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SOCIAL SYSTEMS AS DEFENCE AGAINST PERSECUTORY AND DEPRESSIVE ANXIETY

A Contribution to the Psycho-Analytical Study of Social Processes

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IT has often been noted that many social phenomena show a strikingly close correspondence with psychotic processes in individuals. Melitta Schmideberg¹ for instance, has pointed to the psychotic content of many primitive ceremonies and rites. And Bion² has suggested that the emotional life of the group is only understandable in terms of psychotic mechanisms. My own recent experience³ has impressed upon me how much institutions are used by their individual members to reinforce individual mechanisms of defence against anxiety, and in particular against recurrence of the early paranoid and depressive anxieties first described by Melanie Klein.⁴ In connecting social behaviour with defence against psychotic anxiety, I do not wish in any way to suggest that social relationships serve none other than a defensive function of this kind. Instances of other functions include the equally important expression and gratification of libidinal impulses in constructive social activities, as well as social co-operation in institutions providing creative, sublimatory opportunities. In the present paper, however, I propose to limit myself to a consideration of certain defensive functions; and in so doing I hope to illustrate and define how the mechanisms of projective and introjective identification operate in linking individual and social behaviour.

¹ "The role of psychotic mechanisms in cultural development", *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, Vol. XII.

² "Group Dynamics: A re-view", in this book.

³ *The Changing Culture of a Factory* (London, 1951).

⁴ The views of Mrs. Klein drawn upon in this paper are described in her two books, *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* (London, 1932), and *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis* (London, 1948), and in papers recently published in *Developments in Psycho-Analysis* (London, 1952).

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The specific hypothesis I shall consider is that one of the primary cohesive elements binding individuals into institutionalized human association is that of defence against psychotic anxiety. In this sense individuals may be thought of as externalizing those impulses and internal objects that would otherwise give rise to psychotic anxiety, and pooling them in the life of the social institutions in which they associate. This is not to say that the institutions so used thereby become "psychotic". But it does imply that we would expect to find in group relationships manifestations of unreality, splitting, hostility, suspicion, and other forms of maladaptive behaviour. These would be the social counterpart of—although not identical with—what would appear as psychotic symptoms in individuals who have not developed the ability to use the mechanism of association in social groups to avoid psychotic anxiety.

If the above hypothesis holds true, then observation of social process is likely to provide a magnified view of the psychotic mechanisms observable in individuals, while also providing a setting in which more than one observer can share. Moreover, many social problems—economic and political—which are often laid at the door of human ignorance, stupidity, wrong attitudes, selfishness, or power seeking, may become more understandable if seen as containing unconsciously motivated attempts by human beings to defend themselves in the best way available at the moment against the experience of anxieties whose sources could not be consciously controlled. And the reasons for the intractability to change of many social stresses and group tensions may be more clearly appreciated if seen as the "resistances" of groups of people unconsciously clinging to the institutions that they have, because changes in social relationships threaten to disturb existing social defences against psychotic anxiety.

Social institutions, as I shall here use the term, are social structures with the cultural mechanisms governing relationships within them. Social structures are systems of roles, or positions, which may be taken up and occupied by persons. Cultural mechanisms are conventions, customs, taboos, rules, etc., which are used in regulating the relations among members of a society. For purposes of analysis, institutions can be defined independently of the particular individuals occupying roles and operating a culture. But the actual working of institutions takes place through real people using cultural mechanisms within a social structure; and the unconscious or implicit functions of an institution are specifically determined by the particular individuals associated in the institution, occupying

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roles within a structure and operating the culture. Changes may occur in the unconscious functions of an institution through change in personnel, without there necessarily being any apparent change in manifest structure or functions. And conversely, as is so often noted, the imposition of a change in manifest structure or culture for the purpose of resolving a problem, may often leave the problem unsolved because the unconscious relationships remain unchanged.

PROJECTION, INTROJECTION, AND IDENTIFICATION IN SOCIAL
RELATIONSHIPS

In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud takes as his starting point in group psychology the relationship between the group and its leader. The essence of this relationship he sees in the mechanisms of identification: of the members of the group with the leader and with each other.¹ Group processes in this sense can be linked to earlier forms of behaviour, since "identification is known to psycho-analysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person".² But Freud did not explicitly develop the concept of identification beyond that of identification by introjection, a conception deriving from his work on the retention of lost objects through introjection.³ In his analysis of group life, he does, however, differentiate between identification of the ego with an object (or identification by introjection) and what he terms replacement of the ego ideal by an external object.⁴ Thus, in the two cases he describes, the Army and the Church, he points out that the soldier replaces his ego ideal by the leader who becomes his ideal, whereas the Christian takes Christ into himself as his ideal and identifies himself with Him.

