Fantasies and Fairy Tales in Groups and Organizations: Bion's Basic Assumptions and the Deep Roles

Paul Moxnes

Norwegian School of Management, Sandvika, Norway

Little is known about the psychological processes that constitute roles in groups and organizations. Over the last years, however, organizational psychology has demonstrated that unconsciously some people are likely to be pushed into certain social and organizational roles. This article claims that roles found in ordinary folk tales also arise in organizations. From the Bionic concept of organizational basic assumptions, deep roles emerge. Someone in the group becomes 'king', another 'devil', a third 'clown', a fourth 'witch', etc. Fourteen such deep roles, divided into good and bad, are proposed and their correspondences to each of Bion's three basic assumption groups (dependency, fight–flight, and pairing) are introduced as an expansion of Bion's original theory. This expanded theory is compared to Argyris' and Schön's model for organizational functioning, and it is envisioned that psychoanalytic role theory will be of increased relevance for the understanding of work and organizational life.

INTRODUCTION

Most literature describes organizations as normative-rational systems only, and neglect the irrational forces that operate there. In Britain, however, a recent revival of interest in psychoanalysis in academic institutions is taking place (Parker, 1997), and new books on the irrational aspects of groups and organizations are continuously published (e.g. Czander, 1993; Diamond, 1993; Moxnes, 1995a); but little has been done to advance Bion's group analytic theories. Bion himself never followed up and completed the seminal conceptual work he did on group processes over the nine-year period 1943–52. With more or less biblical status, it has remained unchanged since the days of its conception. The purpose of this article is further to develop the conceptual understanding of groups and organizations that Bion initiated, and to shed further light upon the dynamic interaction between the individual and the organization.

Requests for reprints should be addressed to Paul Moxnes, Norwegian School of Management, P.O. Box 580, N-1301 Sandvika, Norway. Email: paul.moxnes@bi.no

With Freud's introduction of psychoanalysis much of what was projected out in the external world was brought back to ourselves. What we used to believe to be outside ourselves was now disclosed to be the unconscious in ourselves. In this article I will contend that the reverse process is also possible; that which is *in us* mirrors the unconscious in the environment. From that basic position, I will argue for an understanding of the unconscious as a critical force in the interpersonal transactions in groups and organizations.

On occasions I have used observations of my own inner reality in order to understand what is going on in organizations, including families, work groups, institutions, and corporations (Moxnes, 1981, 1997). By observing myself in the group, I could describe the group. The paradox was, that by turning my attention towards my own feelings, I got a valid understanding—not only of myself—but also of what was happening in the group or organization. Earlier I had used "external" group observation methods à la Bales (1950; Bales & Cohen, 1979) without gaining any deeper understanding of what was going on at the interpersonal level. The new introspective observation method where I became sensitive to the introjection of the group's projected attributes, made me admittedly a poor minute-taker, for often my self-observation got in the way of seeing and hearing what happened at the content level in the organization; on the other hand, I got a deeper feeling for what was going on at the process and fantasy level in the group. By observing my own barely recognizable fantasies and emotions, I learned something about the unconscious life of the organization— stuff that you could not or would not talk openly about.

The notion is that it is not just me who projects my unconscious out in the organization. The organization also introjects its unconscious into me. When I observe my own feelings and fantasies in an organization, it is often the organization's collective projective identifications I observe. By the same token, by contact with the organization's collective transference, the wordless or unspoken external world becomes an important part of my inner life, and can be observed through this. When I internalize the collective unconscious and attune to the organization's subconscious processes, I may become unaware of what is happening on the normative-rational level.

This point of view is reflected in the thinking behind the so-called Group Relation Conferences, a type of experiential learning group based on Bion's psychoanalytic oriented theory on group processes. In these groups, most usual structures are removed. The participants must themselves provide form and content to the conference. In this process the connection between the individual unconscious and the organizational unconscious is explored and brought to conscious attention.

In this article I discuss some of the central aspects of Bion's well-known theory on group processes and their links to collective and unconscious fantasies; the so-called *basic assumptions* in groups (Bion, 1961). As an attempt to

continue and expand Bion's thinking, I combine his basic assumptions with a new model for group archetypal fantasies—evolved from my own experiences with introjection—the so-called *deep roles* (Moxnes, 1995a).

FANTASIES

Fantasy is the most important element in all innovation. It is well known that fantasies and dreams give meaning, motivation, and energy to people's life and work. Successful change and creation are realizations of dreams. Therefore recognition of employees' dreams and fantasies become critical for those who are engaged in organizational change and development.

