

## The Trilogy Matrix Event (TME): A Setting for integrating the Study of Large Social System Dynamics from Different Dimensions

Ch 18 in Hopper, E. (2024). *The Tripartite Matrix in the Developing Theory and Expanding Practice of Group Analysis: The Social Unconscious in Persons, Groups and Societies: Vol.4*. London: Routledge.

*Richard Morgan-Jones*

### Background context to this chapter:

This fourth volume of Hopper and Weinberg's edited series on the social unconscious begins with a description and an exploration of "The tripartite matrix in Foulkesian Group Analysis". (Ch1 this volume). This introduction traces the moves from the development of Foulkes' idea of the matrix to describe the web of conscious and unconscious communications that shape group interaction. Hopper then explores the "realms and dimensions" of the tripartite matrix as an "essential characteristic of the social system of any human grouping" (Ibid p.x). He describes the personal, inter-personal and trans-personal dimensions of the matrix and mentions developments in Foulkes thinking described as the *foundation matrix*, the *dynamic matrix* and eventually the *personal matrix*. Additionally, he describes the use of the term *equivalence* in group analysis to explore the relatedness between these different dimensions, along with rich clinical examples.

By contrast, this chapter comes from a different "stable". Although the author has been much influenced by group analytic thinking and practice and in his clinical practice ran two long-term slow-open group-analytic psychotherapy groups and one long-term couples' group, in fact the design of the large group event described in this chapter derived from the practice and thinking of Tavistock group relations and the founding inspiration of Wilfred Bion.

The fact that Earl Hopper and Haim Weinberg have welcomed this contribution illustrates a point made in a commentary Hopper co-authored with Carla Penna, on papers collected a special edition of the European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling, of which I was a co-editor with Robert Snell, focussed on psychoanalytic and group analytic developments in Field Theory. Their commentary review was sub-titled: "...field, systems and silos. From electromechanics to the matrix" (Penna & Hopper 2022: 127). This piece acknowledges the significance of Kurt Lewin's field theory in the development of psychoanalytic, group-analytic and group relations thinking and practice and points to the experiments at the Northfield Hospital as the "cradle" through which these ideas were embodied and conceived anew. However they point to the risk that this watershed ended up creating silos where people from different schools do not share common languages, trainings or indeed cultures of practice, and thereby miss out on enriching eachothers' ideas through appreciative enquiry and critique (See Penna, 2022).

This is the professional and theoretical background for describing a new approach to structuring a large group experience where reflection on experience and the development of new communicational networks can be forged across the three realms described in chapter 1.

### Introduction to the Trilogy Matrix Event

Exploration of large system dynamics, in the TME, seeks to provide an experience through which to integrate reflection and learning across three overlapping perspectives:

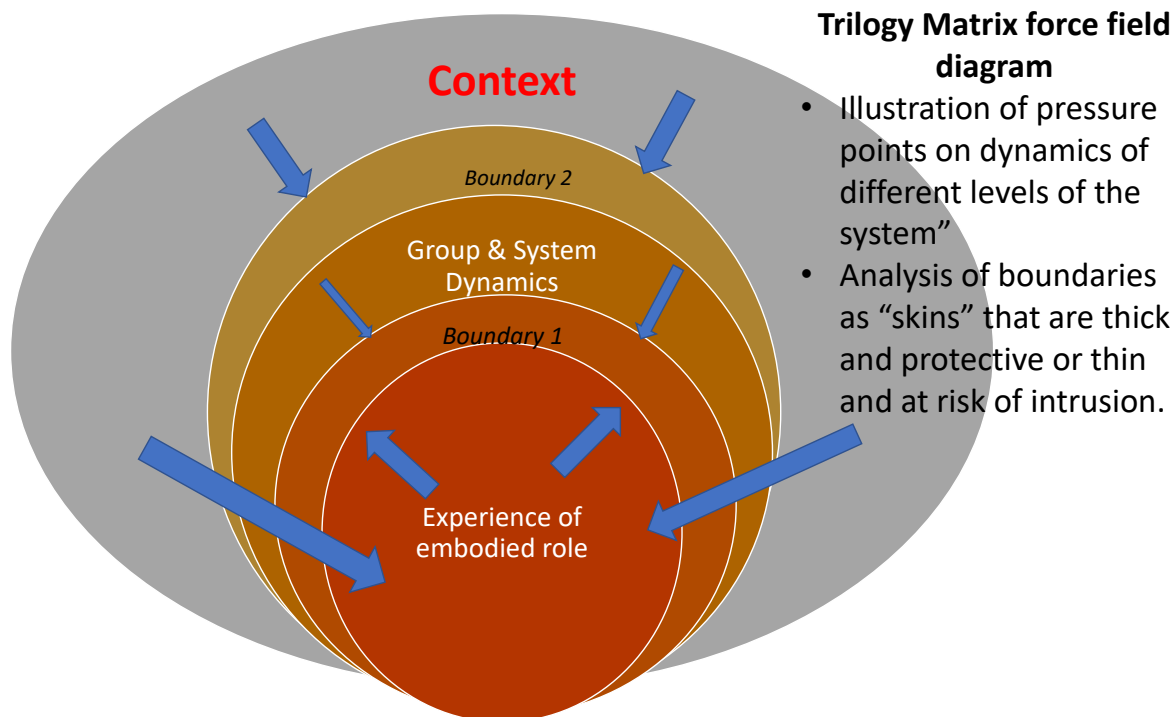
1. The embodied role where what is personally physical and what is emotional meet in a social role.
2. Group and system dynamics with sub-groups, shared unconscious basic assumptions, struggles for identity and moves between effective collaboration and defensive collective mentalities.
3. Forces from the wider context in which the group lives, including trans-generational culture, bequests and trauma.

We can think of these three realms as force fields of dynamic experience and energy, with attraction and repulsion, with fragmentation and solidity, with change and resistance. This chapter seeks to describe methods that explore and learn from experiencing these dynamics and the ways in which different nested circles of enquiry shape each other. Part 1 describes this new design as a force field. Part 2 outlines how this framework has been applied for different purposes in different contexts with examples. Part 3 describes its rationale and potential for developing new dimensions of experiencing and exploring large group dynamics.

#### 1. The Trilogy Matrix Event (TME) as a Force Field

A matrix is a womb that shapes the growth, birth and new life of an infant. The metaphor of a *matrix* describes the way this conscious and unconscious field is shaped by the multiple intersection of forces which are made available to be discerned. It seeks to *frame* the questions relevant to this field of study as a *life space* (Lewin, 1948/1997). These include how to create the setting for enquiry and how to support these enquiries through focused and distinct tasks for studying experience.

The diagram below provides a schematic overview of such a force field. In addition to the three realms of experience that the *TME* explores, the boundary between each is described using the idea of the internal and external pressure points that represent internal developmental thrusts, on the one hand, and the need to adapt to an external wider sphere of influence, on the other. This provides a semi-permeable boundary that can be described using the bodily metaphor of a skin that is more or less porous or opaque.



Describing an approach to studying organisational and societal dynamics, this chapter seeks to structure the understanding of these three different embedded dimensions in a way that can make them apparent while working through the emotional realms and inter-related psychodynamics of each. These are the perspectives studied through the application of psychoanalytic ideas and experience to social settings that is often described as “systems psychodynamics” and engaged with through group relations learning experiences. These are applicable to groups, working teams and organisations and applied in multiple settings.