Like Freud, Melanie Klein sees introjection as one of the primary processes whereby the infant makes emotional relationships with its objects. But she considers that introjection interacts with the process of projection in the making of these relationships.⁵ Such a formula-

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 80: he states, "A primary group . . . is a number of individuals who have substituted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego".

² *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

³ "Mourning and Melancholia", *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV (London, 1925).

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁵ Cf. "Notes on some Schizoid Mechanisms", p. 293: "I have often expressed my view that object relations exist from the beginning of life. . . . I have further suggested that the relation to the first object implies its introjection and projection, and that from the beginning object relations are moulded by an interaction between introjection and projection, between internal and external objects and situations." In *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*.

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tion seems to me to be consistent with, although not explicit in, the views of Freud expressed above. That is to say, identification of the ego with an object is identification by introjection; this is explicit in Freud. But replacement of the ego ideal by an external object seems to me implicitly to contain the conception of identification by projection. Thus, the soldiers who take their leader for their ego ideal are in effect projectively identifying with him, or putting part of themselves into him. It is this common or shared projective identification which enables the soldiers to identify with each other. In the extreme form of projective identification of this kind, the followers become totally dependent on the leader, because each has given up a part of himself to the leader.¹ Indeed, it is just such an extreme of projective identification which might explain the case of panic described by Freud,² where the Assyrians take to flight on learning that Holofernes, their leader, has had his head cut off by Judith. For not only has the commonly shared external object (the figure-head) binding them all together been lost, but the leader having lost his head, every soldier has lost his head through being inside the leader by projective identification.

I shall take as the basis of my analysis of group processes, the conception of identification in group formation, as described by Freud, but with particular reference to the processes of introjective and projective identification, as elaborated by Melanie Klein. Such a form of analysis has been suggested in another context by Paula Heimann³ who puts forward the notion that introjection and projection may be at the bottom of even the most complex social processes. I shall try to show how individuals make unconscious use of institutions by associating in these institutions and unconsciously co-operating to reinforce internal defences against anxiety and guilt. These social defences bear a reciprocal relationship with the internal defence

¹ Cf. "Notes on some Schizoid Mechanisms", p. 301: "The projection of good feelings and good parts of the self into the mother is essential for the infant's ability to develop good object relations and to integrate his ego. However, if this projective process is carried out excessively, good parts of the personality are felt to be lost, and in this way the mother becomes the ego ideal; this process too results in weakening and impoverishing the ego. Very soon such processes extend to other people, and the result may be an over strong dependence on these external representatives of one's own good parts." In *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

³ Cf. "Functions of Introjection and Projection", p. 129: "Such taking in and expelling consists of an active interplay between the organism and the outer world; on this primordial pattern rests all intercourse between subject and object, no matter how complex and sophisticated such intercourse appears. (I believe that in the last analysis we may find it at the bottom of all our complicated dealings with one another.) The patterns Nature uses seem to be few, but she is inexhaustible in their variation." In *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*.

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mechanisms. For instance, the schizoid and manic defences against anxiety and guilt both involve splitting and projection mechanisms, and, through projection, a link with the outside world. When external objects are shared with others and used in common for purposes of projection, phantasy social relationships may be established through projective identification with the common object. These phantasy relationships are further elaborated by introjection; and the two-way character of social relationships is mediated by virtue of the two-way play of projective and introjective identification.

I shall speak of the "phantasy social form and content of an institution" to refer to the form and content of social relationships at the level of the common individual phantasies which the members of an institution share by projective and introjective identification. Phantasy is used in the sense of completely unconscious intrapsychic activity, as defined by Susan Isaacs.¹ From this point of view the character of institutions is determined and coloured not only by their explicit or consciously agreed and accepted functions, but also by their manifold unrecognized functions at the phantasy level.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF SOCIALLY STRUCTURED DEFENCE MECHANISMS

It is not my intention in this article to explore either systematically or comprehensively the manner in which social defence mechanisms operate. I shall first examine certain paranoid anxieties and defences, and then depressive anxieties and defences, keeping them to some extent separate for purposes of explication, and giving illustrations from everyday experience. Then I shall present case material from a social study in industry which may make clearer some of the theoretical considerations by showing the interaction of paranoid and depressive phenomena.

Defences against paranoid anxiety

One example of social mechanisms of defence against paranoid anxieties is that of putting bad internal objects² and impulses into particular members of an institution who, whatever their explicit

¹ "The Nature and Function of Phantasy". In *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*.

² The nature of the objects projected and introjected (e.g. faeces, penis, breast), the medium of introjection and projection (e.g. anal, urethral, oral) and the sensory mechanism of introjection and projection (kinæsthetic, visual, auditory, etc.), are variables of fundamental importance in the analysis of group relationships. I shall not, however, consider these variables to any extent here, but I hope to show in subsequent publications that their introduction makes possible a systematic explanation of differences between many types of institution.