Earlier it was from social psychology that we gained our knowledge about the processes that took place in groups and organizations. But social psychology, as we know it from textbooks, has not been much occupied with people's dreams and visions—just as it has neglected the contributions from psychoanalysis (Appel, 1995). It seems that social psychology over the last years has lost its dominance in the field of small group research. The torch has been picked up by other disciplines, in particular organizational psychology, which now are in the forefront of group research (Levine & Moreland, 1990). Whereas the social psychology mostly has been concerned with the superficial; such as the traces people induce on the external world's artefacts, organizational psychology, in particular European, has to a much higher degree been concerned with the inner and unconscious aspects of organizational life. Historically this can be explained by the fact that at the time social psychology had its breakthrough at the beginning of the twenthieth-century, people were much more buttoned up and reserved than today—in those days it was almost unthinkable that people could share their personal thoughts and feelings with others. Contrary to this, organizational psychology emerged and developed in the post-war era where openness and authenticity was on the agenda.

Wilfred Bion's work is in particular linked to those first years after the war. In many ways Bion was the first group leader who was truthful. His commitment to honesty stood at the heart of his thinking. Lies were the poison of the mind. His own feelings, introjections and interpretations, he laid openly forward in the group—although these fell mostly on deaf ears. Unlike another of the central post-war group therapists, Carl Rogers, who did not emphasize the unconscious in groups, but rather played up to the group members' expectations to him as the good "mum" or "dad", Bion laid out his own fantasies, and thereby also the group fantasies, for the group members. Mostly the group members will not understand what Bion—or other "Bionic" group leaders—say in the group, for they talk from their contact with the unconscious in the group. But afterwards, when the group members, on reflection, have gained access to the pre- or unconscious in the group, the Bionic group leader's words will be meaningful for them. Like most interpretations of the unconscious, they are only understood in retrospect.

BION AND HIS CHILDHOOD

To understand the bionic approach to group psychology, it can be useful to know something about Wilfred Bion's own background. In his biography (Bion, 1986), he describes his life with relentless honesty. His early childhood years were spent in India. He remembers his mother as cold and frightening, always busy. His father was angry and had eyes that looked fiercely at him. He hated them both. At eight years of age he was ousted to a boarding school in England, more or less abandoned by his parents. As a grown-up group therapist, Bion himself avoids taking "parental responsibility" in the group. He developed, in contrast to Carl Rogers, a model for group leadership without parental figures. In group training sessions, Bion acted in a way that clearly signalled the lack of a father, the same as Bionic group leaders today. When I many years ago for the first time participated in a management training programme that turned out to be a group relation conference, some of the first things I wrote in my diary was that I felt totally without mother and father: "No one takes care of us. We are like children at strange places without parents" (Moxnes, 1983; p.8).

As group leader, Bion did not say much. To keep quiet became almost a life style for him. We know from his biography that as a child, young Wilfred, who loved to ask questions, was told by his father to keep his mouth shut. He did, but fumed inwardly (Bion, 1986). It is apparent that Bion's group leadership is a learned technique, a superficial role. There is no natural interaction between the Bionic group leader and the other members of the group. The paradox is that by striving for openness towards himself and the unconscious, the leader at the same time hides himself. Soon he will be "nothing" in the group; he will be rejected by the group members who decide to take matters in their own hands. The fact that Bionic group leaders are unwilling to take on the parent role will likely be experienced as extremely provocative by group participants who in their own childhood were rejected by one or both parents.

In my opinion, Bion became a group leader who was never willing to take a natural leadership role, he was not willing to engage in close relationship with others, and he was not willing to fulfil the group's basic expectations of him. For him, all these group needs were indications of immaturity; that which he calls the group's *basic assumptions*. They were irrational 'as-if' phenomena that the group members had to work themselves out of. But the Bionic group leader becomes himself perceived as an "as-if" leader by many group members—a leader whose conduct appears artificial and incomprehensible, and—from my Scandinavian perspective—sustained by some acquired, mechanistic, "aristocratic", and barely amiable techniques. Bion's work as group leader at the Tavistock Institute did not last long, and he never directly continued his conceptual work in group psychology. He chose to isolate himself in private practice.