## 2. The Basic Model and Three Examples of using the Trilogy Matrix Event

The TME and the *trilogy approach* are designed for running workshops and groups to engage with wider and deeper organisational and societal psychodynamics. They began as a way to provide an experiential design for workshops on the theme of my book: *The Body of the Organisation and its Health*. (Morgan-Jones, 2010), which seeks to relate bodily experience with organisational dynamics and the way the organisation as a social system is embodied in the effectiveness and *socio-somatic* health risks of its work force. The TME has been used to explore thematic workshops, career development workshops, Balint method work discussion groups and as part of a group relations conference providing reflection and gathering of here and now group experiences for learning and application within this tripartite model. The *trilogy matrix (TM)* is a way of describing the theoretical framework that supports the search to understand this complex field.

- a) The **basic model** of the TME is for a large group to meet in three concentric circles. The innermost first circle works for a set period of time reviewing its experience around a given theme. This is therefore a “here and then” event: *here* in the sense of making experience present, *then* in the sense of reflecting on previous experience.
- b) The second circle is then invited to associate to the theme reflecting on the material produced by the first circle while making links to group dynamics observed.
- c) The third outer circle is then invited to associate to the theme in terms of any contextual forces or dynamics linking them to observations of the material provided by the inner two circles. These perceptions may include the whole force field of cultural, societal, racial, economic, political and leadership dynamics.
- d) A fourth part of such an event may include reflective space in which to generate hypotheses linking perceptions of the dynamics across the three circles. This can include exploring the nature of the boundaries between the three perceptions and how porous or rigid they might have been around different forces.

Examples of this model of experience-based learning are described in the following 3 examples:

***Example 1 A TME to Explore the Theme of Shame and Shamelessness<sup>1</sup>***

One of the themes taken up in these workshops was the development of the trilogy method of reflective learning around the experience of shame<sup>i</sup>.

The questions used for each of the circles were as follows:

1. The inner first circle’s task was to explore experiences of shame and shamelessness.
2. The second circle’s task was to make observations on and to reflect on how they perceive the dynamics being discussed and were enacted in the exchanges in the inner circle.
3. The third, outer circle’s task was to observe the discussions of each of the other two circles and to reflect on wider social dynamics.

During this workshop, in a second round of this TME there were the same three nested circles with people able to choose a different circle to work from. While the inner circle reflected on personal experiences of shame and shamelessness, the two other circles observed. Within the inner circle there were three empty chairs, which members from the other groups could occupy to comment on the dynamics they observed from the perspective of either group dynamics (second circle) or contextual dynamics (third circle). This method of working was used for 30 minutes followed by a review of the entire experience of both TMEs.

Using the trilogy approach to reflect on their experiences produced a significant dynamic. By exploring their personal and bodily experiences of shame, the outer two circles witnessed revelations of the pain of being shamed or people being shameless. This was experienced

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<sup>1</sup> This event was a regional meeting of the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organisations held in London 2015.

acutely. It was as if there was something infectious about the shame experience by being cast in the role of a voyeuristic observer in the outer two circles that belonged not just to being a witness, but by the structure of the event itself. For the first circle, this felt like being stripped of a skin or having the experience of another shamelessly stripping one of a skin as in cases of racism, gender identity prejudice, and phobia of difference (Morgan-Jones, 2017, 2022a).

### ***Example 2 Poland on the Couch***

In 2014 I was invited to work in Warsaw at the inaugural “Poland on the Couch” conference by Halina Brunning and Anna Zajenkowska. This included introducing Polish professionals including a good number of group-analysts to the TME methodology alongside a social dreaming experience (Lawrence, 1998, Morgan-Jones, 2019), inputs from representatives of Polish institutional life including politics and the media, psycho-social perspectives on Polish history, and large group reflections.

There were two spaces for TMEs which I introduced and managed with my colleagues Halina Brunning and Olya Khaleelee. The theme of the conference was explored with tasks of the sub-groups being described as follows:

- Inner “Experience” group, the first circle: “to share experiences of what it means to be a Polish citizen in the present moment and have a Polish identity.”
- Second circle, the “Dynamics” group: “to observe the experience group and then reflect on how they perceive the dynamics been discussed and enacted in the experience group.”
- Outer circle, the “Context” group: “to observe the discussions of each of the other two groups experience and dynamics and to discuss wider social dynamics being revealed in the room.”