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function in a society, are unconsciously selected, or themselves choose to introject these projected objects and impulses and either to *absorb* them or *deflect* them. By absorption is meant the process of introjecting the objects and impulses and containing them; whereas in deflection they are again projected but not into the same members from whom they were introjected.

The phantasy social structuring of the process of absorption may be seen, for example, in the case of a first officer in a ship, who, in addition to his normal duty, is held responsible for many things that go wrong, but for which he was not actually responsible. Everyone's bad objects and impulses may unconsciously be put into the first officer, who is consciously regarded by common consent as the source of the trouble. By this mechanism the members of the crew can unconsciously find relief from their own internal persecutors. And the ship's captain can thereby be more readily idealized and identified with as a good protective figure. The anal content of the phantasy attack on the first officer is indicated in the colloquialism: that "the first officer must take all the shit; and he must be prepared to be a shit". Naval officers in the normal course of promotion are expected to accept this masochistic role; and the norm is to accept it without demur.

The process of deflection may be seen in certain aspects of the complex situation of nations at war. The manifest social structure is that of two opposing armies, each backed and supported by its community. At the phantasy level, however, we may consider the following possibility. The members of each community put their bad objects and sadistic impulses into the commonly shared and accepted external enemy. They rid themselves of their hostile, destructive impulses by projecting them into their armies for deflection against the enemy. Paranoid anxiety in the total community, Army and civilian alike, may be alleviated, or at least transmuted into fear of known and identifiable enemies, since the bad impulses and objects projected into the enemy return, not in the form of introjected phantastic persecutors, but of actual physical attack, which can be experienced in reality. Under appropriate conditions, objective fear may be more readily coped with than phantasy persecution. The bad sadistic enemy is fought against, not in the solitary isolation of the unconscious inner world, but in co-operation with comrades-in-arms in real life. Individuals not only rid themselves of phantastic persecution in this way; but further, the members of the Army are temporarily freed from depressive anxiety because

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their own sadistic impulses can be denied by attributing their aggressiveness to doing their duty, that is expressing the aggressive impulses collected and introjected from all the community. And members of the community may also avoid guilt by introjecting the socially sanctioned hatred of the enemy. Such introjected sanction reinforces the denial of unconscious hatred and destructive impulses against good objects by allowing for conscious expression of these impulses against a commonly shared and publicly hated real external enemy.

Social co-operation at the reality level may thus allow for a redistribution of the bad objects and impulses in the phantasy relations obtaining among the members of a society.¹ In conjunction with such a redistribution, introjective identification makes it possible for individuals to take in social sanction and support. The primitive aim of the absorption and deflection mechanisms is to achieve a non-return at the phantasy level of the projected phantasy bad objects and impulses.

But even where absorption and deflection are not entirely successful (and mechanisms at the phantasy level can never be completely controlled), the social defence mechanisms provide some gain. Paula Heimann² has described the introjection of projected bad objects, and their related impulses, into the ego, where they are maintained in a split-off state, subjected to intra-psychic projection, and kept under attack. In the cases described above, the ego receives support from the social sanctions which are introjected, and which legitimize the intra-psychic projection and aggression. The first officer, for example, may be introjected, and the impulses projected into him introjected as well. But in the phantasy social situation other members of the crew who also attack the first officer are identified with by introjection, partly into the ego, and partly into the super-ego. Hence the ego is reinforced by possession of the internalized members of the crew, all of whom take part in the attack on the segregated bad objects within the ego. And there is an alleviation of the harshness of the super-ego by adding to it objects that socially sanction and legitimize the attack.

These illustrations are obviously not completely elaborated; nor are they intended to be so. They are abstractions from real life situations in which a fuller analysis would show defences against perse-

¹ Cf. Freud's description of the re-distribution of libido in the group, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

² "Preliminary notes on some defence mechanisms in paranoid states", *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* (1952).

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cutory and depressive anxiety interacting with each other, and with other more explicit functions of the group. But perhaps they suffice to indicate how the use of the concepts of introjective and projective identifications, regarded as interacting mechanisms, may serve to add further dimensions to Freud's analysis of the Army and the Church. We may also note that the social mechanisms described contain in their most primitive aspects features which may be related to the earliest attempts of the infant, described by Melanie Klein,¹ to deal with persecutory anxiety in relation to part objects by means of splitting and projection and introjection of both the good and bad objects and impulses. If we now turn to the question of social defences against depressive anxieties, we shall be able to illustrate further some of the general points.