COLLECTIVE FANTASIES

Although Bion never became the foremost among the spokesmen for human relations in group psychology (like Carl Rogers), he became a first-hand connoisseur of group fantasies. He recognized that the unconscious fantasies that the individual group members possessed had to be placed somewhere outside themselves—and that the most natural target was in the psyche of the group leader or other group members. The group participants became "objects" for each other's non-recognized feelings and fantasies. Over time the participants' initial sense of identity and personality might get lost and be replaced by feelings derived from projections that they received from others. In this way each group member would end up in a web of projections and counter-projections. Who they would be in the group, and what they would feel like, was dependent on the patterns of collective fantasies they were caught up in (for a similar perspective, see Ashbach & Schermer, 1987). What the group experienced as its "reality" was a product of the group members' collective projections and how these presented themselves symbolically.

At our semi-process oriented executive training programme in organizational psychology at the Norwegian School of Management, I observe every year how the participants in the start of the programme "browse" each other for personal artefacts (clothes, age, colours, voice, looks, vocabulary, body language, etc.) in order to find persons suited as targets for their own projections. The other participants become "real" only to the extent they fit in with the organization's fantasy objects, which the organization then again attempts to control by placing them out in certain persons. By transferring one's unconscious life out in the organization, the person becomes not only able to control it, but also to live out forbidden feelings and unlived life through incarnated substitutes, the so-called projective identification.

Thus organizations become externalizations of personalities, just as personalities become internalizations of the organizations. In the organization, private phenomena as dreams, fantasies, needs, and so on become organizational attributes, like roles, norms, myths, goals, and leadership. The reverse also happens; the personality of the individual member of the organization is the result of the introjected social system. This is not a new thought in psychology. What is in us, is also in the organization.

Organizations leave their marks on us. In the mental life of the individual, "somebody else is invariably involved" wrote Freud (1921/1991; p.25). But in order to feel that our identity is really ours, and not just something laid upon us from outside, it is essential that also we set our mark on the organization. If this does not happen, we become soon invisible to the organization, and thereby also to ourselves, which means that we lose our identity, which is a depressing experience. At best we want to set a positive imprint of ourselves on the

organization; an impression that can make us loved and admired. If we don't succeed in that, we wish at least to be criticized by the organization, or—if we don't succeed in that either—even to be hated or despised. *Anything* is better than to invoke nothing in others. The others in the organization are in a deeper sense me. Without them in me I am nothing, and without me in them I also become nothing.

The thought that the others are me represents a paradigmatic shift in psychoanalytic theory. Frank (1990, p.664) maintains that "historically, the subject matter of the mind has been gradually reframed from narrowly defined as intrapsychic to a broader view that includes the interpersonal field". This increased interest in the external world has made psychoanalysis applicable also in organizational psychology. On the other hand, we can say that the traditional psychoanalytical language does not fit well with the understanding of groups and organizations. The psychoanalytic concepts are constructed with the aim of understanding individual and intrapsychic processes, and mainly developed with an eye to modify individuals' neurotic behaviour. Admittedly, Bion himself maintained that "the apparent difference between group psychology and individual psychology is an illusion" (Bion, 1955; p.461), but I, and many with me, do not agree to this point of view. The group does not behave like a collection of atomistic individuals. We have to separate out the concepts we use for discerning the unconscious life of the organization from those we use for discerning the unconscious life of individuals. Only in this way we can ever understand how they are interrelated. Group analysis needs its own terminology to understand the collective unconscious, as Bion started to do.

When Bion voices his interpretations of the group's situation back to the group, he applies a method from individual psychoanalysis. According to Bion's theory, group pathologies in the form of basic assumptions are dissolved by interpretation. Also here Bion is probably wrong. Active interpretations are in my opinion not a useful tool in group development, especially not when they come from leaders with great power distance to the group members—as is usually the case with psychoanalysts. Zaleznik (1995) argues strongly and convincingly that acting by interpreting unconscious material to working organizations is ineffective, if not harmful. At group relation conferences it often becomes apparent that interpretations are ingredients in a power struggle; they will be accepted, neglected, or rejected depending on whether they come from "friends" or "enemies" in the group. The task for the group leader is, in my opinion, not to participate in this power struggle, but to mirror it.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS AND DEEP ROLES

Psychoanalysis helps us to understand the psychology of organizations. But to understand organizations only from a psychoanalytic point of view is undoubtedly an improper reductionism. The child psychoanalyst Melanie Klein

(Bion's analyst while he was writing his works) became known to group psychology because of Bion's references to her. In his last article on basic assumptions, Bion makes explicit the significance of many Kleinian concepts including projective identification, splitting, psychotic anxiety, and symbol formation (Gould, 1997). When Bionic group analysts became taken in by organizational psychology, Klein followed them as their "big mama". Offhand, there seems to be a big leap from Klein's (1959) famous observation that the infant splits its mother's breasts into a "good" one and a "bad" one, to the employee's splitting their leaders into "good" and bad"; but psychoanalytically oriented organizational psychologists have few problems with this leap. Jaques (1955, p. 483) provided the classical example of splitting in organizations, by stating that "on a ship, everyone's bad objects and impulses may unconsciously be put on the first officer. He must take all the shit, and must be prepared to be a shit. The ship's captain can thereby be idealized as a protective figure."