The second session of this TME took place on a second day and, like the shame and shamelessness workshop described above, included chairs in the inner circle for members of the outer circles to occupy to offer observations or consultations about the dynamics observed from either of the other perspectives, dynamics or societal.

The experience of the first TME was fraught. The conference had stimulated many histories, personal and collective about Polish citizens exposed to humiliating invasion, persecution, genocide of 3 million of its Jewish population and a heritage of asset stripping of culture, language, identity, land and morale. These experiences were added to in the experience of the three nested circles with feelings of being watched, judged critically and even mocked.

By the second day, the social dreaming events and the focus of the presentations and discussions had moved on. People were more deeply in touch with feelings of tragedy, loss and pain that belonged in the inter-generational legacy from the past. This was linked to profound internalised suspicion and fear of criticism between Poles that risked undermining the extraordinary resilience, developmental capacity and courage to have survived horrors of past wars. It was as if the TME, alongside other elements in the conference had enabled expression and

working through of internalised social and emotional attitudes that were both painful but sobering as the event began to map out the journey that Polish citizens had traversed, and which faced them in building a collaborative future. To some extent the 2-day container appeared to provide a chance for working through towards a more hopeful engagement with opportunities for the future.

In reflecting on regular gatherings that sprung from this foundational event, Zajenkowska explores key questions: *“Are we aiming to “analyse” the country, are we putting ourselves in the position of interpreters of the social processes or perhaps we have a different goal? After few years of organizing the projects now the aim became clearer. The purpose of the reflective citizens workshops, which are the core activity of Poland on the Couch, is not to “play the psychoanalysts” of the whole nation but to create transitional spaces for past and current traumas and other important events to be externalized, and to establish connection between citizens.”* (Zajenkowska, 2020) <sup>ii</sup>.

This reflection suggests that the event, marked by its title, could be described as a piece of “Sociotherapy”, bringing to mind and working through trauma down the generations as a resource for motivating change in a social system as Kurt Lewin had proposed (Lewin, 1948/1997).

### ***Example 3 Exploring the Meaning Brexit and Trump in the UK***

In February 2017 the Organisation for Promoting the Understanding of Society (OPUS) organised a day-long workshop under the theme of *“The UK on the Couch: Exploring Brexit and Trump”*. In many ways this echoed the Warsaw experience. During the day’s event a Presentation was made by Simon Western on the theme while, he, Olya Khaleelee and I managed the two TMEs. This event was designed to *“join the task of OPUS to understand at a deeper and wider level the psychodynamics of society as a large group”*. The event was designed specifically to provide a reflective space through which *“one level of experience, reflection and analysis impacts on another to generate new hypotheses, leading to new possible action”*. It was also suggested that the event *“provides a kind of systems event familiar to group relations conferences but focused on ‘work group’ mentality using experience as a source of information rather than just discovery, expression and impact.”*<sup>iii</sup>

During the two TMEs it was clear that the 50 members of the workshop were relieved to have a venue to share their dismay, anxiety and even despair alongside their fury and frustration at the twin shocks of the election of Donald Trump as US president the previous year for the UK, to leave the European Union. Losses included rolling back the Welfare State that many had been involved in through their careers and the loss of social status as citizens who no longer carried respected authority for their contribution and vision of society, that was no longer respected.

Nevertheless, this psychodynamically sophisticated group of professionals were eager to explore their own projections and hatred of those who had voted against what they wished for.

This elicited some misgivings about the European Union which many felt had lost its way as a body to keep peace after a century of traumatising warfare. This failed dependency revealed old scars down generations of suffering in families and communities exacerbated by the economic divide between wealthy and poor that had not abated since the 2008 banking credit crisis and financial crash despite subsequent attempted cures to the financial system.