Defences against depressive anxiety

Let us consider first certain aspects of the problems of the scapegoating of a minority group. As seen from the viewpoint of the community at large, the community is split into a good majority and a bad minority—a split consistent with the splitting of internal objects into good and bad, and the creation of a good and bad internal world. The persecuting group's belief in its own good is preserved by heaping contempt upon and attacking the scapegoated group. The internal splitting mechanisms and preservation of the internal good objects of individuals, and the attack upon, and contempt for, internal, bad persecutory objects, are reinforced by introjective identification of individuals with other members taking part in the group-sanctioned attack upon the scapegoat.²

If we now turn to the minority groups, we may ask why only some minorities are selected for persecution while others are not. Here a feature often overlooked in consideration of minority problems may be of help. The members of the persecuted minority commonly entertain a precise and defined hatred and contempt for their persecutors matching in intensity the contempt and aggression to which they are themselves subjected. That this should be so is perhaps not surprising. But in view of the selective factor in choice of persecuted minorities, we must consider the possibility that one of the operative factors in this selection is the consensus in the minority

¹ Cf. (1945) "The Oedipus Complex in the light of early anxieties", in *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*, and (1946) "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms", in *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*.

² Cf. Melanie Klein's description of the operation of splitting mechanisms in the depressive position (1934) "A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states", in *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*.

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group, at the phantasy level, to seek contempt and suffering in order to alleviate unconscious guilt. That is to say, there is an unconscious co-operation (or collusion) at the phantasy level between persecutor and persecuted. For the members of the minority group, such a collusion reinforces their own defences against depressive anxiety—by such mechanisms as social justification for feelings of contempt and hatred for an external persecutor, with consequent alleviation of guilt and reinforcement of denial in the protection of internal good objects.

Another way in which depressive anxiety may be alleviated by social mechanisms is through manic denial of destructive impulses, and destroyed good objects, and the reinforcement of good impulses and good objects, by participation in group idealization. These social mechanisms are the reflection in the group of mechanisms of denial and idealization shown by Melanie Klein to be important mechanisms of defence against depressive anxiety.¹

The operation of these social mechanisms may be seen in mourning ceremonies. The bereaved are joined by others in common display of grief and public reiteration of the good qualities of the deceased. There is a common sharing of guilt, through comparison of the shortcomings of the survivors with the good qualities of the deceased. Bad objects and impulses are got rid of by unconscious projection into the corpse, disguised by the decoration of the corpse, and safely put out of the way through projective identification with the dead during the burial ceremony; such mechanisms are unconsciously aimed at the avoidance of persecution by dæmonic figures. At the same time good objects and impulses are also projected into the dead person. Public and socially sanctioned idealization of the deceased then reinforces the sense that the good object has after all not been destroyed, for "his good works" are held to live on in the memory of the community as well as the surviving family, a memory which is reified in the tombstone. These mechanisms are unconsciously aimed at the avoidance of haunting by guilt-provoking ghosts. Hence, through mourning ceremonies, the community and the bereaved are provided with the opportunity of unconsciously co-operating in splitting the destroyed bad part of the loved object from the loved part, of burying the destroyed bad objects and impulses, and of protecting the good loved part as an eternal memory.

One general feature of each of the instances cited is that the phantasy social systems established have survival value for the group

¹ "Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states" in *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*.

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as well as affording protection against anxiety in the individual. Thus, for example, in the case of the mourning ceremony the social idealizing and manic denial make it possible for a bereaved person to reduce the internal chaos, to weather the immediate and intense impact of death, and to undertake the process of mature internal mourning at his own time and his own pace.¹ But there is a general social gain as well, in that all those associated in the mourning ceremony can further their internal mourning and continue the lifelong process of working through the unresolved conflicts of the infantile depressive position. As Melanie Klein has described the process "It seems that every advance in the process of mourning results in a deepening in the individual's relation to his inner objects, in the happiness of regaining them after they were felt to be lost ('Paradise Lost and Regained'), in an increased trust in them and love for them because they proved to be good and helpful after all".² Hence, through the mourning ceremony, the toleration of ambivalence is increased and friendship in the community can be strengthened. Or again, in the case of the first officer, the ship's crew, in a situation made difficult by close confinement and isolation from other groups, is enabled to co-operate with the captain in carrying out the required and consciously planned tasks by isolating and concentrating their bad objects and impulses within an available human receptacle.

CASE STUDY

I shall now turn to a more detailed and precise examination of phantasy social systems as defence mechanisms for the individual and as mechanisms allowing the group to proceed with its sophisticated or survival tasks, by examining a case study from industry. It may be noted that the conception of sophisticated tasks derives from Bion's conception of the sophisticated task of the work or W group.³ I am refraining from using Bion's more elaborate conceptual scheme defining what he terms the "basic assumptions" of groups, since the relationship between the operation of basic assumptions and of depressive and persecutory phenomena remains to be worked out.

¹ Cf. Melanie Klein, "Many mourners can only make slow steps in re-establishing the bonds with the external world because they are struggling against the chaos inside," *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*, p. 329.

² *Op cit.*, p. 328.

³ "Group Dynamics: A re-view".

