

# Structure and process in the development of thinking-

Contributions from

- ▣ Carl Jung (1875-1961)
- ▣ Winfred Bion (1897-1979)

# Bion

- ▣ His analytic training was in the Freudian and Kleinian traditions, but he developed his own meta-psychology, one much more in line with that of Jung.
- ▣ The mind grows through exposure to truth
- ▣ Bion investigated the processes through which truth evolves, and the process through which truth is blocked

# JUNG' S TAVISTOCK LECTURES 1935

Basic principles of analytical psychology

Bion asked several questions of Jung in the first and second lectures.

■  
Bion, still a psychotherapy trainee, attended Jung's Tavistock Lectures with his patient, Samuel Beckett

Bion and Beckett both spoke of Jung's influence on Beckett

# Bion's family crest

## *Nist dominus frustra*

- ▣ First eight years spent in India
- ▣ Conflicted relationship with both his father and mother.
- ▣ Early on had an imaginary friend named “arf arfer’ who turned up unbidden in his thoughts, day-dreams and nightmares.

# The schoolboy exile in London

- ▣ He hated boarding school and described it as a terrible experience.
- ▣ Religion was a source of comfort but also of fear for his self-described 'badness'.
- ▣ Later school became more bearable
- ▣ Joined and served in the armed forces from 1916 -1918, in combat much of the time.

**Following WW-I. Bion completed  
his medical training in 1930**

**Analysis with John Rickman, a  
classical Freudian analyst**



- ▣ Training analysis with Melanie Klein, 1946 – 1952

Bion, with Hannah Siegel and Herbert Rosenfeld, worked on developing Klein's theory of the paranoid-schizoid position for use in the **analysis of patients with psychotic disorders**



# Freud and Bion

## *Motivational Systems*

### FREUD

- ▣ Human behavior based on delayed gratification
- ▣ A present pleasure is renounced in favor of a greater quantum of pleasure at a future date

### BION

- ▣ Behavior determined by the emergence of truth and desire for emotional growth
- ▣ The movement from *evading pain to acceptance of suffering* (direct opposition to the pleasure principle)

# Dream Theory

## FREUD

- ▣ The function of dreams was to conceal a hidden wish.

## BION

- ▣ Function of dreams was to synthesize fragmented elements into a whole

# Thinking

## FREUD

- ▣ Thought as a mode for the reduction of tension
- ▣ The *removal* of pain and frustration

## BION

- ▣ The *management* of tension
- ▣ The individual becomes able to bear pain
- ▣ In the service of truth

# Relationship of the unconscious to consciousness

## FREUD

- ▣ The polarity between consciousness and unconsciousness
- ▣ The unconscious arising from the repression of consciousness contents

## BION

- ▣ Changes the focus to the relationship between finite and infinite
- ▣ The need in analysis to prevent the finite from smothering the infinite
- ▣ To demonstrate the transforming process through which the infinite passes into finite awareness

# Bion and Klein

- ▣ Up until 1963 Bion was a member and leader in the London Kleinian group and British Psychoanalytical Society.

Following his publication of *Transformations* (1965) and later *Attention and Interpretations* (1970), he became anathema both to classical Kleinians and Freudians.

# The Concept “O”

- ▣ *I shall use the sign “O” which is the ultimate reality represented by terms such as ultimate reality, absolute truth, the Godhead, the infinite, the thing-in-itself.*

*Bion 1963*

# Psychological growth

## BION

- ▣ The mind grows through exposure to exposure truth
- ▣ The investigation of the process through which truth evolves
- ▣ Study of the processes through which truth is blocked

## JUNG

- ▣ ...that layer of utter unconsciousness contain[s]...the key to individual completeness and wholeness, in other words, healing (XVIII, 179)
- ▣ The individuation process

# Dream theory

## BION

- ▣ Functions to synthesize fragmented elements into a whole.
- ▣ Processing or metabolizing beta elements which cannot be used for thought, into alpha elements which become the basis for thoughts and images

## JUNG

- ▣ The dream means what it says; the dream images arise from a variety of sources – some of which have never been conscious.
- ▣ Meaning making--  
compensator: obj. / subj.,  
reductive / constructive



# Bion's later (post-London) Period

Moved to Los Angeles in 1968

Lectures in Brazil and Italy

# Bion's Exile from Psycho-analysis

- ▣ Many Kleinians stated that Bion never wrote anything worthwhile after *Elements of Psycho-analysis* (1963).
- ▣ Others described him as having deteriorated and that everything he had written subsequent to his leaving England could be dismissed as the ramblings of a senile old man

