturb those systems. This includes any proposed new system, and the consultants.

By deliberate intervention and deciphering the responses – that is, the way in which I, as consultant, was used and experienced and also the feelings evoked in me – it has been possible to gain an understanding of the unconscious level of the 'Met', that of the culture. Thus far I have largely addressed the subject by describing the nature of



the culture, how it has come about, and the effects of such a culture on the organisation. I now want to show more specifically how the culture affects the management of change: how it was experienced by me in terms of the transference and counter-transference arising from the way I was used by the members of the organisation, and how the problems that it posed were dealt with. The following application will relate to one particular intervention which involved an action research project in a mixed police and civilian department.

The subject matter of this intervention is not really important for the purpose of this thesis; much more important is the process and above all the findings. Before commencing the project I arranged that I should have a partner whom I knew that I could rely on for mutual support. In any culture this is helpful, but in what I have referred to as an immature culture I believe it is essential. The early activities involved visiting the various branches concerned, which, in most cases, meant meeting the senior managers. In doing so, we had two objectives: first, to carry out a diagnosis of the current systems and practices and secondly, to build up a rapport and gain the confidence of our clients. Following this, we presented our findings and proposed way forward to the Head of Department, the principal client, for his approval before going through the same process with the managers of the branches concerned.

There were distinctions between each of the groups that we were working with and these were manifested in the 'private languages' used by the groups. One group in particular was isolated both physically, in terms of geographic location, and, to a degree, politically in terms of not often being involved in the decision-making process. The perception of the members of this group was, not surprisingly, one of feeling cut off, that the senior management in their holding environment did not care for them and did not provide for them. One of the results was an extreme lack of basic trust and a highly independent culture. In many respects it reminded me of the examples of the division of the conglomerate and the West Midlands Police Crime Squad referred to at the end of the last chapter.

The proposed way forward was a two-part process. The first involved three activities designed to increase cognitive knowledge: reading packs prepared by the consultants; proposed visits to other organisations where the process could be seen in action; and seminars where an academic expert would be able to further explain and add to their knowledge. The second part of the process involved workshops designed to develop the new system. The first was a two-day workshop for all involved to agree a system and individual group responsibilities for achieving it. This was to be followed by one-day workshops for each of the groups to help them develop their part of the new system.

In order to link the two parts we planned a series of meetings with each of the groups concerned where we aimed to provide as much support and containment as possible. In other words, we aimed to act as a substitute holding environment while their original holding environment was disrupted by the change process. The following describes some of the results of this intervention and provides an insight to the effects of the organisational culture.

On the face of it, it would appear that our attempt at cognitive development was important as a means of providing an understanding, thus giving those concerned the necessary confidence and thereby reducing the anxiety. However, this initially proved to be not as successful as hoped. The reason is as explained by Liddell H S (1956), when he states: "Anxiety accompanies intellectual activity, as its shadow" (p.12). By this he meant that knowledge has a habit of revealing unexpected areas of ignorance and this in turn tends to engender the very anxiety that it sets out to reduce. This was almost exactly what happened in this situation, basically because we provided too much too soon.

This was disappointing because in a previous intervention, the sharing of written information had proved to be highly successful in gaining confidence by means of providing an in-depth understanding of the issues involved. It also ensured that those concerned knew and were talking the same language, thus permitting all to relate to each other. Such a process was felt equally important in regard to this intervention and despite the early anxiety I believe it eventually went a long way to achieving the objectives of change.



Control quickly became a feature of this intervention. There were clear signs that senior managers in each of the various branches sought to be in control by restricting access to information and decision-making. Part of our objective as consultants was to involve as many personnel as possible so that they would all participate in, and own, the development of the new system. When this point was addressed it became clear that this was seen as threatening to the senior managers as was evidenced by remarks made in the absence of junior staff such as: "We tell them what to do", and: "They (junior personnel) could not contribute anything". Or, when in the company of junior staff, the remarks were the same but were put as a joke as follows: "You do as you are told don't you?" (accompanied by laughter).

Another of our objectives was to take the various clients through a process where they would devise the new system themselves. Despite mentioning this on almost every occasion that we came into contact with the groups, there seemed to be a denial that it would happen. Remarks such as, 'your system' were frequently used even though they were fully aware that workshops had been arranged for them to devise the future needs.

As a sort of knock-on from this denial, it also seemed that the need for control was resulting in a dependency mode. This expressed itself with remarks such as: "Tell us what to do and we will do it", which seems to be rather like: "The law says so, therefore we cannot be wrong". They were in effect saying: "If we devise this new system we may get it wrong; therefore we will let someone else get it wrong or we will do as we are told; either way we cannot be wrong". At one particular meeting this was indicated by a strong impassioned plea for a framework, a need for someone to tell them where they were going. It was also indicated by a request to involve other 'experts' to join them – people who had more knowledge than they had – who would be able to tell them what to do. Again, the conclusion to be drawn was that if an 'expert' has said it is right 'we' must also be right.

The need for control was also evidenced by the lack of co-operation between the various branches. Despite the fact that there were fairly obvious needs for links between them in order to effectively carry out their respective tasks there were virtually none.

There was a mutual lack of trust and a near 'bunker mentality' resulting from the need to be in control: the restriction to as narrow a world as they could possibly achieve so that it could be defended with certainty.

The fear of being out of control was shown in relation to another part of the process. As mentioned, one of the ways in which it was planned to achieve the necessary cognitive development of the personnel concerned was to arrange visits to other organisations to see the appropriate process in action. In discussing the need and requirement for such visits one of those involved suggested that the visits would be more useful after we had devised the new system. It would appear that there was a fear of visiting other organisations when not in possession of full knowledge of the subject matter – in other words, a fear of being out of control.

At one of the group meetings I had become aware that instructions were being formulated that would not be adequate for future needs and would subsequently need changing. When the issue was raised it was as though the possibility of a new system did not exist. The talk was all about what we have to do 'at the present time' and any reference to the new system had little to do with them. At the same time, there was a clear recognition that they would need to change the instructions 'when the new system had been developed'. The outcome was that it was as if there was no link between the two events. It seems that by denying the implications of change they were able to deny the unbearable reality of change itself.

The need for control, as described, is influenced by the culture of the 'Met' as a defence against the extreme anxieties experienced and arising from the collective conscience. If we see the function of culture as a whole as being to enable the members of the organisation to produce behaviour which is advantageous under the conditions imposed by the environment we can see that in doing so, they reach a level that is least anxiety-provoking for everyone. The problem is that the culture pervades almost every aspect of the organisation at this time and seriously interferes with attempts to carry out necessary change.



In order to make progress it was necessary to do everything possible to reduce the anxiety and to ensure that depressive mechanisms were available so that people would be able to relate to each other for at least part of the time in such a way that anxiety would be dealt with rather than shelved. At several of the group meetings this proved to be possible. However, this was only after a lot of hard work and a lot of containment of negative projections. All the pain described in the last chapter was present in these situations. The experience of the consultant was one of feeling rejected and of being used as a sort of dumping ground for all manner of moans and groans, of not being trusted. This was expressed in such terms as: "What are you really trying to do?" or "When are you going to impose your grand idea?" This was hardly surprising as it was merely a reflection of a culture where you do not participate in decision-making, you do as you are told.

The next important stage of this particular intervention was the workshops. The first was a two-day workshop for all involved – some 60 people. Having identified the needs for a new system the purpose of this workshop was for the members to participate in developing the particular system required, to identify the areas of responsibility within that system, and to establish what each of the branches would need in order to do their part and what they would in turn have to do for others. This workshop was then followed by a series of one-day workshops for each of the branches to help them plan how they could carry out their part of the system. The following paragraphs deal with the workshops.

At the outset, the most senior police officer present asked for guidance as to the status of the workshops in regard to whether it was permitted to make decisions or whether it was limited to making recommendations about decisions. This was followed by questions from others regarding the value of the workshop in view of a proposed structural change. There were also questions about whether others, such as senior departmental management and Policy Committee, agreed with what we were doing. I sought to deal with the anxiety by making it clear that the heads of department concerned had agreed on the process and that the necessary authority had been given for them to

make decisions. This sufficed in order to get the process of engaging with the primary task started. However, it was clear that there was a great deal of anxiety arising from the doubts of the members regarding the correctness of their actions.

