

RING OF FIRE

**Primitive Affects and Object Relations
in Group Psychotherapy**



**Edited by
Victor L. Schermer and Malcolm Pines
Foreword by Otto Kernberg**



**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

Ring of Fire

The ring of fire 'stands for the life cycle of both the universe and each individual being: the circular dance of nature in the eternal process of creation and destruction. At the same time, the light radiated by the ring of flames symbolizes eternal wisdom and transcendental illumination.'

J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*

The circular form in which the group is seated symbolizes its unity, connectedness and cohesion as well as its microcosmic relation to the larger world of human evolution, culture and the life cycle. Foulkes, Bion and others have identified primitive layers of affect and object relations where universal collective themes and early infantile object relations are re-experienced and repeated in the meeting place for healing called the therapy group. In this context, very profound emotions and energies are released which have deep implications for change and growth, provided the therapist can manage and respond to them effectively.

This book brings together a collection of new and original contributions to an understanding of primitive object relations and intensely critical emotional states which present the maximum challenge to the group psychotherapist: the 'Ring of Fire'. An international group of colleagues, based primarily in Great Britain and the United States, address areas of special interest to them and to which they have devoted considerable research and therapeutic effort. They provide insights into the dynamics of these issues and guide the therapist in the management and interpretation of the group events as they unfold.

While much has been written on primitive group states, the information is scattered throughout many journals and books and all too often does not address the practical problems faced by the group therapist in practical terms. Furthermore, there have been significant developments in affect theory and object-relations theory which have yet to be assimilated sufficiently into the theory and technique of group psychotherapy. This book attempts to reduce that gap as it concentrates on the relevance of concepts to treatment in accordance with Kurt Lewin's maxim, 'There is nothing so practical as a good theory'.

Ring of Fire will be invaluable to group psychotherapy supervisors, beginning and experienced group therapists, students and supervisors of group psychotherapy and group dynamics, and organizational consultants who utilize group dynamics principles in their work.

Victor L. Schermer is a clinical psychologist in Philadelphia. He is Executive Director of the Study Group for Contemporary Psychoanalytic Process and Director of the Institute for the Study of Human Conflict.

Malcolm Pines is a founding member of the Group-Analytic Institute and a Member of the Group-Analytic Practice, London. A consultant psychiatrist, he is Editor of the International Library of Group Psychotherapy and Group Process.

The International Library of Group Psychotherapy and Group Process

General Editor: Dr Malcolm Pines

Institute of Group-Analysis, London, and formerly of the Tavistock Clinic, London.

The International Library of Group Psychotherapy and Group Process reflects the group-analytical approach to psychotherapy from both practical and theoretical viewpoints. It takes into account developments in related areas and includes important works in translation.

Other titles in the series

Basic Aspects of Psychoanalytic Group Therapy

Peter Kutter

Bion and Group Psychotherapy

Edited by Malcolm Pines

The Evolution of Group Analysis

Edited by Malcolm Pines

Jacob Levy Moreno 1889–1974: Father of Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy

Rene F. Marineau

Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust

Dina Wardi

Object Relations, The Self and the Group: A Conceptual Paradigm

Charles Ashbach and Victor L. Schermer

Personal Transformation in Small Groups: A Jungian Perspective

Robert D. Boyd

The Practice of Group Analysis

Edited by Jeff Roberts and Malcolm Pines

The Psyche and the Social World: Developments in Group-Analytic Theory

Edited by Dennis Brown and Louis Zinkin

Psychoanalytic Therapy in the Hospital Setting

Paul Janssen

The Sexual Relationship: An Object Relations View of Sex and the Family

David E. Scharff

Using Groups to Help People

Dorothy Whitaker

A Work Book of Group-Analytic Interventions

David Kennard, Jeff Roberts and David Winter

Ring of Fire

Primitive affects and object relations in
group psychotherapy

Edited by Victor L. Schermer and
Malcolm Pines



London and New York

First published 1994
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004.

