The Church – a Specialized Work Group

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Introduction

For about 25 years I have been working as a free-lance clinical supervisor and organisational consultant. I started in social work, the field I come from. In the subsequent years, my field of consultancy experience was enlarged to include health and educational institutions, local administrations, relief associations, political parties, advocacy groups and trade unions. For about ten years, I have also worked with various Churches and church-associated institutions. This development is somewhat surprising, because I am not a member of any Church, and I take care to tell my clients about this. In these ten years, I have become fascinated by the specific nature of church organisations and this fascination has led me to write this paper. I recognized some parallels with advocacy groups and trade unions but also important differences in the organisational climate. The common trait Churches share with political parties, trade unions and advocacy groups is their task of producing and distributing ideology which creates specific discrepancies if those high ideals and standards destined for society outside are applied to their internal functioning. Their staffs also share a high identification with their job and their organisation, often blurring the boundary between private and public life and between work hours and time for family and recreation. However, what is substantially different is the emotional climate within the organisation: Among trade union and advocacy group officials, there is frequently an agitated atmosphere of intellectual debate, competition and power struggle. Failures of the internal opponents are openly denounced and used as ammunition. People often appear to enjoy a good fight not only at the negotiating table but also within trade union meetings. The casualties in those fights suffer quietly or leave the organisation. The climate in the Church is quite different: Everyone is nice to each other and conflict is a dirty word. Failures of the clergy are ignored or covered up. The latent conflicts find an outlet in rumours or lead to non-communication and isolation. But a great deal of energy goes into maintaining an appearance of niceness. This general impression which I have gained throughout the years made me think of a predominant basic assumption; dependency, in the case of the Church and the social work milieu and fight/flight in the case of political pressure groups and trade unions. When I read Bion's concept of the specialized work group(2001,1961), I had the impression of getting an explanation of why this might be so.

This is the backdrop of this paper. In it, I shall review Bion's concept of the "specialized work group" and apply it to the Church, specifically to

four case vignettes of church institutions at different hierarchical levels. In these vignettes, the characteristics of the archetypical "Church", institutionalizing the basic assumption dependency on behalf of society, are overlaid by workgroup expectations and workgroup behaviour by democratic institutions such as the church council. The conflicting orientations on spiritual leadership and on democratic governance manifest themselves in institutional, social and psychic conflict and quite frequently in somatic symptoms, too.

The organizational climate in the contemporary Church is very often characterized by a friendly, empathic tone and an absence of overt aggression. The members of the Church and the clergy are trying to put into practice what the gospel teaches them: brotherly love. To outsiders this is often perceived as "as if" behaviour. By this I mean as if there were no conflicting interests, no envious feelings, no power struggles, no rivalry. This type of behaviour makes it very difficult to deal with conflict. Conflict is avoided, denied and suppressed, but never really dealt with. Typically, conflicts are therefore latent, chronic and somatised. Since conflicts are not addressed directly by those involved, they tend to spread and become the "talk of the town." Often the organizational structure serves the purpose of conflict avoidance.

My working hypothesis therefore is:

> The organizational climate in the Church favours the splitting off of aggression.
>
> This tendency is dysfunctional for the organisation and harmful for its members.

In the Protestant Church, the spiritual leadership of the clergy is in a fundamental conflict with the democratic leadership of the church council.

This conflict is fuelled by the basic-assumption dependency that affects all members of the Church: clergy, council members and the congregation alike. The nebulous role of the clergy in the Church and in public very often has the effect that the conflict also becomes blurred and transposed onto side arenas. With the tendency of the Church to negate conflict and to suppress conflict behaviour, latent conflict becomes chronic.

And this is the question I want to investigate:

Is the concept of the specialized work group of any help to understand the phenomena observed in the three vignettes and does it offer a theoretical background to my working hypothesis?

In this paper I will explore the use and limitations of Bion's concept, and I will draw on other theoretical elements such as the distinctions between dependency and dependence (Reed and Carr), the organisation and the institution (Hutton and Reed) and institutional analysis (Lapassade and Lourau).

My personal involvement

Lourau postulated that consultancy in organisation is pointless if the consultants do not critically reflect on their own relatedness with the institution, not only in the organisation they are working with at the moment, but also with similar types of institutions they have experienced throughout their biography. He recommends this not only for the consultant, of course, but also for the members of the organisation that seeks consultancy. For those of you acquainted with role analysis (Newton, Long and Sievers, 2006) this might have a familiar ring to it. So I cannot spare you a bit of my personal history with the Church and I invite you, by listening to me, to ponder on your own.

As a small child, I found Church life colourful and sensuous: I remember walking in processions in the home village of my mother with the impressive and the beautiful vestments of the priest and his ministrants and all the flags of the religious and secular village associations, the singing of hymns while walking and praying at the chapels where we stopped. During the Ash Wednesday morning service at the start of Lent, I used to receive ashes on my forehead from the priest. I wore them proudly but without much understanding in my denominationally mixed class of schoolchildren. My mother's name is Agatha and on Saint Agatha's day, February 5th, we children received Agatha bread, small buns of unsalted bread, in Church. Some of the older children told us privately they had something to do with Agatha's breasts that the heathen cut off in her torture. It was a creepy and most exciting story, food for my fantasising in the evenings before dozing off.

At the age of about 15, my relationship to Church changed completely. I tried to avoid going to mass as much as I could. Not without feeling terribly guilty and in a great dilemma. Having missed mass put me in a state of mortal sin, therefore if I went to mass, I would expose my sinfulness to everyone, because I could not receive communion. Going to confession was no option either, because then I would not only have to confess skipping mass but also my carnal sins. During this time, I became more and more aware not only of the symbols but also of the words in Church and their meaning, which I could not accept as eternal truth. I could not believe that the human being is essentially evil because of original sin, that God could have commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, just to test his loyalty and faith. The priest was of no help - he was just as severe and draconic as his God. Although I could not accept it rationally, emotionally I was caught up for years in these feelings of guilt, shame and unworthiness. Even if I did not revolt actively against this repressive milieu, my body did: On two occasions, I threw up in the aisle during church service. And this gave me an excuse for trying not to attend any more. For years afterwards, I did not have contact with the Church, but the anxiety and guilty feelings persisted.

What also persisted is my interest in religious questions. In Teilhard de Chardin (1955), I found a Catholic author with a religious background and an optimistic outlook for mankind. I discovered that I was not the only one suffering from church-inflicted guilt, and my suffering was harmless compared to others who had been physically abused or compared to a friend of mine, who was suffering as an adult from religious delusions.

Later, at the age of 22, I became interested but not really involved in the movement of religious socialism (Ragaz, 1929), the Quakers, and the working priests in France. I followed with interest the post-Conciliar debate in the Catholic Church. In 1972, the Dominican theologian Stefan Pfürnter was pressured by the Vatican to recant his progressive views, particularly on sexual ethics, which he refused to do and subsequently left his order and his chair at Fribourg University. This and the ongoing conflict between Hans Küng and the Vatican on the dogma of papal infallibility (Küng, 1970) finally gave me the resolve to renounce my membership. This was a breakthrough and liberation for my religious development. In the curriculum of my social work studies, several open-minded Protestant theologians teaching theology, ethics and sociology of

religion helped me to make sense of my personal experience and to better understand better the various forms of organized religion.

In my thirties and forties, I was very much involved with the trade union movement and had little contact with the Church. When the first requests from church organisations for consultancy came in about ten years ago, I was very sceptical about how they would react to my disclosure of my story with the Church and how I would react to working with them. It appears that they were specifically looking for an outside view and some of the clergy had experienced similar stories, which laid a foundation for mutual acceptance and understanding. In turn, I discovered many open-minded people within the Church who were struggling with the status quo and searching for ways to make the Church more meaningful for modern society. This orientation towards development I was glad to support with my professional tools, so I do have a slight bias on the side of the reformers, consistent with my professional opinion that an organisation is subject to constant change and development. On the other hand, I don't feel a personal mission to reform the Church.

I will now give an overview of Wilfred Bion's conception of the specialized work group and his views on the Church:

Bion's specialized work group

In an extension of his concept of basic-assumption groups, Bion described specialized work groups: the Church, the army and the aristocracy. (Bion, 2001, 1961). The concept of the specialized work group is based on an observation and leads to a hypothesis. The observation is that the specialized work group has a heightened vulnerability to a specific basic assumption. The Church, for instance, is especially vulnerable to disturbances from the basic assumption mentality dependency (baD), whereas the military is especially vulnerable to disturbances from the basic assumption fight/flight (baF). Bion then offers the hypothesis that the specialized work group has developed from the main group, which is society at large, to manage the specific function of neutralizing the basic-assumption tendency in the main group, so it the basic assumption would not interfere with its work group mentality. In other words, the Church takes care of the needs for dependence in society and channels these needs into a framework of beliefs and rituals. This is beneficial for society, because it is less likely that it will be distracted from its work group mentality by the baD. Bion

describes two dangers for a successful specialized work group: under- and over functioning. The specialized work group is then either no longer able to express its basic-assumption mentality or it is active to an excessive degree. Both poles of under- and over-functioning are detrimental for the work group mentality of society.

The work group is functional when it transforms thoughts and feelings successfully into reality-orientated activity. It is not equipped to express basic assumptions. Basic assumptions become dangerous at the time when the group tries to transform them into activity.

