

Documents from the front line

This section, an ongoing feature of the journal, is intended to include material of a non-academic, practical and immediate nature, representing ongoing psycho-political process – including manifestos, course handouts, leaflets, petitions, round-robins and ephemera of all kinds. All contributions will be gratefully received.

GROUP DYNAMICS OF CREATIVE VERSUS DESTRUCTIVE CYCLES

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From www.lacanianattachmentanalysts.com.

CREATIVE FIGHTING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Creative fighting has as its goal disarming the Other(s), in contrast with destructive fighting where the goal is dismembering the Other(s).

A prime example is sports of all kinds. Historical examples include early members of different villages fighting each other and then using a huge ball in competition. Football evolved as a sport from this. A wartime example is combatant troops playing football as a respite from war. Of course, actual violence can take place in the form of fans fighting each other – hooliganism.

Democracy itself evolved from feudalism where the goal is to use voting and speaking rather than actual violence.

Family life has transcended earlier historical developments where harsh punishments were sometimes prevalent.

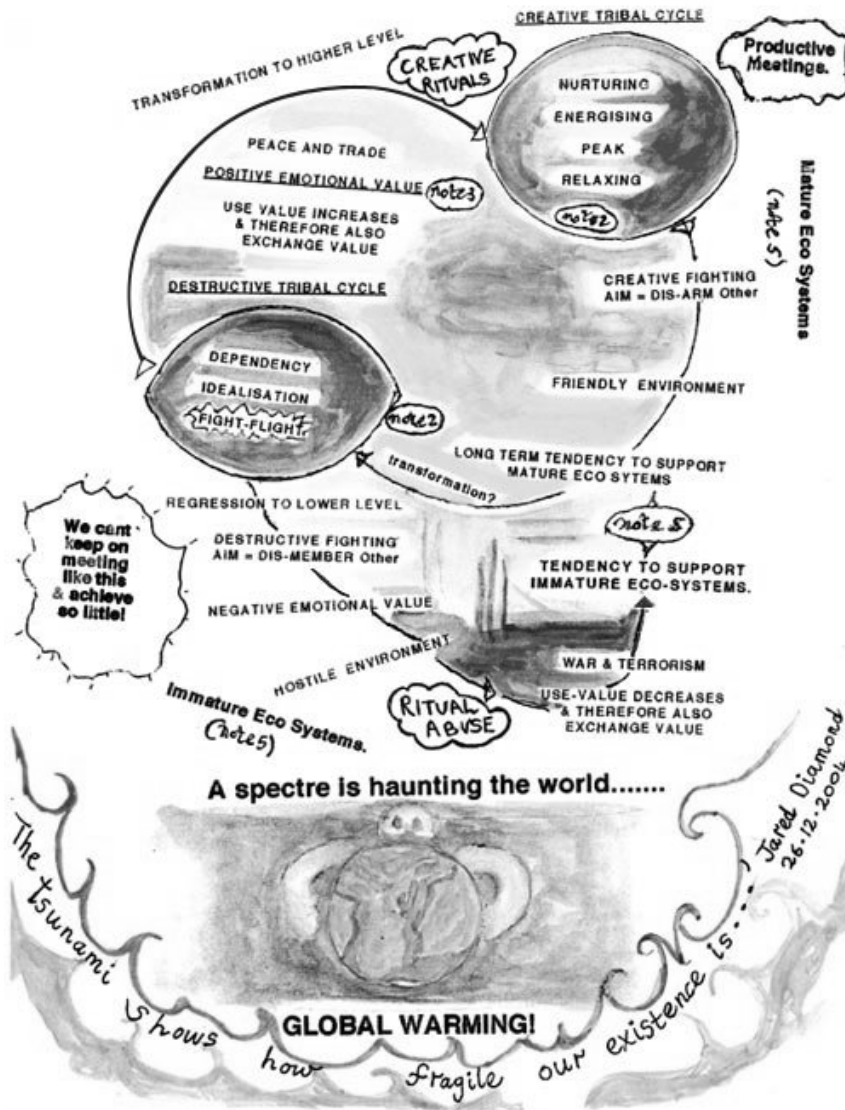
At an international level, the United Nations forum is an attempt to replace war and violence with discussions and agree-

ments. George Bush and his supporters argue that without American and other allied troops peace and democracy would not be possible in Iraq.

