

**RESPONSE-ABILITY AND RESPONSE-INABILITY WITHIN THE
THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP**

by

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psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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ABSTRACT
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Theoretical in nature, this dissertation explores an aspect of the therapeutic relationship related to the notion of responsibility, which, in the present context is looked at as *dynamically* potent by effecting a shift in emphasis from the moral to the dialogical characteristics this notion carries. Toward that end, the study presented here utilizes clinical and theoretical findings in psychoanalytic practice, theory, and infant research, Emanuel Levinas' notion of responsibility, and Wilfred Bion's conception of human psychic development.

"Response-ability" is understood as an extension of very early experiences in the realm of relatedness, and communication between mother and child. Furthermore, it is seen as a basic emotion in which both child and parent are mobilized emotionally in verbal and nonverbal communicative interactions.

The infant's capacity to call his mother into attention through vocalizations, body language, and projections is understood as the child's capacity to *respond* adequately to his internal needs and stimuli. The mother's capacity to read into her child's *appeal* and to *respond* adequately to its interpolation is the manifestation of a specific emotional connection established through a back and forth dialogue between the two. Implicit and necessary to such exchange (as to any exchange), is the conscious-unconscious realization of *separateness*. The back and forth movement between mother and child gradually introduces the idea of "Otherness" and the capacity to negotiate each aspect of the connection well enough allows for emotional and cognitive growth.

However, when the mutual meeting of the child and his environment presents with difficulties in the interrelated dynamics of *appealing-responding-differentiating*, the child's psychological growth might be stalled and the establishment of a productive relationship between parent and child compromised. The dynamics of *appealing-responding-differentiating* function as an emotional link that is active throughout life between people and present in the therapeutic relationship.

Based on these premises, this dissertation is proposing a new construct, the "(RE) link." It is composed of three elements - (Q) for questioning/appealing, (R) for responding, (Df) for differentiating - and is meant to highlight transferential-countertransferential dynamics, which are illustrated by discussing the myth of Oedipus as a clinical case.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is seeking to isolate and explore an aspect of the therapeutic relationship related to the notion of responsibility. In this context however, responsibility loses the moral connotations attached to its use in everyday language. It is looked at as a dynamically potent issue through a shift in emphasis from the moral to the dialogical characteristics this notion carries.

The first chapter is concerned with the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and his approach to the questions of Ethics and Responsibility. Levinas' criticism of Western Philosophy and the development of his radical reassessment of Ethics inspired this dissertation. His conceptions of responsibility, the Other, the Face and alterity as opposed to sameness, constitute the foundation on which the existence of an emotional valence called response-ability leans.

The second chapter gives an account of Wilfred Bion's conception of human psychic development including a perspective of the evolution of Bion's thinking as pertaining to the works of Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein. His conception of container/contained ($\varphi\sigma$), alpha

function, beta elements, O, projective identification, psychosis, and the Love, Hate, and Know links are the tools I have used in conceptualizing my thoughts. Bion's amazing creativity and his unpredictable outlook on things, have allowed me to dare use his concept of 'emotional link' and play with it in this research.

The third chapter compares and links the philosophical and psychoanalytic viewpoints of Levinas and Bion. Although on the surface it would seem that the two worlds do not have much in common, this chapter seeks to show that with regard to this dissertation the way in which the two points of view work together is not unlike the thinkers who inspired this research. They remain Other while their points of view enrich each other.

The fourth chapter addresses the ineffability of the process of change in psychotherapy. For Bion the transformative quality of the therapeutic work is facilitated by the analyst's negative capability. Namely, his ability to tolerate doubts while abstaining from rushing after facts and reason. Various other points of view are discussed as well as a study reflecting the efficacy of psychoanalytic treatment.

The fifth chapter postulates that response-ability and response-inability are emotions. This chapter brings together the four previous chapters in establishing the existence of the (RE) link. This postulation is structured around linguistic cues pointing to the inherent dynamic of question, response, and difference within the concept of responsibility. It is also based on my interpretation of Levinas' conception of responsibility and on my use of Bion's concept of emotional links.

The sixth chapter takes Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" as a case study. Since Freud, the famous myth has not ceased to draw the attention of the psychoanalytic community. While keeping in mind Freud, Klein, and Bion as points of reference, the analysis of the myth from the (RE) link vertex departs from all three. From this point of view, the tragedy reveals the underlying trauma of emotional miscommunication and the severance of one's capacity for response-ability.

CHAPTER ONE

EMMANUEL LEVINAS

Levinas' thought is deeply rooted in the phenomenological philosophical movement. A short introduction is necessary to highlight the ways in which he remained attached to certain aspects of phenomenology while departing from others as he developed his own ideas. Levinas' approach to phenomenology is concerned with the questions of 'otherness', 'responsibility', 'I-Thou', 'the vocative' and 'relationality'.

1.1 Phenomenology and Levinas

The origin of the word "phenomenology" comes from the Greek words "phainomenon" (appearance) and logos (reason or reasoned inquiry). The main question that phenomenology asks is: "What is an appearance?" The answer to that question is that an appearance is anything of which one is conscious and is the manifestation of that of which it is the appearance (Stewart & Mikuna, 1974).

The philosophical tradition of some philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century was concerned with the question of consciousness as well, except that they treated consciousness as one among other substances in the world. This stance is rejected by phenomenologists who

assert that consciousness cannot be treated as an object among other objects.

By the end of the 19th century the impressive advance of the sciences in explaining natural phenomena led to the conviction that anything and everything could be investigated and eventually explained by empirical means. Within this frame of mind traditional philosophical questions addressing ethics, metaphysics and religion were irrelevant and were discarded.

In contrast to 'scientism', phenomenology contends that certain phenomena cannot be dealt with adequately by means of quantitative methods of experimental science (Stewart & Mikunas, 1974). Thus, phenomenology does not limit itself to the investigation of objective or naturalistic realities, but broadens the range of philosophical inquiry by rejecting assumptions about what is real or not real.