This situation continued throughout the first day, with the result that few really addressed the primary task head-on. Instead they chose to skirt round it by dealing with other related matters and, in particular, strongly questioning the commitment of senior management. In fact, they went further than this in stating, on several occasions, that what was required was 'firm, or strong, leadership'. It would appear that they were making it quite clear that their perception of the holding environment was that it was not good enough and that they did not have a basic trust. There was just not the courage to create; the fear of being wrong was greater than any understanding of the need to change.

By the end of the first day my partner and I both felt extremely bruised and not a little discouraged. At this stage our fears and anxiety about the group staying in a regressed position and not acting in a progressive manner were very high and were seriously interfering with the process. Nevertheless, we managed to see through the fog of the counter-transference sufficiently to agree that we somehow needed to ensure a greater focus for the following day. We agreed that we would change the planned process and work for the first part of the day as a total group and that we would provide an outline structure of the new system that all of those present would be familiar with. We felt that a degree of structure was required in order to provide some sort of consistency, continuity and confirmation.

Later that evening, having got away from the situation and relaxed after my evening meal I was able to put things into a clearer perspective. I then began to relate the transference of the members to my previous knowledge of the culture. In the process of making sense of previous notes I began to get a real appreciation of what was happening in the transference and counter-transference, which I will return to shortly.

If anything, at the start of the next day there was even more anxiety than on the previous day. The result of the next session was very mixed. However, there was total support from the membership for the outline structure that had been posted up by us at the



start of the day. I was also able to take something from each of the group presentations as being positive moves forward which I could use as the basis of the next session. The outline plan used to provide a structure was one which had been contained in the reading supplied to the members as part of the cognitive development process. It had also been referred to by the 'expert' at his seminars. It would appear that a primary reason for the acceptance of the outline plan was a direct result of the cognitive development. In accepting the plan, I can only assume that there was no feeling of risk on the part of the membership. Because of the seminars, presentations, and reading, they accepted that this system was right. It may also indicate that the posting up of the outline structure provided the members with an affirmation of a safe holding environment.

At the conclusion of the workshop I was able to show that we had broadly achieved our purpose sufficiently to proceed to the next stage. However, from one or two remarks made by the members and the quality of outcomes, my partner and I were left feeling quite despondent. In our view at that point it was difficult to see where we could plan to go forward when the culture was creating so much resistance. Here again, personal reflection permitted a better understanding of the situation. It was not possible to do this when the event was taking place because of the vast amount of information, not to mention emotion, that was present at the time. However, getting clear of the immediate situation and being able to reflect on the events in a rational manner permitted me to consider again the impact of transference and counter-transference.

The starting point was that the membership were not simply awkward or stupid. Furthermore, they were not deliberately avoiding or denying the need for change – on the contrary. But the transference was further evidence that the common conscience was severely repressing the impulses of the members to be creative. The extreme control exercised by the common super-ego of those involved demanded that they not take a risk, they had to be sure that they were right. For the consultants this denial and task evasion was a very frustrating and annoying situation, which resulted in counter-transference. To be dominated by the counter-transference would be harmful to the progress of the project. To push for change, to chastise the members for lack of commitment, or to get angry

because of lack of progress, would not deal with the members' anxiety. On the contrary, it would only serve to increase the anxiety exhibited in the transference. What was needed was some way to give them the confidence to be right.

In terms of providing a temporary holding environment it was important that a mature dependency existed between the consultants and the clients. In order to keep the level of anxiety as low as possible it was necessary to stay close to the existing culture, with its needs for structure, yet to ensure that depressive mechanisms of differentiation were available so that people were able to relate to each other for at least part of the time, thus dealing with the anxiety instead of shelving it. Consequently, we planned to use the outline structure, which the clients had agreed, as the basis of the one-day workshops and to relate this to what they already did so that they could show where they would fit into a new system. This would be a reasonably safe activity which it would then be possible to build on in order to look at future needs. The other benefit of this approach was that they would all be talking to the same system and using the same language, so that they would all be able to relate to each other subsequently.

In the event the one-day workshops, structured as they were to deal with the culture of the organisation, proved constructive and progressive. Had they not been so constructed I have little doubt that they would have been regressive. An interesting point was that four of the five groups had few, if any, negative views about the two-day workshops, indeed, on the contrary, they expressed quite a lot of positive views. The fifth group, while not expressing many positive views, nevertheless, expressed few negative views. I feel certain that knowledge of the culture and the structuring of events in a way that created minimum anxiety for such a culture was responsible for much of the success of these workshops. Nevertheless, in reflecting on this situation it seemed clear that many of the consultant views were founded on the feelings arising from the counter-transference – feelings of fear of failing in us as a result of the way that we were used and experienced.

Reference has already been made to transference and counter-transference in this chapter but it is felt that this is an appropriate point to provide a further explanation. Racker (1968) says, "Transference is, firstly, an expression of the resistance, and secondly



that those feelings are a displaced repetition of older ones. The impulses and feelings (love or hate, desire or fear) directed towards the consultant were thus transferred from the original objects (usually the parents and siblings)" (p.44). In this case, the original objects from whom the impulses and feelings were transferred were the public.

As Racker points out, "The interpretation of the resistance must precede the interpretation of the repressed impulses or be linked with it" (p.44). By back tracking in this manner it will be possible to determine the original cause from which the resistance arose. However, this is only one half of the picture because, as has been discussed, Freud discovered that impulses and feelings towards the client also emerge in the consultant, that is, the phenomenon named by Freud and referred to earlier, that of counter-transference. Relating back to the workshops provides us with an example of this, in the situation where the membership reacted by not engaging the primary task. The spontaneous counter-transference reaction of myself and my partner was one of a certain anxiety and annoyance and, indeed, of discouragement. That this was no bad thing is described by Racker: "This (counter-transference) can be used as a tool for understanding the transference. Why is the consultant the object of such transference?" (p.60). Thus the working through of the counter-transference can help to explain what is happening in the transference.

This raises the most interesting of all subjects for a consultant, the capacity to know himself. His capacity to perceive what his client has repeated from his unconscious is first dependent on the degree to which he is conscious of his own unconscious. In other words, he needs to be able to distinguish between what belongs to him and what belongs to the client. It also means that he should create a situation in which he is disposed to admit all possible thoughts and feelings in his unconscious. To achieve this means that the consultant must not fix his attention in any predetermined direction, it means 'suspending all memory, desire and understanding' (to use Bion's terminology). It also means staying at the boundary, being close enough to experience the feelings but not too close as to become flooded by the experience.

The consultant can act as a container for the anxieties of his clients only if he is conscious of his own unconscious. Although referring to analyst and patient, Racker explains, "The analytic transformation process depends then, to a large extent, on the

quantity and quality of Eros the analyst is able to put into action for his patient" (p.32). He also states, "The patient makes use of the interpretation only when he finds himself in a good affective relation to the analyst" (p.39). If the consultant is not aware of his own personal proclivities, if he is not aware that the counter-transference feelings are his and not the client's, he is unlikely to have a good affective relationship with the client.

## Summary

The Metropolitan Police in common with other organisations is constantly evolving into what the members make it – and what the public make it. It consists of groups of people some of which, such as the Fraud squad are well known and others less so; all, are nevertheless perceived objects for those employed in the particular group and for those outside the boundary. Each may be artificial creations, or ideas held in the mind, but they are still treated by their members as if they exist. Each group establishes its own boundaries across which reality testing and relationships can take place. In Mintzberg's terms, the 'Met' is a typical bureaucracy. Valuable as this information may be it does not tell us anything about the unconscious processes of the culture. To gain such an understanding requires that we take an active participation in the lives of the members of the 'Met'. We need to deliberately intervene and decipher the responses to the intervention.