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

© 1994 Selection and editorial matter, Victor L. Schermer and
Malcolm Pines; individual chapters, the contributors.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or
reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic,
mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented,
including photocopying and recording, or in any information
storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from
the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British
Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Ring of fire: primitive affects and object relations in group
psychotherapy / edited by Victor L. Schermer and Malcolm
Pines.

p. cm.—(The International Library of Group Psychotherapy
and Group Process)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Group psychotherapy. 2. Regression (Psychology),
3. Small groups—Psychological aspects. 4. Object relations
(Psychoanalysis). I. Schermer, Victor L. II. Pines,
Malcolm. III. Series.

[DNLM: 1. Psychotherapy, Group. 2. Affect. 3. Object
Attachment.

WM 430 R581 1994]

RC488.R54 1994

616.89'152—dc20

DNLM/DLC

for Library of Congress

93-34089

CIP

ISBN 0-203-35940-2 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-37196-8 (Adobe eReader Format)

ISBN 0-415-06681-6 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-06682-4 (pbk)

Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	vii
<i>Foreword by Otto Kernberg</i>	ix
1 An editorial introduction: Silence=death <i>Malcolm Pines and Victor L.Schermer</i>	1
2 Between theory and practice, light and heat: On the use of theory in the ‘Ring of Fire’ <i>Victor L.Schermer</i>	9
3 The phases of group development and the systems-centred group <i>Yvonne M.Agazarian</i>	36
4 Attacks on the reflective space: Containing primitive emotional states <i>Robert D.Hinshelwood</i>	86
5 Bion’s post-Experiences in Groups thinking on groups: A clinical example of -K <i>John Gordon</i>	107
6 Borderline phenomena in analytic groups <i>Malcolm Pines</i>	128
7 Group thanatropics <i>Jeffrey Kauffman</i>	149
8 Therapeutic responses to the expression of aggression by members in groups <i>Saul Tuttmann</i>	174

9 Utilizing co-therapy in the group treatment of borderline and narcissistic patients	198
<i>Robert H.Klein and Harold S.Bernard</i>	
10 Intensive group and social systems treatment of psychotic and borderline patients	240
<i>Marvin R.Skolnick</i>	
11 Glacial times in psychotic regression	275
<i>Salomon Resnik</i>	
<i>Author index</i>	308
<i>Subject index</i>	312

Contributors

Yvonne M. Agazarian, EdD, is a psychologist in private practice and Consultant Affiliate to Friends Hospital, Philadelphia, PA. She has developed a Theory of Living Human Systems; founded System-centered Group and Individual Psychotherapy; co-authored *The Visible and Invisible Group* in the International Library of Group Psychotherapy and Group Process series and co-sponsored the System-centered Group Psychotherapy videotape series. She is a fellow of the American Group Psychotherapy Association and a board member of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy.

Harold S. Bernard, PhD, is a psychologist in private practice in New York City. He is Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Chief of the Group Psychotherapy Program, Division of Ambulatory Services, NYU/Bellevue Medical Center, President of the Eastern Group Psychotherapy Society, 1991–3, and Member of the Board of Directors of the American Group Psychotherapy Association, 1991–4. Dr Bernard is book review editor of the *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, and co-editor of the *Handbook of Contemporary Group Psychotherapy* and of the *Manual of Group Psychotherapy*.

John Gordon, BA, is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and group analyst in private practice and Principal Psychotherapist in the Department of Psychotherapy, St Bernard's Hospital, London, where he organizes the outpatient service in group psychotherapy. He is a Full Member of the British Association of Psychotherapists, a Member of the Institute of Group Analysis and co-author of *Group Approaches in Psychiatry*.

Robert D. Hinshelwood, PhD, is a British psychoanalyst and consultant psychotherapist who has contributed greatly in object-relations theory and group analysis. He is the author of *What Happens in Groups?* and *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought Analysis*, and the forthcoming *Clinical Klein*. He is Clinical

Director of the Cassel Hospital, and the founder of the *British Journal of Psychotherapy*.

Jeffrey Kauffman, MA, MSS, is a clinical social worker and psychotherapist specializing in bereavement therapy in suburban Philadelphia, PA. He is founder and Director of the Institute for Spirituality and Psychological Healing and a consultant for nursing homes, hospices and other organizations.