Phenomenology seeks to return to the origin of philosophy, namely a search for wisdom or true knowledge, and the place of man in the cosmos. "Philosophy begins in wonder," declares Husserl. Accordingly, the task of philosophy is to fulfill man's need for self knowledge and knowledge of his world.

Edmund Husserl in the mid-1890 started the phenomenological movement. Its influence on philosophy, psychology, politics, theology, literature and more has been tremendous. As in most important movements it branched out in different directions notwithstanding the fact that most phenomenologists continued to share certain basic conceptions of the original idea.

Lester Ambree (2001) gives a list of widely accepted features of the phenomenological approach:

- a. Phenomenologists tend to oppose the acceptance of unobservable matters and grand systems erected in speculative thinking.
- b. Phenomenologists tend to oppose naturalism (also called objectivism and positivism), which is the worldview growing from modern natural science and technology that has been spreading from Northern Europe since the renaissance.
- c. Positively speaking, phenomenologists tend to justify cognition with reference to what Edmund Husserl called 'evidenz', which is awareness of a matter itself as disclosed in the most clear, distinct, and adequate way for something of its kind.

- d. Phenomenologists tend to believe that not only objects in the natural and cultural worlds, but also ideal objects, such as numbers, and even conscious life itself can be made evident and thus known.
- e. Phenomenologists tend to hold that inquiry ought to focus upon what might be called "encountering" as it is directed at objects and, correlatively, upon "objects as they are encountered."
- f. Phenomenologists tend to recognize the role of description in universal, a priori, or "eidetic" terms as prior to explanation by means of causes, purposes or grounds.

Beyond the agreement on shared principles, with time, different thinkers started to take phenomenology in different directions. Emmanuel Levinas is one of those thinkers. His philosophy is inspired by Husserl as well as by Heidegger's 'Existential Phenomenology', which concerned itself with topics such as action, conflict, finitude, oppression and death (Ambree, 2001).

However, although Levinas' philosophical premise stems from the method of Husserl and Heidegger, he extends the limits of their agenda with the daring claim that what

guides philosophy is ethics and not ontology¹ as responsibility precedes reasoning. For Levinas, the meaning of ethics is to be found in responsibility in relation to difference. Through the metaphor of the nakedness of the face of the 'Other' referred to as "...the absolutely weak... what is absolutely exposed, what is bare and destitute..." (Levinas, 1982, p. 104), Levinas introduces the theme of responsibility, which, by entering our lives, makes philosophy a necessity.

Levinas' ethical phenomenology is influenced by his own Jewish experience of Nazi brutality. Although he starts out as a Husserlian phenomenologist he comes to criticize this approach as he disagreed with Husserl's notion of 'transcendental ego' which remains idealistic. Likewise, he departs from Heidegger's ontological phenomenology because it revolves around the idea of 'being' with the 'self' (Van Manen, 2000).

As opposed to Husserl's emphasis on the essence of things, and Heidegger's concentration on 'mineness' as manifestations of the primacy of the self, Levinas believes that in order to understand human reality our focus has to

¹ Ontology is the inquiry into, or theory of, being as being. In a broader sense it includes the study of what there is an inventory of what exists often divided into categories. An ontological commitment is a commitment to an existence claim.

shift toward what is otherwise than being, on alterity, or the infinite which manifests itself through the encounter with an Other's face. The Other's face calls us, addresses us (vocative), and our response to this appeal is an ethical experience (Van Manen, 2000).

1.2 Levinas' criticism of Western Philosophy

In his book "Totality and the Infinite: An Essay on Exteriority" (1969) Levinas engages in a critique of traditional phenomenology, European philosophy and Western civilization as a whole. The premise for his criticism is to be found in the spirit of Greek philosophy whose thought and practice are ruled by a desire for totalization and the reduction of the universe to an ultimate unity (Peperzak, 1999). Levinas' ethics contests Western philosophy in its attempt at unifying truth, the self, the world, and reason itself into grand systems of philosophical unity and harmony (Veling, 2001). This tendency to monism stands in complete contradiction with the basic ideas of phenomenology which concentrate on phenomena as they present themselves and which entails the acceptance of singularity. According to Levinas, Western philosophy is an 'egology' expressing an ideology in which the ego is at once the center of the universe and the source of its

meaning. This tradition comes directly out of the philosophy of Descartes, Kant and Husserl. Descartes writes in his "Mediations" (1981, p 162), "Every idea is a work of the mind." He then appealed to God's existence as a way to justify the paradox inherent in his statement. Namely, if ideas come from the mind, how can the mind give us knowledge of independently real substances? In Descartes 'cogito'² the presence of another is only possible through his own ideas, thus in Descartes' philosophy there is no place for otherness, as the idea of God takes its place.

For Husserl on the other hand, the other exists, but only in the sense that the other has for me. In other words, the other is only the meaning that I create for the other. The consequences of this conception of the self in relation to the concept of ethics is expressed by Beavers (2002):

Given this view towards ideas, then, anytime I take the person in my idea to be the real person, I have closed off contact with the real person; I have cut off the connection with the other that is necessary if ethics is to refer to real other people. This is a central violence to the other

² Descartes theory of knowledge starts with the quest for certainty. This is eventually found in the "cogito ergo sum". By locating the point of certainty in my own awareness of my own self, Descartes give a first-person twist to the theory of knowledge. The Metaphysics associated with this priority is the famous Cartesian dualism, or separation of mind and matter into two different but interacting substances. Descartes sees that it takes divine dispensation to certify any relationship between the two realms thus divided. (Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, 1996)

that denies the other his/her own autonomy. Levinas calls this violence "totalization" and it occurs whenever I limit the other to a set of rational categories, be they racial, sexual, or otherwise. Indeed, it occurs whenever I already know what the other is about before the other has spoken. Totalization is a denial of the other's difference, the denial of the otherness of the other. That is the inscription of the other in the same. If ethics presupposes a real person, then such totalization will, in itself be unethical. (p. 2 of 8)

Levinas (1969) expresses clearly that meaning can only take shape through the communication of meaning to *someone*. Consequently he asserts, the Other is the first condition of meaning. As opposed to Hegel who sees reason as overcoming alterity, Levinas sees it as requiring social plurality and separation.