The specialized work group normally operates the other way round: It transforms activity into the basic-assumption mentality. Bion illustrates this by the example of the Church. The main task of the Church is to strengthen faith and worship the deity; this corresponds to the basic assumption dependency. The Church assumes and fulfils people's need to submit and entrust themselves to the protection of a higher power. By accepting this delegation, it relieves the tendency of the main group, society, towards dependency and allows society to transform thoughts and feelings into action oriented to reality. This function is performed at its best when results of human action in society are interpreted as divine providence and people have the opportunity in prayers and rituals to thank God for his grace. Faith in divine providence and care will become dysfunctional if it is not only expressed symbolically but if it also determines everyday activity. When the main group, society, relies entirely on divine intervention and renounces all self-reliance and responsible action the basic assumption dependency is dominating group mentality and impairing work group functioning. The successful Church will therefore both strengthen religious faith, thus responding to dependency needs, and preach about the self-responsibility of humans.

Let me now summarize the main elements of Bion's concept:

For Bion, the specialized work group (Bion, 2001, 1961, p.114)

1. has evolved out of the main group (Bion uses the term "hived off")
2. translates activity into the particular basic-assumption mentality
3. specifically to express a basic-assumption mentality on behalf of that main group
4. has a task particularly stimulating for this specific basic assumption mentality
5. is especially vulnerable to disturbing influences from this basic assumption mentality
6. is dysfunctional, if it is either not active enough or overactive

The specialized work group emerges out of the main group of which it is a part, with the purpose of "neutralizing the dependent group [mentality], or the fight/flight group [mentality], so these mentalities could not obstruct the work group function of the main group" (Bion, 2001, 1961, p.115) The basic-assumption mentality latent in the main group finds a place via projective identification in the specialized work group, where it can be expressed and symbolized without affecting the task of the main group.

Excursus: Group – Organisation - Institution

The usage of the words 'group', 'organisation' and 'institution' in everyday language appears to be self-evident, and no explanation is needed. And even if they have multiple meanings, they are readily understood when they are used in context. So e.g. organisation can mean a social structure, as in "The organisation for Promoting Understanding of Society", but can also signify an activity such as "organisation of an OPUS Conference". There is a tendency that the term 'organisation' appears more often in business and the term 'institution' is more frequently used in civil society and the state.

The use and meaning of these words as scientific terms is not as simple and depends partly on the author and partly on the academic field and on the era.

In "Experiences in Groups," Bion uses the term 'group' in several ways: As a group of people coming together for a certain purpose. This kind of group he refers to varies in size from a small group (with a minimum of three members) to a large group of about hundred, as in his Northfield Experiments (Bion, 2001, 1961). Larger groups often consist of the main group and of subgroups.

Confusingly, he also uses the term "group" together with a qualifying adjective to signify different ways of functioning or different mental states: e.g. 'work group', 'basic-assumption group' or in referring to McDougall's (1973, 1920) 'organised group' vs. 'unorganised group'. French and Simpson (2009) have suggested making this meaning explicit by consistently writing and speaking of "…group mentality"

And Bion's third use refers to societal phenomena, such as when he speaks of the 'main group', meaning society, and its specialized work groups, such as the Church, the aristocracy and the army.

In "Experiences in Groups", first published in 2001, 1961, but containing articles from 1943, 1948, and 1952, there is almost no mention of "organisation" and "institution". In the rare cases these terms are used, he refers to the organisation (of structure and processes) within the group and to a societal institution, such as the bride price or the wergild.

In "Attention and Interpretation" Bion (1983, 1970) takes a close look at the institution of the psychoanalytic society and uses the Church as a model. He describes the process of institutionalization as a dynamic between the group, the 'mystic', the 'messianic idea' and the 'establishment'. The central figure is an "exceptional individual" (Bion, 1983, 1970, p.64) with an unconventional idea, a thought all others in his group just could not think of. He calls this exceptional person a genius, a 'mystic' and the outstanding thought the 'messianic idea'. As examples of such 'mystics,' he cites Freud, Faraday, Newton, Jesus, Meister Eckhart and Isaac Luria, a Jewish Messiah of the 16th century. Their messianic ideas contained the hopes of their group to get closer to the eternal truth, or in Bion's terms, closer to 'O', ultimate reality.

Bion sketches an archetypal genesis of the Church as an institution in three phases: In the first phase, the human being is in union with God; there is no difference between the human being and God. In the second phase, the finite human being is separated from infinite God. This separation is acknowledged by adoration of God through religious practice and institutionalized religion. A caste of priests, the establishment, has established itself to mediate between the lay members of the group and their God and this renders the separation irreversible. The establishment organizes and administrates the relationship between the members of the group and God, the eternal truth or 'O,' with religious or ideological dogmas or scientific laws.

The members of the group carry within themselves marks of their divine origin and yearn for reunification with their God, from whom they feel estranged. From time to time, this group of ordinary members and their yearning bring forward a mystic, who claims to have a direct experience of unity with God and passes on a messianic idea. The establishment of the religious institution now has a problem: How should they deal with the mystic and his messianic ideas without losing their influence? They can try to integrate his teachings or persecute him and his followers. The most effective way to neutralize him is, according to Bion, to put him in a position within the establishment, where his creative or destructive potential is absorbed by administrative functions. Bion distinguishes three types of relationships between the group and its

mystic and his messianic idea and his followers: the first type of relationship is the commensal, the second is the symbiotic and the third is the parasitic. In the commensal relationship, the two groups coexist and don't harm each other. In the symbiotic relationship, confrontation propels development even if this does not appear evident at first sight. The contribution of the mystic is taken into serious consideration and both the mystic and the establishment profit from their relationship. The parasitic relationship is characterised by mutual envy, and it is destructive for both the host and the parasite. The same three attributes describe the relation between the mystic and the messianic idea: In the commensal relationship, the idea and the thinker exist separately, the thought is still in search of a thinker; the idea has not yet been discovered. The still separated positions of thought and thinker can approach each other and a critical situation occurs when an idea is just about to be discovered or when an important scientific problem is just about to break through. In symbiosis, the thinker and his teaching correspond, they co-evolve. This is the case in which the mystic authentically lives what he teaches, e.g. Mahatma Ghandi. In the parasitic relationship, thinker and thought correspond negatively, which means that the thinker uses his formulation as an obstinate resistance against the truth, with the unconscious anxiety that the truth would destroy him or vice versa.

Bion's thoughts on the institutionalisation of religion can be summarized in terms of his container/contained concept: The mystic contains the messianic idea; he in turn is contained in the group. There is always a tension between container and contained, symbiotic or parasitic, creative or destructive, evolutionary or revolutionary. It is the task of the establishment to manage this tension, either by integrating the mystic and his ideas or by defending the group against it.

Although Bion extensively uses examples from religious history to illustrate his ideas, he initially used these examples to look at the dynamic in the (British) Psychoanalytical Society. He explicitly denies any sociological or political application of his concepts; they are to be understood as tales or mythological constructs representing the group in the inner world of human beings. (p. 114)

Bion uses the term 'institutionalisation' in the context of the institutionalisation of psychoanalysis, which consists of publication, selection, training and graduation (p.75). Armstrong (1992) reports that Bion distrusted institutions and experienced them as dead and rigid, hindering the growth of people within them and their new ideas. The development or expansion of the institution tends to be restricted by its

hard shell of laws and dogmas; the institution locks itself in. He also writes of the 'the institutionalized group' without defining it exactly, but from the context it becomes clear that he uses it synonymously with 'the establishment,' which he defines as "the ruling caste" in the psychoanalytic institute, a group, a nation or a group of nations (p.86). The 'basic-assumption group' does not appear at all in "Attention and Interpretation" nor does the 'specialized work group' or the term 'organisation'.

The Grubb Institute makes a point of distinguishing between organisations and institutions (Hutton 2000). I quote

"**Institution** is an entity constituted to carry out a specific function, whether official, unofficial, formal, or informal, e.g. family, business, Church, government, voluntary agencies or army.

Organisation is the way the institution is structured and developed in order to deploy human and material resources to carry out its purposes."

The definition of the 'institution' focuses on its primary task, its reason to be. In contrast, the 'organisation' is the specific way in which any particular institution is structured, organized, and managed to fulfil its purpose. There is a hierarchical relationship between those definitions; the institution is the abstract idea of a function in the service of a larger social entity, in the examples given, for society. The organisation signifies the specific mode of operation of a singular social entity dedicated to a particular function. E.g., practically every human society knows the institution of government, but there are thousand different ways this societal function is incarnated in a particular organisation in historical time and geographic space.

In the theoretical framework of object relations (Fairbairn, Klein, Winnicott), both concepts are understood as mental constructs, consisting of internal objects in the minds of the members of the organisation.

"**Organisation-in-the-mind** is a conscious or pre-conscious construct, focused around emotional experience of tasks, roles, purposes, rituals, accountability, competence, failure, success. It calls for management.

Institution-in-the-mind is an unconscious construct, focused around the emotional experience of ideals, values, hopes, beliefs, dreams, symbols, birth, life, death. It requires leadership." (Hutton, 2000, p. 2)

As mental constructs, they are influenced by the history of the individual's personal experience with organisations and institutions. The conscious part of these constructs, the organisation-in-the-mind, can be made subject to discourse and negotiations within the organisation. The preconscious and unconscious institutional part, the institution-in-the-mind, is attainable by projective methods such as drawings, psychodrama, group analysis and psychoanalytic interpretation.

Jean Hutton gives an example of these two concepts for the Church: "Organisation-in-the-mind would describe Church in terms of types of people - ministers, priests, lay people, buildings, liturgy, finance, polity etc. - which has a purpose which may or may not be defined. Institution-in-the-mind would conceive Church as people with something to do with the idea of God, e.g. the People of God, the Body of Christ. What it is for is a matter for belief which will vary over time and place." (p.3)

This use of the term 'institution' is quite different from, even contradictory to Bion's: Here the material, social organisation is the container and the institution the contained.