The development of consultancy skills is not only a lengthy process but at times a painful one, and one which never ends. The role of internal consultant while still a police officer of Chief Superintendent rank produces interesting dynamics. The rank sometimes creates dependency in junior officers and counter-dependency in senior officers. The fact that I am a police officer, sometimes creates role confusion which can be threatening to the self identity. The role of internal consultant, sometimes creates problems as the consultant is also part of the organisational culture. The development of a 'cultivated ignorance' will allow the consultant to reduce the effect of the culture.

Freud and Bion recognised that certain organisations were particularly liable to be affected by the external environment by virtue of their reason for being. The influential factor in the situations that they describe is the role of authority acting in a super-ego



manner, the super-ego being the vehicle for the phenomenon that we call conscience. Conscience is a set of rules which are internalised without one knowing where they come from. To break such a rule is to experience guilt. The 'Met' is strongly influenced by the 'collective demands' of the public manifested in, for example, the adversarial judicial system and demands for accountability.

The lack of firm boundaries and the internalised 'collective conscience' limits reality testing and creates anxiety. The outcome is that the members view the 'Met' holding environment as not good enough. In their interrelatedness with the holding environment the members seek to develop a culture that will be advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by the environment. The result is a culture dominated by conscience whereby being right is all-important and taking chances is not to be contemplated. Thus there is a demand for control, for static unchanging order and structure, the avoidance of change and pursuit of activities that police feel they are good at.

The all-pervading nature of culture is more fully realised when it is appreciated that the 'collective conscience' is part of all members of the 'Met' and that it has developed over a long period of time as if it were water seeping through a wall as in the process of osmosis. It becomes ingrained into the culture of the organisation and, therefore, any suggested change will be experienced with anxiety and guilt, as to do something new might not be right. The result is a lack of self-belief and low self-esteem which, in turn, means little progress and little meaningful change.

Dread of the super-ego sets various defence processes, such as denial, in motion. The anxiety also causes the members of the organisation to project their feelings onto others such as a consultant. In this process of transference the consultant is 'sucked into the outer personality structure of the group'. The projection of negative transference can be a most unpleasant and demanding experience for the consultant. Positive transference may not be painful, but it is highly seductive and consequently can be equally dangerous for the consultant.

It may be necessary to provide a new language as part of the process of change. Cognitive development may also be relevant to the success of an intervention. However, as Liddell has pointed out, "anxiety accompanies intellectual activity as its shadow". Knowledge itself may reveal areas of ignorance and, in turn, engender anxiety. Care is therefore needed – in particular, care to relate to the culture in deciding how, when, how much and in what form the cognitive development should take place.

In a situation where anxiety levels are high and an organisation is in a position where the paranoid–schizoid mechanisms predominate it is necessary to do everything possible to reduce the anxiety and to ensure that depressive mechanisms are available so that people are able to relate to each other for at least part of the time. Once again, this requires a knowledge and understanding of the culture in order that the most appropriate responses may be planned.

Knowledge and understanding of the culture permit a more accurate analysis of the transference and counter–transference. It may not be possible to make such an analysis when the process is taking place because of the amount of information, not to mention emotion, present at the time. However, personal reflection after the event should permit a clearer understanding. Here the consultant needs to be able to distinguish between what belongs to the client and what belongs to him: that is, to distinguish between the transference and the counter–transference. To do so, the consultant must know himself, must be conscious of his own unconscious, must be aware of his own personal proclivities.

Knowledge of self contributes to the awareness of the consultant, particularly in knowing what effect he is likely to have on his client. In the next, and last, chapter I shall look at this and other matters in considering power and ethics in the consulting role.



## *CHAPTER 13*

### **POWER AND ETHICS IN THE CONSULTANT ROLE**

By way of introduction to this chapter it will be useful to recall that Menzies Lyth (1989) informs us that the consultant's responsibility "lies in helping insights to develop, freeing thinking about problems, helping the client to get away from unhelpful methods of thinking and behaving, facilitating the evolution of new ideas for change, and then helping him to bear the anxiety and uncertainty of the change" (p.33). In doing so, we are intervening directly into the lives and behaviour of our clients. In the chapter on 'Organisational Socialisation' and elsewhere, I have described the potentially chaotic results of change for the members of an organisation. We should therefore be aware that our interventions have effects on our clients; in other words, that we are using power. Consequently, there is a continual need to consider whether we are using power in an ethical manner.

Unlike those who operate in the realms of non-human behaviour, social scientists cannot experiment with new institutions as they like. If we are to work with clients in a way that affects their lives we need a clear understanding of the nature of power. It is this that I shall be looking at in this chapter and at the ethics involved in the use of such power. The contribution of psychoanalysis to understanding power is seldom recognised but I argue that the pluralistic conceptualisation of power is a more effective tool for understanding the consultant-client relationship. This pluralistic view of power will be related to various aspects of the consultant-client relationship, such as dependency, manipulation, and social control, in each case drawing attention to the ethics of the situation. However, I shall commence with a consideration of the nature of power.

As has previously been stated, we know that as a child develops he acquires a boundary which enables him to become progressively more capable of discriminating between outside and inside, between reality and fantasy, and of managing the relation between them. Fairbairn described the development of the personality starting from a state of total dependence on the mother to the mature dependence of the adult on the basis of the structuring of experience within personal or object relationships. The individual at the

personal or psychological level could be viewed as an organism perpetually requiring, and seeking, personal relationships for his development and maintenance. Throughout this process, the individual requires constant affirmation of his identity from the social milieu.

We also know that this self-system develops in the first place by internalising the relationship with the mother and then those of certain important others. Thus, we can say that what develops within the self-system boundary is a perceived reality. Added to this is our knowledge that perception limits our 'reality'. We can only work with what is known to us; or, put another way, something only has meaning in relation to our current knowledge. It is the perceived reality of our self-system that we constantly need to test out and obtain affirmation of from those around us.

In short, we need to constantly confirm our boundaries in order to preserve our self-esteem. We do this by reality testing with others in our social milieu. For the most part, we learn to expect consistent behaviour from those others. However, when we meet with behaviour that is inconsistent with our current perception, this can be very threatening to our individual boundaries, or more particularly, to our self-esteem. In the event, in order to preserve our individuality and self-esteem it seems to be a natural function that we all try to influence others – on a regular basis – that our perception of reality is the right view. In this sense, power is an integral part of everyday life.

The nature of perceived reality is that it is constantly changing. As Berger P L & Kellner H (1981), remind us, "I cannot interpret another's meaning without changing, albeit minimally, my own meaning system" (p.31). This implies that all, whether influencer or influenced, are changed as a result of an interaction. The fact that both parties in a relationship have a mutual effect on each other (even in the infant/mother interaction) is underestimated. Thus we can see that power as influence is pluralistic. This view of power is somewhat different from the harsher or more oppressive view of power that is frequently used. From this other perspective, it is considered that you either have power or you do not: that power is 'zero-sum' in nature; that it is something which benefits one group, or one individual, at the expense of another; that the power of a person A over a person B lies in the ability of A to get B to do something that he would not have done otherwise.



This latter view has been the predominant use and understanding of the nature of power. It is one which has largely ignored or failed to apply psychoanalytic knowledge regarding the development of the personality. This should come as no surprise when we consider that the predominant view of science has been mechanistic. Under this paradigm we have come to equate power with the capacity of machines: with a free standing object which can be switched 'on' or 'off' or be regulated without any effect on anything else. This has coloured our language and our perception of power as being something 'good' or 'bad' depending on where we stand. However, adopting an interpretive paradigm liberates our thinking so that we can view power in a pluralistic manner. As Bateson has postulated (in Skynner R (1989)), "It is not a zero sum equation where the less I gain the more there is for others. The more I gain the more there is for them, and vice versa" (p.113).

This leads us to the notion, previously stated by Rice A K (1963), that every individual has the capacity for self-management in roles of both leadership and followership within organisations. Taking this view, in the role of both leader and follower the individual exercises authority. The mature individual has the capacity to transact external and internal realities across the personal boundary, and can thus manage his feelings, sentiments and construction of reality. However, we need to remember that the individual has to deal with the organisation of experience of relationships in an open system interacting with the social environment. Consequently, the roles will change in accordance with what the individual experiences through the social interaction. When individuals experience what has previously been described as an 'immature situation' they feel unable or unwilling to exercise authority in the follower role. This leads to the conclusion that the consultant should decide, on his own authority, when to lead and when to follow.

