

## Call for Participants

The annual conference of  
*The International Research Group for Psycho-Societal Analysis : SQUID 2023*

(22 - 26 May 2023, IUC, Dubrovnik)

### *Basic assumptions and a world in crisis*

In his seminal *Experiences in Groups*, the British object-relational analyst Wilfred Bion (1961) works psychoanalytic concepts into a delicate theory of human relationality and sociality – something he captured in the term “groupishness” (Schneider 2015, p. 416). Informed by his experiences as a doctor at a military psychiatric hospital during World War II, Bion saw the basic human need for, but also struggle with, sociality to lie in primitive phenotypical forms of reaction-formation that he located, *not* at the individual, but at the group level.

Bion (1961) identified three of these “basic assumptions,” as he called them, as predominant in shaping the character of a group, specifically, the basic assumptions of *dependency*, *pairing* and *fight-flight*. In a group in which dependency predominates, group members “think they need only wait for a single sustaining leader who will solve all their problems” (Bion, 1961, p. 82). In a group shaped by dynamics of pairing, “the group members participate in the creativity of a pair of individuals to produce a savior or saving idea, providing ‘a Messiah, be it a person, idea, or Utopia’” (Schneider 2015, p. 426, quoting Bion, 1961, p. 152). Finally, in a group in which the basic assumption is fight/flight, group members identify an enemy and group around either fighting this enemy or fleeing from them.

“The central feature of basic assumption behavior,” writes object-relational theorist Larry Hirshhorn (1990), “is the rapidity and ease with which groups take up and display these assumptions. They do not go through a process of group development; rather, the group magically creates a group culture or climate” (p. 57). All too quickly, groups are drawn to such magical forms of interaction in a primitive defence against the looming necessity to think and, as Bion put it, in “a hatred of having to learn by experience” (Bion, 1961, p. 89).

Building on – and departing from – Bion’s theory of group analysis, the 2023 annual meeting of the International Research Group for Psycho-Societal Analysis (SQUID) at the International University Center in Dubrovnik (Croatia) is dedicated to in-depth inquiries of group processes and ‘the group’ as a central relay station for psycho-societal and psychosocial thought in times of exacerbating crises, be they social, political, economic, or ‘anthropocenic.’ We will look into and seek to apply group analytical approaches at four levels: first, at the level of group theory in general (e.g., How does Bion’s approach differ from Foulkes and others?); second, at the more specific level of in-depth hermeneutics (e.g., How do group analytical approaches correspond and/or differ from Alfred Lorenzer’s conception of psychoanalytic hermeneutics and interpretation groups?); third, at the level of the challenges that these theories pose for reflections on our own “groupishness” (e.g., How does the ‘we’ of our own research group function? How can it be put to work in a careful and progressive way?); and fourth, at the level of wider questions about the world and our access to it (e.g., What does a focus on psychoanalytic group psychology tell us about the manifold human-made crises that human-beings, together with all living species, are currently facing?).

### Participation

IRGfPSA is an invite-only group. Please send a short work-biographical statement in which you explain how your work orientations might fit in with IRGfPSA's psychanalytic/psychosocial orientations to the EC at [steff.krueger@gmail.com](mailto:steff.krueger@gmail.com), to be considered for invitation. In case you are **PhD student**, the symposium is ECTS-accredited as a PhD-course.

The readings for the week will be sent to participants in due course. In the meantime, we would already like to suggest a novel that speaks to this year’s theme: Irvin Yalom’s *The Schopenhauer Cure* (2005). Please, note that this will *not* be part of the course reading per se; rather, the book suggestion is meant as a witty introduction to the thinking about group processes that we want to undertake at this year’s conference.

The International Research Group for Psycho-Societal Analysis  
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