# Bion's Legacy

▣ He utilized Klein's thinking about:

Life and death instincts

Phenomena of greed and envy

Theory of splitting and projective identification

**The paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions**

**Theory of internal objects**

# Bion's additions and expansions to Kleinian Theory

- ▣ Abandonment of memory and desire
- ▣ Reliance on imagination and intuition
- ▣ Abandonment of the focus on instinctual life
- ▣ Examination of pure thoughts and pure feelings – the things-in-themselves
  - (inherent pre-conceptions)

# Any reason for Jungians to study or read Bion?

- ▣ Much of Bion's meta-psychology is similar to, or parallel with, that of Jung.
- ▣ Bion's influence in the wider analytical world has come to be quite significant, and growing.
- ▣ It is bringing Jungian thought, into the psychoanalytical world.

- ▣ Bion expanded and amplified a number of Jungian principles.
- ▣ Bion's analysands / disciples do both discuss and reference Jung's ideas and contributions in their work.

# The Analytic / Emergent 'Third'

## JUNG

- ▣ Transcendent Function – emerges through interactions of the consc. and unconsc. systems.
- ▣ The bringing together of opposites for the production of a third

## BION

- ▣ Transformation – process whereby the infinite (uncons, without form) is transformed into the finite, with form.
- ▣ Transformation of beta elements through the alpha process into thinkable thoughts (alpha element) with form / image



# Relationship and the Analytic Field

JUNG

(*FORDHAM & PLAUT*)

- ▣ The Psychology of the Transference (Jung)
- ▣ The need for relationship for the development of imagination (F. & P., Schwartz-Salant)

BION

(*OGDEN*)

- ▣ Emotion, the basis for thought, arises in relationship (Bion)
- ▣ Therapist's preconscious in exploring the analytic field [anal. third] (Ogden).

# Links between human beings

- ▣ Love (L, -L)
- ▣ Hate (H, -H)
- ▣ Knowledge (K, -K)
- ▣ Each is an emotional activity. *Fear* is a passivity.

# Links—

A crucial activity in which the emotional experience of *learning* takes place

- ▣ Hatred of learning , deriving from the psychotic part of the personality, leads to an attack on the link — stopping or reversing the link.
- ▣ It is possible to define the key link of each analytic session, that underlies all other statements and feelings.

The catalyst which gives rise to the emotional experience is the link between one human being and another

- ▣ Thought process

- ▣ A discharge will occur

# Psychosis

# The Psychotic and Non-psychotic parts of the personality

- ▣ Even in psychosis, some part of the ego remains in contact with reality, and is therefore not psychotic
- ▣ In the withdrawal from reality seen in psychosis, this is, in fact a phantasy. It seems quite real to the patient.
- ▣ The effect of this phantasy is a real one; it leads to feelings and relations (and later to thought processes) being cut off from one another [fragmentation]

- Bion extended the effect of the illusion to the phantasy underlying *projective identification*. There is pressure on the analyst in the inter-personal relationship in order that the analyst will experience aspects of the projected part(s).
- Bion stressed the importance of *verbal thought* for awareness of psychic reality.

# Primitive Basis of Thought

- ▣ The significance of verbal thought for psychic reality
- ▣ Foundations for primitive thought are blocked where there is excessive projective identification and splitting
- ▣ Primitive thoughts are closer to 'ideographs and sight rather than words and hearing'.



- ▣ Bion considered that *introjection* leads to the formation of unconscious thought 'turned towards the relations between object-impressions'
- ▣ Unconsc. thought was linked to the 'consciousness attached to' sense impressions.
- ▣ Together, these are the precursors to verbal thought.

## PSYCHOTIC PERSONALITY

- ▣ Splitting – aim to produce minute fragmentation (paranoid –schizoid position)
- ▣ Effect ‘separations which run directly counter to any natural lines of demarcation between one part of the psyche and another’

## NON-PSYCHOTIC PERSONALITY

- ▣ Dissociation/  
Repression – gentler, having respect for natural lines of demarcation between whole objects
- ▣ Effects separation (depressive position) where tension is held

# Container/Contained *(The Alchemical Vas)*

- ▣ Bion designates the masc. and feminine symbols for the contained and container.
- ▣ The archetypal image used for this is the mother's breast / infant The mating of these two elements is the basis for all mental growth.