Psychoanalytic interpretations can immediately give the impression of being odd, incomprehensible, and extremely speculative. For this reason it can be useful to supplement the models developed from psychoanalytic studies with knowledge from more commonly known sources, and here the legacy from our folk tales has especially been inspiring. In the so-called "tales of magic", which most of us have adopted with mother's milk (and Disney movies), there is plenty of organization psychological insight to be picked up. For example, the roles in the essential family (father, mother, child) and its helpers and antagonists are not just prototypes of roles in the tales, but also important roles in work groups and organizations (Moxnes, 1995a).

Jaques (1955), Mitroff (1983), and Schein (1985) point out that not only infants, but also adults tend to split their most important interpersonal relations up into good and bad—not least in the workplace. In accordance with this, I have earlier argued that the essential family roles with their helper roles give reason to postulate that about a dozen split roles exist in our prototypal fantasy world—and thereby also in our organizations (Moxnes, 1995a) . We do not only meet these roles in fairy tales—we are constantly looking for them to materialize in our work life. A work team, a school class, or a company will, intuitively, look for persons to fulfil the fairy tale roles. In Fig. 1, I have exemplified these roles with the help of characters from European folk tales. When these archetypal fantasies are collectively projected onto certain people in the organization, they become the so-called *deep roles*. They become the interpersonal realities of the organization, a stage setting with almost indisputable, taken for granted, presumptions. The notion of deep roles helps to give form and meaning to the complex and chaotic emotional states that the organization unfolds.

Bion mentions conditionally archetypal role fantasies such as the "unborn genius" or "messiah" of the *pairing group*, or the "God" of the *dependency group* (Bion, 1955). As such, Bion's basic assumptions theory (Fig. 2) contains an early formulation of what I here call deep roles. Basic assumptions are—like deep

SPLITTING		
	GOOD	**BAD**
FATHER	GOD/KING	DEVIL
MOTHER	QUEEN	WITCH
SON	CROWN PRINCE	BLACK SHEEP
DAUGHTER	PRINCESS	WHORE
SPIRITUAL	WISE MAN	FALSE PROPHET
MATERIAL	SLAVE	DISLOYAL SERVANT
TRANSFORMATIONAL	HERO/ WINNER	CLOWN/ LOSER

THE FAMILY applies to the FATHER, MOTHER, SON, DAUGHTER rows. **THE HELPERS** applies to the SPIRITUAL, MATERIAL, TRANSFORMATIONAL rows.

FIG. 1. The deep role matrix. The deep role model contains seven archetypal role fantasies, which dominate groups and organizations, each divided into a positive and a negative modality.

1 **Dependency—** the group wishes to be sustained by a leader on whom it depends for nourishment.
2 **Fight-flight**—the group creates an enemy to fight or flee from.
3 **Pairing**—the group is permeated by a messianic hope, often through two members who are seen as a pair and from whom something good will come, something that will "save" the group.
4 **Work Group**—here the group has contact with its internal and external realities and works rationally towards solving its tasks. This is a condition that is in contrast to the basic assumptions.

FIG. 2. Bion's basic assumptions and work group. The figure presents the collective fantasies in the three basic assumption groups and the fourth (rational) modality: the Work Group

roles—archetypal fantasies; they are characterized by emotions, not by reflections or facts; they are full of clichés, empty phrases, stereotypes, and over-generalizations. Basic assumptions, like deep roles, are mental states of the organization, created from a need for emotional security. Both phenomena are characterized by defensive reactions to psychotic anxiety, and both theories assert that the primary task of organizations is survival. The common function of basic assumptions and deep roles alike is security and survival; why else should such fantasies exist? A difference, however, between the two concepts is that while a basic assumption can last for months or change two or three times an hour, a deep role is much more stable and thereby provides better emotional security.

Deep roles as well as basic assumptions are fantasies that induce actions. Although they are unsaid and undeclared, they are not necessarily always unconscious. Basic assumptions, like deep roles, are "as–if" realities—one acts *as if* something is the case; the fantasy about reality is confused with reality. In our personal life we recognize such basic assumptions when we fall in love. In history we recognize them from for example mediaeval witch processes. In our days' work life we recognize them from the newspapers, such as in the Lindaas and the Bjugn cases,[1] where it seemed likely that collective projections of deep role nature have been at work. The same might well be the case in the much talked about sexual harassment case between Bill Clinton and Paula Jones.