One hypothesis sought to gather the role of the UK as a unique centre of tolerating conflicts around differences of identity in a post-colonial world. The Brexit campaign had deliberately mobilised divisive anti-migrant feeling, racial prejudice and hatred of the inter-sectionality of gender diversity. These were chosen as focus for ills felt by traditionalists hankering for a by-gone age of imagined certainties. This also involved oscillation between primitive fears and excess excitement, masquerading as disapproval about mixed race and same gender partnerships. This contrasted with the values of international liberal ideals expressed in metropolitan populations seen by some as elitist that coalesced around the wish for independence from Europe.

Significant hypotheses were also voiced about attempts through gift work, care work and research to repair damage that felt at once like a body blow in attacking much needed dependency on the state by disadvantaged communities (inner circle), an attack on inter-dependency collaborative work (second circle) and failure in political leadership and followership (third circle).

### 3. The TME as a “new practice”

In the wider field of studying group dynamics in society and at work, there are many approaches to defining three “nested” circles of embedded domains where linked reflections on experience may be explored. These include:

- the person-role-system approach from the Tavistock Institute (Obholzer & Roberts, 1994).
- the Foulkesian *Tripartite Matrix* approach to the personal, the inter-personal and the trans-personal (Hopper & Weinberg, 2011, 2016, 2017, & see especially chapter 1). As Hopper points out earlier in this book (p.x), giving priority to inside-outside could easily be reversed as does Foulkes’ move between the *Foundation Matrix*, the *Dynamic Matrix* and the *Personal Matrix*. Alternatively, Group Analysis gives crucial priority to the Dynamic experience of the here and now group experience through which three other matrices intersect.
- the *Transforming Experiences in Organisations* approach of the Grubb Institute describing person, context and system overlapping in role experience, resourced by a larger transcendental “Source” of beliefs and values (Long, 2016).
- Agazarian’s Systems Centered Theory (SCT) of exploration of three nested domains of person, system, group-as-a-whole focusing especially on sub-group formation, and conflict resolution (Agazarian & Gantt, 2011).

Description of each of these well tried and developed schools of thought and ways of creating thinking, let alone comparison of similarities and differences lies beyond the scope of this contribution. Each approach provides different ways of reflecting on and experiencing these complex inter-relationships of different dimensions and perspectives with different emphases and purposes.

This locates the TME as a new practice (Morgan-Jones, 2022a) theoretically within the fields of group relations, group analysis and psychoanalysis and including their application to societal and cultural phenomena.

So why begin with the body and its means of seeking connection through the senses? This question relates to the way we take for granted, tacitly and unconsciously, aspects of the functioning of the main senses along with the main organs of the body. We take them for granted and are largely unconscious of them until such time as they make their presence felt in the form of sensations or our behaviour unconsciously seeking stimulation. The model being explored here is how the body is not just the source of sensation, feeling and experience. It also provides a container for experiences and emotions that we cannot digest. Even using such a metaphor, as did Bion (1963), suggests the physicality from which emotions appear. This is a two-way street across what Bion described as the *contact-barrier* (Bion, 1962). It is the body that generates, enjoys and suffers what belongs to the person, intertwined as we are with the group and the wider context. For this reason, cogent and significant as the structuring of ecological context may be through social sciences, the source and burden of their structure is experienced as sensation seeking meaning across the body-mind-group-context interfaces. We can also reverse this perspective and explore how the person can be experienced as the embodiment of group and context, experiencing these other dimensions consciously and unconsciously inscribed on our unwitting behaviour.

That said, reflecting on experience as bodily experience is to be found in the mind. Language is involved as one channel along which communication is made, not least to the speaker who finds themselves through their mouth. Yet along with spoken language comes another channel, sometimes described as the “music behind the words”. By this I mean the non-verbal expression of senses, the use of metaphor to create images in the mind and the energy and forcefulness that communicates the temper of what is being said, the physicality, social role and significance of who and what the speaker is in the minds of others. With language we are already in the realm of the social, with non-verbal messages even more so. This second channel communicates across minds and penetrates unconscious elements of individual and group experience, that emphasis on the body’s sense experience reveals.