Without calling it institutionalisation, Hutton describes a process as to how an organisation gets under way: Her description starts with a person having an idea and a vision that communicates this vision to others and thereby formulates her or his institution-in-the-mind. Others take up his ideas and start to design a collective organisation-in-the-mind based on their interpretation of the institution communicated by the visionary. And finally the organisation is set up by employing people who are to manage resources and execute the tasks assigned to them. All three stages of this process imply uncertainties of communication and interaction of the institutions-in-the-mind and the organisations-in-the-mind of the individuals concerned.

This description of an institutionalisation process partly resembles Bion's, especially in the "extraordinary individual" and the "messianic idea". But it suggests that the new organisation is built on an open field without pre-existing institutions and organisations. This is why I prefer Bion's process-model, because in our time of globalized communication, it is very unlikely that new institutions emerge out of the blue, even within the mind of a genius. They all are developments of and responses to already existing institutions. They might of course lead to the foundation of new organisations, if the existing ones cannot contain the new ideas.

Review of the Specialized Work Group Church

Bion's concept of the specialized work group is described rather sketchily; he invests only two pages in his book "Experiences in Groups" (Bion, 1971, p. 114 - 116) to it. It is restricted to the three examples of Church, military and aristocracy, based on the three basic assumptions he formulated. However, he never excluded that those three basic assumptions could be augmented, and they actually were: basic assumptions one-ness (Turquet, 1977), basic assumptions me-ness (Lawrence, Bain and Gould, 1996) and basic assumption grouping (Cano, 1997) Should we think of other specialized work groups with the task of containing those more recently formulated basic assumptions? They could perhaps be more relevant for modern society than the aristocracy. On the other hand, are there not more institutions of importance for the whole society that could also be understood as specialized work groups? And if so, what basic assumptions would they contain on behalf of the main group? Armstrong (2005) has already proposed another specialized work group: The law as a specialized work group for emotions associated with guilt.

The Church, as seen by Bion as the realisation of the specialized workgroup dependency, is essentially ahistorical and ideal-typical. Although he refers to the Church of ancient Rome in the 5th century, as it was defended by Saint Augustine in the *City of God* (Augustinus, 1977). Bion uses this historical example, but makes no reference to the time he lived in, the 20th century, with the then prevailing social and religious conditions. His concept of the specialized work group and especially the Church in *Experience in Groups* (2001,1961) takes no account of social development and development in the relationship between society and the specialized work group.

Nevertheless, Bion's concept also contains a dynamic component: The specialized work group can fail by acting on the basic assumption dependency in its activities and interactions. This can happen in two ways: Instead of formulating the dependence on God in a process of symbolisation in prayer and worship, it can put this dependence into action: The Church establishment positions itself as a intermediary and administrator of God's grace between God and the human being, and thereby creates real dependency of the flock on the Church. Or it can preach radical determinism and thus deprive the people of all free will and all responsibility. In both cases, the Church as a specialized working group fails society in its task to support the work group mentality.

In *Attention and Interpretation* (Bion, 1970), he again dwells on organized religion and the Church. He does take up the concept of the specialized work group up again, but turns to the internal social dynamics between the messianic idea, the mystic and the establishment. He understands the Church as a result of an institutionalization process in which the Church becomes container for the messianic idea. In Christianity, the Church becomes the container for the teachings of Jesus. The nascent Christian Church has thus achieved what the Rabbinate failed to achieve: to integrate the mystic and his teachings. Bion did point out that Jesus, like many other mystics, had not set out to create a new religion, but to revitalize the old one. (Bion, 1970) This dynamic between the old establishment, the mystic and his messianic idea has been repeated several times: Even Luther, the German reformer, initially had no intention of breaking with Rome and establishing a new Church. Seen from an historical perspective, therefore, a static description of institutions like the Church is inadequate. They are to be seen as a history of more or less dynamic, concurrent and branching processes of institutionalization in succession.

Bion describes here a dialectic process of institutionalization, comparable to the one investigated by Lourau and Lapassade (1970) in their analyse institutionelle (institutional analysis).

Institutional Analysis - Analyse Institutionelle (A.I.)

In the following section, I would like to give a brief introduction to the concept of institutional analysis (Lourau, 1970) and relate it to Bion's concept of the specialized work group and his thoughts about institutionalization.

Institutional analysis, l'analyse institutionelle (A.I.), was developed in France in the late sixties and seventies by a small group of sociologists and social psychologists calling themselves "les psychosociologues" or "les institutionalistes" (Lourau, Lapassade, Adorino, Guatarri, Hess and others) They believed that for social scientists, it was impossible to analyse societal phenomena from a neutral position. As an alternative to positivist sociology, they proposed self-analysis of the groups, organisations and institutions offering their professional knowledge and experience as just one of the instruments of the collective process of self-reflection and self-ascertainment. They were quite aware that they themselves became part of this self-reflecting system and therefore their own implication in the client system and the analytical process had to be disclosed and open to scrutiny. "Elle [l'A.I.] naît au début d'un processus encore active aujourd'hui, de critique de l'institué (en matière des formes politiques d'action). Et cette critique est une autocritique, portant en germe la notion d'implication de l'observateur dans ce qu'il observe." ("Institutional analysis was born at the beginning of a process still active today, the critique of the instituted (concerning the forms of political action). And this critique contains self-critical the seeds of the implication of the observer in whatever he is observing." Lourau, 1997, p.7,my translation.)

A key term in institutional analysis is transversality. It makes clear that A.I. goes beyond the analysis of a particular social organisation but aims at the institutional rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1997) of society. « L'analyse institutionnelle consiste, …, à rechercher les traces, dans le collectif et dans la base matérielle concernée, de la transversalité étatique. Cette transversalité bien réelle opère massivement par l'imaginaire et le symbolique. » ("Institutional analysis consists of looking for traces of state transversality in the collective [the organisation] and its material artefacts. This transversality is very real and overwhelmingly operates by imagination and symbolism." Lourau, 1997, p.55, my translation) Transversality here means the complex network of multiple belongings of the members of a particular group or organisation and those of the analyst and the various frames of reference influencing their values, attitudes, thoughts and behaviour

patterns. According to Lourau, the state is the 'supreme operator' for all transversal processes of institutionalisation. This is a leftist view of the late sixties, of course. Today, he probably would identify the global economy as the "supreme operator". The varying orientations of individuals on their schemas of reference[1] in a group will show congruencies and differences. Out of these differences emerge critical questions and an impulse for change. Transversality is therefore one of the sources of negation and consequently a driving force for institutional development.

Institutional Analysis differentiates between 'organisation,' 'établissement' not to be translated by establishment, but rather by 'facilities', and 'institution.' The term 'organisation' includes the system of structures, procedures, laws and conventions determining the functioning of a social system, whereas the facilities are its visible and material representation, for example, its buildings, machines, tools, and cooperate design.
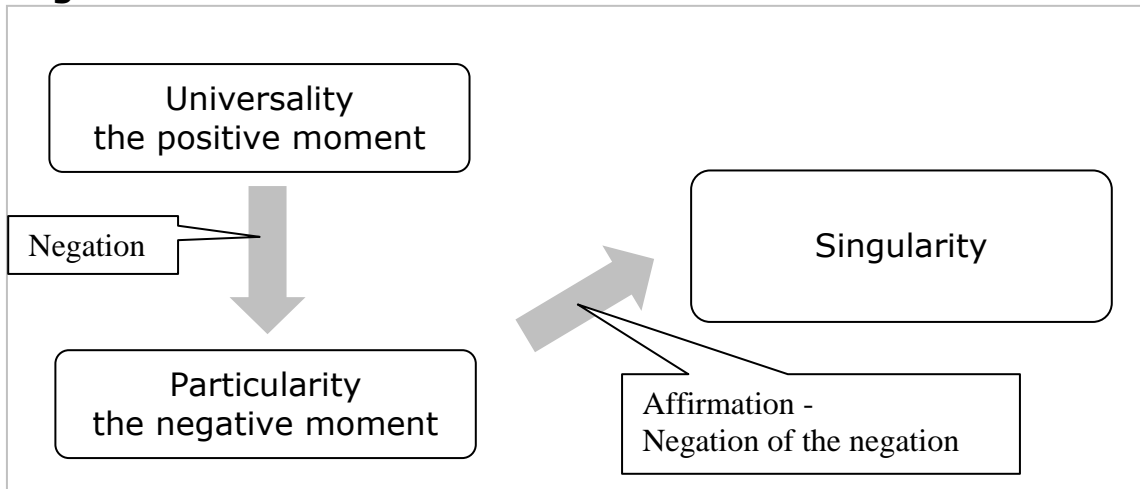
The theoretical nucleus of A.I. is the concept of the institution. The institutionalists understand institution not as a social entity, but as a societal phenomenon present at all levels of society: matrimony, family, employment, inheritance, medicine, credit, education, groups, organisations and societies at regional, national and world levels. The institution is the result of a dialectic social dynamic, developing from the interaction between the instituted and the institutor leading to the institutionalization. These terms (in French: l'institué, l'instituant et l'institutionnalisation) were coined originally by Conelius Castoriadis in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (1980) but it was Lourau who elaborated them for their use in institutional analysis.

