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The Collective Spark

Erratum:
Bob Hinshelwood's name is incorrectly listed as "Rob Hinshelwood" in the table of contents for Chapter 8. Apologies from editors and publisher.

The Collective Spark

Igniting thinking in groups, teams and the wider world

This book shows how to think together with others and to help others to think together with you. The chapters are written from a rich store of knowledge, experience and understanding that illuminates the hidden complexities occurring whenever people meet to collaborate, plan, review, innovate, learn, teach, consult or facilitate.

From their various professions and work areas, the authors delve beneath the surface of visible interactions to reveal the knowledge and wisdom that exists in intuitive and unconscious processes. The result is a profound and informative book that is engaging, accessible and readable, to inform everyday practice in groups, teams, committees, organizations and communities.

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----- Section 1: -----
Setting the scene

1. Igniting the Collective Spark: The relevance of thinking together

Why a book about thinking together?

People think together all the time to develop, manufacture and distribute goods, build places to live and work, and invent medicines and other essentials. But have you, reader, not sat through hours of boring and even toxic meetings? There is a need to learn how to think together in teams, committees, organizations, or other situations where people collaborate. We intend this book to bring into focus elements of thinking together that are otherwise overlooked in everyday interactions. We want to share what we found in our various fields about the nature of what we can call collective thinking, how to recognise it, when it happens and how to encourage it.

Many books and papers on collaboration, teamwork, cooperation and group dynamics contain valuable information about how people think together. They have been helpful to us. But our experience leads us to the possibility of looking beyond the collections of individuals exchanging views and cooperating to a goal. We have all found that sometimes, groups can become creative, and it can be said that the group thinks[1]; the result is something that goes beyond what any member could achieve[2]. It can even happen with two people such as is described in Chapter **10** in a psychotherapeutic setting.

Yet there is a resistance to recognising that groups think. We want to emphasise that people can think together in groups and then, when conditions are right, the group can think. Instead of an exchange of individual views and contention of ideas, group members become part of a thinking process in which there are component thoughts, and the group comes to something unexpected that belongs to the group. This is what we call the *collective spark.* It is something that can ignite a fire or fizzle out if the conditions don't allow it to take. In Chapter **2** we described the history of reluctance to acknowledge that social units have their own form of existence and a life of thought, emotion and action. We describe its suppression in the 1930s as a casualty of the struggle between liberal democracy and totalitarian ideologies.

The vocabulary of the mental life of social entities is fuzzy: social mind, group mind, collective mind, social thinking, collective thinking, groupthink. Many of these terms carry the implication that the collective mind and thinking is less than individual mind and thinking, or that it is some "mystical" emergent entity that has no basis other than the imagination of the writer concerned. What is overlooked is that everyone who joins a group was already raised and lived in groups, so the group having a capacity to think is not *emergent* but *recombinant*. We recombine our group nature with each new group, bringing what has been formed in us, including our group traumas and group skills, and reconfigure it. There is nothing new, there always were groups and we always lived our lives and expressed our minds in groups, thought with others, felt with others, and acted with others.

Group minds are particular conditions of individual minds in combination so that something new occurs — people interact so their thoughts strike collective sparks. Both individual and group are real. It is urgent that we find a language to describe and relate them to each other. We will call on all these terms since we are not in a position to impose a strict terminology. What follows is our effort to open a field of knowledge and empower thinking together and creating thinking groups.

How do groups think?

Groups do not have some mystical, separate capacity for thinking, they only think with, by and though their members. It has been understood for almost 150 years, that the capacity for collective thinking is a product of how the group's communication processes are organised. We include all the forms of communication, verbal, non-verbal, emotional, and those outside conscious awareness. These include direct emotional exchange between people attempting to understand each other (described in Chapter **10**), intuition (described in Chapter **11**) and unconscious blocks (in Chapter **12**). It includes cognitive processes that occur 'in the background' and can't be brought directly to conscious awareness (discussed in Chapter **4**). They are all part of group thinking and indirect, 'background', unconscious processes as much as direct, 'foreground', conscious processes.

Thinking-together is working with the complex interrelationship between two different ways of being. One is rational, involving goal directed thinking and sharply focussed attention. The other is non-rational (NOT irrational) involving exploratory thinking, associative connections, and free-floating attention. Movement between these two modes is an essential part of a high-quality thinking space (described in Chapters **5** and **9**).