More often than not anxiety will result in regression, and it is this situation that I now refer to. Adequate perception and the ability to deal with incoming material by logical thinking requires a well-functioning boundary. The problem arises when perception is blinkered, when the personality boundary becomes disturbed and thinking

becomes more animistic. In these circumstances, encountering a complex and perplexing situation probably mobilizes a temptation to regress to earlier and less mature behaviour. This is typically described by Miller E J (1976), as follows,

"Primitive processes of splitting and projection recur. Thus an adult encountering a person in an authority position may respond not simply to the realities of what the other says and does, but also to a long-persisting internal representation of authority, which may be benign and dependable or punitive and dangerous" (p.21).

One of the most prominent modes of regression is the use of dependency manoeuvres to reduce anxiety. This can result in authority figures being invested with special meaning and power in the fantasy lives of those upon whom they exercise authority. As described above, regression involves childhood experiences and the form that the dependency conflict takes varies with the development of the individual. It lies behind other developmental events and is coloured by them. The dependency phase is characterised by such infantile patterns of ego functioning as magical thinking or poor reality perception. The insidious costs of excessive dependency – erosion of self-esteem, chronic feelings of helplessness and depression – are often not readily apparent.

In short, the ego function has to control transactions across the personal boundary. Where there is confusion which causes difficulties in defining and maintaining those boundaries this may result in anxiety whereby the ego is overwhelmed by 'uncontrolled regression'. However, it is important to distinguish this process from that which Winnicott D (1971) has termed, 'regression in the service of the ego'. This latter process takes place as the individual moves towards independence. During this process he encounters situations which threaten him, as well as others which he is able to master and learn from. There will be times when he feels he has adventured too far, when he needs an opportunity to recuperate, to regroup his forces or recover his health, and in order to do this he 'regresses to dependence'. This condition of dependence, unlike 'uncontrolled regression', is a perfectly normal resting state from which a creative reaching out can take place.



The dividing line between 'regression in the service of the ego' and 'uncontrolled regression' where the ego is overwhelmed, may not be very clear, but in terms of authority the distinction is important. In the former, the subject is still capable of adequate perception or, to use the description of Lofgren L B (1975), is capable of 'progression' which means re-establishment and reinforcement of boundaries. In the latter 'regression' means a move in the direction of malfunctioning boundaries. In the former the individual is still capable of exercising authority, whereas, in the latter, he is not.

In those cases where the individual is not capable of exercising authority, the effectiveness of task performance will be reduced. By gratifying dependency needs the consultant will take away the individual's authority; whereas through resisting the seductive nature of dependency, by permitting the individual to struggle for maturity, towards independence and realistic functioning, the consultant will increase the authority of the client. This is echoed by Skynner (1989) when he writes,

"Gregory Bateson never ceased to remind us that any attempt to change ourselves or others through the use of power rather than through understanding inevitably becomes a form of manipulation that diminishes them and – what I believe is more important – diminishes us as well" (p.113).

It is often claimed that if an organisation is to function effectively, a degree of dependency of members on each other and on the ruling coalition is necessary. Clearly there is a need for leadership, structure, and agenda or clear task if the organisation is to function well. Rioch M (1976), suggests that, for the exercise of such authority some power is necessary. However, it is not quite so clear cut as this. As Miller (1985) points out,

"On some issues, such as the product mix, management can properly be expected to proffer an expert opinion, on others, such as the values that the organisation of the company should be pursuing, the shop floor worker and the general manager are fellow employees, and it is difficult to argue that one should expect to impose his values on the other" (p.269).

The dependency we are referring to here is not the unhealthy uncontrolled dependency where regression results in a loss of authority but one where members retain their own authority. In such a situation individuals accept dependence and give their

authority to leaders by taking authority as followers. For example: in an emergency, in turbulent times, in situations where there is a lack of knowledge on the part of one group of individuals, or more particularly, in situations where there is a clear possession of knowledge on the part of another group of individuals, they may accept that for the good of the total organisation they will take their authority to become followers.

In the same manner individuals are prepared to give their authority by following the accepted processes of the organisation. The nature of organisations is described by Miller E J (1985) who states,

"An enterprise as such is no more than the product of the shared beliefs, of those outside and inside, that it exists and that the organisational boundaries of the enterprise as a whole and of its parts are located in particular places. Its survival is therefore contingent on the sanctioning of the role holders on these boundaries by the role holders inside them." He then continues, "Consequently, some degree of dependence is realistic" (p.250).

Dependence, that is, in the sense that the role holders have given their authority by sanctioning the boundaries with the consequence that they now do not have entire control.

I now want to view the power relationship in regard to the process of learning. In Bion's terms, the mating of pre-conception with sense data is based on our understanding of the world, our perception. For this mating to take place there must be a capability to understand the sense data presented. Where the data is inconsistent with our current perception, there is liable to be anxiety and regression. In such a case there will be a need for a transitional zone in which understanding can take place. It is the provision of this transitional space that will provide the containment of anxiety. The consultant's function during these transactions will be to receive some of the dislodged dependency. He will also have the task of trying to interpret the dependency structure as a further way of helping the client system to understand these internal processes. In other words, he will be fulfilling the sort of 'temporary holding environment' role that I described earlier in the thesis. It follows that where the containment is such as to preserve the client's authority then change will, as Bateson encourages us to believe, be brought about by understanding.



As to what is learned, there are two types of sense data (knowledge) that may be presented to the client, and which will affect the consultant approach. These are the distinctions, (referred to in Miller E J (1976)), made by William James between, 'knowing about' and 'knowledge of acquaintance' which were referred to in the chapter on 'Learning'. Learning cognitive knowledge will not normally cause great anxiety but if it is inconsistent with the client's current perception, it could do so. As to knowledge of acquaintance, this presents a totally different problem. To acquire this type of learning, it is essential that the client is acting in his own authority. Even if the consultant were to attempt to change the client by means of a one sided, coercive, approach, it seems clear that this effort would be doomed to failure. What can be done is to provide the conditions that will permit this type of learning to take place. It seems that for consultancy to be both effective and ethical it should essentially take place in a relationship of inter-dependence, where the realities of mutual dependency can be explored and the nature of authority which both sides bring to the relationship can be examined and worked with.

This requires that the consultant is acting with authenticity, that is, sharing with the client his own thoughts, perceptions, and feelings within the boundaries of the contracted task – or, put another way, the consultant bringing more of his 'real self' to the 'role'. Lack of authenticity will on the one hand, diminish the consultant in the eyes of the client but on the other hand, it must inevitably also diminish the consultant. The consultant will know that he has reduced the authority of the client, which should result in a loss of his own self-esteem.

Just as there are differences in what is to be learned, so too there are differences in the nature of organisations that must be taken into consideration. At times of rapid environmental change, of crisis or 'turbulence' in the external environment, there may be a need for increased centralised decision making. At times of external stability, increased decentralisation and participatory management may be helpful. In the same way, the consultant may be open, accepting, direct, confronting or supportive. There is no one way to consult to a client, save that 'form follows function'. What may be appropriate for promoting learning in one situation may not be appropriate in another. For example, in

a recent consultancy project in the Metropolitan Police I discovered that a highly participative approach did not work. I therefore introduced a more structured approach more in keeping with the traditional hierarchical structure.

There has been considerable debate on the issue of 'power or social control'. For example, Burrell G and Morgan G (1979), pose the question of 'whether it is possible or meaningful to identify power independently of a wider process of ongoing social control' Here the views of Astrachan B M and Flynn H R (1976), on the nature of groups are valuable. They point out that, "In each important group to which the individual belongs, the individual begins to learn something about the ideals and behaviours that are expected of him, and to explore whether to give his authority to the conditions of membership" (p.47). If he finds that they are reasonably consistent with his perceptions he may choose to do so and will stay with the organisation. If not, he will leave.