The instituted (l'institué), that what is instituted, is that what – seemingly- has always been, that what is taken for granted. "At this moment, the concept is totally true, which means it is abstract and generalized." (Lourau, 1970, p.10, my translation).It consists of the shared beliefs of the group that are not questioned and may not be questioned. The instituted represents the static aspect of social life, the established order, conventions and rules claimed to be valid within the whole group or organisation. A part of this is voiced and written down in records, rules, stories and collective myths; another part is semi-conscious, not publicly spoken of. This part finds expression in jokes and rumours and another part remains unconscious. In Hegelian

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[1] cf. CROS, the Conceptual Referential Operative Schema of Pichon Rivière, Tubert and Hernandez, 2004, p. 47

dialectics (1970), this represents the positive moment, universality. [Das allgemeine Wesen, l'universalité]

Hegel's dialectics:

Universality
the positive moment

Negation

Singularity

Particularity
the negative moment

Affirmation -
Negation of the negation

The instituted can never be the perfect order; it carries within itself flaws which are the nucleus of its critique. "All general truth ceases to be completely true as soon it becomes incarnated, when it is applied to specific and circumstantial conditions…" (Lourau, 1970, my translation). The "institutor", the instituting agent, signifies multiple conscious and unconscious social forces that question the existing order and discuss or implement alternatives. It is the antithesis to the established way of thinking and the opposition to the ruling powers. The institutor is the negative moment in this dialectic, the particularity. [Die Besonderheit, la particularité]

Lourau's social dialectics of power in institutions:

Instituted

Critique,
Opposition

a specific institution
as an organisation

Institutor

Institionalisation
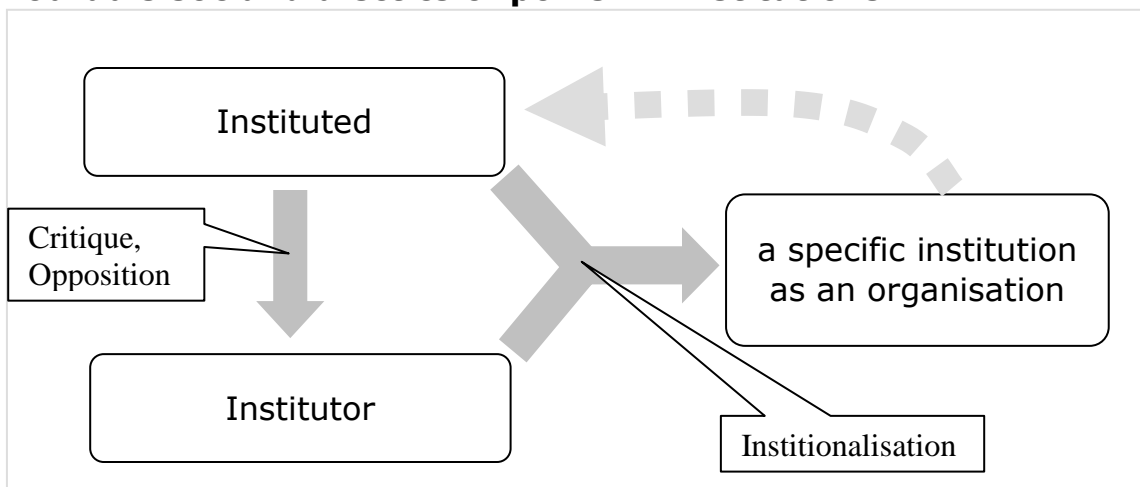
Institutor and instituted are interconnected logically as well as in a social dynamic in such a way that one cannot be thought of without the other. They are mutually dependent and complement one another.

This dynamic between institutor and instituted results in a specific and singular institionalisation, as an alternative, a complement, a replacement or a modification of the instituted, in which the tension between the instituted and the institutor has –momentarily and incompletely- been resolved. "The universal norms are not incarnated directly in individuals; they impose themselves by singular social systems more or less apt to fulfil certain tasks. This moment of singularity is the result of the action of negation on the positive unit of the universal norm in a specific singular setting."(Lourau, 1970, p.10) [La singularité, die Einzelheit, according to Hegel]

Now we can understand why the Intuitionalists differ in their usage of "institution" from the everyday use of the term. In their conceptual framework, it is not a social entity, not its material representation and not its rational framework of values, goals, rules and procedures. For them, the "institution" is the social dynamic resulting from the interaction of these three moments: the instituted, the institutor and the institutionalisation keeping the institution in constant development, sometimes continuously, sometimes erratically. The motor of this process is the tension between the universal norm, which never fits all circumstances perfectly, and its negation. It leads to an adaption or modification of the universal norm for a specific and singular situation, which has the opportunity of becoming a new universal norm, thus suspending[2] the previous one. This process should not be imagined as a linear sequence nor as a cycle, but rather as a spiral, leading to new, but not necessarily better, levels of social differentiation. At any moment of time, all three momentums are present and shaping the institution.

Lourau (1970) then uses a second dialectic triangulation:

The first is the foundational, general idea of the institution, its absolute truth. Its abstract concept or in group-relations terms: its primary task. [The positive moment: universality] E.g. for the Christian Church, this task is the adoration of and communion with a monotheistic God.

The second is the negation of the general idea. Since no absolute truth can be entirely true, when it is applied to particular circumstances, it

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[2] The Hegelian term is sublation (Aufhebung), signifying to supersede, put an end to, but simultaneously maintain, preserve.

also contains its negation or its contradiction. [The negative moment, particularity] E.g. for the Christian Church, this contradiction is the disputes about trinity or transubstantiation.

C) The discourse resulting from the tension between the first and the second moments that incarnates in a specific social form or organisation is the singularity, the negation of the negation.

Lourau's discursive dialectics in institutions:
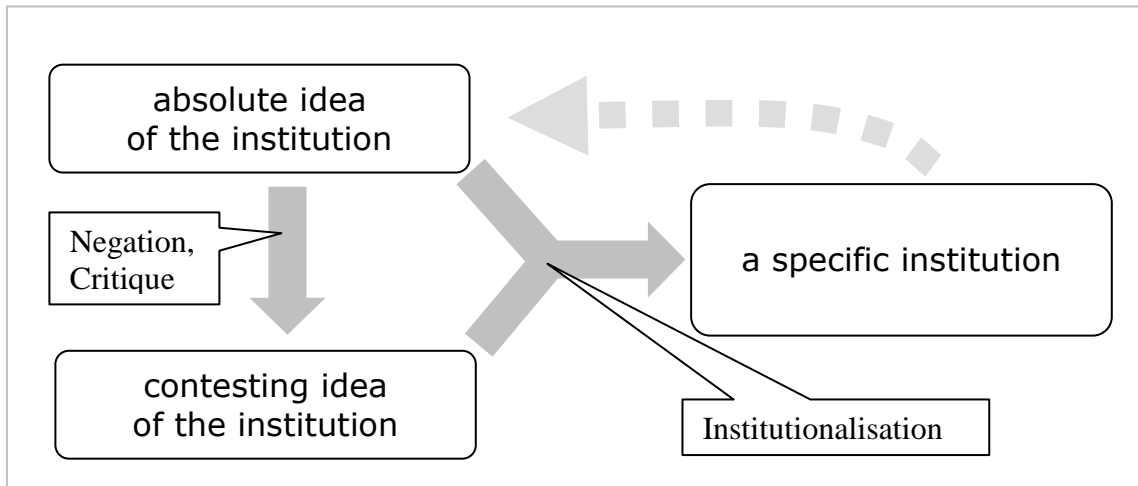
Institutional analysis investigates this process of institutional dialectics not only by passive and external observation but also by participation and direct intervention. The observer / intervener specifically pays attention to the analyser [l'analyseur], which is an event, a person or a selected fact – to borrow a term of Bion (Symington, 1996, p. 92 ff.), that triggers the self-analysis of the organisation (Gilon et Ville, 2002, p.76). The analyser operates by deconstructing the instituted conditions and de-masking the power relations hidden under the apparent consensus. (Lamihi, 2002)

Very often the observer / intervener is also an analyser by the very fact that she or he is a new and strange element in the organisation. This means that the observer / intervener necessarily becomes involved and entangled in the power relationships and discourse of the institution. This inevitable and ongoing implication and the history of previous biographical implications with this or similar institutions represent a subjective factor that must be open to analysis by the observer/intervener and also by the client system. Lourau identifies three dimensions of implication, which are the questioning of a) the relatedness of the observer and the observed, b) the relationship

between the socioanalyst and the group or organisation and c) the societal status of the socioanalyst. (Lamihi, 2002)

We now come to a further conceptual element which I found very helpful to complement Bion's concept of the specialized work group.

Dependency and Dependence

The specialized work group "Church" is functional for society by containing and symbolizing and thereby neutralizing the distractive and destructive effects of the feelings associated with basic-assumption dependency. Although Bion put much emphasis on the obstructive effects of basic assumptions in groups, he also pointed out that occasionally basic assumptions can be helpful for or furthers the aims of the work group (Bion 2001,1961).

Bruce Reed, the founder of the Grubb Institute, (1996) and Wesley Carr, the former dean of Westminster Cathedral, (2001) distinguish between dependence and dependency. In trying to understand the function of the specialized work group Church for society, I found this distinction very helpful. Reed was inspired by Donald Winnicott (1988), who used the term "regression to childlike dependence." Reed cited this (1996) from a personal conversation with Winnicott as a feature of normal everyday life.

Reed concludes that, for Winnicott, regression to childhood dependence is a feature of normal life. We all have periods in life when regeneration becomes more important than productive activity. When we are ill or tired or when we are overwhelmed by impressions, we retire to a safe space and shut ourselves off from outside disturbance and we gladly let others take care of us. For this alternation between periods of productive activity and periods of renewal, Reed uses the term "oscillation." This can be understood as a mechanism of self-regulation much like the contact cycle of Fritz Perls (1981). Both concepts contain the idea that the human being (and the group) cannot be productive all the time , so they also need time for regeneration.