Like all emotions—anxiety, fear, hate, love—exist in each of the basic assumption groups (Bion, 1961), so they are also present in all the deep roles. But each of the three basic assumptions (Fig. 2) has its own dominant emotion: helplessness in the dependency group, hate/fear in the fight–flight group, and messianic hope in the pairing group. This makes the mental content and thus the deep role fantasies different in the different groups. As such, King and Queen are linked to the dependency group; splitting into the Good and the Bad to the fight—flight group; and Prince and Princess to the pairing group. In our programme in organizational psychology at the Norwegian School of Management we observe each year how the deep roles materialize in the classroom; Prince find Princess (pairing), Hero finds Villain (fight–flight), and the organization finds an Almighty (dependency). By the help of questionnaires and interviews we map each year the role fantasies in the classroom, and we find strong empirical support for the deep role model.

---

[1]The Lindaas case and the Bjugn case were criminal cases covered extensively by the Norwegian media. Similar cases have found place in many countries. In the Lindaas case an Enrolled Nurse in a nursing home was accused by her colleagues of murdering 10 of the clients. In the Bjugn case a male kindergarten teacher, together with prominent members of the local community, were accused of mass sexual abuse of children in a day-care centre. In both cases the accused were acquitted. They appeared to be victims of collective fantasies.

I claim that the deep role model so far is the best available tool to predict which roles are likely to emerge in groups. I also propose that the forces behind this emergence of roles are the same as the ones that have been at work in our inherited folk tales and mythology. New groups and organizations develop the same way as creation myths—from chaos to order. In so-called "leaderless groups" and at group relation conferences the development will go through phases of dependency, fight–flight, and pairing before it possibly reaches the "work group" stage. Often, groups develop from top to bottom of both the models depicted in Figs. 1 and 2. As the group goal and structure change, old basic assumptions and old deep roles might be replaced by new ones. In crises or in cases of membership change it sometimes happens that new realities force the group or organization to replace their old basic assumptions with new ones, and that they have to start the role development and distribution process over again.

I shall now take a closer look at the relationship between Bion's three basic assumptions and the deep roles.

Dependency—the Want for Mother and Father

Dependency is a very basic force in organizations. It is part of the hierarchical dimension—the submission to authority. This is depicted in the vertical dimension of the deep role model (Fig. 1). In the dependency organization, the members are looking for a leader. They choose the presumed most almighty and omniscient figure, someone who comes closest to the fantasy of King and God. The organization expects to be sustained by a leader on whom it depends for nourishment, material or spiritual, for protection (Bion, 1961). The leader is idealized and made a God who takes care of his children (Rioch, 1970). (In this context God can very well be a woman, even if in our masculine, Jewish–Christian mythology it is the male who has possessed himself of God's image and hence made it difficult for women to enter the role of King or God.) If the formal leader is not willing or able to meet the organization's expectations with regard to basic dependency assumptions, this will arouse hostility and ultimately rejection of him. This happens when the organizational members begin to see him as incompetent and unable to judge what goes on in the organization. But as long as the dependency prevails, the relationship between the members and the leader (or the consultant) become like in a religious cult. The leader's words (or even his handouts) become a bible.

Fight–flight—to be Hero or Villain

Fight–flight is about sensitivity to danger and threat. It is linked to the splitting dimension in the deep role model (Fig. 1), and is—like dependency—a typical masculine basic assumption. In fight–flight there is a persuasion of belligerence and a demand on the leader to act aggressively—or to lead the organization to flee from the threatening situation. This is first and foremost the role of the Hero;

the warrior's role. In a fight–flight situation the organization wants action, and seeks accordingly a vigorous and dynamic leader. The fight–flight leader is expected to encounter enemies and dangers, he has to appear brave and self sacrificing, at best with some paranoiac traits. That will make it easier for him to find an enemy, even if no one exists. He must hate this enemy, for he is, on behalf of the organization, on guard against "the evil". As such he is carved out of the fairy tale of the youngest brother, the simpleton who travels out into the world to find the troll or dragon to chop its head off. In my management training groups, the enemy can as well be psychology, the group work, the shortage of time, self analysis, etc. The enemy does not need to be a person; it can just as well be "rubbish" which needs to be fought—or escaped from.