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The case to be presented is one part of a larger study carried out in a light engineering factory, the Glacier Metal Company, between June, 1948, and the present time. The relationship with the firm is a therapeutic one; work is done only on request, from groups or individuals within the firm, for assistance in working through intra-group stresses or in dealing with organizational problems. The relationship between the social consultant (or therapist) and the people with whom he works is a confidential one; and the only reports published are those which have been worked through with the people concerned and agreed by them for publication. Within these terms of reference, I have published a detailed report on the first three years of the project.¹

The illustration I shall use is taken from work done with one department in the factory.² The department employs roughly sixty people. It was organized with a departmental manager as head. Under him was a superintendent, who was in turn responsible for four foremen, each of whom had a working group of ten to sixteen operatives. The operatives had elected five representatives, two of whom were shop stewards, to negotiate with the departmental manager on matters affecting the department. One such matter had to do with a change in methods of wages payment. The shop had been on piece rates (i.e. the operatives were paid a basic wage, plus a bonus dependent on their output). This method of payment had, for a number of years, been felt to be unsatisfactory. From the workers' point of view it meant uncertainty about the amount of their weekly wage, and for the management it meant complicated rate-fixing, and administrative arrangements. For all concerned, the not infrequent wrangling about rates that took place was felt to be unnecessarily disturbing. The possibility of changing over to a flat rate method of payment had been discussed for over a year before the project began. In spite of the fact that the change was commonly desired they had not been able to come to a decision.

A period of negotiation

Work with the department began in January, 1949, by attendance at discussions of a sub-committee composed of the departmental

¹ *The Changing Culture of a Factory.*

² This case material is a condensation of material which is given in much greater detail in two published articles: Jaques, E., "Collaborative group methods in a wage negotiation situation", *Human Relations*, Vol. III (1950); and Jaques, Rice and Hill, "The social and psychological impact of a change in method of wage payment", *Human Relations*, Vol. IV (1951).

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manager, the superintendent, and three workers' representatives. The general tone of the discussions was friendly. The committee members laid stress upon the fact that good relationships existed in the department and that they all wanted to strive for further improvement. From time to time, however, there was sharp disagreement over specific points, and these disagreements led the workers' representatives to state that there were many matters on which they felt they could not trust the management. This statement of suspicion was answered by the management members, who emphasized that they for their part had great trust in the workers' sense of responsibility.

The workers' suspicion of management also revealed itself in discussions held at shop floor level between the elected representatives and their worker constituents. The purpose of these discussions was to elicit in a detailed and concrete manner the views of the workers about the proposed change-over. The workers were on the whole in favour of the change-over, but they had some doubt as to whether they could trust the management to implement and to administer the change-over in a fair manner. What guarantees did they have, they asked, that management had nothing up its sleeve? At the same time, the workers showed an ambivalent attitude towards their own representatives. They urged and trusted them to carry on negotiations with management, but at the same time suspected that the representatives were management "stooges" and did not take the workers' views sufficiently into account. This negative attitude towards their representatives came out more clearly in interviews with the workers alone, in which opinions were expressed that although the elected representatives were known as militant trade unionists, nevertheless they were seen as liable to be outwitted by the management and as not carrying their representative role as effectively as they might.

The day-to-day working relationships between supervisors and workers were quite different from what would be expected as the consequence of these views. Work in the shop was carried out with good morale, and the supervisors were felt to do their best for the workers. A high proportion of the shop had been employed in the company for five years or more, and genuinely good personal relationships had been established.

The discussions in the committee composed of the managers and elected representatives went on for seven months, between January and July, 1949. They had a great deal of difficulty in working

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towards a decision, becoming embroiled in arguments that were sometimes quite heated and had no obvious cause—other than the workers' suspicion of the management, counterbalanced by the management's idealization of the workers. Much of the suspicion and idealization, however, was autistic, in the sense that although consciously experienced, it was not expressed openly as between managers and workers. These attitudes came out much more sharply when the elected representatives and the managers were meeting separately. The workers expressed deep suspicion and mistrust, while the managers expressed some of their anxieties about how responsible the workers could be—anxieties which existed alongside their strong sense of the workers' responsibility and of their faith in them.

Analysis of the negotiation phase

I now wish to apply certain of our theoretical formulations to the above data. This is in no sense intended to be a complete analysis of the material. Many important factors, such as changes in the executive organization of the shop, personal attitudes, changes in personnel, and variations in the economic and production situation all played a part in determining the changes which occurred. I do wish, however, to demonstrate how, if we assume the operation of defences against paranoid and depressive anxiety at the phantasy social level, we may be able to explain some of the very great difficulties encountered by the members of the department. And I would emphasize here that these difficulties were encountered in spite of the high morale implied in the willingness of those concerned to face, and to work through in a serious manner, the group stresses they experienced in trying to arrive at a commonly desired goal.