## Bion's modification of Klein's concept of *projective identification*

He conceptualized the mother's capacity for *reverie* as the capacity for thinking about the sense impressions (beta-elements) projected into her by the infant's primary anxiety

The mother then detoxifies these and sends them back to her infant in a form that enables them to become thinkable (alpha-elements) and be used for development

# Post-Bion in the USA

James S. Grotstein

*Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams the  
Dream? –  
Psychic Presences*

Thomas H. Ogden

*Rediscovering Psychoanalysis: Thinking and  
Dreaming, Learning and Forgetting*

# Dreaming as processing

- ▣ The dream as the mechanism whereby undigestible beta elements are transformed into alpha elements that can be used for thought.
- ▣ The analyst dreams the patient's material in the reverie state in the analytic hour.

# Schizophrenia (the psychotic) *and Language Usage*

- ▣ 1. Language as a mode of action
- ▣ 2. As a method of communication
- ▣ 3. As a mode of thought



# As a mode of action

- ▣ In the service of splitting or projective identification.
- ▣ Use of words as things or as split-off parts of himself
- ▣ Pushes these forcibly into the analyst or object(s)

# Language for splitting of the object

- ▣ When the analyst becomes identified with internal prosecutors
- ▣ Severe splitting makes for extreme difficulty in achieving an ability to use or form symbols

# Capacity to form symbols

- ▣ 1. The ability to grasp whole objects (vs part-objects)
- ▣ The abandonment of the paranoid-schizoid position with its attendant splitting
- ▣ The bringing together of splits and the ushering in of the depressive position

# Intolerance seen in the Psychotic

- ▣ The depressive position
- ▣ Internal persecutors
- ▣ Verbal thought

# The outcome of progress in the analysis—

## *Realization of insanity*

- ▣ Recognition by the patient of one's own psychic reality
- ▣ Realization that he/she has hallucinations and delusions
- ▣ The patient will direct powerful feelings of hatred towards the analyst, and a conviction that it is the analyst who has driven him crazy.

In the event of improvement, that which the patient has spent a lifetime avoiding, becomes *known*.

- ▣ If the analyst tries to reassure the patient, he / she undoes all that has been accomplished.

Bion's contribution to the understanding of  
psychosis and the psychotic mind  
[Aguayo, J. , *Int. J. PsychoAnal.*,02/09]

- ▣ A movement from the interpretation of *content* to interpreting their *thought processes*

# Use of Language in those with psychotic mentation

- ▣ Language as a manifestation of disordered thinking
- ▣ Confuses omnipotent thoughts with action
- ▣ Where thoughtfulness is needed, the psychotic prefers action



# Projective identification as having a communicational impact on the analyst

- ▣ The newly emerging intersubjective field

# The analyst as being 'intruded into' as the projective receptacle

- ▣ Without the containing and interpretative intervention, there results a more severely persecutory recycling of the patient's original projection.

**The analyst is left to withstand the violent jolts and remain the repositor of sane, integrative depressive position thinking.**

The psychotic attacks his own mind  
and thus his capacity to communicate.

The many fragmented pieces of self  
are violently (forcefully) projected into  
his objects

In this violent splitting and projection,  
the psychotic attacks not only his own  
mind but the function of *his own sense  
organs*

# The resulting subjective state

- ▣ Neither alive nor dead
- ▣ The mind is destroyed as an 'apparatus of perception'

# Summary

- ▣ Bion's model of thinking begins with the breast (mother) as receiving container, upon / into which projections (beta elements) are made by the infant.
- ▣ The breast / other holds, metabolizes, transforms these projections into beta-elements which form the material for dreams and thoughts.



- ▣ When this process is repeated hundreds of times through the mother / analysts' own alpha function, the infant / analysand is able to introject this process into their own mind
- ▣ Failure of attunement of mother / analyst is a form of re - traumatization.



# Jung

Similarly, Bion described the container /  
contained in relationship

Described the aspects of projection

Recognized that the analyst is affected by the  
unconscious projections of the patient

**Emphasized the relational basis  
in which emotion is experienced  
and ultimately expressed,  
transformed and symbolized**

**Developed a way of understanding the symptoms and interactions occurring when we work with psychotic /borderline patients, or experience that aspect of the psychotic personality in all of us**

Utilizing this model, and recognizing developmental failures, Bion left a model for understanding normal thought processes, and the abnormal thought process seen in psychosis.

Finally, Bion and his followers have joined with Jungians in the exploration of the archetypal or “O”.

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