The three concentric circles can be seen as the creation of a framework within which members can wander around an experience exploring it from a fuller range of perspectives that do not just prioritise observation through sight. Bodily senses also include sound, smell, taste, touch, the kinaesthetic sense of movement and the proprioceptive sense of positioning of the body in space. Each of these encompasses unconscious and non- or pre-verbal communication. Each also includes developing the capacity for grouping of persons, thoughts and ideas as well as the



shaping of conceptual frameworks born of cognitive learning across diverse domains developed as a means of describing and analysing experience. This bringing together, or linking discrete dimensions of experience, provides a chance to locate the experiences being mapped across a wider and deeper field without inhibiting the flow of new ideas.

Behind these elements is also the influence of Gordon Lawrence's development of Tavistock approaches in using *social dreaming matrices* as a way of mobilising the collective experience of the unconscious to develop new experiences, and new thinking that belongs to what Bion, in his later work, described as "thoughts waiting for a thinker". (Bion, 1967, Lawrence, 1998, 2010,). What is particularly significant about this approach is the shift from the idea of the unconscious mind as a veil of repression behind which prejudices, motives and preconceptions remain hidden towards including the idea of mobilising the unconscious experience of dreaming and creative waking dream thinking to create new thoughts and hypotheses about complex social and organisational systems (Lawrence, 2000).

Across the bedrock of theory that underpins the TME are Bion's two theories of relating minds to bodies. The **first** is his theory of groups (Bion, 1961) and the way people instinctively and unconsciously form emotionally bonded groups which he developed in his *protomentality* through *basic assumption* and *work group* observations of group dynamics. The **second** is his *theory of thinking* (Bion, 1967) derived from Freud's idea that thinking was primarily unconscious and embodied in the intolerance of frustration. This made the capacity for thought as a relief from the burden of the need for others upon whom to evacuate toxic experience. This model of thinking begins from the mind's encounter with what Bion described as the *beta-elements* of raw sense experience that demand to be transformed through the *alpha-function* of maternal-like emotional recognition and containment, to create a differentiation between the conscious and unconscious elements of the mind (see Morgan-Jones, 2022). In this way external reality can be faced without the interference of primary processes and defences against them. Additionally, unconscious dream-like thinking can be mobilised to create imaginative links to give new meanings and to generate new ideas to be elaborated. The TME seeks to relate these two approaches and I now want to explore their integration before later turning to the **third** dimension of the context.

Research for integrating these ideas and their application draws heavily on *The Body of the Organisation and its Health* (Morgan-Jones, 2010) where I explored Bion's ideas of the body-mind interdependence and the desire to belong to a *group body larger than one's own* (Morgan-Jones, 2016). This link between the embodied mind only making sense through the embodied group, Bion described as *protomentality*.

Awareness of the relationship between bodily, sense-based experience and emotional experience in the rhythm of the life of the group and its interactions. In Bion's (1967) theory of thinking sense-impressions were transformed into emotions through the internalising presence of maternal-like reverie and attention. He described this as the way *beta elements* impacting the senses were transformed into emotions through *alpha-function*. However, the idea first appeared in the form of a *protomental matrix* that encompasses the "groupishness" he

suggests is at war with the desire for individual independence. For Bion the *protomental matrix* was characterised by the fact that whether it was emotional or physical could not be distinguished as these aspects were opposite sides of the same psycho-social phenomena.