The degree of inhibition of the autistic suspicion and idealization becomes understandable, I think, if we make the following assumptions about unconscious attitudes at the phantasy level. The workers in the shop had split the managers into good and bad—the good managers being the ones with whom they worked, and the bad being the same managers but in the negotiation situation. They had unconsciously projected their hostile destructive impulses into their elected representatives so that the representatives could deflect, or redirect, these impulses against the bad “management” with whom negotiations were carried on, while the good objects and impulses could be put into individual real managers in the day-to-day work situation. This splitting of the management into good and bad, and

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the projective identification with the elected representatives against the bad management served two purposes. At the reality level it allowed the good relations necessary to the work task of the department to be maintained; at the phantasy level it provided a system of social relationships reinforcing individual defences against paranoid and depressive anxiety.

Putting their good impulses into managers in the work situation allowed the workers to reintroduce the good relations with management, and hence to preserve an undamaged good object and alleviate depressive anxiety. This depressive anxiety was further avoided by reversion to the paranoid position in the negotiating situation.¹ During the negotiations paranoid anxiety was partially avoided by the workers by putting their bad impulses into their elected representatives. The representatives, while consciously the negotiating representatives of the workers, became unconsciously the representatives of their bad impulses. These split-off bad impulses were partially dealt with and avoided because they were directed against the bad objects put into management in the negotiation situation by the workers and their representatives.

Another mechanism for dealing with the workers' own projected bad objects and impulses was to attack their representatives, with an accompanying despair that not much good would come of the negotiations. These feelings tended to be expressed privately by individuals. The workers who felt like this had introjected their representatives as bad objects and maintained them as a segregated part of the ego. Intra-psychic projection and aggression against these internal bad objects were supported by introjective identification with other workers, who held that the representatives were not doing their job properly. That is to say, other members of the department were introjected to reinforce the intra-psychic projection, and as protection against the internal bad representatives attacking back. In addition to defence against internal persecution, the introjection of the other workers provided social sanction for considering the internalized representatives as bad, offsetting the harshness of super-ego recrimination for attacking objects containing a good as well as a persecuting component.

From the point of view of the elected representatives, anxiety about bad impulses was diminished by unconsciously accepting

¹ Melanie Klein has described how paranoid fears and suspicions are often used as a defence against the depressive position. Cf., for instance (1934) "The Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States", in *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*, p. 295.

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the bad impulses and objects of all the workers they represented. They could feel that their own hostile and aggressive impulses did not belong to them but belonged to the people on whose behalf they were acting. They were thus able to derive external social sanction for their aggression and hostile suspicion. But the mechanism did not operate with complete success, for there still remained their own unconscious suspicion and hostility to be dealt with, and the reality of what they considered to be the good external management. Hence, there was some anxiety and guilt about damaging the good managers. The primary defence mechanism against the onset of depressive anxiety was that of retreat to the paranoid position. This came out as a rigid clinging to attitudes of suspicion and hostility even in circumstances where they consciously felt that some of this suspicion was not justified by the situation they were actually experiencing.

From the management side, the paranoid attitude of the elected representatives was countered by the reiteration of the view that the workers could be trusted to do their part. This positive attitude unconsciously contained both idealization of the workers and placation of the hostile representatives. The idealization can be understood as an unconscious mechanism for diminishing guilt, stimulated by fears of injuring or destroying workers in the day-to-day work situation through the exercise of managerial authority—an authority which there is good reason to believe is, at least to some extent, felt unconsciously to be uncontrolled and omnipotent. To the extent that managers unconsciously felt their authority to be bad, they feared retaliation by the operatives. This in turn led to a reinforcement of the idealization of the elected representatives as a defence against paranoid anxiety; that is to say, as a means of placating the hostility of the workers, and hence of placating internal persecutors. These idealizing and placatory mechanisms were employed in the meetings with the elected representatives, so that reality mechanisms could operate in the relationships with workers in the work situation, less encumbered with the content of uncontrolled phantasy.

It can thus be seen that the unconscious use of paranoid attitudes by the workers and idealizing and placatory attitudes by the management were complementary, and reinforced each other. A circular process was set in motion. The more the workers' representatives attacked the managers, the more the managers idealized them in order to placate them. The greater the concessions given by management to the workers, the greater was the guilt and fear of

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depressive anxiety in the workers, and hence the greater the retreat to paranoid attitudes as a means of avoiding depressive anxiety.

Description and analysis of the post-negotiation phase

In June, six months after the discussions began, these attitudes, rather than the wages problem, were for a time taken as the main focus of consideration. A partial resolution occurred,¹ and the workers decided, after a ballot in the whole department, to try out a flat-rate method of payment. The condition for the change-over, however, was the setting up of a council, composed of managers and elected representatives, which would have the authority to determine departmental policy—a procedure for which the principles had already been established in the company. The prime principle was that of unanimous agreement on all decisions, and the agreement to work through all obstacles to unanimous decision by discovering sources of disagreement so that they could be resolved.