The meeting of minds to think together, involves valuing emotion in thinking. This might seem to contradict the common wisdom that emotion must be avoided to think clearly. That unhelpful myth detracts from the effectiveness of groups and

teams. Sometimes, when the situation can't be clearly defined to form an idea to be thought about, emotional connections provide a gateway into thinking (described in Chapters 10 and 11). We validate from a variety of areas of practice an emerging truth that emotion is an essential element of the thinking process. It provides signals to the thinker about the importance of each thought and structures the relationships between thinkers often showing a reality even if it has not been grasped yet.

The first part of the book (Chapters **2-5**), present a historical setting and descriptions of successful and unsuccessful group thinking, as well as providing some of the emerging neuroscience showing how organised social experience is continued into brain processes to organise the neurological basis for thinking. There is no clear boundary between the "external" social world and the "internal" world of brain and mind as there is for the body. The establishment of a facilitating social environment is the foundation of the capacity for groups to think collectively, beyond the capacities of any individual.

When people are not thinking together

Just as we learn about group thinking when it is done well, we also learn about it when it fails. In the section below we describe some clues that might indicate that a team or group[3] is not thinking together effectively. Subsequent chapters describe many different groups and social settings and a combination of successful and unsuccessful thinking. Some examples show how a group is unable to think collectively and by interventions in the group they are helped to achieve it (Chapters **5, 9, 11, 12**). In some cases, the thinking required is not solving problems or planning and executing tasks but using thinking to come to terms with stress, trauma and organisational difficulties (Chapters **3, 5, 9, 13, 15**). The authors approach the subject of collective thinking from many different aspects and different settings.

Some symptoms of impaired thinking-together are:

- The group's atmosphere does not feel safe enough for participants to think or speak freely. Despite individual participants thinking useful thoughts, they are not made available to the group. *Individual* thinking may be creative, but *collective* thinking is impaired because the thoughts of one member do not become a stimulus for the thinking of others. Group leaders are less likely to feel the distrust or inhibition than are members and may be least likely to notice this unhelpful pattern.
- Patterns of assumptions, norms and beliefs in the group culture prevent some topics from being addressed, questioned or discussed, but nobody is conscious of these "forbidden zones" or "forgotten zones" in the range of conversation topics. This results in a kind of "blindness" that cannot be addressed until the taken-for-granted patterns are brought into the awareness of the group[4] often by an external person (see Chapters **3, 9, 12**).

- Group leaders attempt to create open debate but inadvertently signal through their actions that there is not space for ideas that are too different to theirs. The leader may not be aware this is what they are doing, and it becomes difficult for members to address the problem. Instead, group members "go through the motions" and let the leader keep believing they are facilitating a great collaborative conversation[5]
- A group unknowingly becomes locked into a type of thinking that is not the most useful for the situation. Convergent thinking is required for decision making. When an adequate number of options have already been identified, the number of ideas needs to be reduced (converged) to the one that is finally chosen. On the other hand, divergent thinking is required when a group needs to be creative in the search for more options. Groups are seldom aware of what kind of thinking they need which leads to confusion and ineffective collective thinking.
- One or more group members consistently act in ways that impedes collective thinking. Persistent patterns of various types of group behaviour can disrupt the "thinking space[6]". Hostility, vanity, big-noting oneself, being 'hurt' by what others say, being dogmatic, being opinionated/strident, and questioning *everything* all fracture the required communication patterns. Whilst group leaders may be aware of the destructiveness of these patterns, they are difficult to change because directly addressing them can easily trigger another outburst on the part of the people perpetuating them[7].
- If *Group-level* awareness is low, members have one-on-one conversations without being aware that everything they say and do in the *group* affects the whole *group*. In normal group functioning all members witness all interactions and use it as information to predict how they themselves will fare when they actively participate. Additionally, leaders often underestimate the psychological and emotional power of what they themselves say and do. In general, every move made by a group leader is noticed by members and these "data" have a powerful influence on "how we do things around here" — i.e., group culture[8].
- Feelings are discounted or over-emphasized. Ample research shows that thinking is integrated with feeling[9] and denial of feelings diminishes the quality of thinking. Much group activity occurs at an intuitive level — resulting in feelings, flashes of intuition and half-formed thoughts — but if no-one voices this material the richness of this collective non-rational effort cannot be harnessed to solving group problems (as shown in Chapters **10, 11, 12**). On the other hand, being swamped by strong feelings drowns

out thinking. Excessive focus on the feelings associated with a topic, prevents thinking[10]. To build a climate where thinking and feeling are balanced and integrated, the leader needs to be emotionally competent[11]. Participants look to the leader to signal "what is OK" in terms of balance between thinking and feeling. If they are unaware of an unbalance in the conversation, it can be difficult for members to break the pattern themselves[12].