Robert H. Klein, PhD, is a psychologist in private practice in Connecticut. He is Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at both Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, and Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York. A Fellow of the American Group Psychotherapy Association, Dr Klein is a frequent lecturer, workshop leader and contributor to the group therapy literature. He is co-editor of the *Handbook of Contemporary Group Psychotherapy*.

Malcolm Pines, MLB, FRCPsych is a founding member of the Group-Analytic Institute and former consultant at the Tavistock Institute. Author of numerous books and articles in the fields of group psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, he has served as President of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy.

Salomon Resnik, MD, is a psychoanalyst, group analyst and author of several works on psychoanalysis and art which have been published in English, French, Italian and Spanish. He has special experience in the treatment of chronic psychotic patients, both in individual psychoanalysis and in group analysis.

Victor L. Schermer, MA, CAC, is a psychologist, consultant and supervisor in private practice and clinic settings in Philadelphia, PA. He is Executive Director of the Study Group for Contemporary Psychoanalytic Process and Director of the Institute for the Study of Human Conflict. He is co-author of *Object Relations, the Self and the Group*, and contributes to the psychotherapy literature with an emphasis on object relations theory, self psychology, and group systems theory.

Marvin R. Skolnick, MD, is a psychiatrist in private practice in Alexandria, VA. He is a Faculty Member of the Washington School of Psychiatry, Fellow of the A.K.Rice Institute and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at George Washington University.

Saul Tuttmann, MD, PhD, is a psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, psychologist and group psychotherapist in private practice in New York City. Dr Tuttmann is Clinical Professor of psychiatry at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York; President, 1994–5, the American Academy of Psychoanalysis; and President–elect, 1996–8, the American Group Psychotherapy Association.

Foreword

Otto Kernberg

The psychoanalytic exploration of the dynamics of small groups and their therapeutic utilization is a rich, still significantly unexplored territory. The path-breaking findings of Freud, Bion, Turquet, and Anzieu have been only partially integrated with the mainstream of psychoanalytic thinking. As the contributions to this volume demonstrate, even the fundamental developments in other areas of the psychoanalytic domain brought about by the major contributors to the psychoanalytic studies of group processes have not been fully deployed to develop further the understanding of group processes *per se*. Psychoanalytic group therapy has already served as an experimental laboratory for psychoanalytic object relations theory concepts, for the exploration of character pathology and its changes through treatment, and for the study of how individual psychopathology and the unconscious group processes that emerge in the group's interaction impact on each other.

The editors of this book have undertaken an important and challenging task: the study of the mutual influence of the explosive developments in psychoanalytic theory and technique of individual treatment, on the one hand, and on the other, the theoretical and technical innovations in psychoanalytically orientated group psychotherapy. By bringing together leading exponents of various approaches to psychoanalytically orientated group psychotherapy, and encouraging contributors to focus on this central question of the mutual interaction of the two fields, the editors of this book have provided us with a rich and thought-provoking book.

One major danger of trying to integrate various theories is the possibility of creating the appearance of an eclecticism that would do injustice to the competing theoretical models, blur the different concepts, and interfere with raising crucial questions, and with scientific research. This danger has been successfully avoided by the clear differentiation of the various perspectives reflected in the contributions to this book.

Contemporary developments in psychoanalytic technique are

characterized by the tendency to focus increasingly on the 'here-and-now' unconscious developments before attempting genetic reconstructions; on formulating unconscious conflict in object relations terminology, on a growing attention to detection and management of the countertransference, and on the consideration of the centrality of patients' affective experiences. Similarly, psychoanalytic group psychotherapy as exemplified in this volume also focuses more sharply on these issues.

It is now well known that even mature and successfully analysed individuals may present strikingly regressive reactions in unstructured groups. These phenomena point to particular temptations to regression in groups in contrast to what takes place in ordinary dyadic and triadic interactions. The nature of these regressions, their causes, treatment, and the window they provide for the study of mass psychology, ideology, and organizational behaviour warrant further exploration. Indeed, the study of group behaviour may provide new contributions to psychoanalytic theory as well as to the technique of psychoanalytic psychotherapy. The present book takes us a significant distance in the direction of exploring these issues, and does so with commendable clarity and open-endedness.