On this view, 'social control' is no more and no less than the collective authority of the individuals within that society. Be it a family, organisation, or a wider societal grouping, it exists in its current condition by the sanctioned authority of the individuals within it. Should the collective view be that the conditions of membership are not worthwhile, they will attempt to change them by withdrawing their authority. We can all offer examples of family, or organisational, life where various members have found the conditions do not meet their perception of reality and have taken action to change those conditions. On a societal level, I believe that the actions of Gandhi provide us with the clearest example of the pluralistic nature of power. In spite of the use of immense one sided power on the part of the government, Gandhi still possessed authority. Nothing that the government did, be it coercive or manipulative, served to reduce his power. It did, though, as Bateson so rightly stated, diminish the government.

In any discussion on power, authority and ethics of consulting the issue of manipulation will inevitably be raised. In any organisation there will exist different groups with different perceptions of the same world. This may involve black workers and white workers, male workers and female workers, blue collar workers and white collar workers, or even those on the first floor and those on the second floor. The difficulty for the consultant is that he may have to deal with all of these different perceptions. In doing



so, he will undoubtedly come under suspicion from one or other group that he is manipulating them in favour of another group. The most obvious example is between the ruling coalition and the rest of the workforce, as the consultant will invariably be employed by the former.

Understandably, this may lead to the consultant being viewed with suspicion by those who interpret the boss–employee relationship in class terms and perceive an irreconcilable conflict of interests between the two groupings. Many consultant interventions are, I feel sure, as described by Miller (1985), "something to be applied on behalf of their clients, top management, to the rest of the organisation – top management itself being exempt from the process" (p.244). From this standpoint, consultancy can only be seen by non–managers, as a cunning ploy, as a manipulative exercise. Equally, there are those cases where consultants seek to impose a participative process on a hitherto directive management system. From this standpoint, consultancy will also be seen by managers as a manipulative exercise.

Taking the pluralistic view of authority, consultancy cannot be anything but a political activity. The very presence of the consultant affects the pre–existing distribution of power. All interventions will affect the perceived reality of all concerned to a lesser or greater degree depending on their current perception. The nature of consultancy is such that where one system is consciously or unconsciously attempting to alter the current knowledge of those involved, relations between the consultant and client must, of necessity, be political. Activities by the consultant that are seen as threatening by any party may result in anxiety, regression, and a subsequent loss of authority. This will diminish the client but it will, as previously stated, also diminish the consultant. It is therefore my contention that ethical consulting values should be about preserving the authority of all concerned, whatever their perceived reality.

It is suggested that the key to containing anxiety lies in the use of information. Bateson G (1979), put forward the proposition that in the realms of communication, organisation, thought, learning, and evolution, 'nothing will come of nothing', without information – that nothing has meaning except it be seen as in some context. This is in accord with our previous recognition that we can only work with what is known to us;

with our own individual perception of reality. Bateson takes this further by relating this to the phenomenon of transference, of which he states, "It is a universal characteristic of all interaction between persons because, after all, the shape of what happened between you and me yesterday carries over to shape how we respond to each other today. And that shaping is, in principle, a transference from the past" (p.15). Thus our perceived reality will be set in the context of its development. It is through the access to information that movement can be achieved.

The facilitation of access to information by the consultant is consistent with the requirement for authenticity which, it will be recalled means sharing with clients one's thoughts, perceptions, and feelings within the boundaries of the contracted task. It is also consistent with the task of consultancy, as the essence of learning and evolution is exploration and change. Thus information will permit all concerned to perceive a different reality through understanding, through the use of their own authority. Whereas, on the other hand, no information will result in stalemate and entrenched positions – 'nothing will come of nothing'. Ethical consulting therefore, also requires authenticity and sharing information with the client.

## **Summary**

The role of the organisational consultant is a very privileged position, we should therefore be aware that our interventions have effects on our clients and that we are using power. In view of the possibility of anxiety and regression by the client to a position where there is a loss of self-esteem and a capability to exercise his own authority, there will be times when the client will be extremely vulnerable. Understanding the nature of power helps the consultant to understand the client so that he can provide a temporary holding environment for the containment of anxiety and aid the recovery of the client to a position where he is once again capable of exercising his own authority. In conclusion, I would postulate that – among other things – for the consultant to help his client in the most effective manner it is both necessary, and ethically demanded, that he has an understanding of what organisational culture is, and the way it is developed, perpetuated, and represented.



## **CHAPTER 14**

### **CONCLUSION**

The starting point for this thesis was my discovery that working as an organisation consultant I often experienced circumstances where the sociostructural system of an organisation was not congruent with the cultural system. Current theory failed to provide a satisfactory explanation of culture such as to enable me to be effective in attempting to bring about intended change in organisations. Consequently, it was felt that there was a need to look at culture in a different light, to search for new ideas and that an original approach might prove more beneficial.

The basis of these new ideas that constitute the argument presented in this thesis is that organisational culture is something that an organisation IS, rather than something that an organisation HAS. Nonetheless, when viewed from the perspective of organisational change it seems helpful to distinguish between the constructs of 'culture' and 'structure'. Starting from that basis, the aim of the thesis is to develop a theoretical framework that will provide an explanation of culture relevant to understanding organisational change. In doing so, the intention is not to disregard or dismiss other theories but is an acknowledgement of the point made by Singer (1968) when he stated,

".....it is going to take more than one kind of theoretical model to do justice to the variety, complexity, and richness of human culture" (p.541).

At the centre of the process are the individual members of an organisation and their mental processes. Culture being a construct, the source of that construct is the human mind. Consequently, in developing a theory and methodology we need to develop a means of interpreting the conscious and unconscious behaviour of the individual actors of various boundaried groups within organisations. This means that we need appropriate tools, because, as Bhaskar (1975) has stated,

"The social scientist can only say as much as the tools at his disposal, or those which he chooses to use, enable him to say" (p.6).

In deciding on the approach to take it was decided to use concepts from psycho-analysis as the tools which would provide the sought after explanation of culture.

In the event, it is felt that the decision to use a psycho-dynamic approach has permitted a consistent and compatible investigation of the wide range of concepts that are associated with organisational culture. In more specific terms, by building on these concepts it has been possible to arrive at a theory which begins to answer a crucial question: that concerning how culture develops. In this chapter I shall first relate to the development of the new ideas by summarising the main elements of the theory, as developed in Chapter 10. This will then be followed by an analysis of the application, discussed in Chapter 12, which is an explanation of the utility of the theory in a piece of organisational consultancy.

The theory builds on psycho-analytic theories about the development of the individual and in particular to a key concept of this thesis, namely, the interrelatedness of the individual with various 'holding environments' in the development of personality. Development of the individual was referred to in depth in the Chapter on 'Symbolism' but the following brief summary will assist the ensuing discussion. Starting from birth, the early relation is characterised by infantile dependence, that is, a dependence based on a primary identification with the object, and an inability to differentiate and adapt. The infant is part of a symbiotic relationship with his mother, that is, he is both 'held' by the mother and is part of the maternal holding environment. At this stage the holding environment is both 'psycho-' and 'socio-'. However, in spite of the closed nature of the holding environment between mother and infant, this is still an open system. Through the bodily senses, influences from the external environment may affect the development of the infant.

For the infant to develop there is a need for a 'basic trust' in the maternal holding environment and for what Winnicott (1971) has termed 'a good enough holding environment'. This 'basic trust' is developed as a result of the infant's perceived experience of his holding environment. From holding inside the mother's womb this extends to holding in the mother's arms. However, what we are referring to is much more than just physical holding. It is about the mother providing boundaries which help the infant to make sense of his world. Much can occur during the process of maternal holding that will affect the process of movement from infantile dependence to mature dependence.



As the infant grows there then develops the use of a transitional object which leads to the recognition of external objects – of a 'me' and 'not me'. Gradually there develop several 'not me's' in the shape of father, siblings, playmates, and other relations. At this stage there also develops the use of true symbols and the use of language and words as symbols. Here the holding environment begins to split into an internalised psychological part and an external social and physical part. There also develops a succession of holding environments in the form of family, school, youth groups (e.g., scouts or guides), university and work organisations.