So far, we have established Bion's theories of group life and how it relates to the transformation of sensations into emotional experience. Now we come to the **third** circle to explore the way current societal trends and political and economic factors are seen to shape bodily senses, emotional experience and group dynamics. In developing Bion's thoughts about societal dynamics, my own work has been shaped by his references to links between *basic assumption mentalities* with the fields of both epidemiological and economic speculations (See Bion, 1961:ch 5, Morgan-Jones, 2010 & 2011, Morgan-Jones & Torres, 2010).

Within a TME the task is not to surface unconscious dynamics so much as to mobilise unconscious dream-like thinking that is intuitive, metaphorical and imaginative in order to approach societal realities in a new way (see Armstrong, 1989). A further dimension in a Tavistock approach is the way organisations can be seen as open-systems exchanging goods, services, working lives, careers, trades and ideas with wider society in an inter-dependent way. From the Foulkesian group analytic perspective the context includes the *foundation matrix* for any group or person, which is so widely explored across this and the previous 3 volumes in this series.

This field can be studied around the capacity of what Bion (1967) described as the *contact-barrier* which protects the conscious from the unconscious mind and vice versa. This reversible perspective is key in addressing thinking that belongs to the realm of waking dream thoughts that are intuitive, symbolic and characterised as unconscious-to-unconscious phantasy. Where the *contact-barrier* breaks down, the inability to wake up and the inability to sleep risks producing the confused world of psychotic and delusional experience that Hopper describes associated with the traumatised group (Hopper, 2003). The boundary between the first and second circles (boundary 1 in Fig 1) and the boundary between the second and third circles (boundary 2 in Fig 1), can be thought of as semi-permeable membranes analogous to the human skin as a lax, rigid or flexible container as it deals with the forcefulness of managed and unmanaged intrusions and the porosity of the boundary (Morgan-Jones, 2010 ch 4).

### ***Boundaries as semi-permeable and integrating membranes***

In forging links between the 3 domains of the TME a key idea is the investigation of what both distinguishes the different realms on the one hand and what joins them on the other. For Bion a key idea was to describe the boundary contact-barrier that internalises containing capacity for delayed gratification and encouraged transformation of the threat of sense based and emotional overwhelm towards capacity for thought. In conceptualising the TM and using the diagram in figure 1, this involves exploration of the 2 boundaries.

For this purpose, I have found invaluable use of the metaphor of skin as a semi-permeable membrane. This draws on the work of Anzieu, (1984, 1989, 1990), Bick, (2002), Turquet (1972,1973), Tustin (1986), Ogden (1992), Raufman & Weinberg (2016) and Ulnik (2007). It

develops Bion's idea of *protomentality* as the key dimension of bodily experience that shapes emotions and groups them in the way he described the basic assumption mentalities. Basic assumptions can be seen as skins that permit the feeling of a bonded group that will assist in supporting threatening emotional conflicts. (These dimensions are explored in my *The Language of the Group Skin, 2017 & in press 2022*). Interpretation of these metaphorical skins as part of a force field can also be linked to the group analytic approach of Pichon Riviere's concept of 'el vinculo', the *link* (Losso et al., 2017). Such links can be seen as forged across the flow of the many, boundary crossing, internalised and externalised objects of relationships to be discovered through a TME among other settings across our psycho-social fields.

One area worth exploration is the nature of the thickness or thin-ness of these boundaries with more or less rigidity or permeability. Persons may be shaped by identifications that defy the demands of groups, or else that personify group membership (Turquet, 1974, 1975, Hopper 2003). Groups may also be shaped by becoming at the mercy of contextual forces they enact or else held together in rigid isolationism. By the same token leaders may hold societies to ransom or else be at the mercy of collective forces they ignore at their peril. Such dynamics might be enriched by understanding the nature of traumatised boundaries and the oscillation Hopper has described between aggregation and massification dynamics (2003), however this exploration will demand greater elaboration perhaps in a collection on large group dynamics. Suffice to say the TME might be able to provide interesting evidence about these processes. Additionally, it aims to open up dialogue between different voices across groups and across internalised experiences that broaden and deepen the field as a container for hitherto unrecognised and unvoiced dimensions of large group dynamics. This dimension echoes Bion's final autobiographical work (Bion, 1994) and the group internalised in individuals. This echoes developments in clinical psychoanalysis that develops field theory.