This book will not provide any particular resolution to the controversies in contemporary psychoanalytic thinking, but it will acquaint the reader with the implications of such new psychoanalytic thinking for the understanding of group processes, and stimulate him or her to explore further the relationship between theory and technique in clinical practice.

New York
1994

1 An editorial introduction

Silence=death

Malcolm Pines and Victor L. Schermer

The ring of fire 'stands for the life cycle of both the universe and each individual being: the circular dance of nature in the eternal process of creation and destruction. At the same time, the light radiated by the ring of flames symbolizes eternal wisdom and transcendental illumination.'

J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*

To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.

Ecclesiastes

Group psychotherapy, like the human life cycle, has its universal ongoing themes punctuated by periods of intense emotionality, crisis, regression and transformation. The circular form in which the group is seated symbolizes its unity, connectedness and cohesion as well as its microcosmic relation to the larger world of human evolution, culture and the life cycle. Foulkes, Bion, Ezriel and others have identified primitive layers of affect and object relations where universal collective themes and early infantile object relations are re-experienced and repeated in the meeting place for healing called the therapy group. In this cauldron of group emotionality, profound energies are released which have a wide range of implications for change and growth.

This book brings together a collection of new and original contributions to an understanding of primitive object relations and of those highly charged emotional states which present the maximum challenge to the group psychotherapist: the 'Ring of Fire'. In the present volume, an international group of colleagues, based in Great Britain, France and the United States, address areas of special interest to them and to which they have devoted considerable research and therapeutic effort. They will provide insights into the dynamics of these issues and guide the therapist in the management and interpretation of the group events as they unfold.

When *Ring of Fire* was initially conceived, and each of the contributing authors was contacted, the editors specifically asked him or her to provide, in effect, a teaching and supervisory experience about a particular group

issue or set of issues which had been of special interest for an extended time period. We think that the reader will find this goal of such an intimate learning experience with each author at the helm has been largely fulfilled. Certainly, a passionate and important 'message' about the conduct of group therapy is conveyed by each author, yet within the framework of careful observation and scholarly integration, and, thanks to some detailed vignettes and protocols, the reader gets a clear sense of what goes on in actual, 'live' group therapy sessions.

While much has been written about primitive group states, there have been recent developments in psychoanalytic ego psychology, self psychology and object-relations theory which cry out to be assimilated into the theory and technique of group psychotherapy. This book attempts to partially close that gap by emphasizing the relevance of newer concepts to treatment.

CURRENT DILEMMAS AND ISSUES IN THE FIELD OF GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY

The incentive for bringing together this collection of articles and essays stems from the striking developments and changes in the context and the practice of group psychotherapy over the past ten to fifteen years, some of which are indeed heartening, but many of which have proved troubling to the serious and dedicated psychotherapist.

A matter of great concern to today's therapist and, for that matter, any human being who inhabits this planet, is the increasing and sometimes traumatic impact of individual and group regressive phenomena on our lives. One could cogently argue that we are currently witnessing a global primitivization of emotional experience as a result of the population explosion, the catastrophic destructive power of modern weapons of war, and the overwhelming quality of advanced technology and modern self-consciousness with a backlash tendency towards primitive splitting, denial, avoidance and pathological narcissism.

Social observers have pointed out the extreme, psychotic-like nature of war in this century; the genocidal leadership pathology of Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein, and so on, the collective paralysis and unresponsiveness to atrocities in the Holocaust and more recently in Serbo-Croatia; and the alienation and anomie of contemporary culture. More proximal to group treatment, numerous therapists have noted the increased influx of borderline and narcissistic patients into their practices. In many ways, life has always been difficult and conflictful, even violent, but these times do seem to be especially so, placing severe stresses on the personality and the social group. It is perhaps encouraging that, in small ways, therapists, negotiators and

diplomats are beginning to join forces to apply psychotherapy principles to diplomacy and intergroup conflict resolution (cf. Volkan, Ettin and others).