Where the individual has experienced his holding environment as good enough his personality may develop to the extent that he is capable of progression. Thus, we may now have an individual who is capable of using true symbols, and of mature dependence based upon differentiation of the object from the self, and who is a member of multiple holding environments: a unique individual who might be termed an artificial creation that has developed out of his interrelatedness with the multiple holding environments of which he has belonged. The unique mosaic that is the individual personality is made up of introjects from all of the holding environments of which he has been a part. In adulthood, each of the holding environments of which he is a member consists of an internalised psychological part and the external social and physical part.

To conclude this brief look at individual development, we can describe personality in the following way:

- (1) It is a psycho-social process;
- (2) It is evidenced by sameness and continuity;
- (3) It is influenced by conscious and unconscious processes;
- (4) It is unique for each individual;
- (5) It is a dynamic process;
- (6) It is such that the individual will produce forms of behaviour which will be psychologically advantageous to him under the conditions imposed by the environment.

Turning now to organisations, as was argued in Chapter 3, and following Khan (1976), the view taken here is that human organisations have no structure other than the patterns of behaviour that are also their internal functions. When these patterns of

behaviour stop, the organisation ceases to exist. Not even the traces of equipment and buildings that remain will provide us with many clues as to its nature in life. Patterns of human behaviour are of human construction and are infinitely susceptible to modification. In order that the organisation is to exist, people must be motivated to engage in the stable recurring patterns of behaviour that constitute the organisation. In essence, this view sees organisations as artificial creations (constructs) that are viewed by their members as perceived objects 'as if' they were individuals.

The main working hypothesis of this thesis, as discussed in Chapter 10, is that in the same way that personality develops out of the interrelatedness of the individual with his holding environment(s) so the culture of an organisation develops out of the interrelatedness of the members of the organisation with the organisation holding environment. The group and holding environment are structured by and within each other but by virtue of treating 'the organisation' as if it were an individual the members interrelate with it 'as if' it were a holding environment.

In a manner similar to the relationship of the individual with his mother the organisation becomes a partly conscious and partly unconscious holding environment for its members. The conscious part of the holding environment may be termed the external holding environment. This is the sociostructural part which consists of the ruling coalition, the formal goals, structures, strategies, policies and processes, roles of members, knowledge and skills, the shared private language, beliefs, values, and attitudes. The unconscious part of the holding environment may be termed the internalised holding environment. This is the psychological part which consists of internal objects derived from phantasy activity about the holding environment, that is, by introjection of external objects. It is that part of the self which composes the basic social character of the individual.

Viewing organisations as open systems, the partly conscious and partly unconscious holding environment is influenced by activities in the external environment of the organisation. The inter-relatedness to symbolic objects may include those 'outside' the organisation. The degree of influence will depend on the degree of boundary control exercised on behalf of the members of the organisation. If there is a clarity of purpose



external influences are unlikely to be great, whereas if the boundary is weak external influence may be considerable. As Miller & Rice (1975) explained,

"Unless there is a discontinuity, there can be no boundary region and thus no sense in which activities carried out within the supposed system are insulated from other activities 'outside'" (p.48).

From this view of organisations it is considered that we may therefore also describe culture in a similar manner to the description of personality:

- (1) It is a psycho-social process, which was explained by reference to the interrelatedness of the members of the organisation with the organisational holding environment;
- (2) It is evidenced by sameness and continuity to provide for the self-esteem of the members and their sense of reality with others;
- (3) Being a psychological as well as a social process it is influenced by conscious and unconscious processes;
- (4) Both the uniqueness of the collective, perceived view of the members of the organisation and the organisational holding environment results in a unique culture in every organisation and part of an organisation;
- (5) Because groups are ongoing structures as opposed to finished ones it is a dynamic and changing process;
- (6) The members of the organisation will produce forms of behaviour which will be psychologically advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by the environment.

Reliable holding is as important to the self-esteem of the members of an organisation as it is to the infant. If there is a basic trust in the holding environment there is likely to be a task supportive culture. That is, the culture is likely to be in synchronicity with the sociostructural system. However, if there is no basic trust and the holding environment is viewed as being either socially, physically and/or psychologically, 'not good enough' (to para-phrase Winnicott), there is likely to be an anti-task culture. In these circumstances there will be a lack of congruence between the cultural system and the sociostructural system. From the view of an outsider, the behaviour of the members of an organisation may appear irrational. However, the behaviour needs to be viewed

from the perspective of the members of the organisation. They produce forms of behaviour that are advantageous to them under what they consciously and unconsciously perceive are the conditions imposed by their holding environment. Thus, the rationality of organisational behaviour is one associated with the particular culture and not one associated with external criteria or societal values.

This has implications for the perpetuation of culture, as was argued in Chapter 10. In the same way that the maternal holding environment affects the development of mature dependence in the infant, so the organisational holding environment will affect the existence or otherwise of mature dependence in the group. In what might be termed the 'mature' situation the culture will be perpetuated and characterised by gradual and smooth change because of the ability of the members to differentiate and adapt to change. In the 'immature' situation (here seen as analogous to infantile dependence) the culture will be perpetuated with little or no change because of the inability of the members to differentiate and adapt. 'Object relations' (really, subject-object relations) emerge out of a lifelong process of differentiations of the self from the world. As cultural change involves the very creating of new objects (a process of differentiation) as well as our relating to them (a process of integration) it is a necessary condition that a 'mature' situation exists.

There are also implications for the representation of culture which is chiefly achieved by words and language used as symbols, as was argued in Chapter 6. Each culture is represented by its own unique private language, or idiom. Where an 'immature' situation exists there is a greater tendency to synthesise and develop a more and more private form of language; Mechanisms of condensation and pictorial representation are more likely in view of the lack of adaptability. In the 'mature' situation the opportunities for adaptability and differentiation will result in a less concrete private language.

Like all theories, the theory presented here is also itself a construct. Whenever we begin to look at a situation with a view to explaining it, in whatever way, we must create artificial divisions and viewpoints. In the terminology used in this thesis we need to somehow categorise the data in order to make some sense out of it. As we are dealing with mental processes, I have used the artificial categorisations that have already been developed for the purposes of psycho-analysis. This provides not only a ready made



structure for viewing these complex processes but also a shared language for others to understand (see Chapter 11).

Once we introduce the notion that individuals are involved in the development of culture, we also need to bear in mind that culture is influenced by unconscious feelings and fantasies. Therefore, in addition to developing a theory of how culture develops it is also necessary to develop a methodology that permits us to gain access to both conscious and unconscious data. The only place that the organisation and its holding environment exist is in the perceived reality of the members of the organisation or in the mind of the theorist. Consequently, in order to gain the sort of data required it is necessary to intervene directly into the lives of the subjects of the culture so that we and they may access the conscious and unconscious views of their organisation. As was argued in Chapters 11 and 12, it is suggested that the way that we do this is to obtain an understanding of the transference in the situation. By deliberate intervention and the deciphering of the responses – that is, the way that the consultant is used and experienced and the feelings evoked in him – it is possible to develop hypotheses about the unconscious processes of the members of the organisation.

Thus a person (subject) exhibiting transference in a relationship experiences the other (object) in a way that does not correspond to the actual object and which cannot be accounted for on the basis of the current situation alone but is based on previous interpersonal experiences. Starting from this point and following Scheidlinger (1980), the consultant needs to ask, "What makes this client behave (speak or act) toward me in this particular way at this moment?" In other words, what role does he unconsciously try to push me into, what sort of relationship is he unconsciously trying to establish between us? In this way we arrive at a knowledge of the unconscious which, of course, is only as something conscious as we know it, after it has undergone transformation or translation into something conscious. A working hypothesis is that answers to these questions will enable the consultant to establish contact with the unconscious level of the organisation, which is essential if he is to understand culture.

A further concept discussed in Chapter 11 is projective identification, which has particular significance for culture and change. Bion (1961) believed that the group arouses

primitive feelings in its members and that results in them using the defence of projective identification. Although the process starts with a person projecting a part of his self onto and into one or more persons, it is the impact on the other person that is of greatest interest. A phantasy is created which is a wishful one – that is, it has behind it a pressure toward gratification or fulfilment. The member of a group tries to actualise the unconscious wishful transference fantasies, to make them real, to experience them as part of reality. The other person undergoes an identification or a fusion with the projected content and its unconscious meanings and has the experience of being manipulated into a particular role, although he may not necessarily be aware of this manipulation.