*"Getting in touch with primitive mental states and with the origin of the self is strived for, not so much for discovering historical truth or recovering unconscious content, as for generating motion between different parts of the psyche, for transforming barriers within the mind into caesuras (i.e., breaks after which there is continuity), and for incorporating and integrating different parts of the Self, even those seemingly inaccessible ones."* (Bergstein 2012).

This suggests that the purpose of the TME is not so much to analyse what are described as equivalences, as to free up communication between the three realms of the matrix. The TME moves beyond the application of Bion's initial application of psychoanalytic thinking in groups to incorporate his later thinking that includes container/contained (Bion, 1970), the transcendent and truth revelatory aspect of what he described as transformations in "O" (Bion, 1965), and his model of thinking (Bion, 1967), his theory of waking dream thinking (Bion, 1975/1991) and his autobiographical "Memoir of the Future" (Bion, 1974/1991) representation of the internalised group epitomising Foulkes' *personal matrix*. Particularly significant in developing the TME has been developments in psychoanalysis of field theory and especially the *post-Bion Field Theory* developed around a number of Italian psychoanalysts including, Ferro (2019), Civitarese (2013) and Neri (1998) and integration of their work with artistic expression (Snell, 2021).

To do justice to the matrix this suggests that we need to move beyond the work of Bion who described the essential body-mind-group inseparable combination as a *protomental matrix*, and of Foulkes whose pioneering work in developing group analysis using the concept of a *matrix* to describe the unconscious organic bedrock of shared dynamic experience and of its fundamental meaning as the womb from which new life is generated through words that evoke deeper and wider experience. Such ideas deserve poetry:

**Matrix**

*A mass of fine-grained rock  
in which gems, crystals or  
fossils are embedded.*

*Something within or from  
something else originates,  
develops, or takes form.*

*We are a matrix  
we souls who seek communion or  
that which we call connection.*

*What is within us or from us  
that will take form?  
what gem, what crystal,  
what fossil?*

Michelle Seligson<sup>iv</sup> 2021

Like much fine poetry, physical metaphor and language meet in creating a new shape for an old idea, while the language forges links between body, mind, society and meaning, unknown and yet to be searched for. Poetry is embodied, generated and could be explored through the lens of a TME.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have described a framework for structuring reflection on, and observation of experience that forges links between the internalisation and externalisation of conscious and unconscious forces. I have outlined developing a setting through which this approach can be applied to discover and work through the psychodynamics of complex inter-lacing fields. In the theoretical section I have explored some of the underlying theories particularly from Bion's thinking and from psychoanalytic developments in field theory to explore each of the three major dimensions of the TME. In ending this chapter as a contribution to understanding the social unconscious I want to underline the methodology of this setting as a means of learning for reflection on the experience of what it means to belong to the large group which is humanity in its many dimensions.

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<sup>i</sup> As John Steiner (2011) suggests in his book on “Seeing and Being Seen”, Kleinians have majored in guilt and been slow to take up the socially based inter-actional experience of shame and shamelessness.

<sup>ii</sup> A striking development in this work is the collection of essays edited by Anna Zajenowska and Uri Levin from Israel entitled, “Europe on the Couch: A Psychoanalytic and Socio-cultural Exploration of a Continent” (2020).

<sup>iii</sup> The quotations in *italics* are taken from the publicity for the event, written by this author.

<sup>iv</sup> Inspired by Gordon Lawrence’s *social dreaming matrix*, two colleagues, Michelle Seligson and Kathy Cain, ran a new idea for a poetry matrix where, in place of sharing dreams, associations and meanings, we members of the workshop brought poetry for associations and meaningfulness. This poem was inspired by the poet’s attendance at a TME.

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