They surrender to their needs for rest and relaxation like small children, who would like to participate in the activity of the grown ups, and - after fierce resistance - finally fall asleep. This periodic regression into "childlike dependence" is part of the dynamic balance with with which adults keep themselves healthy. Reed (1996, p.4) uses the concept of oscillation between "periods of autonomous activity and periods of physical or symbolic contact with sources of renewal."

Dependence is the ability to give up control temporarily and to give oneself over to a soothing situation in times of need for recovery. It could be contact with another person, it could be being taken care of, it could be sleep, holidays or meditation or going to a concert or a game. This willingness to renounce control is also a prerequisite for ecstatic experience during sex and while dancing.

In contrast, dependency is conceived as a mindset in which the individual increasingly feels dependent on an external source of satisfaction, like a drug, a person or a particular behaviour. Happiness is only possible if the external addictive factor is available. The individual feels bad without the addictive behaviour, discontented and dissatisfied. In the group context, members are no longer in contact with their own abilities and power. However, they imagine their leaders as being omniscient and omnipotent. Dependency does not imply trust, but rather the absence of critical thinking and with increasing dependency, also the inability to think. Karl Marx used the metaphor of religion as the opium of the people to illustrate the soothing as well as the addicting effect of religion, which thus stabilizes the prevailing conditions of domination [die herrschenden Verhältnisse] in society: "The misery of religion is at the same time an expression of real misery and protestation against this misery. Religion is the sigh of the plagued creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people." [3](Marx/Engels, 1976, p.378, my translation)

In the group relations context, it is generally understood that the mentality of basic-assumption dependency leads to dysfunctional behaviour in which the group strays from its task and abandons its own thinking as it waits for instructions from its leader. To please the leader, to anticipate and interpret his or her wishes, to be seen and recognized by her or him has become a central element of group behaviour. Dependency groups are characterized by "….primitive idealization, projected omnipotence, denial, envy and greed, together with defences against these,…"(Kernberg, 1978)

But what if, instead the dependence mentality and behaviour in the group take the form of regenerating its own resources in the sense of Winnicott and Reed? The group is momentarily off task, playing,

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[3] "Das religiöse Elend ist in einem der Ausdruck des wirklichen Elendes und in einem die Protestation gegen das wirkliche Elend. Die Religion ist der Seufzer der bedrängten Kreatur, das Gemüt einer herzlosen Welt, wie sie der Geist geistloser Zustände ist. Sie ist das Opium des Volkes." (Marx/Engels, 1976, p.378)

relaxing, having a good time or meditating and thus regenerating its energy. Then, I would say that this behaviour is functional and in the service of the primary task in the long run. Just like the individual, the group is familiar with periods of regeneration in aimless banter, in playful activities, in stages of shared silence. Dependence is less narrowly fixed on the leader; it is confidence in the group, a feeling of security, a loosening of self control. The leader can contribute to the conditions for the group to feel secure like a mother for her child. Such periods of collective pleasure and regeneration can appear spontaneously in the group process or they are ritualized in established organization like breaks, communal meals, and celebrations. Often these are situations in which thinking is less targeted and they include phases of creativity, when new and uncommon approaches to the task are found. For the dependence mentality, trust in the group and its leader is a necessary prerequisite.

In light of this distinction, the specialized work group of the Church takes on a new meaning. It takes over from society this regenerative and holding function, providing rituals to meet the need for collective dependence. On the one hand, these rituals like mass, prayer, anointing, and processions have themselves a healing effect. On the other hand, the Church offers the opportunity to the individual and the community to express dependence on a higher power and to experience being sheltered by it. This can be seen as a defence mechanism against the existential anxiety of being "thrown into the world" (Heidegger, 2001).

This spiritual dimension of dependence and security is expressed by the German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer in a letter he wrote in 1944 from prison to his mother and his fiancée:

> Von guten Mächten wunderbar geborgen
> erwarten wir getrost, was kommen mag.
> Gott ist bei uns am Abend und am Morgen
> und ganz gewiss an jedem neuen Tag.

> *By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered,*
> *And confidently waiting come what may,*
> *we know that God is with us night and morning,*
> *and never fails to greet us each new day.*[4]

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[4] This hymn appears in the 1982 Episcopal Hymnal (695). The translator is F. Pratt Green (1903-) The translation copyright is with Hope Publishing Company 1974.

This later became a popular protestant hymn. The poem transports the human need to believe in God's presence in the most desperate circumstances (Bonhoeffer was hanged by the Nazis only a couple of months later: 9.4.1945.) But it also shows that this dependence on God was not transformed into passive acceptance of fate. Bonhoeffer was one of the central figures in the religious resistance against the Nazi regime.

Benign and malignant effects of basic assumptions
The members of a group in work-group mentality share beliefs in development, rational or scientific methods, and learning from experience. The group and its members are able to tolerate frustration, make use of the emotions supporting the task and contain those which endanger it. This is to say that not all emotions associated with basis-assumption mentalities need to be disruptive for the work-group mentality. Gratitude and adequate followership (baD) can assist the group in its work. Only when the group is overwhelmed by the basic-assumption mentality does it get off task and productivity declines. (Bion, 2001,1961)

Robert French and Peter Simpson (2009) elaborated a hypothesis matching each basic-assumption mentality to a corresponding work-group mentality. They frequently observed interactions in groups or organisations that were similar to interactions determined by one of the three basic assumptions of dependency, pairing or fight/flight, but without a detrimental effect on group productivity. Quite to the contrary, these interactions appeared to support the productive functioning of the group and its work on its primary task. This approach of basic-assumption and work-group mentalities parallels Reeds concept of the distinction between malignant dependency and benign dependence.

Looking at Bion's construct of the work-group mentality, it looks as if the group would be productively working on the task all the time. In this model, there is no allowance for regeneration. Should not the concept of the work group be extended to Reed's (Reed, 1996) concept of oscillation that includes periods of rest, renewal and regeneration? During these periods, the dominant mentality is dependence. The group members lower their control, regress to early childlike dependence (Winnicott), and allow themselves to become dependent on the leader and/or on the primal trust in the group. (cf. "syncretic sociability" Merleau-Ponty, 1964)

Historical Examples of the Church as a Specialized Work Group

How valid is Bion's typology for a specific Church at a particular historical moment? Does it apply to the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council? Does it apply to the Protestant Church at the time of the Reformation? And does it also apply to the current wide range of very different denominations in postmodern Christianity? All Christian Churches have in common the worship of an almighty, omniscient God.

"Christians are people who describe their dependence on God as a blessing" is a frequently used quote attributed to Herman Bezzel, a Lutheran Theologian (1861-1917). This corresponds to Bion's view: The central and common theme of the Churches is the management of human frailty in the face of God. The Church offers a simple answer to the central question of the human condition [condition humaine] (Malraux, 1933) or of being-thrown-into-the-world [des in-die-Welt-Geworfen-Seins](Heidegger, 1927).

For example, the Catholic Church has created an extremely hierarchical system, which ultimately relies on the authority of Saint Peter and his successors, who was called by Christ, according to tradition, to found the Church. (Matthew 16:18)

Over the centuries and in spite of all theological disputes, the teaching of the Church that considers the human being as a creature of God dependent on His will has remind unchanged. In this sense, the basic-assumption mentality dependence is a consistent feature of the Church as a specialized work group. In contrast, the dependence of the faithful on the Church structures and authorities developed in oscillations between the poles of dependency and autonomy. Again and again in church history, there have been people and groups who allowed themselves, regardless of church doctrine, to ask questions and think independently (Leonardo da Vinci, 1490, Galileo Galilei,1632) or they tried to break away from the dependency on the clergy and church structures (Jan Hus, 1420; Pierre Valdès 1175, Jakob Amman, 1693) . The Church has generally fought these unorthodox believers as heretics and persecuted and burnt them at the stake.

But there are also examples in which autonomy movements have led to reforms and have been integrated into the Church's renewal. The Second Vatican Council (1962 to 1965) raised a great deal of hope both inside and outside the Catholic Church. Groups of laymen and clergy

tried to spread the good news in the liberation theology movement among the indigenous population of Latin America, the factories of France and the "Basisgemeinden" base Churches in Switzerland.

But in the long run, the reactionary forces were eventually stronger and they still are today. They succeeded in maintaining and strengthening the authoritarian structures and thus cemented the dependency of the laity and the local clergy on the Vatican. The faithful, who want to live their relationship with God in freedom and in community with others, only had the choice of escaping to the base Churches on the edge of and outside the Catholic Church. In Switzerland and probably also in Central Europe, a majority of Catholics no longer believes in the capacity for renewal of their Church. They have left the Church or have distanced themselves internally from the Church and attend weddings and funerals only. A clear sign of the loss of legitimacy is the crisis of and in the clergy: A century ago it was the hope of every Catholic mother to have at least one of her sons becomes a priest. Nowadays the Church in Switzerland fails to fill the vacant parishes with priests who speak the local languages. The few priests who are still found come from Africa or Romania. In Ireland and America, the clergy has lost credibility by the massive sexual abuse of children entrusted to them. It might be true that only a small portion of priests were directly involved. Nonetheless, this exploitation of dependents must be seen as part of the system. Even if the bishops did not approve of this abuse, they actively sought to cover it up for years.