Pairing—Princess Finds Prince

Pairing is about libidinal excitement and positive expectancy. Pairing corresponds to the deep roles of Prince and Princess; two people who are conceived of as a couple in the organization and symbolize that something good will come. Hope is in the air; something positive is about to happen. The organization's attention might well be directed towards the future, but its task here and now is to induce hope. Sexual motives, fertilization symbols, and futuric fantasies characterize the organization. The old problems will disappear in utopia; a new messiah will come, a saviour. But if anybody in fact endeavours to take on a messianic leadership, he or she will be ostracized. For the optimism to prevail, Godot must not come, and the messianic leader must remain unborn.

Organizations whose goals are to create a better world might well be founded on such pairing assumptions. The Norwegian division of "No to Nuclear Weapons" could be an illustration of this; the leader has for more than 20 years been seen in the main streets of Oslo with his pamphlets and peace material carried in a pram. For some psychoanalysts this would certainly indicate that the pairing assumption is at work. The same can be said about the sociotechnical movement in Norway in the 1960s and 1970s, where the "pairhorses" Thorsrud and Emery (1964, 1970) gave written and verbal expression to the idea that sociotechnical design, such as autonomous work groups, would revolutionize society when it had only spread sufficiently. The spreading never happened, and the hope (and the movement) could be kept alive for a long time.

The Work Group—Rationality and Wisdom in Command

All basic assumptions show a lack of understanding of what goes on in the group, and are at the same time opposed to change and development. The Work Group, on the other hand, recognises a need both to understand and to develop (Bion, 1961). This is the type of group that triumphs in the long run, says Bion (1955). In the Work Group structure, rationality and wisdom are in the top seat. Here the

organization produces what it is meant to produce, here it works efficiently towards its goals, and here the wheels turn without disturbing basic assumptions in the machinery.

According to Bion (1955), the leader of the Work Group has the merit of being in contact with external reality. However, few work teams and organizations—regardless of how mature and rational they might appear—can escape being affected by basic assumptions. Splitting, projection, and introjection are at the bottom of even the most elaborated and rational social processes. When Rioch (1970) resembles a Work Group with a stern father or mother, she indicates at the same time that archetypal forces are still present in the group. A Work Group can also be a fantasy—a fantasy about the perfect functioning group.

Work Group and Model II as Fantasies

What Argyris and Schön (1978) call a Model II organization has much in common with Bion's Work Group. When teamwork has become a rational phenomenon, not only the Work Group, but also the Model II organization has transpired. In the Model II organization the members are encouraged—and encourage others—to tell what they know (but fear to say), and they articulate their positions and values in such a self-reflecting way, that others are not afraid to challenge them. The Model II organization reaches its goals through openness, authenticity, and knowledge about the realities in human interactional processes. There is little room for deep roles in Model II.

The opposite type of organization, Model I, is characterized by basic assumptions, lies, half truths, closeness, stereotypes, unrealizable fantasies, suppressed feelings—and often ruthless competition. Model I is a deep role organization; an efficient producer of winners and losers. Here one is occupied by saving face and avoiding hurting other's feelings, often with the faulty intention of showing respect. First and foremost it is important to win and to avoid losing at any price. The game is to gain power and to hold on to it, and (through splitting) to be able to distinguish between friends and enemies; two central modalities in both the basic assumption theory and the deep role model.

According to Argyris and Schön (1978), most of us live our daily lives in Model I organizations. The Model II organization will for most people be a dream; a value we can contend with and a goal we can strive for but seldom reach, and—in my opinion—never preserve. Work Group and Model II organizations are almost unattainable; something which exists only briefly, and which over time only can survive as a point of reference; a Shangri-la on the horizon.

At the management training programme in Organizational Psychology at the Norwegian School of Management, we create, by means of a system of structured exercises, group processes, and reorganizations, a Model II organization for a brief hour. The students want to hold on to this revelation, and often they meet for some time after the course, in some cases for a year or more. But in

all cases the spirit from the Model II experience comes to an end some day; sometimes it even changes into its direct opposite. It is like a marriage—after the honeymoon, a less perfect reality knocks at the door. As referent point and utopia, however, the Model II organization will never die.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Levine and Moreland (1990, p. 603) claim that "little is known about the psychological processes that produce roles within small groups, although some speculations can be found." Today there is little doubt that the small group psychology has shown that some people unconsciously get thrust into various roles. Rooted in the group's basic assumptions, deep roles emanate (Moxnes, 1995a). Someone in the group becomes "King", another "Devil", a third "Clown", a fourth "Witch", etc. Also Levine and Moreland (1990) maintain that some universal roles can be found in nearly all groups, and that such roles are especially interesting to investigate.