- Curiosity is absent or replaced by blame and attack. Group members show little interest in the impact they are having on the interaction and instead blame others for anything that goes wrong. The way a leader discourages blaming behaviour and instead encourages curiosity has a major impact on how the group as a whole moves between curiosity and blaming[13].
- Conversations are driven by time restraints so the criterion for the success is that they are 'finished'. This forces closure and curtailing potentially useful input. Furthermore, the anxiety generated by being hurried diminishes the quality of thinking. Time is a real constraint in many settings, but false economies can be created by talking briefly about a multitude of topics rather than thinking in more depth about a few. Leaders who value decisiveness and closure above high-quality thinking exacerbate this unhelpful pattern.
- The group's own state is not considered worthy for allocating time. As shown in many succeeding chapters, groups that are unproductive, conflicted and unable to do their work well, have multiple blocks to free communication and allocation of time to work over their experience and digest their tensions is highly cost effective in terms of output.

Associated with this is a lack of attention to the development of a "social infrastructure of thinking" (see Chapters **3** and **5**). Following a number of simple and well-established principles provides a good ground for group thinking to evolve. Some of these are discussed below.

It is also common for the ineffectiveness of thinking-together in groups to be quite unspectacular. There may be a dull energy-sapping tone to interaction where participants are disengaged or uninterested rather than visibly struggling or avoidant. This 'dynamic of dullness' is often present in meetings in organizations.

The characteristics of a team that effectively thinks together

It is possible to obtain cues through observation that indicate when effective collective thinking is occurring. The brief description below introduces the diverse descriptions that appear in the chapters that follow. Collective thinking is achieved when many of the following patterns are present:

- Participants act as if something interesting, challenging or engaging is going on.
- Most people present have a positive expectation that it is useful to take part in the discussion.

- Although group members vary how actively involved they are, on average there is a purposeful sense of industry about the team[14].
- Conversations probably occur in intense bursts, sometimes interspersed with silences that may feel full and rich because participants are immersed in intensive thinking about the topic under discussion.
- Conversations are punctuated with emotional expressions of interest, enjoyment, humour — especially humour about the problems and challenges they are facing. These are not escapes from the responsibilities but serve to lift the conversation and generate enjoyment and a common feeling.
- The conversation is not always logical, and weaves around the main topic of discussion, with sometimes excited new ideas occurring to participants, but these apparent diversions end up adding something to the overall exploration.
- There may be disagreements as group members assert their opinions strongly and even passionately but there is an ability to shift ground as they gain understanding from the debates. The goal of the discussion remains central rather than interpersonal conflict or rivalry becoming the focus.
- Coherent patterns emerge in the conversation and evolve into decisions or commitment to action.
- The group can acknowledge when there is agreement about arriving at a new understanding that has previously eluded them.
- Group members can take their place as mature individuals retaining a commitment to the common goals even if their ideas do not end up being used.
- Most people perceive the group to have a shared understanding of what is being discussed and why. They have a positive expectation that what they say is held in mind by others and will be considered, even if their ideas are eventually discarded, they are contribute to the overall conclusion. They are confident that they will not be attacked. They are curious about what others say and prepared to 'play' with ideas — to let their minds go in unexpected directions that are not necessarily logically related to the topic under discussion. Nonetheless, they still hold in mind the intention of the discussion.
- Group members are curious about what is going on for themselves and can reflect (usually silently) on what is going on in their internal world. Participants reflect quietly on how engaged, how excited, how fearful they are. Often, they take the next step in the chain of curiosity and ask themselves questions like "what is it about me that has me thinking, feeling and doing what I am right now in this group?"[15]

The kind of curiosity that keeps a thinking space

in good shape is two directional: Participants are curious about what is going on in the group ('outwards' curiosity) at the same time they are curious about what is going on in them ("inward" curiosity).

Effective thinking-together depends on the topic, culture, context, setting and urgency. Members of a group thinking effectively together are likely to experience swings in the feeling and interactions. Effective group and team thinking is expressed in *patterns* of interaction observed over a period, rather than being evident in a "snapshot" of team interaction[16]. Hence, the overall question that we need to ask when we are assessing the effectiveness of thinking in a group level discussion is "Over the period of this meeting/interaction, how well is this group of people making use of the intellectual resources and knowledge that exist in this group or team?"