Whether such primitivization is a result in part of the observer-influenced outcome of enhanced theoretical and observational skills which allows us to perceive the pre-oedipal layers below the oedipal complex, or whether it is the increasing impact of regression due to global communication, powerful technologies and population increase, the reality is that *primitive regression is an increasingly impinging and insistent aspect of the ongoing context within which all group psychotherapy is conducted*. The group therapist who does not attend to the primitive layers either engages in 'whistling in the dark', ignoring and not treating defects and deficits in the self and object relations which underlie the presenting symptoms, or at times sets up the group for catastrophic situations of acting out, loss of group cohesion and failure to thrive as a group. So many patients have been affected by regressive psychocultural and traumatic processes as they operate in childrearing practices, neglect and abuse; substance abuse, and other regressive expressions of culture and society. To be effective psychotherapists, we must be able to accompany such patients and groups through these very painful layers of experience.

An additional concern of far-reaching importance for the environment in which group therapy is conducted is the precipitous change in the health care systems and funding streams which support the therapy process. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was enormous enthusiasm for insight-orientated psychotherapy. Scholarship and research abounded, and public and private grants supported and encouraged pure and applied research, pioneering efforts in individual, family and group psychotherapy, and the start up of new mental health and addictions treatment programmes. Both patients and insurance companies were ready and willing to pay for long-term outpatient treatment, and even long-term hospital stays. In that context, a variety of group therapies thrived and proliferated and had social impact well beyond the professional and treatment sectors.

More recently, a number of trends have militated against dedicated, humanistic and psychodynamic long-term therapy efforts. The most clear-cut force against such work has come from so-called 'third party' funding sources, whether private insurance companies or government-provided health care. In efforts to stem the tide of astronomically increasing health care costs, an admittedly necessary goal, the funding sources have undercut and undermined effective treatment efforts. They have fostered the belief that treatment can be done quickly, and they have done so without the careful research and 'hands on' experience necessary to justify changes in practice where human lives are concerned. The more extreme and poorly thought through of these 'utilization review' and 'managed care' efforts have already

had a devastating impact on treatment and research. In England, for example, the Cassel Hospital, the Tavistock Clinic and the Henderson Hospital, world-renowned centres for treatment and research in group psychotherapy, have only barely survived, despite vehement public agitation, the changed climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Similar stories could be provided for some of the most prestigious institutions in the United States.

This volume implicitly argues for and is a testimony to longer-term treatment efforts which consider the dynamics of the whole person and wrestle with the deeper levels of difficulty beyond the surface symptoms and which have to do with the quality and durability of treatment efforts rather than patching up and covering up the disorders. We all need to work together to make *proper and appropriate* intensive psychotherapy available and affordable to those who need it.

Such social and economic forces impacting upon the treatment process are further reinforced by the overall societal increase in pathological narcissism discussed by Christopher Lasch and others. Excessive self-centredness reinforced by social norms of isolation leads severely distressed and disturbed people either to avoid treatment entirely on account of the human contact and the admission of shortcomings it entails, or else to make demands for quick, painless 'cures' rather than self-explorations which uncover defences, resistances and areas of vulnerability in the self. The positions of both the psychoanalyst and the group analyst, looking objectively at individual and group phenomena yet with a deep concern for the patients' well-being, is not easily maintained when people in increasing numbers are seeking 'warm, fuzzy' therapy experiences, self-appointed gurus who promise instant transformation, and medications which provide instant escape and relief.

Thus, the present volume, coming to publication as it does in the 1990s is at one level almost a cry in the wilderness, asking that, as therapists, we have the courage to stand up to some of these onslaughts. One place to begin doing this is in the consulting room itself, by practising better therapy, and by asserting the power of our work once again, the power to help persons change by achieving greater self-insight through the nurturing and developmental capacities of the group process. Each chapter of this volume seems to say that it is possible and necessary to dare to go with the group into the primitive realms, mindful of course of the defences, and, through the therapeutic alliance, to learn with the group what we are all made of.