Projective identification provides an added dimension to transference, in that transference need not be regarded as simply a repetition of the past. It can also be a reflection of fantasies about the relation of the consultant created in the present by projective identification. In trying to actualise their unconscious wishful phantasy the members of a group will externalise the wish into the person of the consultant. This may evoke a counter-transference response which can be meaningful to the consultant. The information to be found in transference and counter-transference can be the crucial clue to the interrelatedness of the members of the organisation and their organisational holding environment. In this way the unconscious views that the members of the organisation have formed about their holding environment are displaced onto the consultant by means of transference.

In terms of methodology we are getting closer to clinical psychoanalysis. This is bound to attract the same sort of criticisms levelled against psycho-analysis in general – not least the criticism referred to in Chapter 1, that psycho-analysis is self-monitoring and self-confirming so that it "comes out right" whichever way experimental evidence happens to point. This is a difficult assertion to rebut for those uninitiated in psychoanalysis, however, those who have been involved as analysts or analysands have frequently rebutted such assertions.. However, if we accept the notion, which has now been accepted by even those most critical of psycho-analysis, that the unconscious is a necessary construct for exploring mental processes, we need a methodology that will provide an explanation of



unconscious processes. An analysis of the transference and counter-transference is a means of achieving this. In the following paragraphs I shall refer to application but will also take further the discussion of transference.

As was described in Chapter 12, working as an internal consultant, by deliberate intervention and deciphering the responses it has been possible to gain a richer understanding of the culture of the Metropolitan Police Service, including the unconscious relatedness of police with their holding environment. Through engaging with various groups it was possible to confirm, as others have previously stated, that groups of people within the same organisation may have different languages, beliefs and values. Sometimes this was a marked difference, at others more subtle difference and at times there was little or no discernible difference. The needs for attachment, social relatedness and confirmation, consistency and continuity all pull the members of groups together into a boundaried whole, a group of people who closely identify with each other and introject the same set of rules so that they can be said to share a collective super-ego. This supports the notion that parts of an organisation that are perceived by their members as bounded groups enact – to varying degrees – sub-cultures of the main culture. In much the same way that the mother provides boundaries which helps the infant to make sense out of his world, so the members of the organisation form boundaries to make sense out of theirs. The boundaries thus formed will be the result of the interrelatedness of the members of the organisation with the organisation holding environment.

An analysis of the way the various groups involved in the intervention related to me, as consultant, has provided data in regard to how the members of the organisation related to their holding environment. At times this was expressed in the transference as helplessness and was accompanied by requests such as 'Tell us what to do and we will do it' or by calls for experts to assist them in their endeavours. They were in effect saying 'If we devise this new system we may get it wrong; therefore we will let someone else get it wrong or we will do as we are told; either way we cannot be wrong'. This was experienced in the counter-transference as a guilty father who was not providing love and caring for his children.

At other times the feelings of the members of the groups were expressed in terms of questions such as, 'Have we got authority to do this?' There were also questions about the commitment of senior management and calls for firm and strong leadership. In the transference this was experienced as being the father of a totally dependent child. There was also avoidance of the current problem using future structural change as an excuse. This again produced counter-transference feelings of a rejected father. The transference also displayed a considerable lack of trust that was evidenced by questions like 'What are you really trying to do?' Here the feeling was of a father not trusted by his child.

In all of these circumstances the refusal to provide the sought after dependency or the challenging of the helplessness, denial and avoidance brought a transference response of anger, anxiety and hostility. My experience, as the consultant, was one of feeling rejected and of being used as a sort of dumping ground for all sorts of moans and groans, of not being trusted. Here the counter-transference response was feelings of anxiety and annoyance and indeed discouragement but above all, of guilt. It was as if I was a poor father who had not looked after his children; one who had caused his children so much pain.

The question to be answered was 'What makes the members behave toward me in this way?' At the cognitive level they had learned what needed to be done about the current problem and were able to work with the necessary concepts. At the political level there was clear support for the change expressed both verbally and in writing by very senior managers. There was even an acceptance by the members of a need for change and the desirability of the change. Yet, their response was, as has been described above, a strong resistance to change expressed in the transference as denial and avoidance and lack of trust. Clearly, there was considerable anxiety regarding the prospect of change which could not be explained at the surface level and therefore required that we should seek an explanation at a deeper level. There was apparently something, quite separate from the sociostructural system which was the source of this anxiety. Other than an explanation that the members of the groups were all stupid or simply awkward, which they plainly



were not, there exists no obvious explanation for the fact that there is some separate process that results in the behaviour described. I take this process to be culture and that it had developed out of the interrelatedness of the members of the organisation with the organisation holding environment.

The effects of change on members of an organisation make more sense if we bear in mind the proposition that culture produces forms of behaviour that will be advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by the environment. The all-pervading nature of culture is such that there is interaction between all parts of the organisation. This makes each process dependent on the other. Consequently any changes to one part of the organisation will cause and again be influenced by changes to others. The disruption to the organised whole may be viewed as a threatening experience. In developing a culture the members of an organisation develop a structure of meaning on which they have come to rely for its sense of continuity, consistency and confirmation. To give up these known ways of behaviour and embark on the unknown may be experienced as nothing less than social chaos and individual breakdown.

In this instance, the threats to the structure of meaning that had been developed by the members of the groups concerned was shown in various ways: the activities of managers in restricting access to information and decision making; the restriction by the members to as narrow a world as they could possibly achieve so that it could be defended with certainty. This was particularly apparent in the non co-operation between groups; the demand for a static and unchanging order and structure, the avoidance of change, and the restriction to activities which they felt they were good at. These behaviours may be seen as tending to confirm the notion that the members of the groups rely on the structure of meaning that we call culture for consistency, confirmation and continuity.

The situation referred to, however, was also evidenced by extreme anxiety. It was a typical 'immature' situation, one in which there was little progression and where differentiation was not possible. The anxiety signified that the organisation itself was in a situation where the paranoid-schizoid position predominated. The reliance on tight and rigid hierarchical controls and closely controlled tasks resulted in feelings of chaos that were disturbing in the extreme. The way that this was dealt with was to build in the

systems of control, which were seen as 'good', and to project all the 'bad' feelings onto anything which was likely to disturb these systems. This included any proposed new system, and the consultants.

The anxiety that was being transferred onto the consultant was arising primarily at the unconscious level and was a representation of the internalised holding environment. An interpretation of the transference led me to conclude that there was a lack of basic trust by the members of the groups in their holding environment. Furthermore, that this lack of basic trust had been developed out of experience of the holding environment over a period of time. That is it was a representation of the psychological internalised part of the holding environment which consists of internal objects derived from phantasy activity about their holding environment. What was being introjected by the members of the groups was not a comforting progressive experience but the sense of contentless anxiety referred to by Bion.

What was not understood, at this time, was why there was no basic trust. To understand more fully what was happening it was necessary to go beyond the transference and to try to interpret the counter-transference. It will be recalled that what is repressed by the client may be expressed by the consultant and that this (counter-transference) can be used as a tool for understanding the transference. The overriding feeling in the counter-transference was one of guilt. Analysis of the counter-transference led me to believe that this guilt experienced by the consultant was that which was repressed by the members of the organisation and was the reason why the consultant was the object of such transference. Furthermore, it was the guilt experienced by the members which led to the anxiety and resistance to change. At this point, in order to explain this better it will help if I recall something of what was said in Chapter 11 about guilt and conscience.

Freud (1926) discovered that on the one hand anxiety and guilt are closely connected with each other. On the other hand he came to the conclusion that the term 'guilt' is only applicable in regard to manifestations of conscience which are the result of super-ego development. Bettelheim (1969) was of the view that,

"A collective super ego is derived from collective demands instead of uniquely personal ones. It is still an inner voice that echoes an original



external equivalent. Only, it is not a voice that shouts to me in particular 'Thou shalt not' but rather a chorus of many voices shouting 'You (plural) must not'."

Explaining that this is even more powerful than an individual conscience he continues,

"Such a voice is more inescapable. We can try to hide from a parent, even from God.... but we can never hide from a control system of which we are quite consciously a part" (p.126).