The family is probably the prototype for all groups. This was stated by Freud (see Bion, 1961) and repeated by contemporary leading organizational psychologists such as Levinson (1994). Adult people will, without being aware of it, use the organization as a substitute for the family group. It is hardly coincidental that Bion, in the very first sentence of his exceptionally open-minded autobiography, mentions all the essential family roles in his life: father, mother, brother (himself), sister, and old "ayah" (nanny). This corresponds to the five first unsplit deep roles: Father, Mother, Son, Daughter, and Helper. We might well here have to do with the antecedents of the personality's "Big Five".

In neither the basic assumption group nor the Model I organization, of course, do Father, Mother, King, or Witch exist. They are all need-derived, psycho-biological fantasies, created in order to help the organization members structure their own inner and outer reality (Moxnes, 1995a). When this structure becomes a collective fantasy, that is when it is shared by several members of the organization, it becomes a "truth" of what the organization contains in terms of dissimilarities, of good and bad forces, of friends and enemies. This collective fantasy does not only serve the need for basic security, it also provides goal, meaning, and commitment in daily work. And it signals clearly where one belongs in the organization; who is in alliance with whom, or, simply, who one eats his lunch with. Ultimately, however, it is a question of survival.

Developments in organizations happen when the organizational members, encountering new realities, have to correct their inadequate collective fantasies and create new images of each other. The same happens in families. If the spouses do not change their inadequate fantasies about each other the marriage will stagnate or break up. Not much in the game of marriage is "true"—only "appropriate". In a live and learning marriage most of us have over the course of the years experienced the spouse in most of the fairy tale roles.

The psychological goal in organizations must be to see each other's diversities and possibilities without adopting the stereotypes of the basic assumptions and deep roles. As a permanent organizational state, however, such a goal is unobtainable. No organization would be able to detach itself totally from the influence of the unconscious. Without basic assumptions any organization member could be R2D2 (a Star Wars robot), and without deep roles the organization might become a machine. To be totally free from our archetypal heritage is probably neither possible nor desirable.

Experience so far suggests that no organization is wholly devoid of deep roles. The parallels to Bion's basic assumptions are apparent. There is little doubt that the deep role model is a further structuring of the organization's unconscious or unspoken basic assumptions. Bion's theory was based on psychotherapy groups exclusively with males, in particular soldiers from the Second World War. The deep role theory is for its part built on experiences with managers in process-oriented training groups. These are interpreted in the light of our ordinary folk tales, but also managers are mainly men, and the fairy tales are created by men. In this way both basic assumptions and deep roles reflect the masculine fantasy world. It is this world of fairy tales that still dominates our work teams and organizations. The feminine roles have always been defined by the masculine world of imagination.

I have during the last few years systematically observed and measured deep roles formation in groups of managers attending our intensive Organizational Psychology programme at the Norwegian School of Management. When applying our new semi-process oriented learning methods it does not take long before the group dynamics produce deep roles in the classroom. It seems to me that deep roles first exist as a system of roles devoid of people waiting, so to speak, for certain individuals to fill the vacant spaces. I am intensely aware when the "King," "Devil," "Princess," "Whore," "Witch," etc. "pops up" in the classroom. These role fantasies may be mine only, but they may also be those of the class. When my own fantasies match the collective fantasies of the class, then, and only then, are they mirroring the true deep roles in the organization. When this happens, I am by definition in touch with the mythological powers in the classroom, experiencing through sensitivity to the organizational projective and introjective processes what is going on at the sub- or unconscious level in the organisation—and thereby probably also being able to do a better job as a management trainer (Moxnes, in press).

Application for Business Organizations

Theory, experiences, and preliminary research data give reason to believe that collective unconscious fantasies exist in all organizations, that they affect the organizational climate and culture, and that they direct the employee's perception

of own personality and identity. With regard to practical organizational applications, Denison (1990) and Moxnes (1997) have shown empirically that organizational fantasies and dreams are important management factors, not only for employee well-being and growth, but also for the business organization's primary function: to secure a sound profit. In a pilot study, measurements of seven deep-role-related organizational fantasies turned out to be surprisingly good predictors of Norwegian Saving Banks' future economic performance (Moxnes, 1995b, 1996). As such Bion, the deep role theory, and psychoanalytical thinking gain practical relevance and applicability also for the organization's primary task.

Psycho-economic studies, in which the employees' unconscious fantasies and the company's economic key figures are linked and analysed together, might become an important task for future psycho-economists. Here some grand challenges await young researchers. When the first valid measuring instruments for uncovering the organization's deep roles and archetypal fantasies are before long construed, the correlation between the organization's fantasy world and its economic result will be a new and exiting research target in the years to come—hopefully with great practical relevance. The fantasies can be "more real than reality". In addition to searching for facts, we must in the future also look for gratifying organizational fantasies.