1.3 The Other and Otherness in the Philosophy of Levinas.

At the heart of Levinas' philosophy stands the question: "How does the self meet the Other?" His reference to 'interiority' and 'exteriority' suggest that beyond the self there is more. More than what I can know, more than the limits of my own self.

In addressing the issue of exteriority as something that goes beyond being, Levinas sets out to challenge

Ontology and Metaphysics³ in the traditional ideas of the 'transcendental ego', representation, the verbal form of to be, as the ultimate authorities in deciding what is meaningful.

In an interview he gave in 1987 (Doutreleau & Zalio, 1987), Levinas elaborates on his views of the ethical dimension in his philosophy. He starts by saying:

We should not let ourselves be overly impressed by the false maturity of the moderns who do not see a place for ethics-which they denounce as moralism-in reasonable discourse (p. 201).

Levinas' stance begs the question: "How can ethics be integrated in a discourse about reason or knowledge?"

Levinas begins by addressing the inherent meaning of the word 'being'. The verbal form of the word 'being' indicates that its significance is in doing, acting, or in a history. Consequently, being suggests the question of self-preservation in the effort of 'going on being' which itself hints at 'a kind of unforgettable seniority of non-being, against which being [strove]⁴...' (p. 201). Levinas deems this primary struggle as that of the interiority of pure being before or without ethics, absorbed in its 'conatus essendi'

³ Ontology is the attempt to say what entities exist. Metaphysics is the attempt to say, of those entities, what they are.

⁴ This position is reminiscent of Freud's notion of the Death Instinct characterized by a living organism's tendency to return to an original state of non-being.

(i.e., a closed structure upon which everything bases its persistence in its own being). Ethics on the other hand was born out of

[t]his human inversion of the in-itself and the for-itself (of "every man for himself") into an ethical self, into a priority of for-the-other - this replacement of ontological persistence by an I henceforth unique certainly, but unique because of his chosenness for a responsibility for the other man- inescapable and non transferable, this radical turn about would take place in what I call an encounter with the face of the other. (Doutreleau & Zalio, 1987, p. 202)

According to Levinas, this ethical engagement toward the other marks the beginning of thought. Breaking with the theoretical structure of Western thought, he argues that to think is no longer to contemplate, but to be engaged in the drama of being-in-the-world. Consequently, understanding our reality in the world does not require of us to define it, but rather to be in an affective state⁵. Unlike Heidegger who maintains that we live from things through their function and implements, Levinas maintained that we live from things as nourishment⁶ (Beaver, 2002). In introducing the body where the spiritual/cerebral only had been envisaged, Levinas transfigures the notion of

⁵ Bion's conception of the development of an apparatus for thinking is based on the same premise, i.e. one's capacity to tolerate emotions and frustration.

⁶ Bion (1963) talks of "food for thoughts" and equates the apparatus for thinking to the digestive system.

transcendence by bringing it back from the sublime into the humbleness of everyday life, into the dwelling of a human body that works, speaks, feels, enjoys and suffers. If philosophy is not an isolated compartment of human existence, it is necessarily intermingled with life's entire struggle for meaning (Peperzak, 1999).

In the article, "Is Ontology Fundamental?" (1951), Levinas proposes that although no meaningful language can argue in favor of a divorce between language and reason, one could legitimately wonder whether reason had to necessarily precede language. He reflects on the possibility that language could be based on a relationship that is prior to understanding, and that constitutes reason⁷.

This relationship is established through the encounter with the epiphany of an Other's face whose presence and speech ruptures the homogeneity of my universe and breaks its totality⁸. Consequently, the order of meaning comes to us from the inter-human relationship. The 'Face', with all

⁷ For Kleinians and neo-Kleinians, Projective Identification is a way through which communication and meaning can be created prior to the acquisition of language.

⁸ Bion's conception of Projective Identification as having the function of communicating internal affective states to the mother, and having for effect to disrupt her "peace of mind" is very close to Levinas' notion of the rupture of the sameness or totality of the 'living being' through the encounter of the Other's face.

its meaningfulness is the beginning of intelligibility (Levinas, 1982). To the question "What is there in the Face?" Levinas warns that his notion of the Face is not intended as plastic. He writes in "Ethics as First Philosophy" (1984),

The proximity of the other is the face's meaning, and it means from the very start in a way that goes beyond those plastic forms which forever try to cover the face like a mask of their presence to perception. But always the face shows through these forms. Prior to any particular expression and beneath all particular expressions which cover over or protect with an immediately adopted face or countenance, there is the nakedness and destitution of the expression as such, that is to say extreme exposure, defenselessness, vulnerability itself. This extreme exposure-prior to any human aim-is like a shot 'at point blank range' (p.83).

According to Levinas, the other, who looks at me, is not a phenomenon because a face is invisible, as it cannot be identified as a theme. A visage cannot become a piece of my surrounding. The Other penetrates my world when he visits me as an absolute stranger coming from beyond (Levinas, 1969). In this meeting of the Other's face, he becomes my neighbor "precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing

recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question"
(p. 83)⁹.

As a result, this summons to responsibility destroys the formula of generality. The destruction of the formula of generality is also present in speech, as speech just like the face comes from beyond, insofar as it precedes everything which can be said thematically. Just as the Face, saying resists thematization. Levinas notes that Western Philosophy had neglected both, while concentrating on the question of "facing being" and the finitude of our existence. Levinas turns those questions around by shifting his attention not on "facing being" but on "being faced". My gaze is now turned toward the other. "Now, it is no longer I who faces being, but the other who faces me. I lose a certain hold over myself and find that I am no longer the one who searches and questions. I am the one who is faced by the other-with the gaze, the look, request, command, or call of the other in my life" (Veling, 2001).