According to Bion, the Church as a specialized work group has the tasks of addressing the phenomena of basic-assumption dependency and relieving the main group, society, from the disturbing influences of the affects of dependency (Bion 2001,1961). Using the example of the post-conciliar Catholic Church, it becomes clear that the Church manages this task in a way that increasingly isolates itself from society and thus becomes become ineffective. Dependence is not only a quality in the relationship of the human being to his God but dependency is also the main characteristic of all relationships in the Church. Here we see a failure of the specialized working group, which was predicted by Bion, in which "…dependent ….activity.... swells to overwhelming strength." …."For basic assumptions are dangerous in proportion as the attempt is made to translate them into action" (Bion, 2001,1961, p.115) Dependence in the post-conciliar Catholic Church not only influenced the relationship of believers to God -- that would not have been dangerous, even according to Bion - but also determined the "corporate behaviour" within the Church. In this way, the Catholic Church alienated itself from its base and consequently lost much of its social function and relevance.

Initially the reformation was intended as a religious renewal, but its result was a schism. The Reformed Church was indeed successful in cutting the ties of dependency on Rome and in propagating the maturity of the human being before God. But not long afterward, it persecuted its own dissidents, the Anabaptists, with massive force and drove them into flight to the Jura and as far as North America (the Amish) or drowned them like Felix Manz in the Limmat River (1527). To the Swiss Reformer Zwingli, adult baptism was an anarchist threat to his concept of a comprehensive People's Church. He was convinced that if only those who believed in God were baptized, then the People's Church would soon become extinct. Infant baptism together with confirmation and marriage had the effect of strengthening the institutional ties between the individual, his family and the Church and thus ensured tax revenue for the Church. During this time of striving for independence, two currents of the Reformation developed: the anarchistic, which didn't want either Church or state between the believer and his God. This current was represented by Thomas Müntzer (* 1489 - † 1525) and Felix Manz (ca. 1500 - † 1527). The second current of state dependency and support was represented by Luther (* 1483 - † 1546), Zwingli (* 1484 - † 1531) Calvin (* 1509 - † 1564) and others in what later became the Reformed Church.

From the perspective of Bion's thesis, the state-supporting (and state dependent) Reformed Church of the first years after the Reformation would be a failure of the specialized working group. It preached dependence not only as dependence of the human being on the will of God, but also as subjugation of believers to the moral laws of the Church enforced with draconian punishment. The nascent Reformed Church was again translating basic-assumption mentality dependency into social action and replaced the old dependencies on Rome with new ones on the state-associated Church.

Isn't it amazing how quickly the reformers, calling for a break with Roman dogmatism, themselves mutated into intolerant religious and political dictators?

Church history shows a constant oscillation of authority between the poles of a dogmatic establishment that enforces the belief and behaviour of the faithful and a messianic idea of liberation, carried by an extraordinary person.

Vignettes

Now I would like to direct your attention from the historical to the contemporary Church by presenting four vignettes of my consultancy practice in Churches and church-related associations. Although the cases are based on my experience, they have been abridged and made anonymous by the use of fictitious names and, as much as possible, locations.

Vignette 1: A reformer confronting the reformed Church

Two parsons in the same congregation are entangled in a long-lasting and latent conflict, most of the time not spoken of but with virulent episodes. All advances from the Church council to reconcile the opponents were fruitless. One of them, let us call him Leuenberger[5], grew up in the parsonage in which he lives now. After a few years of training and stages as a vicar he became the successor of his father, who is a highly respected preacher and who still ministers to the congregation from time to time. His son is not such a gifted preacher; he invests his time more in pastoral care. His services are unspectacular and traditional, attended mostly by the elderly and the members of the congregation he has a pastoral relationship with. For several years he has been affected by a chronic disease which is limiting his energy and work capacity. He bears his suffering with humility and in this he is a role model for many in his congregation.

His opponent, Munzinger[6], is a stranger to the region, the son of fundamentalist evangelical parents. He first learned a trade and studied theology in his late twenties. As a parson, he has turned away from his fundamentalist roots and strives to modernize the Church. Religion, so he thinks, has an important message also for the modern world, for the young and those who have turned away from the Church, but this message has to be put across in up-to-date words and forms. So he organises, for example, musical services with jazz and folk bands and a series of lectures with philosophical themes applied to current affairs. These efforts drew many followers who applaud his activities and come to his events even if they are irregular church-goers.

The conflict between these two styles has spread and also affected the other members of the church team (the deacons, sexton, organist, and secretaries) and the church council. Episodes of conflict are usually triggered by unconventional demands by the second parson: He wants to use the Church while the organist is practicing; he refuses to attend

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[5] fictitious name
[6] fictitious name

the meetings of the parish team when he feels that there is nothing important on the agenda, to mention just two examples. In the town, he is an important public figure and a respected representative of the local Church. He engages in public debates, writes letters to the editor and brings his voice from a Christian point of view into public affairs. The church council appreciates his active role; they feel that he is able to open the Church and its message to the majority of church members who attend services only at marriages and funerals. On the other hand, they are irritated by his independent behaviour and his unwillingness to discuss his projects in the church council. For him, the church council has no authority on the religious content and form of his undertakings. He only accepts them as the administrative authority that manages funds, buildings and rooms.

This way of understanding and interpreting his role is partly supported by an unfortunate construction of church and state laws. In the canton of Berne, parsons are employed by the state, unlike the rest of the personnel such as the organist, sexton, deacons, secretaries, and catechists who are employed by the local Church but by the state. So there is no direct authority to issue directives based on an employer-employee relationship. The Church law states that "the church council manages the parish in cooperation with the parson and the personnel."[7] and the parson "in obedience to Jesus Christ …. is free in the proclamation of the gospel"[8] There is an on-going debate in the cantonal synod about changing the church law in order to gain clarity in this matter.

Between Leuenberger and the Church council, there is mutual respect of their respective functions and a broad consensus on how the parish should be lead. They share a traditional understanding of the Church, limited mainly to pastoral care, church ceremonies and catechism.

An interesting aspect of this conflict is the differing conflict styles. The church council, most of the personnel, and the parson carrying on a family tradition have the conventional conflict style in Swiss Church milieus: Friendly and polite manners. Conflictual issues are not directly addressed but only hinted at and niceness is the dominant style of interaction. If conflict can't be avoided by compromising, it is only discussed behind the back of those directly involved. In contrast, there is the behaviour of Munzinger. He also shows polite manners in the initial phase of contact, but is very outspoken when the discussion gets to the crucial points. He has no hesitation about arguing for his project

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[7] Art. 105, al. 1, Kirchenordnung 1990
[8] Art. 121, al. 2, Kirchenordnung 1990

and defending his approach and is ready to harshly confront the weak points in the argumentation of his opponents. Usually he takes care not to attack the person, but as victims of his rhetorical skills, his adversaries often feel humiliated and offended.

Considerations:
Munzinger's strong sense of mission makes him the mystic in this parish, although there is nothing mystical in his mission: He wants to make the Church and the gospel relevant for the modern world. The parish council, the establishment, is not entirely opposed to this and tries to integrate his impulses into the church activities. It shares or at least respects his goals but struggles with his anti-dependent behaviour within the inner circle of the parish staff. Council members perceive his attitude as arrogant and defend themselves against latent feelings of envy by superficial friendliness, conventional behaviour and increasingly, non-communication.

Vignette 2: Defending against cathedral envy

The Protestant Church in the Swiss capital is organized into twelve parishes. One of the parish Churches is the cathedral parish in the centre of Berne. The parish council is very aware and proud of the medieval heritage of which they are custodians. For them and for their beautiful cathedral, only the very best organist and the most eloquent and acclaimed preachers are good enough. Their cathedral is, in contrast to most urban and suburban Churches, often full and their Sunday services, concerts or special events often get national attention. Councillors and the clergy enjoy their successes, but they are very aware of the potential of envious feelings among members of the other parishes in the city. The cathedral parishioners feel that they are entitled to additional funding because of their national catchment area. For the other parishes and the association of parishes in Berne, this is by no means evident. As in most Swiss cities, the number of Protestants has decreased due to people leaving the Church and a demographic shift in cities from a Protestant to a Catholic and Muslim population. For these reasons, the Protestant Church has to make do with less tax revenue. In the cathedral parish, this is attenuated by a population of parishioners whose age and wealth are much above the average. So, compared with other city parishes, the parish has very few social responsibilities. The main question in the consultation was how they could get additional funding without provoking counterclaims from other parishes. Within the parish council, there was a strong inclination towards a business model of strategic planning. For instance, parish councillors asked themselves what their unique selling proposition was. – The cathedral. What kind of

marketing approach should we take to "sell" our services to the community? In this context, "selling" meant to have convincing arguments to acquire a greater share of the Church taxes for to special religious services. These special religious services are not destined primarily for the parish but for the capital city, for the canton and for the nation.

A power play is going on among the parishes and their exponents, but the conflicting interests are not openly discussed. All parties involved are trying to get into an optimal head position in the race for the best advantage.

The skyline of central Berne is dominated by the cathedral. It is the highest building in town (100m), higher than the town hall and the cupola of the federal parliament (60m). It symbolizes the supreme authority of God, source of all worldly powers, and it points to heaven, the mythical location of His presence. This was the belief in mediaeval times and gave great authority to the Church. Is it just a coincidence that during the planning of construction of the federal parliament, the tower of the cathedral was extended 1889-1893from 60m to 100m (Weber, 1976). The cathedral is frequently the location of national, often interreligious mourning services for victims of catastrophes and for nationally famous politicians and artists.