It appeared as though the open discussion of autistic attitudes facilitated a restructuring of the phantasy social relations in the department—a restructuring which brought with it a greater degree of conscious or ego control over their relationships. The fact, however, that there was only a partial restructuring of social relations at the phantasy level showed itself in the subsequent history of the shop council. For, following the change-over to a flat-rate method of payment, the council came up against the major question of re-assessing the times in which given jobs ought to be done.

Under piece rates such assessment of times was necessary, both for calculation of the bonus to operatives and for giving estimated prices to customers. On flat rates, it was required only for estimating to customers; but the times thus set inevitably constituted targets for the workers. Under piece rates, if a worker did not achieve the target, it meant that he lost his bonus; in other words, he himself paid for any drop in effort. Under flat rates, however, a drop below the target meant that the worker was getting paid for work that he was not doing. A detailed exploration of workers' attitudes² showed that the change-over from piece rates to flat rates had in no way altered their personal targets and personal rate of work. They felt guilty

¹ The work-through process is in part described in the articles referred to above, and includes an account of the manner in which transference phenomena were handled in the face-to-face group situation. An analysis of the work-through process is outside the scope of the present paper, and hence there is only passing reference to it in the text.

² Cf. "The social and psychological impact of a change in method of wage payment", *Human Relations* (1951).

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whenever they fell below their estimated targets, because they were no longer paying for the difference. In order to avoid this guilt, the workers applied strong pressure to keep the estimated times on jobs as high as possible, as well as pressure to get the so-called tight times (times on jobs that were difficult to achieve), re-assessed. There were strong resistances to any changes in job assessment methods which the workers suspected might set difficult targets for them.

On the management side, the change-over to flat rates inevitably stirred whatever unconscious anxieties they might have about authority. For under piece rates, the bonus payment itself acted as an impersonal and independent disciplinarian, ensuring that workers put in the necessary effort. Under flat rates it was up to managers to see that a reasonable rate of work was carried on. This forced upon them more direct responsibility for the supervision of their subordinates, and brought them more directly into contact with the authority that they held.

The newly-constituted council, with its managers and elected representatives, had great difficulty in coping with the more manifest depressive anxiety both in the managers and in the workers. This showed in managers' views that the council might possibly turn out to be a bad thing because it slowed down administrative developments in the department. Similar opinions that the council would not work and might not prove worth while played some part in the decision of five out of six of the elected representatives not to stand for re-election in the shop elections which occurred sixteen months after the setting up of the council. These five were replaced by five newly-elected representatives, who in turn brought with them a considerable amount of suspicion. That is, there was again a retreat to the paranoid position while the managers' depressive anxiety continued to show to some extent in the form of depressive feelings that the council would not work. It has only been slowly, over a period of two years, that the council has been able to operate in the new situation as a constitutional mechanism for getting agreement on policy and at the same time intuitively to be used for the containment of the phantasy social relationships. An exploration of the re-rating problem has been agreed and is being carried on with the assistance of an outside industrial consultant.

This case study, then, illustrates the development of an explicit social institution, that of meetings between management and elected representatives, which allowed for the establishment of unconscious mechanisms at the phantasy level for dealing with paranoid and

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depressive anxieties. The main mechanisms were those of management idealizing the hostile workers, and the workers maintaining an attitude of suspicion towards the idealizing management. To the extent that splitting and projective identification operated successfully, these unconscious mechanisms helped individuals to deal with anxiety, by getting their anxieties into the phantasy social relations structured in the management elected-representative group. In this way the anxieties were eliminated from the day-to-day work situation, and allowed for the efficient operation of the sophisticated work task and the achievement of good working relationships.

However, it will be noted that the elected representative-management group was also charged with a sophisticated work task—that of negotiating new methods of wages payment. They found it difficult to get on with the sophisticated task itself. In terms of the theory here propounded, these difficulties have been explained as arising from the manner in which the predominant unconscious phantasy relations in the negotiating group ran counter to the requirements of the sophisticated task. In other words, an essentially constitutional procedure, that of elected representatives meeting with an executive body, was difficult to operate because it was being used in an unrecognized fashion at the phantasy level to help deal with the depressive and paranoid anxieties of the members of the department as a whole.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON SOCIAL CHANGE

In the above case study, it might be said that social change was sought when the structure and culture no longer met the requirements of the individual members of the department, and in particular of the managers and the elected representatives. Manifest changes were brought about, and in turn appeared to lead to a considerable restructuring of the phantasy social form and content of the institution. Change having taken place, however, the individual members found themselves in the grip of new relationships, to which they had to conform because they were self made. But they had brought about more than they had bargained for, in the sense that the new relationships under flat rates and the policy-making council had to be experienced before their implications could be fully appreciated.