⁹ Donald Meltzer's (1988) concept of the aesthetic conflict addresses the awe-like experience of the baby facing his mother. He states: "The ordinary devoted mother presents to her ordinary beautiful baby a complex object of overwhelming interest, both sensual and infra-sensual.... the meaning of his mother's behaviour, of the appearance and disappearance of the breast and the light in her eyes, of a face over which the emotions pass like the shadows of clouds over a landscape are unknown to him. He has after all, come into a strange country where he knows neither the language nor the customary non-verbal cues and communications" (p. 22).

In giving an ethical dimension to the necessity of difference, Levinas overthrows the philosophical tradition of Descartes' "I think therefore I am" and replaces it by "Here I am" as the response to the call of the other. In Levinas, responsibility is not a choice because "Here I am" precedes any self-consciousness. Against the belief of an original freedom, Levinas shows that responsibility toward the Other is not a decision originating in our will. This inescapable responsibility entails an asymmetrical relationship or the "asymmetry of intersubjectivity". Quoting Dostoievsky, Levinas (1982) writes: "All men are responsible for one another, and I more than anyone else. One of the most important things for me is that asymmetry and that formula. It is Dostoievsky's formula" (p. 107).

I believe that this asymmetry inherent in the Other's appeal takes the form of "I am here!" as it signals itself to me and ignites my response to it in the form of "Here I am".

As will be seen in the chapter on response-ability, the response to the appeal coming from one who is not me, is unmediated by neither "memory nor desire"¹⁰. It has an

¹⁰ Bion (1998) expresses the undesirability of saturating the therapeutic space with prior knowledge or a set agenda. As Levinas, Bion advocates for an 'act of faith' through which an encounter with the Other is made possible.

inescapable quality that thrusts us into this encounter,
into surprise and into affect.

CHAPTER TWO

WILFRED BION

Bion's work with schizophrenic patients marked the beginning of the elaboration of his interpretation of the psychotic personality, which in turn led to the development of his theory on thinking (1962). During the 40ies and 50ies, Bion's work with psychotic patients lead him to attempt to understand the problem of thought disturbance and language. Historically, the use of psychoanalysis with psychotic patients had been discouraged. However, in Meltzer's (1998) words,

Bion, along with people like Rosenfeld and Segal chose to follow the technical tradition of Mrs. Klein in adapting the method by altering nothing but the means of communication available to the patient...by widening the scope of their power of observation. Naturally, this took the form of paying greater attention, as in child analysis, to the action of the patient in the consulting room. But it also extended to a new area of phenomenology, the uses of language. (p. 291)

Bion formulated his conception of psychosis in a series of papers that follows his experience with the analytic treatment of schizophrenics. Some of those papers are: "On Hallucinations" (1958), "Differentiation of the Psychotic and Non-Psychotic Personalities" (1957), "On Arrogance" (1957), and "Attacks on Linking" (1959). This

sequence of papers is testament to Bion's extended inquiry and deepening understanding of this matter.

In his paper "Differentiation of the Psychotic and Non-Psychotic Personalities" (1957), Bion put forth the idea that psychosis is the result of

minute splitting of all that part of the personality that is concerned with awareness of internal and external reality and the expulsion of these fragments so that they enter into or engulf objects (p. 266).

Bion finds in his work with schizophrenic patients evidence of such phenomena and proceeds to analyze the dynamic underlying such occurrences.

2.1 Freud's and Klein's Influence on Bion

Bion attributes his clarification of "the obscurity that pervades the whole of psychotic analysis" (p.266) to the oeuvres of Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein, which play a central part in the elaboration of his conception of mental functioning.

Sigmund Freud

Freud's (1911) description of the mental apparatus called into activity by the demands of the reality principle and in particular of that part of it which is

concerned with the consciousness attached to sense-organs. Bleandonu (2000) specifies:

Leaving aside Freud's distinction between inside and outside, Bion considers pleasure and pain to be as 'real' as sensory impressions. Lastly, he considers the capacity to understand to be an attribute of consciousness, to the extent that consciousness is 'a sense organ for the perception of psychical qualities' (Freud, 1911, p. 151).

We will later see how Bion's conception of the 'alpha function' which operates on consciousness of emotional experience will allow for a reevaluation of conscience experience and learning. If Freud gives unconscious processes a role never before imagined at the root of human behavior and motivation, Bion revitalizes consciousness.

In "The Ego and the Id" (1923b) Freud characterizes the Ego thus:

We have formed the idea that in each individual there is a coherent organization of mental processes; and we call this his ego. It is to this ego that consciousness is attached; the ego controls the approaches to motility - that is, to the discharge of excitations into the external world; it is the mental agency which supervises all its own constituent processes, and which goes to sleep at night, though even then it exercises the censorship on dreams. From this ego proceed the repressions, too, by means of which it is sought to exclude certain trends in the mind not merely from consciousness but also from other forms of effectiveness and activity (p. 3951).

Bion (1957) agrees with the "...classification of ego function, which Freud put forward..." (p. 267) but reconsiders the idea put forth by Freud (1924) that in

...amentia - an acute hallucinatory confusion which is perhaps the most extreme and striking form of psychosis - either the external world is not perceived at all, or the perception of it has no effect whatever... We know that other forms of psychosis, the schizophrenias, are inclined to end in affective hebetude - that is, in a loss of all participation in the external world. In regard to the genesis of delusions, a fair number of analyses have taught us that the delusion is found applied like a patch over the place where originally a rent had appeared in the ego's relation to the external world (pp. 4066-4067).