Considerations:
In this vignette, it is quite evident how the Church as a specialized work group deals with depend<u>ence </u>on behalf of society. The cathedral becomes the space where common folks and the powerful, both struck by acts of God, together express their awe and humility. On a spiritual level, the cathedral and its personnel are fulfilling very competently the task of dealing with the dependence mentality of society and to transform it into thought and symbolic action. For the parish council, ministers, and deacons, it is a source of personal and professional satisfaction to serve the community and the nation in this way. It could even be pride, if it didn't feel sinful to be proud and if it weren't for the fear of provoking envy in the members of the less prominent parishes. The thinking of the parish council is very much influenced by the tradition of the cathedral, dating back to the 15th century. It is as if the parish and its council had as their main reason to be to serve the cathedral. The Church building is not only the physical space for the congregation, but it has become a symbol of dominance and depend<u>ency</u>. It dominates the city's skyline, the public attention and the other parishes. And I call it depend<u>ency</u>, because of the predominant role of the cathedral in all discussions in the parish council. The parish

cannot be thought of without the cathedral. All other parish tasks are secondary to it. The cathedral has become the idolized object of the group and its maintenance and utilisation the group's primary task.

Vignette 3: Serving and Governing the Church

The national association of regional Churches runs a head office with a staff of 30. Their main tasks are to bring the Churches' point of view into the public debate, to facilitate coordination and cooperation amongst the member Churches, and to maintain working relationships with other Churches and religious organisations, with charities and with the state. A survey of workplace satisfaction has shown poor results compared to a benchmark average of other service organisations as to questions concerning "identification with the institution" and "information and participation of employees". The results of the survey were discussed in individual interviews with a random sample of the personnel and with management.

The interviews showed that the employer's efforts to arrange work conditions in a way that employment and family commitments were compatible were greatly appreciated. The administrative staff was very satisfied with their salary, while the academic staff realized that their income was lower than what they could earn in other comparable positions. The most frequently criticized aspect was the lack of employee participation. Although the organisation had a staff committee and regular staff meetings, many had the feeling that the really important information was withheld. The directors were accused of maintaining a paternalistic style of leadership and to pass on only selected and sugar-coated information from the board and the federation committees. This criticism also had an impact on the assessment of the organizational climate in two contrasting ways: The relations with the line manager, the management and the council on the one hand and the relations among colleagues on the other. The majority assess the relations among colleagues positively. In informal contacts outside the office, they share their corporate frustrations with each other. Many also feel well supported within their teams. In direct contact with colleagues from other departments, the structural barriers were sometimes overcome or subverted in the interest of the common task.

Relationships with management are more problematic. There is a great deal of pent-up, unexpressed anger and distrust towards management. The rituals and events meant to cultivate the working atmosphere are perceived as evocation rituals, supposed to celebrate unity and cooperation that is perceived in daily work as brittle or broken. The

board and council appear aloof and distant. Employees wonder whether they are taken notice of at all.

Many interviewees believed that the organisational problems and conflicts are either not perceived or repressed and swept under the carpet. If this strategy of ignoring does not work, the conflicts are personified and the person concerned is harassed and pushed out of the organisation. The large fluctuation in recent years is said to be at least partly a consequence of this. Many colleagues appear to have internally resigned or are ready to get out. Superiors elude tensions and conflicts and if they cannot be avoided, the superiors try to assuage the conflicts/appease those in conflict. It seems that there are interpersonal conflicts in the organisation, in which the parties with each other have not spoken for years. This at least partly explains survey results higher than the benchmark for sleep disorders, lack of energy and listlessness, and high emotional stress.

Some superiors have a leadership style in which they keep much to themselves, without taking into account the resources, initiative and creativity of their subordinates. This leads to a rapid pace of directives and consequently to frequent work interruptions that are experienced as disturbances. This leadership style is perceived by some as patriarchal: The patron thinks for his subordinates – in the best of intentions - and arranges whatever he thinks is good them.

The personal appreciation of a superior's job performance is praised or criticized depending on the superior. Overall, the interview responses are more critical than the survey responses. We see this in the context of the responses to the questions on satisfaction with goal setting and target checks. Interviewees reported that apparently often the feed-back loop concerning work content is not closed; the results and impacts of their work are not evaluated against the targets, the targets remain unclear, or the job is organised in a way that the employees cannot overlook completely. They feel like cogwheels in a big machine. People often get the feeling that their dedication has gone largely unnoticed and unappreciated. They receive no or if any negative feedback from their superiors and / or the committees they work for. Because many employees do not receive assessments of their work, this also creates great uncertainty.

Considerations:
This case study illustrates once more the organizational dependency within the organisation, partly paralyzing it and cutting it from its creative potential. The working climate is characterized by helplessness and resignation. The spiritual dimension of the Church plays only a

marginal role in the everyday business of this organization. There is therefore no space to symbolize dependence, a central function of the Church as a specialized work group. This lack is filled by internal dependency. As in the parishes, the interactions in the organisations are characterized by anxiety and rivalry, here especially between the departments and their leaders.

Vignette 4: Cain and Abel in the parish

In the centre of this vignette is Blumer, a parson in a suburban parish[9]. He is responsible for pastoral care in a sub-district of the parish together with a colleague, Holzer[10]. In this role, he depends on the cooperation of the deaconess, the secretary, catechists, organists and the sexton. There is a long history of conflict amongst the parish staff centred on his behaviour, which is perceived by the others as arrogant, offensive, uncooperative and arbitrary. Despite these shortcomings, which did not become evident to a wider public, Blumer was very popular with a large number of his parishioners. He was an eloquent preacher with a stentorian voice and his sermons were praised for their relevance to daily life. In contrast to his colleagues, he regularly had a full Church. He also initiated a large number of educational and cultural projects that resonated not only with Church-goers but also with a larger public.

The conflict culminated several years ago in a motion of the parish council at the parish assembly to remove him from office. This mobilized his followers and they turned up in large numbers at the parish assembly, an event that does not usually attract much attendance. His uncooperative and autocratic behaviour in the team was discussed in the assembly, but most of the parishioners were not much interested in the internal affairs but more in the outcome. Many participants of the debate praised his services and sermons and his cultural and religious activities in the parish and the borough. The assembly voted in a large majority for him and against the motion of the parish council.

After this showdown, the conflict abated and everyone made an effort to get along together, although the basic relationship pattern remained: Blumer behaved as an autocratic leader, isolated by his co-workers, some of them suffering silently, some in hidden opposition and some seeking shelter in a neutral position. From time to time, the conflict flared up again, usually on some organisational matter in which Blumer ignored or tried to bend regulations and procedures for the sake of one of his many projects. The reactions of his colleagues appear wildly

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[9] fictitious name

[10] fictitious name

exaggerated to him and he has given up trying to understand them. He says of himself that he has always been an alpha animal and he wistfully thinks back to the day when he was the only parson and the only staff in a smaller parish.

After a couple of years, the conflict broke out again and for him, out of the blue. A majority of the staff signed a letter to the parish council demanding to remove him from office again for the same reasons as some years before: arrogant and autocratic behaviour towards the other employees of the parish. His usual opponents in the lower echelons of the parish hierarchy had signed the letter, but among the signatories was also Blumer's colleague Holzer, who had taken a neutral stand up to that point.. Blumer was astonished, all the more so because he and Holzer and their wives spent a week's holiday together just the week before and Holzer must have previously signed the letter. Holzer didn't say a word about it and Blumer did not perceive any tension in their relationship during their holidays. This time, the parish council sought another way of dealing with the conflict. They requested the canton to dismiss Blumer from his office. The very complicated and somewhat inconsistent concurrence of state and church law made this move possible. Subsequently Blumer was suspended from most of his functions but not dismissed and the canton demanded an investigation of the allegations against Blumer and of moves towards reconciliation. After a year of uncertainty and isolation, an agreement was reached. Blumer could continue in his office, but the tasks were to be reorganized to reduce to a minimum the need for cooperation and consultation between Blumer and the other employees.

Considerations:
This parish illustrates the tension between the mystic, Blumer, and the establishment, his colleagues and the church council, or in the terms of the institutionalists, the tension between the institutor and the instituted. Unfortunately this does not lead to a creative dynamic; it leads only to a stalemate: The establishment is unable to evict the parson from the parish, but it succeeded in isolating him within. The parson loses a lot of his charismatic influence in the community and is restricted to the comparatively small circle of his followers. The emotional climate in the system is characterized by envy, arrogance, mutual suspicion and anxiety. Everyone loses in this long-suppressed and now virulent conflict: the Church's reputation suffered; the energy of the staff was absorbed for a long time with the ongoing conflict; and Blumer's health was seriously affected.

Conclusions and further questions

Conclusions

Does the concept of the specialized work group offer a plausible explanation for the common characteristics of social systems in a church context, which are the avoidance of overt conflict, suppressed anger, envy and idealization?

The Church is especially vulnerable to acting out dependency
In my cases, I observed the tendency to act out dependency and anti-dependency frequently within the organisation. In church history, there were also many occasions when the Church created und maintained societal dependency on the Church to secure and enlarge its power.

The messianic ideas of the Church throughout history centred around dependence/dependency
The process of the Church's institutionalisation was propelled by a series of prophets, messiahs, and reformers and their messianic ideas. A large number of those ideas centred around dependence on God and liberation from dependency.