REFERENCES

Appel, S. (1995). Freud and civilization. *Human Relations*, *48*, 625–645.

Argyris, C., & Schön, D.A. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Ashbach, C., & Schermer, V.L. (1987). *Object relations, the self, and the group*. London: Routledge.

Bales, R.F. (1950). *Interaction process analysis: A method for the study of small groups.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Bales, R.F., & Cohen, S.P. (1979). *SYMLOG: A system for the multiple level observations of groups*. New York: The Free Press.

Bion, W. (1955). Group dynamics: A review. In M. Klein, P. Heiman, & R.E. Money-Kyrle (Eds.), *New directions in psychoanalysis*. London: Maresfield.

Bion, W. (1961). *Experiences in groups*. New York: Basic Books.

Bion, W. (1986). *The long week-end 1897–1919: Part of a life.* London: Free Association Books.

Czander, W.M. (1993). *The psychodynamics of work organizations. Theory and applications*. London: Guilford Press.

Denison, D.R. (1990). *Corporate culture and organizational effectiveness*. New York: Wiley.

Diamond, M.A. (1993). *The unconscious life of organizations: Interpreting organizational identity*. London: Quorum Books.

Frank, K.A. (1990). The living response to the transference. *Contemporary Psychology*, *35*, 664–665.

Freud, S. (1991). *Civilization, society and religion: Vol. 12*. *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego in S. Freud.* London: Penguin. (Original work published 1921)

Gould, L.J. (1997). Correspondences between Bion's basic assumption theory and Klein's developmental positions: An outline. *Free Associations*, *7*, 15–30.

Jaques, E. (1955). Social systems as a defense against persecutory and depressive anxiety. In M. Klein, P. Heiman, & R.E. Money-Kyrle, (Eds.), *New directions in psychoanalysis*. London: Maresfield.

Klein, M. (1959). Our adult world and its roots in infancy. *Human Relations*, *12*, 291–303.

Levine, J.M., & Moreland, R.L. (1990). Progress in small group research. *Annual Review of Psychology, 41*, 585–634.

Levinson, H. (1994). Why the behemoths fell: Psychological roots of corporate failure. *American Psychologist, 49*, 428–436.

Mitroff, I.I. (1983). Archetypal social systems analysis: On the deeper structure of human systems. *Academy of Management Review*, *8*, 387–397.

Moxnes, P. (1981). *Ångest och arbetsmiljö*. Stockholm: Förlaget Natur och Kultur.

Moxnes, P. (1983*). Fantasi eller virkelighet? Bilder satt sammen fra en konferanse om organisasjon og ledelse* (Rp.). Oslo, Norway: Psykologisk institutt, Universitetet i Oslo.

Moxnes, P. (1995a). *Hjältar, hexor, horor och andra djuproller i mänskligt samspel*. Stockholm: Förlaget Natur och Kultur.

Moxnes, P. (1995b). *Vekst og volum i driftsresultat som konsekvens av organisasjonskultur*. [Growth and volume of annual profits as a consequence of organizational culture] (Research Rep. no. 8/1995). Sandvika, Norway: Norwegian School of Management.

Moxnes, P. (1996). The organisational seven and profitability (Meeting abstract). *International Journal of Psychology*, *31*, 4365.

Moxnes, P. (1997). *Psykologi och ekonomi: Hur organisationskulturen påverkar rörelsesresultatet. Et fallstudie*. Stockholm: Rabén Prisma.

Moxnes, P. (in press). Deep roles: Twelve primordial roles of mind and organization. *Human Relations*.

Parker, I. (1997). Group identity and individuality in times of crisis: Psychological reflections on social psychological knowledge. *Human Relations*, *50*, 183–196.

Rioch, M.J. (1970). The work of Wilfred Bion on groups. *Psychiatry*, *33*, 55–66.

Schein, E.H. (1985). *Organisational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Thorsrud, E., & Emery, F.E. (1964*). Industrielt demokrati. Representasjon på styreplan i bedriftene?* Oslo, Norway: Universitetesforlaget.

Thorsrud, E., & Emery, F.E. (1970). *Mot en ny bedriftsorganisasjon*. Oslo, Norway: Tanum.

Zaleznik, A. (1995). The case for not interpreting unconscious mental life in consulting to organisations. *Psychiatry*, *58*, 357–370.