According to Bion, the ego is never wholly withdrawn from reality. He believes that the patient's loss of contact with reality is due to an omnipotent fantasy aimed at destroying reality or any awareness of it as to create a state that is neither life nor death. Withdrawal is in fact only an illusion caused by the patient's deployment of projective identification against his mental apparatus, which he evacuates. The power of the fantasy that split the perceptual apparatus in minute fragments and projects it outwards is such that it looked as if it were a fact and not a fantasy. Those modifications regarding the nature of withdrawal as well as the mechanisms involved in creating the illusion of withdrawal, led Bion to the conclusion that

such patients are ill enough to be considered psychotic but that the psychotic part of their personality obscures the presence of another part that is non-psychotic.

Furthermore, Bion asserts that all individuals, even the most advanced, have mental aptitudes and reactions deriving from the psychotic part of their personality, which manifest themselves through violent attacks on the mental apparatus, on consciousness and on both internal and external reality. Bion's deduction is closely linked to Melanie Klein's notions of "Projective Identification "and "positions".

Melanie Klein

Melanie Klein (1946) first introduced the concept of projective identification in her paper "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms" to describe a complex set of processes by which split off parts of the personality are projected into an object where they become installed affording the illusion of control over the object. One characteristic of Projective Identification is that the recipient of those projections reacts as if the projections were part of his own self. Klein (1946) remarks that when the use of

Projective Identification is excessive, it leaves the psyche it has been evacuated from, impoverished.¹¹

By using the term "position" as opposed to "stage" or "phase," Melanie Klein (1935) put the emphasis on a developmental rather than a structural model. The implication of this shift is that a 'position' is always an available state, not something that one passes through with more or less success (Mitchell, 1987). In a note she wrote at the end of her paper "A Study of Envy and Gratitude" (1957), Melanie Klein explained her choice of terminology:

In my former work I have described the psychotic anxieties and mechanisms of the child in terms of phases of development...but since in normal development the psychotic anxieties and mechanisms never solely predominate...the term psychotic phase is not really satisfactory. I am now using the term 'position' in relation to the child's early developmental psychotic anxieties and defenses. It seems to me easier to associate with this term, than with the terms 'mechanisms' or 'phases', the differences between the developmental psychotic anxieties of the child and the psychoses of the adult: e.g., the quick change-over that occurs from a persecution anxiety or depressed feeling to a normal attitude- a change-over that is so characteristic of the child (p.235).

¹¹ In "On the Sense of Loneliness" (1963) M. Klein writes: "Projective identification is based on the splitting of the ego and the projections of parts of the self, into other people; first of all the mother and the breast. This projection derives the oral-anal-urethral impulses, the part of the self being omnipotently expelled in the bodily substance into the mother in order to control her and take possession of her. She is not felt to be as separate individual but an aspect of the self. If these excrement are expelled in hatred the mother is felt to be dangerous and hostile. But it is not only bad parts of the self that are split off and projected, but also the good parts" (p. 303).

According to such conception, the phenomena she describes imply that each position is particular to certain types of object-relations (part/whole objects) with specific types of anxieties and defenses that persist throughout an individual's life.

In the paranoid-schizoid position the primitive nature of the anxieties such as annihilation, mobilizes primitive defenses. Splitting, idealization and projective identification allows the child to cope with persecutory anxiety by keeping idealized good objects apart from persecutory bad ones. In the depressive position, as objects become more and more whole, comes the realization that one has to relinquish control over the object and allow for its independence. Consequently, the individual is faced with his inability to protect the object. (Steiner, 1985). This psychological step forward, entails the realization that destructive impulses are directed toward the loved object¹². Feelings of despair, loss and guilt and

¹² Melanie Klein (1928) disagrees with Freud in that she contends that it is not the libido, which brings the epistemophilic instinct (love of knowledge or curiosity) into being, but the early sadism in which the infant directs envious attacks on his mother's body as the source of all good and bad things. Thus, the Mother's body is his first object of knowledge. The anxiety produced by those attacks led to a desire to repair and to make amends, which is the route to symbol formation. Excessive sadism however, can lead to the inhibitions of the epistemophilic instinct.

intense conflicts associated with mourning, gave rise to the urge to repair, which in turn lead to the development of the symbolism¹³. However, since the paranoid-schizoid position is never fully replaced by the depressive position, a continuous movement between the two positions (integration leading to depressive functioning or disintegration and fragmentation resulting in paranoid states) takes place. (Segal,1969. Steiner 1985)

2.2 Bion's Conception of Psychic Development

As mentioned earlier, the concept of 'psychotic personality' refers to a mental state that reveals itself through behavior, language and the effect that both have on the observer. Bion believes, following Klein, that schizophrenia is due to a combination of innate and environmental conditions. He discusses the role of the environment in "Attacks on Linking" (1959) in which he

¹³ Hannah Segal (1991) remarks that M. Klein's work on: "...projective identification threw a new light on the whole problem of symbolism. It struck me in my work that concrete symbolism prevailed when projective identification was in ascendance... Symbolism is a tripartite relationship: the symbol, the object it symbolizes, and the person for whom the symbol is the symbol of the object. That tripartite relationship does not hold when projective identification is in ascendance. The relevant part of the ego is identified with the object: there is no sufficient differentiation between the ego and the object itself, boundaries are lost, part of the ego is confused with what is symbolized. It is only with the advent of the depressive position, the experience of separateness, separation, and loss that symbolic representation comes into play" (p. 38).

asserts that the origins of psychosis can never be found in the mother alone. In "Differentiation of the Psychotic and Non-Psychotic Personalities" (1957), he concentrates on inborn dispositions in the child and proposes that among the notable traits of the psychotic personality is the fear of annihilation that defines the type of object-relations it tends to establish, coupled with the presence of destructive impulses. In Bion's words:

I shall enumerate now what I think are the preconditions for the mechanisms on which I wish to focus our attention...these are: a preponderance of destructive impulses so great that even love is suffused by them and turned into sadism; a hatred of reality internal and external, which was extended to all that makes for the awareness of it; a dread of imminent annihilation. (Klein, 1946), and finally a premature and precipitate formation of object relations, whose thinness was in marked contrast with the tenacity with which they were maintained" (1957, p. 266).