What collective thinking is not

Thinking-together is not 'groupthink' or mindless conformity to the pressures for everyone to think the same thing[17]. Such a group culture involves one person's thinking being imposed on the others to define what can be thought. Instead, thinking together involves a meeting of minds where each person retains their individuality and contributes to a lively and diverse group conversation. Conformity and concurrence are breakdowns in collective thinking and become pseudo-goals at the expense of the actual topic of discussion. Other pseudo-goals are listed below.

- Harmony and/or absence of conflict[18].
- Democratic decision making[19] and concurrence[20].
- Togetherness or "one-ness"[21].
- Smooth functioning[22].
- A sense of order or predictability[23].
- Continual team member satisfaction[24].

It is likely that the quality of collective thinking will suffer if any of these (pseudo)goals are pursued as if they are the purpose of the group.

In contrast, effective collective thinking may at times involve elements of conflict, tension, diversity, confusion, divergence and insistence on difference between team members[25]. Collective thinking may at times be rough, clumsy, diverse and unpredictable. Often the emotional and psychological strain on team members may be greater when involved in high quality collective thinking than when pursuing some of the pseudo-goals listed above[26]. But members of a thinking group retain their awareness of why they are debating, disagreeing on the way to a goal, and even if they do not reach universal agreement, the conclusion can be supported and get on with the task. Feeling good in a group or team does not *necessarily* mean that high quality group thinking is occurring (although high quality collective thinking *can* feel great). Chapter **15** describes some ways in which groups behave to seek comfort and prevent themselves from engaging with difficult topics and feelings.

Why is thinking-together important?

A frequent pattern in workplaces is where an anxious manager insists staff work exactly how they imagined it should be done even though the staff are professionals in their area. Micro-management is soul destroying and takes away any possibility of initiative and therefore satisfaction in the work, and it usually does not allay the manager's anxiety. During a consulting project Martin was struck by how a team leader directed team members on many aspects of their work. Many team members were disengaged and de-motivated. During a long and seemingly unproductive coaching session for the leader, Martin was unable to fully manage his frustration and asked the team leader why he employed intelligent and well-trained people "...because you don't seem to make use of their knowledge and intelligence." The team leader was shocked and, not surprisingly hurt by Martin's confrontation. But after exploring the idea of collective intelligence he started to make some small changes to his behaviour.

Anecdotal evidence from many people with whom the authors of this book have worked suggests an enormous cost of time and emotional energy is wasted in a wide range of settings where leaders and chairpersons assume that their opinions should dominate. There is an anecdote that the CEO of a large telecommunications company told his senior management meeting of an idea he had to radically reorganise how they did business. He looked around the meeting and asked what they thought of it. There was hesitancy at first and they all said it sounded like a great idea. No one disagreed. The CEO responded by saying this was such an important decision that they would not proceed until next day and he wanted everyone to go away and think of what was wrong with it. He saw disagreement as a way to engage collective thinking which was silenced by agreement.

Cooperate, collaborate and coordinate are three commonly used terms that also signal the importance of thinking-together. The prefix 'co-' indicates that there is more than one person involved. Hence *cooperate* means to 'operate' together, where the word operate means taking action (but not making surgical incisions!) In order to operate-together we need to share goals and talk about how to get things done. In short, thinking-together is what enables cooperation to occur. *Collaborate* has its roots in the word 'labour' and originates from labouring together. To labour together successfully requires thinking together. '*Coordinate*', originates from Latin roots and brings with it the sense of arranging things together[27]. To arrange things together we need to talk and think together about what gets arranged and who arranges what. Thinking-together hides away in the English language under other names and so it is easy to miss its importance

If thinking-together is so important, why is not more known about it?

One reason we don't lie awake at night analysing the human capacity to think together is that we spend a lot of

our time thinking with others and it is like breathing common air. It's just there in everyday life, taken for granted. Most people have multiple daily conversations during which they coordinate ideas, thoughts, values or actions. We do many things on 'automatic' and thinking together is one. If we don't reflect on it, it's no wonder it does not capture our attention. Our patterns of body movement, speech and everyday interaction are managed in parts of our brains that reliably repeat everyday actions and routines without making demands on consciousness. This saves a great deal of time and energy[28] because the conscious brain is slower and more energy-hungry than 'unconscious' parts of the brain. The behavioural patterns we enact when we think together with others are similarly held in the automatic parts of our brains and escape conscious awareness. We could say that the taken-for-granted nature of thinking together is a collective blindness.