Rycroft (1968) stated that,

"Like anxiety,...guilt can be reduced by avoiding contact with new ideas" (p.43).

Analysis of the counter transference led to the conclusion that the demands that produce a collective police super-ego and subsequently guilt, arise from a combination of circumstances over a period of years. Calls for accountability and the adversarial judicial system coupled with the lack of an effective strategy, results in a collective conscience which says, 'you must be right'. The effect is that the culture is one where being right is all-important and taking chances is far too risky to contemplate. This in turn imposes a sort of control on the organisation which is manifested in a demand for a static order and structure, the avoidance of change and the restriction to activities which the police feel they are good at. Thus we are able to show that the every-day activities of police are considerably influenced by the inter-relatedness to symbolic objects in the environment.

As Anna Freud (1966) explains, dread of the super-ego is the anxiety that sets the defensive processes going. Members of the organisation have the problem of admitting that they have desires and phantasies and this is experienced with shame, anxiety and feelings of guilt. In this particular case, the desire of the members was for a new and better system of working. However to entertain such desires led to a dread of the superego and a resulting guilt. In a situation where the super-ego is insisting 'you must be right', the mention of new objects is not possible; identification is with known and existing objects; there is no capacity for tolerating or experiencing new ideas, and the members feel they have no choice. This leads to a fear and belief that mistakes will not be permitted and will not be admitted.

In effect, it is postulated that what has happened is that because of the combination of circumstances, for the members of the organisation, these exceptionally strong public demands have become an important integral part of the organisational holding environment. The culture is dominated by conscience and the forms of behaviour adopted by the members of the organisation that they feel will be advantageous to them under the conditions imposed by their environment are exercised to prevent the extreme anxiety arising from the feeling of guilt that the members experience when they have doubts about the correctness of their actions. In turn, the inference is that police have a serious lack of belief in themselves and a low self-esteem. They seem unable to take the decisions that will begin to deal with their problems and instead wait for someone else to take the decisions and tell them what to do.

The ambiguity presented by the holding environment prevents the necessary confirmation, consistency and continuity that is required by the members. In developing a culture they therefore reach a level that is least anxiety-provoking for the members by adopting forms of behaviour that do not cause them anxiety and guilt. This results in the sort of behaviour described above: for example, hierarchical control and restriction to roles that they know they are good at. Support for the view that there is a need for being right is to be found in the reduction of anxiety and in the confidence to work with new ideas when they were provided with a structure which they could be sure was right. In order to make progress it was necessary to do everything possible to reduce the anxiety so that people would be able to relate to each other for at least part of the time in such a way that anxiety would be dealt with rather than shelved: that is, to remain in the depressive position.

We have seen, then, that the framework that is the basis of this theory is an artificial categorisation of the process that we call culture. In the same way that the topological model provides a means of making sense of complex mental processes for an analyst, this model provides a means of making sense of the complex process of culture. Where it differs significantly from previous theories is that the framework provides a means of viewing culture as an ideational system that is at the same time, 'an idea held in the mind' of individuals, an 'inter-subjective phenomenon', an 'unconscious as well as a conscious phenomenon', and that it is 'developed out of the inter-relatedness to symbolic



objects'. In doing so it gives individuals a dominant and pivotal role in the development of culture. Application demonstrates that the theory not only provides an explanation of the manifest behaviour of the members of the organisation but also the reasons why they behave in that particular way.

I would stress that this is only one way of looking at organisation culture. As Singer (1968) has stated,

"It is going to take more than one kind of theoretical model to do justice to the variety, complexity, and richness of human culture" (p.541).

Nevertheless, in providing a means of interpreting the way that individual members of an organisation characterise their social reality I believe that this framework provides a richer explanation of organisational culture and that it is a more appropriate tool for understanding organisational change.

If the consultant is to help his clients he needs to ensure that a state of mature dependence exists and to do this he must be aware why they adopt their particular forms of behaviour and the structures of meaning that they rely on. Progression is made possible by the existence of a good enough holding environment and in order to change there has to be an ability to differentiate new objects and to integrate them: in other words, a state of mature dependence must exist. As Fairbairn (1952) stated,

"If a mature individual loses an object, however important, he still has some objects remaining. His eggs are not all in one basket. Further he has a choice of objects and can desert one for another. The infant, on the other hand, has no choice. The infant is completely dependent on his object" (p.47).

In providing data about the way the actors interpret their holding environment the theoretical framework is helpful in diagnosing the cause of an organisational problem. Without such an understanding we would address our attention to the symptoms, by, for example in the case reported, responding to the lack of decision-making by providing more leadership training. However, the framework also provides data at a deeper level of understanding. Too much anxiety will prevent progression and mature dependence and will result in regression to paranoid-schizoid behaviour. A working hypothesis is that the consultant who is able to acquire such knowledge of the culture will be able to reduce the

anxiety by providing the members of the organisation with a temporary holding environment while they adjust to new behaviour and a new meaning system. In the instance reported above, it was necessary to provide the clients with a degree of structure – something they could be reasonably sure was right – and thus remove some of the risk-taking that they were experiencing.

In conclusion, it should be recalled that the theory has only been used in one organisation and, by only one consultant. The information (and misinformation) stored within the individual, arising from past experiences and inborn needs, sets the standards by which we both evaluate new experience and establish their meaning. Consequently, even the most objective research is dependent on interpretive choices which are often left implicit. It is essential, therefore, that in order for the theory to be established other consultants need to apply it critically in other organisations. However, it is felt that in the one setting that it has been applied it has been shown that this is an interpretive tool that can provide data about culture relevant to organisation change.

We also need to bear in mind that all organisations are unique, consequently, there can be no settled categorisation of what a holding environment is or is not. The question of what the holding environment includes and what it does not include can only be organisation specific. The significance of various aspects of the organisation holding environment will also be organisation specific. We need to assess how open the organisation system is and what the significant aspects are. In the case of the Metropolitan Police the most significant aspect was the lack of an effective strategy and the influence of factors in the external environment. That will not always be the case. For example, looked at from this theoretical basis, a significant aspect of the holding environment for Kets De Vries (1984) in his 'neurotic organisations' was the leader. For Jaques (1955) and Menzies Lyth (1970) in their 'social systems' as a defence against anxiety' the significant aspect was the inappropriateness of the formal structures and strategies.

There seems every reason to suggest that the theoretical framework can be used as an interpretive tool in other organisations. The concept may also prove to have other applications. For example, using the concept of organisation holding environments: Is it



possible that they can be influenced by managerial action? All cultures are unique but it may be possible that they can be influenced indirectly. We cannot influence culture per se but it may be possible to influence the holding environment and consequently through this the organisational culture. As has been stated earlier in this chapter if there is to be progression an infant needs to have a basic trust in his maternal holding environment, this trust comes from what Winnicott calls 'good enough' mothering. In the same way, could we ensure the existence of conditions amounting to 'good enough' managing such as will result in a basic trust in the organisational holding environment and thus progression? Is it possible to arrange the social and physical parts of the organisational holding environment so that the members of the organisation produce forms of behaviour that are not only psychologically advantageous to themselves but also to the organisation – thus resulting in a task related culture?

A further avenue of development might exist if a comparative study was carried out to establish if it was possible to show a generalisation of types of organisation holding environments. Again, the uniqueness of cultures is not for one moment being questioned. However, it is suggested that by examining the conditions that exist in the social and physical parts of organisation holding environments where there are task related or anti-task cultures, then it may be possible to show recognisable patterns. Should this be the case there would be considerable advantage to managers in helping them to manage effectively.

This theory may also have relevance to other fields such as family therapy. It may be particularly helpful to those therapists who take a systemic rather than an individualistic approach to family therapy. Viewing the situation as a family holding environment may provide information about why the individual member of the family adopts particular forms of behaviour. Extending this line of thought, it seems that those involved with delinquent children – either in an institution or as individual therapists – need to provide the 'good enough' holding environment that was undoubtedly missing in the family holding environment. These are potentially exciting developments that are beyond the scope of this study and will only be determined by further research.

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