Bion develops his conception of destructive attacks made on anything felt to have the function of linking one object with another in his paper "Attacks on Linking" (1959). In this paper Bion addresses the significance of destructive attacks in the etiology of some symptoms of borderline psychosis. He begins by proposing that the prototype for all links is the primitive breast or penis. Similarly, he sees in the infant's fantasized attacks against the breast by means of projective identification,

the prototype of all attacks on objects that serves as links (Bion, 1959).

Projective Identification: From Klein to Bion

Since Melanie Klein's concept of 'projective identification' is central to Bion's work, I believe that at this juncture it would be helpful to revisit it and see how it evolved in psychoanalytic theory and practice. Melanie Klein asserts that for the first months of life during the paranoid-schizoid position, the infant experiences aggressive and libidinal impulses and fantasies of an oral and anal nature. The fantasized attacks on the mother when of oral origins are to suck her dry, bite her up, scoop out and rob her of her good contents, and when of anal origin they are to expel bad substances as well as part of the ego out of the self and into the mother. This maneuver intends to injure as well as to take possession and control the object. The mother is then experienced as the bad self toward whom much hatred is directed.

This situation leads to a particular form of identification, prototypical of an aggressive object-relation in which by means of 'projective identification' the infant rids himself of his aggressive and destructive impulses by forcefully projecting them together with part

of his self into the object. "The phantasy of forcefully entering the object gives rise to anxieties relating to the danger threatening the subject from within the object" (Klein, 1946, p.11), and, in turn, the object is felt to be a persecutor.

This mechanism differs from projection proper because what is projected into the object is not experienced as ego alien. If in projection per se 'discrete impulses' are attributed to objects, in projective identification that attribution concerns actual parts of the ego (Symington, 2001; Lerner, 1996; Greenberg & Mitchell 1983). Lerner (1996) suggests that projective identification could be divided into three sub-processes: an externalization of parts of the self with a disregard of real characteristics of the external object, a capacity to blur boundaries between self and other, and an overriding need to control the other.

As maintained by Bion, the origins of attacks on links are to be found in the paranoid-schizoid position, which is dominated by part-object relationships. Bion brings the conception of part-objects a step further as follows (Bion, 1959):

The conception of part objects as analogous to an anatomical structure, encouraged by the patient's

employment of concrete images as units of thoughts, is misleading because the part-object relationship is not with the anatomical structure only but with function, not with anatomy but with physiology, not with the breast but with feeding, poisoning, loving, hating. This contributes to the impression of a disaster that is dynamic and not static. (pp. 311-312)

This modification allows him to establish the concept of link as an element related to the patient's relationship with a function rather than with the object that subserves this function. Bion (1959) expresses this idea clearly when he explains that his "concern is not only with the breast, or penis, or verbal thought, but with their function of providing the link between two objects" (p. 312).

Furthermore, relying on his clinical experience Bion asserts the presence of an aspect of projective identification that had not been envisaged earlier and will mark the beginning of a complete reassessment of the countertransference phenomenon.

Melanie Klein addresses the danger inherent in the excessive use of splitting and projective identification for the development of the personality. Her assessment however, is formulated in quantitative terms only while Bion adds to this idea a qualitative dimension. He observes that one of his patients resorted to projective

identification "with a persistence suggesting it was a mechanism of which he had never been able sufficiently to avail himself." (Bion, 1959, p.312) Bion believed that analysis afforded his patient with the opportunity to exercise a mechanism "he had been cheated of."

As the analysis moved forward, Bion realized that the underlying dynamic of many sessions was that while the patient strove to rid himself of fears of death by projecting them into his analyst, the feelings never stayed long enough to undergo modification through the analyst's psyche. As a result those feelings were not modified and became more painful while increasing the intensity of emotions in the patient. Gradually, the image of an early scene built up in Bion's mind. He (1959) reports:

I felt that the patient had experienced in infancy a mother which dutifully responded to the infant's emotional displays. The dutiful response had in it an element of impatience 'I don't know what's the matter with this child'. My deduction was that in order to understand what the child wanted the mother should have treated the infant's cry as more than a demand for presence. From the infant's point of view she should have taken into her, and thus experienced, the fear that the child was dying. It was this fear that the child could not contain (p.313).

According to Bion, an understanding mother is a mother who can experience the anxiety, fear, and despair her baby

strives to rid himself of by way of projective identification, while maintaining a balanced outlook. Within the therapeutic work, the patient feels a renewed opportunity to make up for what he has been deprived of through his interaction with the analyst, while his past experience activates a dynamic which makes the pain and resentment more acute. What ensues is a mixture of feelings of gratitude and hostility toward the analyst who perpetuates the refusal of "the use of the only method of communication by which he feels he can make himself understood... [the use of] the link between patient and analyst, or infant and breast ... the mechanism of projective identification" (Bion, 1959, p. 313).

At this juncture, Bion addresses the issue of the interaction between inborn dispositions and the environment. He clarifies that while inborn characteristics such as excessive aggression and envy are not created by the mother they are enhanced if the mother happens to display the kind of unreceptiveness the patient mentioned earlier experienced. Likewise, those personality characteristics do not disappear but diminish if the mother has the capability of introjecting her infant's feelings while remaining balanced. Notably, this quality in the

mother is not sufficient to alleviate the hatred and envy inherent in psychotic infants as in those personalities the 'mother's peace of mind' is bound to generate more destructive attacks, as it generates more envy. Bion (1959) observes this phenomenon with a patient who "insisted that I must go through it with him, but was filled with hate when he felt I was able to do so without breakdown" (p.313).

Bion concludes that under such circumstances the attacks on the link are synonymous to the attacks on the analyst's/mother's peace of mind. The analyst's capacity to introject the patient's destructive impulses is "transformed by the patient's envy and hate into greed devouring the patient's psyche; similarly peace of mind becomes hostile indifference" (Bion, 1959, p.313). Self-destructive behaviors and acting out in borderline psychosis reflect this particular dynamic in the patient's attempt to destroy the analyst's much envied peace of mind.