Another factor is that in collective thinking, it is the group that thinks through the members. There is an automatic response to resist the threat of loss of individuality and autonomy in relinquishing a personal idea or point of view when it is challenged in favour of another. Our own thoughts and point of view are tangible and vivid in our experience and to prioritise group thinking we need to do for our thinking life what all good sports people have to learn: the team and the team goals are more important than mine, I need to submit my individual interest to the collective interest of the team and pass the ball to someone who can get the goal, even though I want to try for glory. Our society is well versed in the collective behaviour of team sports in the field of gross motor action, but we have some way to go to apply the same values to group and team thinking, even though as the sports players discover, the satisfaction of being a member of a winning team is as great as being an individual winner.

Associated with this is the role of our ideologies of "freedom" and "individuality" that constrain our ability to let ourselves become part of a group enterprise. We think together effectively when we are open to the deep intrinsic cognitive and emotional interconnections between humans as well as acknowledging the powerful unconscious connections that bind us together. But awareness of these connections can be threatening. After all, aren't we meant to be free, independent and autonomous individuals? We are taught that freedom is sacrosanct and hence we should not be constrained (or helped?) by the influence of others? This ideology tells us that we are individuals because we are free of the collective influence and constraint, and that we are free because we are individuals. It's a circular argument. But in order to think together effectively we need to acknowledge — and profit from the fact — that individuality is never absolute. Chapters **3** and **5** explore this idea in more detail and Chapter **4** on the neuroscience of thinking together articulates some neuro-biological evidence of our intrinsic bonds.

There is also the old fear of the crowd and groupthink which limit our willingness to understand how to think together. Whilst Janis's work on *groupthink*[29] was complex and detailed, everyday use of the term has stripped it of its richness and the term is thrown around as though there is a danger groups and teams will inevitably become collectively dumb and compliant. This misuse of an otherwise valuable concept reflects a society-wide fear of being intellectually and emotionally overpowered by groups. However, it is a common experience to find it difficult to speak up against the dominant view in a group and it feels as though our freedom is being constrained by the group. As Charlan Nemeth observes, the emotional pull towards agreement or consensus in groups is a part of the human experience[30]. Hence, not only is there the socially reinforced fear of group pressure, but we also experience it viscerally on a regular basis.

The fear of being "taken over" by others' thoughts has been around for a long time. In 1895 Gustave le Bon, a Frenchman who was both a social scientist and a natural scientist wrote about the coercive nature of crowds which act as if they have a mind of their own that is not the same as the sum of the individual minds of people who make it[31]. Since then, Totalitarian regimes, two World Wars and a Cold War have evoked a deep fear of collectivism in Western culture, even if the origins of that fear do not rise to consciousness[32]. These ideas are explored more fully in Chapter **2**.

The fear of collectivist thinking reached fever pitch in the USA during the McCarthy era but persists into the 21st century. Listen out for the blanket condemnation of ideas by politicians when they object to collectivist ideas by saying things like "That is just another way to bring in socialism."

The topic of how people think together deserves more attention than it currently receives. Paying more attention to how we think together has the potential to improve the quality of life for many people and to imptove also group and team effectiveness across a broad spectrum of endeavours.

For whom is this book written?

It is written for the curious and for the disenchanted.

The curious reader

- Anyone who is curious about the human condition and interested in how human beings interact, collaborate, coordinate, argue and think together is likely to find enough new and interesting material in the book to justify reading it — or at least the chapters that most speak to you. Having said that, in writing the book we focused our attention on five main groups of readers, as follows:
- Educators whose work is primarily with groups and who would benefit from a rich understanding of how people think and learn together.
- Group facilitators, including group therapists, who would benefit from a deep understanding of

the social mind and how social phenomena affect group and therapeutic effectiveness.

- Managers and team leaders of hard-pressed teams tackling society's greatest problems in health, mental health, welfare, social services, emergency services, forensic and justice settings. Work in these fields is undertaken in teams and groups with relentless demands, underfunding and constant exposure to traumatic events.
- Leaders, managers, consultants and trainers in organizations (including clubs, societies etc.) and people who consult to them. The effectiveness of organizations depends to a great extent on how well members of the organization think together.
- Consultants, public servants and others who need to consult with groups and communities in order to develop, discuss and gain acceptance of policies, plans and projects.