Time will only tell whether this will be the case. One could site the Second World War as creative fighting to save democracy from Fascism. Were the millions who died in this and earlier wars worth the costs?

On a smaller scale, organizations can be gripped by power struggles not excepting therapy organisations! (John Southgate had more hassles in therapy organisations than I had as a national serviceman in the RAF 1952–4!)

We have drawn upon the work of Wilfred Bion's short but amazing book *Experiences in Groups*. He posits a creative work group (w-group) that he contrasts with a destructive basic assumption group (Ba-group), which moves between three contrasting modes of being: the basic assumption of dependency (baD) where the group seeks a leader on whom to depend. The second mode is the Basic Assumption of Pairing where the group seeks a couple to seek



Notes

- (1) These dynamics are present in all organisations and societies, ancient and modern, large or small, secular or religious and not excepting therapy organisations!
- (2) Derived from Bion, 'Experiences in groups' See also Southgate and Randall 1976, Co-operative and Community Group Dynamics, still in print - Gale Centre Publications, Loughton, Essex.
- (3) Derived from classic Marxist Economics. We have added 'Emotional Value' . For example someone you have loved who has died may have left some artifact which reminds you of her or him, for example, and old pipe or lipstick holder. They would have no Exchange value or Use Value but very high. Emotional Value for you.
- (4) General influences are Marx, Freud, Lacan, Reich, Alice Miller, John Bowlby and their successors.
- (5) Plus ecological systems thinkers e.g. Margalef and George Monbiot.

The above is based upon Hegel's dialectic of the Unity, Opposition, and interpenetration of opposites.

salvation, an archetype being a Royal Pair whose progeny will protect the future. Finally there is the Basic Assumption of Fight-Flight where the most 'Psychiatrically sick member' is unconsciously chosen to lead. Forms of fascism could be described in this basic assumption.

These dynamics have been observed in many groups, large and small.

Psychoanalytic and psychotherapy organizations who know of Bion's work are no better at keeping to the creative dynamic than other kinds of organizations!

It is, at this point in time, not yet clear whether the situation in Iraq will end with broadly creative or destructive events.

Millions died in the last two World Wars, 1914-18, and 1939-45. Was it worth it? Such carnage and loss of millions of lives beggars belief. A slogan might be: NEVER AGAIN!

AFTER A CONVERSATION WITH ERIC HOBSBAWM

This structure (pictured above) repeats itself at many levels, for example:

- (1) • small groups;
- organizations of all kinds;
- larger scale national organizations;
- international organizations;
- continental organizations and societies.
- (2) The dynamics derive from our evolutionary history especially the tribal dynamic of our ancestors (without whom we wouldn't be here!).
- (3) It is ubiquitous – from the smallest family level to international politics.
- (4) In all examples the question is 'how can we move from destructive fighting to creative fighting?'
- (5) None of us are exempt from this dynamic.
- (6) The world's great philosophers and states persons have grappled with this dynamic throughout history.
- (7) To quote Marx, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.'
- (8) Freud's extraordinary contribution was to elucidate the degree by which we are governed by forces that are literally *unconscious*.
- (9) Lacan helps us to understand the extraordinary effect of 'the language which speaks us'.
- (10) Bowlby helps us to understand our dependency on attachment to others and the devastation we feel when faced with loss of important relationships and the necessity of the mourning process.
- (11) The colour scheme (painted by Elizabeth London) uses the brighter orange and yellow colours for the creative cycles and darker blues and browns to highlight the destructive cycles.

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