In conclusion, Bion believes that the origin of the disturbance is twofold. On the one hand the patient has excessive destructive, hateful and envious inborn tendencies; on the other he is faced with an environment which did not afford the patient with the opportunity to

use the mechanisms of splitting and projective identification. Denial of the use of these mechanisms whether due to the mother's inability to introject her infant's projections while keeping her balance or due to the infant's hatred and envy that makes it impossible for him to tolerate the mother's capacity to do so, severs the link between infant and breast. The destruction of this most important link, leads to a grave disorder of the impulse to be curious¹⁴ on which all learning depends. This aspect of Bion's thinking is addressed in depth in his paper "On Arrogance" (1957) and developed further in "Theory of Thinking" (1962).

Viewed from Bion's perspective, the mechanisms of splitting and projective identification are primary and crucial means of communication between the infant and the external world. Furthermore, they are necessary to the healthy development of the infant's personality and consist of the building blocks of the development of the capacity to think, experience emotions, and make meaning. The implications of such beliefs affect psychoanalytic theory and practice, as the emphasis on preverbal communications present in the analyst's experience of the patient during

¹⁴ See note 12 on the epistemophilic instinct.

the session gain greater scrutiny. Bion's notion of container and contained is closely connected to the communicative function of projective identification which in turn influences his conception of the development of object-relations and of the capacity to think.

The Capacity to Think

In his paper "On Arrogance" (1957), Bion continues to investigate phenomena pertaining to what he conceives of as 'psychological disaster'. He directs his attention to certain patients who make recurrent references to curiosity, arrogance and stupidity in ways that are dispersed and disconnected throughout the analytic material. Bion suggests that the presence of such material is an indication that the analyst is witnessing a psychological disaster. He begins his paper by stating: "The meaning with which I wish to invest the term 'arrogance' may be indicated by supposing that in the personality where life instincts predominate pride becomes self-respect, where death instincts predominate, pride becomes arrogance." (Bion, 1957. p. 114) Bion supports his assertion by revisiting the myth of Oedipus. Whereas Freud's discovery of the Oedipus complex is based on the notion of sexual crime and incest, Bion puts the emphasis

on the notion of hubris that Oedipus displayed in his stubborn vowing to make bare the truth no matter what. He writes:

This shift in emphasis brought to the center of the myth.

The sphinx that asked the riddle and destroys herself when it was answered.

The blind Teiresias who possessed knowledge and deplored the king's resolve to search for it.

The Oracle who provoked the search, which the prophet deplored.

The king whose search completed suffered blindness and exile (Bion, 1957, p.144).

Bion thinks that this Oedipal paradigm is most relevant for patients in whom psychotic mechanisms are active. In such patients there appear to be attacks launched against the ego, closely related to the attacks on the breast of the paranoid-schizoid position. Bion wonders what in reality could be so hateful to trigger in the patient this need to destroy the ego, which brought him into contact with it. His answer is that the premature presence of genital desire in schizophrenics and schizoid mechanisms, joined with envy, lead to the hatred of the unbearable vision of the parental couple. By attacking his own ego, the schizophrenic patient can deny the existence of the intolerable couple.

According to Bleandonu (2000), "Klein is preoccupied with the relationship to the breast, Bion generalizes oral envy by 'oedipalizing' it" (p. 135). Furthermore, while Freud's Oedipus feels sexual desire for his mother and murderous impulses toward his father, Bion's Oedipus is the enemy of an envied couple and an arrogant seeker of truth (Bleandonu, 2000).

Bion's extension of Freud's concept of the Oedipus conflict, suggests that beyond incest and parricide lays another profound tragedy, Oedipus' blinding of his eyes to truth which renders him a mental cripple (Grotstein, 1983). In associating arrogance, curiosity and stupidity with the presence of psychotic phenomena, Bion clarifies how an infantile catastrophe, namely the presence of hatred and envy coupled with a lack of proper containment, leads the infant's mind into modes of evacuation of sensations as opposed to thinking.

The arrogance of schizophrenic thinking is in the smugness of believing one can 'think' by evacuating thoughts and the organ which thinks the thoughts, the mind (Grotstein, 1983, p. 8).

Freud's notion of the 'primal scene' (1919) and Melanie Klein's (1928) 'epistemophilic instinct', raise the important question of infantile curiosity. For Klein, the child's curiosity is primarily directed toward the contents

of the inside of the mother's body, whereas Bion recognizes the infant's need to seek truth for the mind as a motive in itself. However, Bion's position suggest that the harshness of truth can be blinding and debilitating unless it is mediated by the presence of a proper container whose function is to translate and transform it as to detoxify it and give it meaning.

Bion's seminal paper "A Theory of Thinking" (1962) deals precisely with this issue. It is safe to say that Bion's elaboration of his theory of thinking constitutes a radical reorientation of psychoanalytic theory (Grotstein, 1983).

He begins his paper by introducing a theoretical system resembling a philosophical theory with the exception that his system is not meant to remain in the realm of ideas but is intended for use in psychoanalytic practice. According to him, thinking depends on the successful outcome of two major mental developments. However, in order to clarify Bion's claims some aspects of Kant's theory of knowledge should to be addressed. In the preface of his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1788), Kant formulates his main question: "How much can understanding and reason know apart from all experience?"

Kant talks of a priori intuitions involved in our sensory knowledge. Established philosophical and psychological traditions considered sensation as a passive state in which our senses presented us with data that we have no choice but accept. Kant contends that some aspects of sensory experience cannot be accepted as empirically known introducing thus the notion of a priori knowledge (Mautner, 1997). For Kant, whatever we know through our senses is phenomenal. Consequently there are things that exist and that we cannot know. Kant contrasts the notions of noumenon (things-in-themselves) and phenomenon (the object of empirical knowledge). He defines a noumenon as an object of awareness not produced by experience (thus, unknowable).