It is our hope that our chapters will open up possibilities and point to some guidelines about how to make better use of the resources that are available in the groups doing the work.

The disenchanted reader

This is not a book about Covid 19 but was mainly written during the first two years of the pandemic and following the Trump presidency in the USA. During these years we noticed a generic increase in polarization of opinion in everyday life in the many countries where we live. This polarization reduces the capacity for people to think together. We expect many people in everyday life want to understand more about how people think together, and why they sometimes fail. There are many people from the above list of occupations who are disenchanted with some of the groups, teams and organizations in which they are involved. The book offers some useful insights and hints gently at possible solutions to some forms of problems. If you are disenchanted, you may feel recognized by some of the chapters and, in addition to this solace, you may find some hope.

The ethic behind the book

We intend for the book to provoke readers to develop knowledge that shifts their perspective and helps to make sense of experience. Some would call that wisdom. It is hoped that this knowledge that can be integrated with the readers' perspective so they see things differently and have new options, that has relevance to their lives and that can lead to new thinking and actions. In our societies there is a blindness to the social nature of thinking that arises partly from over-emphasis on the individual and individualism and partly from resistance to acknowledging the inherently social dimension of mind. Hence one intention for the book is to provide readers with new ways of seeing and perceiving the fundamental importance of the social fabric and its dynamics, and what we are currently calling the 'social mind', in all human endeavours. In Chapter **9** the notion of the social mind is expanded. We wish to pull the collective to the foreground as a counter

to the dominance of individualism against the reality of our lives in society.

A second element is to assist readers to understand, perceive and value the implicit elements in human functioning which is outside consciousness. It includes what is classically referred to as the unconscious and of course this has been studied by psychoanalytic thinkers and practitioners. Nevertheless the unconscious processes we emphasise are wider than the traditional Freudian unconscious and needs to include, intuition, feelings, dreams and fantasies and most importantly, that there is an unconscious dimension to our social life and part of our being that is inherently and inescapably social is unconscious. Psychoanalysis has explored the unconscious in its social sense. One branch has been through the work of Bion which was taken up in the Tavistock approach to group work, education and organisational consultation[33].

Another application of psychoanalysis to groups was by S. H. Foulkes who founded Group Analysis and from the beginning emphasised that groups have a reality of their own and can provide therapeutic help to a whole range of mental health problems[34]. Both Foulkes and later practitioners of group analysis came to recognise there is a social unconscious which contains many thoughts, values and practices that exist in society and impinge on its members. These influences occur not only through history and the traumas of past generations but also provide a social dimension to unconscious life that as yet is lacking an adequate language. It is now an integral part of Group Analytic Theory and Practice[35] which is extended to active organisational consultation[36] and broader social and political issues[37]. At the same time much work has been done with psychoanalytic ideas in relation to groups in North America.

These ideas have been central to all the contributors. They range from practicing psychoanalysts, psychotherapist and group psychotherapists, organizational consultants, educators, and adventure therapists. Details of their professions and areas of work are listed in their biographic details and it can be seen that most work across several areas of professional work. This makes for a creative exchange. However, all have in common a conviction that the current view of individuals sealed inside their skin interacting with others inside theirs across a gap is obsolete and needs renovation. We have chosen to focus on the activity of thinking since it is central to many professional activities, and we all found we were working in one way or another with groups thinking.

Although we draw on a variety of ideas, psychoanalytic and other traditions, the book is written on the assumption that an informed reader interested in learning about the social nature of groups and their members and in understanding their thinking will be able to find interesting applications of these ideas. We hope they will both challenge current thinking as well

as confirm experiences which may have proved challenging and offer some ideas about how to tackle important problems of group life.

We begin with an account of the various strands of thought that have led to the kind of understanding we have been developing in Chapter **2**, then in Chapter **3** describes the experience of social thinking and Chapter 4 the neuroscience of social thinking. Then Chapter **5** describes how social thinking can develop into a social mind for the group given the right communicational conditions. These papers lay the foundations of our discussion. The later chapters demonstrate how a social dimension can be explored in widely different areas of application and with differing approaches and emphasis.