Several prominent examples are
Moses   Exodus from Egypt
Christ   Freedom from "the yoke of slavery" of the law. (Gal 5, 1-6)
Luther   Liberation from Rome
Münzer   Liberation of the exploited peasants
Manz   Liberation from compulsory infant baptism

The Church as a specialized work group incarnates both the beneficial side of depend_ence_ and the destructive side of depend_ency_.
Bion underlined the beneficial function of the specialized work group for society but he also pointed out that specialized work groups are especially vulnerable to basic-assumption behaviour for the basic assumption in which they are specialized in. To understand these two sides of the coin I found the distinction between depend_ence_ and depend_ency_ (Reed, 1996) especially useful. This is consistent with the findings of French and Simpson, 2009 who proposed that each basic-assumption mentality corresponds to a work group mentality that is beneficial for work group behaviour and the common task.

Dependence is a basic human need. It is best satisfied in a safe container.
Reed and Carr argued convincingly that dependence is a legitimate need not only for infants; adults also want "periods of physical or symbolic contact with sources of renewal" from time to time (Reed, 1996, p.4) The church building, the religious rituals and their music can be an excellent container for those needs, where they can be symbolized.

Bion's concept of the specialized work group should be to be integrated with his concept of institutionalization.
When I tried to apply the concept of the specialized work group to the historical examples and to my case studies, I found it too static. While it does explain the tension between the basic-assumption mentality to be contained on behalf of society and the work-group mentality necessary for the group's survival as an organisation, it fails to explain the social dynamics resulting from this tension. The concept of the specialized work is complemented by Bion in "A*ttention and Interpretation"* (2009) by his concept of institutionalisation, where the institutionalized group is essential for generating a mystic who carries the messianic idea. Here, he focuses almost exclusively on the Church, only one of the specialized work groups he postulated. His terminology (the mystic, the messianic idea) might be quite adequate in a religious context, but it doest not really fit other institutions. The two conceptual elements need to be integrated into one concept that can the functionional, the structural, and the psychodynamic aspects of societal institutions. I will use Lourau's concept of institutionalisation and Luhmann's systems theory as a framework to try to integrate those aspects.

Some of the elements of Bion's and Lourau's concept are almost equivalent:

Bion	Lourau
Mystic Messianic Idea	Institutor
Establishment	Instituted
Specialized Work Group	a singular Institution as a social entity
Containment = the Interaction of Container and Contained	Institutionalisation

Correspondence between Lourau and Bion
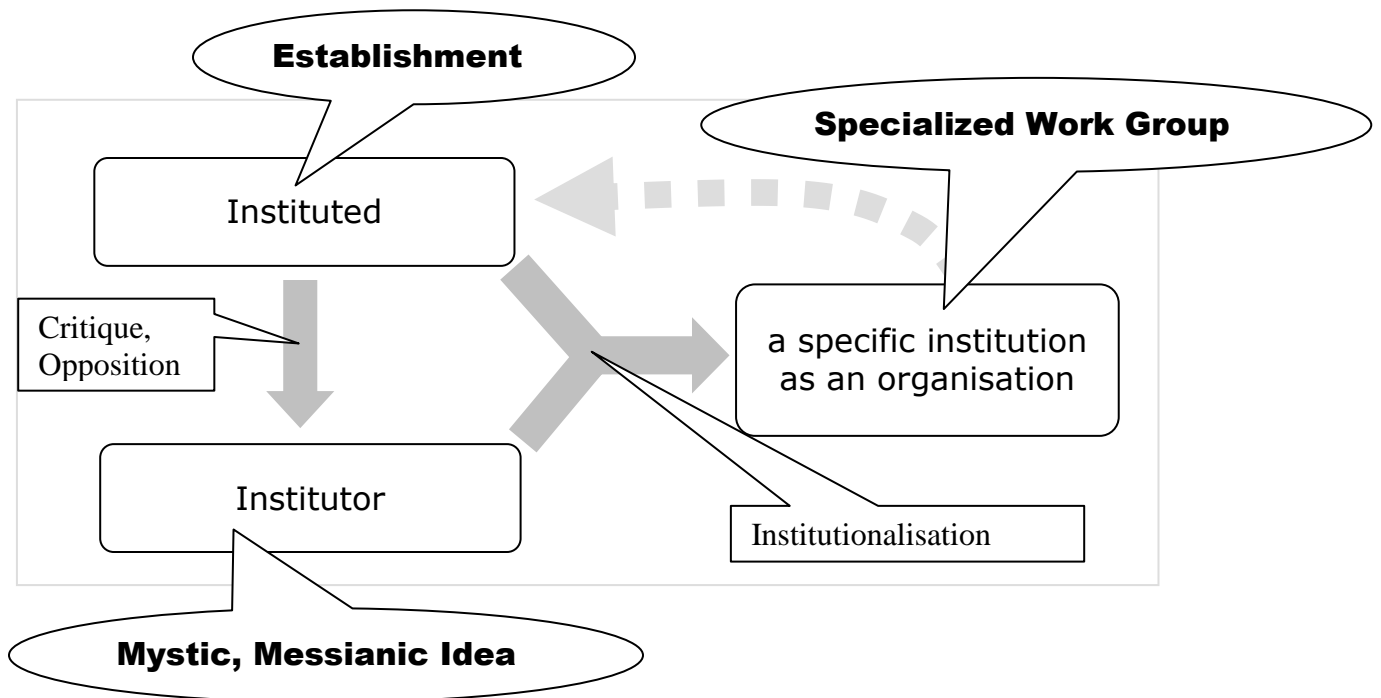
They are almost, but not exact equivalents: The institutor is a wider term than the mystic and the messianic idea. It includes the mystic, the messiah or the genius but it also includes any individual or group diverting from the general norm, be it intentionally with a sense of mission, like the prophet or unintentionally through the failings and shortcomings that any absolute idea has when it is incarnated in the actions of individuals and groups. Looking at it this way, the 'extraordinary individual' and the messianic idea are just one of several manifestations of the social dynamic in institutions.

At first sight, there is however a slight difference in the meaning between "establishment" and the "instituted." While Lourau speaks of the instituted as enclosing everything that is established, like laws, rules and matters that go without saying (allant de soi), he refers to social norms of varying degrees of commitment. Bion in his text defines the 'establishment' as the ruling caste of a group or a nation, always referring to an actual subgroup of people holding power and defining rules, laws and dogmas for the rest of the group. Paul Hoggett (1997) has extended this social concept to an agency in the mind of individuals and the group "… deeply established –i.e., beneath the surface, invisible, more like a network than an institution;…" (p.8). With this,

Hoggett is very close to Lourau's understanding of the instituted, since they both refer to a set of values, attitudes and norms that determine the individual as well as the group as a whole and serve the maintenance of the status quo. But it is noteworthy that Hoggett's description of the "internal establishment" is much more sinister and oppressive than Lourau's.

In the interaction between container and contained, there are several ways leading to the destruction of either or to the expulsion of the contained. But there is also the possibility that container and contained are both transformed and benefit by their interaction. This is the case in which the establishment successfully integrates the mystic and his messianic idea into the life of the group. This process comes close to Lourau's idea of institutionalization, when the interaction of instituted and institutor leads to a new level of the instituted. This new instituted can of course again become subject to negation.

Institutions assume normative and affective functions on behalf of society

There is a parallel between Lourau and Bion in the understanding of how the supra-system (society) and the subsystem (the Church) are interconnected: Bion postulates that specialised work groups emerge within the main group to neutralize the basic-assumption mentality in the main group. (Bion, 2001,1961) This comes very close to Lorau's functionalist understanding of institutions, in which institutions incarnate universal norms adapted to one or several functions. (Lourau, 1970) The specific contribution of Bion highlights the affective, irrational part of function, of which we are largely unconscious.

Integration of the concepts of Lourau, Bion and Reed in Hegelian dialectics

Below I will attempt to integrate the three main concepts I have drawn upon in the paper. I thus hope to contribute to a fuller understanding of institutional dynamics that will also include the affective layer of institution below the surface:

1. The positive moment of universality: The 'ideal Church' is charged with and assumes for society the symbolization of depend<u>ence</u> and thereby contributes to society's functioning in work-group mode.

2. The negative moment of particularity: The real Church is constantly tempted not only to symbolize this dependence on God but also to bind its members in dependencies on the Church and the secular establishment. The 'ideal Church' is negated by this 'acting out' of the

basic-assumption depend<u>ency</u> by dogmatic thought control and a system of repression.

3. The negation of the negation, which is affirmation: The tension between the real and ideal Church creates a momentum of historical change in a specific cultural and political situation, which brings forward 'mystics' and 'messianic ideas' and leads to revolution or schisms if the tension cannot be contained by the establishment through either evolutionary reforms or repression.

4. The result of a reform, a revolution or a schism is a new, 'ideal' Church, which is of course subject to this same dialectics again.

It should be noted that these steps represent only a logical, not sequential order. All three momentums are present simultaneously, and together make up the institution, even though they may come into the foreground alternately in the institutional history.

Further questions:
In the course of writing this paper, I have stumbled across a number of new questions, possibly more than I was able to answer. They call for further enquiry into the psychodynamics of societal institutions.

Is the aristocracy still the relevant specialized work group in democratic societies or has it been replaced by another?

Can we also identify specialized work groups for the "new" basic assumptions of one-ness, me-ness and grouping?

Do we recognize specialized work groups in society which do not correspond to basic assumptions but have a similar function, that of carrying, containing and symbolizing affects for the whole society? Candidates for such specialized work groups would be, for example, the penal system, parliament, school, the medical system, the employment system, the monetary system money, the stock exchange.

This thinking leads to a new working hypothesis that connects Bion's specialized work group with institutional theory: Some societal institutions have the function of specialized work groups: They serve society by, amongst other functions, carrying and containing unconscious affects that otherwise would disturb and endanger the function of the main group.

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