THE NEED FOR A SCIENTIFIC FRAMEWORK INTEGRATING THEORY AND PRACTICE

The role of theory and a scientific framework for group psychotherapy has found proponents as well as opponents. It is certainly possible to justify,

from both existential and phenomenological standpoints, that theory and empirical investigation can both cloud the therapist's perception and potential for relating in an 'I-thou' relationship to the group members, a relationship which promotes 'agape', genuineness, positive self-regard and inner change. The existential approach focuses on our human condition of absurdity and aloneness. Phenomenology says, 'What you see (or, more recently in self psychology, what you empathically understand) is what you get.' In both views, 'experience-distant' theory is believed to interfere with the direct linkage in the here-and-now between patient and therapist. The French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once said, 'The worst crime is to make abstract that which is concrete', by which he meant that abstraction distances us from the human condition and causes us to ignore forceful realities. There is much truth in these words, but we must remember that Sartre is referring to a *misuse* of abstraction to avoid painful realities and human compassion.

Psychoanalytic, group-dynamic, and group-analytic approaches have consistently emphasized the importance of theory in consolidating and systematizing data from human development and from the consulting room. Today, however, we are increasingly aware that theory does not entirely stand for 'truth' as such or for unchangeable patterns of events. As Werner Heisenberg, a founder of quantum theory, pointed out, scientific theory and the observations on which it is based are a function of the observer as well as the observed. In therapeutic parlance there is no observation, inference or theory that is without the subjective bias of countertransference.

So, in the present view, theory and the scientific frame of reference are an inherently paradoxical blend of the subjective and objective, like an Escher print; yet theory is necessary, as are the birds and the fish in one of Escher's drawings. The latter are necessary, though neither 'birds' nor 'fish' 'exist' as such. What exists is the paradox. Modern physicists, with their quantum theory and chaos theory, would heartily agree with us. The symbolism of the 'Ring of Fire' reflects this paradox. The ring is the most perfect, aesthetic, parsimonious figure, representing the unity of thought which scientists seek. Yet it is burning, dissolving.

GROUP THERAPY SITUATIONS AND POPULATIONS OF THE 'RING OF FIRE'

When the co-editors of this book explored possible themes, the one which stood out as the focus was the following: to examine the most difficult situations and dynamics in group psychotherapy and depict how particular therapists, each from his or her own perspective on primitive affects and

object relations, deals with these situations and dynamics. If we were to take a survey of what therapists at various levels of training and experience found 'most difficult', we would undoubtedly find individual and subgroup differences as well as commonalities. A beginning therapist, for example, might say that 'screening for a proper mix of group members' or 'developing a cohesive group' are the most difficult tasks. A therapist working with a population of severely depressed patients might say, 'a suicidal crisis'.

One criterion used in the present volume has been the sorts of difficulties which are not only of interest to beginners but continue to be of ongoing concern to therapists who have completed basic training sequences in group psychotherapy and have honed their group skills with some supervised group therapy experience. For example, the 'perpetual motion' of separation, loss, grief and mourning which characterizes groups, and especially 'bereavement groups', may distress and baffle the therapist. Jeffrey Kauffman holds that such mourning processes are the very 'Rosetta Stone' of what propels groups in the first place, offering for our consideration a new group psychology based on mourning as the central process.

Another instance of a 'primary preoccupation' of the group therapist is the intense aggression which may occur in almost any group, and the management of which most therapists find of great concern. Saul Tuttmann, although he focuses primarily on patients we would consider 'character disordered', discusses ways that an object-relations/ego psychological model might be applied in almost any group therapy context to manage and work through severe anger and hostility.

Ring of Fire addresses such issues of ongoing concern. Further examples include pressure on the therapist to join in collusive, projective and scapegoating events and processes (Hinshelwood), attacks on thought and emotional growth (Gordon), group treatment of borderlines (Pines) and psychotic patients (Resnik), problems of the co-therapy dyad (Klein and Bernard), and difficulties that come up in milieu therapy situations (Skolnick).

A second criterion for the choice of situations and populations for this volume is the usefulness of contemporary theoretical perspectives in addressing the problem. Self psychology and object-relations theory, for example, have proved very helpful in working with borderline, narcissistic and psychotic patients. As we have said, Malcolm Pines focuses on borderline and narcissistic patients in outpatient open-ended therapy groups. Harold Bernard and Robert Klein delve into the co-therapy issues attendant on work with such patients, utilizing what they term an integrated 'systems/developmental' perspective, emphasizing 'boundary and decider subsystems' of the group along with developmental insights on borderline and narcissistic personality from Kernberg, Masterson and others. Salomon Resnik and Marvin Skolnick each

independently address issues centring around the most profoundly difficult patients' intensive group and milieu treatment: chronically mentally ill borderline and psychotic patients. Resnik is indebted to Bion's work on both group assumptions and on psychosis. Skolnick applies the A.K.Rice 'Systems of Organization' model to the therapeutic community. Yvonne Agazarian uses a synthesis of systems theory and object-relations theory to provide a schema for therapeutic interventions in each phase of group development. One of the editors, Victor Schermer, has contributed a chapter on theory, which will take the reader on a 'guided tour' of such conceptual developments in group psychology and psychoanalysis.