The effects of the change on individuals were different according to the roles they occupied. The elected representatives were able to change roles by the simple expedient of not standing for re-election.

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tion. And this expedient, it will be noted, was resorted to by five of the six representatives. The managers, however, were in a very different position. They could not relinquish or change their roles without in a major sense changing their positions, and possibly status, in the organization as a whole. They had, therefore, individually to bear considerable personal stress in adjusting themselves to the new situation.

It is unlikely that members of an institution can ever bring about social changes that suit perfectly the needs of each individual. Once change is undertaken, it is more than likely that individuals will have to adjust and change personally in order to catch up with the changes they have produced. And until some readjustment is made at the phantasy level, the individual's social defences against psychotic anxiety are likely to be weakened. It may well be because of the effects on the unconscious defence systems of individuals against psychotic anxiety, that social change is resisted—and in particular, imposed social change. For it is one thing to readjust to changes that the individual has himself helped to bring about. It is quite another to be required to adjust one's internal defence systems in order to conform to changes brought about by some outside agency.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Freud has argued that two main processes operate in the formation of what he calls artificial groups, like the Army and the Church; one is identification by introjection, and the other is replacement of the ego-ideal by an object. I have suggested that this latter process implicitly contains the concept, formulated by Melanie Klein, of identification by projection. Further, Melanie Klein states explicitly that in the interaction between introjective and projective identification lies the basis of the infant's earliest relations with its objects. The character of these early relations is determined by the way in which the infant attempts to deal with its paranoid and depressive anxieties, and by the intensity of these anxieties.

Taking these conceptions of Freud and Melanie Klein, the view has here been advanced that one of the primary dynamic forces pulling individuals into institutionalized human association is that of defence against paranoid and depressive anxiety; and, conversely, that all institutions are unconsciously used by their members as mechanisms of defence against these psychotic anxieties. Individuals

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may put their internal conflicts into persons in the external world, unconsciously follow the course of the conflict by means of projective identification, and re-internalize the course and outcome of the externally perceived conflict by means of introjective identification. Societies provide institutionalized roles whose occupants are sanctioned, or required, to take into themselves the projected objects or impulses of other members. The occupants of such roles may absorb the objects and impulses—take them into themselves and become either the good or bad object with corresponding impulses; or, they may deflect the objects and impulses—put them into an externally perceived ally, or enemy, who is then loved, or attacked. The gain for the individual in projecting objects and impulses and introjecting their careers in the external world, lies in the unconscious co-operation with other members of the institution or group who are using similar projection mechanisms. Introjective identification then allows more than the return of the projected objects and impulses. The other members are also taken inside, and legitimize and reinforce attacks upon internal persecutors, or support manic idealization of loved objects, thereby reinforcing the denial of destructive impulses against them.

The unconscious co-operation at the phantasy level among members of an institution is structured in terms of what is here called the phantasy social form and content of institutions. The form and content of institutions may thus be considered from two distinct levels: that of the manifest and consciously agreed form and content (including structure and function, which, although possibly unrecognized, are nevertheless in the preconscious of members of the institution, and hence are relatively accessible to identification by means of conscious study); and that of the phantasy form and content, which are unconsciously avoided and denied, and, because they are totally unconscious, remain unidentified by members of the institution.

A case study is presented to illustrate how within one department in a factory a sub-institution, a committee of managers and elected workers' representatives, was used at the phantasy level for segregating hostile relations from good relations, which were maintained in the day-to-day production work of the department. When, however, the committee was charged with a serious and conscious negotiating task, its members encountered great difficulties because of the socially sanctioned phantasy content of their relationships with each other.

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Some observations are made on the dynamics of social change. Change occurs where the phantasy social relations within an institution no longer serve to reinforce individual defences against psychotic anxiety. The institution may be restructured at the manifest and phantasy level; or the manifest structure may be maintained, but the phantasy structure modified. Individuals may change roles or leave the institution altogether. Or, apparent change at the manifest level may often conceal the fact that no real change has taken place, the phantasy social form and content of the institution being left untouched. Imposed social change which does not take account of the use of institutions by individuals, to cope with unconscious psychotic anxieties, is likely to be resisted.

Finally, if the mechanisms herein described have any validity, then at least two consequences may follow. First, observation of social processes may provide one means of studying, as through a magnifying glass, the operation of paranoid and depressive anxieties and the defences built up against them. Unlike the psycho-analytical situation, such observations can be made by more than one person at the same time. And second, it may become more clear why social change is so difficult to achieve, and why many social problems are so intractable. For from the point of view here elaborated, changes in social relationships and procedures call for a restructuring of relationships at the phantasy level, with a consequent demand upon individuals to accept and tolerate changes in their existing pattern of defences against psychotic anxiety. Effective social change is likely to require analysis of the common anxieties and unconscious collusions underlying the social defences determining phantasy social relationships.