Chapter **6** considers the role of early development in social relationships as fundamental to group thinking. Chapter **7** looks at how groups can form a social body to give it clarity and identity. Chapter **8** provides a detailed account of how thinking exists beyond the skin. Chapter **9** describes the role of reflective groups to enable the kind of group thinking that helps work teams to integrate traumatic events and manage highly stressful work. Chapter **10** describes the exchange between therapist and client in terms of the meeting of minds within the social medium.

Chapter **11** describes how an organizational consultant needs to pay attention to the emergence of social realities in the unconscious communication between client consultant and colleagues. Chapter **12** describes how social structures can prevent group thinking and how interventions can allow it to develop again. Chapter **13** gives an account of how group thinking allows organisations and teams to process the pandemic and its effects. Chapter **14** is an account of an educational experiment in group thinking that leads out of traditional educational practice to take account of the social reality. Chapter **15** shows that the methods described in earlier papers can be adapted to create opportunities to help communities affected by war and trauma to work though rebuild their social fabric. Chapter **16** pulls together patterns of ideas to help the reader initegrate the many ideas presented in the book.

We trust that in these papers, the collective spark will be found smouldering. If it ignites some interest, curiosity and wish to learn more then we have achieved out aim. If as well, it stimulates the reader to observe social and group life more closely without remaining closed in the traditional individual-oriented frame of mind, then we will be even more pleased.

1 A finely described example of a group making a medical discovery is in Fleck (1979).

2 Many clear and graphic illustrations of what groups can achieve beyond their members are given in Surowiecki (2004).

3 We use the words team, group and collective to describe the many forms of gathering – virtual or face-to-face – when people think together. In general, a team has a shared purpose and its members collaborate to achieve a shared goal. Sports teams

cohere around the purpose of the game. Participants in groups often share a goal, but also participate because the group helps them achieve a personal goal. Learning groups and personal development groups are examples. Sometimes we use the term 'collective' as an overall descriptor to include either a team, group or other conglomeration of people.

4 see Douglas, (1986); Obholzer, (1994); Stapley, (2006).

5 See Wong, (2006).

6 The term 'thinking space' is a geographical metaphor for the context that enables people to think together. This concept is developed further in subsequent chapters (Chapters 13, 15).

7 See Clarke, (1995).

8 See Ringer, (2002) and Schein, (1987).

9 See Damasio (2003).

10 See Ratey, (2001).

11 See Glavas, Jules & van Oosten, (2006)

12 See Marrone (1998).

13 See Isaacs, (1999).

14 See Bion, (1961)

15 See Argyris, (1993); Isaacs, (1999) and Schon, (1995) for expansion on 'the reflective practitioner'

16 See Chapter 5.

17 Janis (1982) refers to the pressure for team members to mimic each other's' way of being in the group

18 See Anzieu, (1984)

19 Janis identifies it is seen as an impediment to thinking if it is assumed that consensus is necessary.

20 See Lawrence, Bain & Gould, (1996).

21 Anzieu (1984) refers to the "group illusion" that we are all one happy family

22 See Bohm, (1996)

23 See Stacey, (2003).

24 See Lipman-Bluemen & Leavitt, (1999).

25 See Deslauriers, (2002).

26 Chapman, (1999) describes the emotional hard work involved in engaging in difference of opinion.

27 According to Wictionary and other dictionary sources

28 The brain function involved in repetitive processes is called 'procedural memory', such as riding bicycles, driving cars, chopping wood and sport skills. Procedural memory is a part of the implicit memory system that also guides many interpersonal interactions. Both Charles Duhigg (2012) and Daniel Kahneman (2011) describe the function of procedural memory.

29 See Janis, (1982),

30 See Nemeth (2018).

31 See Le Bon (1895)

32 Rob Gordon's PhD thesis (2001) contains a comprehensive literature review and commentary on the Western reluctance to acknowledge the influence of groups on our behaviour.

33 Bion started with his work Experiences with Groups (1961) but he also referred to groups in his later work, and although he continued to work with individuals, his work with groups was picked up and applied through the work of AK Rice (1965) in the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (Colman and Bexton, 1975 and Colman and Geller, 1985) and led to the Group Relations approach. There are a number of other writers and traditions showing this work is alive and well and applied in many fields (Garland, 2010).

34 See Foulkes, (1966, 1975, 1977), and Foulkes and Anthony, (1973) and the journal Group Analysis.

35 See Hopper and Weinberg, (2011, 2016, 2017) and others.

36 See for example, Novakovic and Vincent (2019).

37 See for example Dalal, (1998, 2002).