A third and quite unavoidable criterion of chapters for *Ring of Fire* has, like it or not, turned out to be Darwinian natural selection! There were profound and precious time and space constraints imposed on putting together a collection of articles for a book such as this. If time had permitted the sifting, sorting and soliciting of more material, and if the size of the volume were considerably larger, the editors would almost certainly have included topics additional to those which finally have gone to press. For example we would definitely have included a chapter on group psychotherapy with victims of severe trauma and/or abuse, another on dissociative and multiple personality disorders, and another on the management of shame and shame-based behaviour in group therapy (although Kauffman here places great emphasis on shame as a regulator of mourning processes in groups). Perhaps a second or related volume might take up such areas of great interest in the future. For the nonce, practical necessity forced our hand.

The editors would like to express their appreciation and gratitude to the contributors who have taken time from numerous professional commitments and responsibilities to write the new and original essays which comprise *Ring of Fire*. In addition, special thanks are due to Edwina Welham, editor at Routledge, for her support and encouragement of this volume at its inception, and her ongoing assistance and patience with the complex editorial process of collating a variety of new material into a coherent whole. Thanks also to Michael Graves, poet, writer, teacher and critic, New York City, for his thoughtful comments on readability and style.

We do believe that we have brought together a collection of representative themes which should whet the appetite and address the concerns of almost any group therapist, supervisor or student of group therapy. We invite the reader to read the chapters in whatever order occurs to him or her: each is intended to be a self-sufficient contribution of its own. There is, none the less, a certain logic in the order in which the chapters are presented, moving in a certain respect from the general to the specific, and from a theoretical and process focus to a 'population' focus. Further, each chapter is preceded

by a brief 'editors' introduction', to alert the reader to some key points and to give the totality of *Ring of Fire* the sense of a journey through the realm of primitive group regressions. Read, learn, grow and enjoy!

V.L.S. and M.P.
Philadelphia, USA
London, England

2 Between theory and practice, light and heat

On the use of theory in the 'Ring of Fire'

Victor L. Schermer

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Co-editor Victor Schermer offers in what follows a guided tour and critique of the variety of theoretical constructs utilized in *Ring of Fire*. Schermer argues that the 'modernist' view in which logical and consistent scientific theory reflects the nature of an orderly, lawful universe is being supplanted by a 'postmodernist' emphasis on diversity, incompleteness, uncertainty, chaotically disorganized elements and catastrophic change and transformation. In group theory and therapy, global theoretical frameworks and schools of thought are being replaced by the use of multiple theories to achieve perspective and containment within the living group.

Schermer first examines several group-as-a-whole theories. He reviews the seminal contributions of Freud, Bion, Foulkes, Lewin and Miller and Rice and then looks at contemporary systems theory.

There follows a perspective on contemporary schools of psychoanalysis: Kleinian, British Independent school, Kohutian self psychology, and the psychoanalytic contributions of Bion. Emphasis is placed throughout on the way each chapter of *Ring of Fire* employs group-as-a-whole and psychoanalytic concepts to elucidate specific group situations.

As co-editor of this volume with Malcolm Pines, it is my opinion that readers will be impressed with the diversity of concepts and theories which the contributors have brought to bear upon group psychotherapy, as well as their combination of clinical sophistication and empathic attunement to be seen in the way each author has used his or her theoretical frame in the treatment context. Such themes, variations, and applications of conceptual schema have called, in my view, for a commentary on the current multiplicity of theories and their relationship to the practice of group psychotherapy.

What follows is an attempt to provide such an orientating framework. I would like briefly to review and examine the various authors' key theoretical