Furthermore, as opposed to the arguments of rational psychology for which "I think" infers that "I" is a thinking substance identical with itself and who possesses a continual identity, Kant believes that the "I" of "I think" is empty. In a passage of the Critique, Kant (1996) writes: "I am conscious of myself, not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but [I am conscious] only that I am, this representation is a thought not an intuition." (p.157)

Following in the Kantian tradition, Bion asserts that thoughts exist as inherent preconceptions and are older than the mind that thinks them¹⁵. Consequently, a mind is needed to think those "thoughts without a thinker", so that thinking is a phenomenon forced upon the ego due to the pressure of thoughts that are being transformed from sense impression and from intuitions. Bion insists that unlike other theorists of thought, he regards thinking as a development forced on the psyche by the pressure of thoughts and not the other way around (Bion, 1962).

What are thoughts? Using Plato's idea of pre-conceptions¹⁶ as preceding the use of our senses and Kant's assertion of 'a priori knowledge', Bion classifies thoughts according to the nature of their development.

A pre-conception is an inborn disposition corresponding to an expectation. A pre-conception in psychoanalytic terms can be compared to Kant's notion of 'thoughts without a thinker'. When a pre-conception mates with a realization that approximates it (i.e. the breast)

¹⁵ Levinas' (1998) notion of responsibility as "...anterior to all logical deliberation required by the reasoned decision" (p. 170) is close to Bion's notion of preconception.

¹⁶ Plato theory of forms speaks of archetypes that are permanent, eternal and not subject to change. He sees them as 'ideas' but not as 'someone's ideas'. Rather forms are akin to a kind a remembrance of a world of ideas apart from the world of our experience, in which all human souls have passed at one time.

the mental outcome is a conception. The synchronicity of the mating of a pre-conception with a realization entails that conceptions are expected to be constantly conjoined with an emotional experience of satisfaction.

The outcome of a pre-conception mating with a frustration (the absence of a breast or a no-breast or absent breast 'inside') depends on the infant's capacity to tolerate frustration. It depends in particular on whether the infant's decision will be to evade or to modify the experience of frustration.

If the capacity to tolerate frustration is sufficient, the 'no-breast inside' becomes a thought, leading to the development of an apparatus for thinking. Under such circumstances, the dominance of the reality principle is synchronized with the development of the capacity to think (Freud, 1911). The capacity to tolerate frustration enables the psyche to develop thoughts, which in turn make the experience of frustration more tolerable.

If the capacity to tolerate frustration is inadequate, the 'internal no-breast' becomes a 'bad internal no-breast' that puts the psyche in a position in which it has to opt between evasion of frustration or its modification.

The incapacity to tolerate frustration tipped the scale in the direction of evasion of frustration, which results in a significant departure from the reality principle. What should have been a thought becomes a bad object indistinguishable from a 'thing-in-itself', fit only for evacuation. Consequently the development of an apparatus for thinking is disturbed and there occurs a hypertrophy of the apparatus for projective identification. Under such conditions, the psyche operates on the principle that the evacuation of a bad breast is equivalent to sustenance from a good one. The end result is that thoughts and bad objects become indistinguishable and what should have become an apparatus for thinking becomes an apparatus for ridding the psyche of accumulations of bad internal objects.

Bion continues by saying that when frustration can be tolerated, the mating of a pre-conception with a realization, be it positive or negative, initiates the capacity to learn from experience. On the other hand, when the tolerance for frustration is not so great as to activate the mechanism of evasion but yet too great to bear dominance of the reality principle, the personality develops omnipotence as a reaction to the mating of a pre-conception with a negative realization. This situation

leads to omniscience as a substitute to learning from experience with the aid of thoughts and thinking. One of the consequences of such a dynamic is that the capacity to discern true from false (pertaining to the non-psychotic part of the personality) is replaced by rigid affirmations that one thing is morally right and the other morally wrong¹⁷ (pertaining to the psychotic part of the personality).

Bion talks about the 'survival of the personality' of the infant as managed in part by his mother. When mother and child are adjusted to each other, projective identification plays a major role by arousing in the mother feelings that her child strives to rid himself of. Under those conditions, Bion sees the infant's use of omnipotent fantasy as a realistic phenomenon to be expected in normal development. If the mother cannot tolerate these projections, the infant is reduced to continue to project with increased force while losing in the process the potential meaning that is attached to the projections.

The process by which the infant's projections are transformed into thoughts requires the intervention of a

¹⁷ This state of minds highlights the difference between morality and ethics as seen by Levinas. The rigidity of absolutely right or absolutely wrong is a refuge against the acknowledgement of difference. It reduces experience to a one-dimensional frame of reference in which sameness dominates.

function that Bion called the "alpha function." Bion conceives of the alpha function as the cornerstone of the thinking process. The alpha function is a hypothetical mechanism that converts sense data into alpha elements "and thus provides the material for dream thoughts, and hence the capacity to wake up or to go to sleep, to be conscious or unconscious" (Bion, 1962, p. 308). Accordingly, consciousness depends on that function. The processes of projection and introjection are central to the notion of alpha function. As mentioned earlier, when the relationship between a child and his mother permits the child to use normal projective identification, the mother receives the projections and through her 'capacity for reverie,' detoxifies those projections and returns them to her infant in a form that is tolerable, thus capable of sustaining meaning.

On the other hand, sensory experiences that are not transformed by the mother, Bion calls "beta elements," which are not fit to be used to think, to remember, or to fulfill any function attributed to the mental apparatus. They are experienced as 'things-in-themselves' and are only fit for evacuation.

Alpha Function and Beta Elements

Bion's deliberate choice of terms devoid of meaning, such as 'alpha function' or 'beta elements', are in direct relationship with his theory of thinking itself. The reason he opts to use cryptic terminology is to avoid quick and premature conclusions based on familiarity with already used concepts and ideas that would saturate and distort what he is trying to convey. Consequently, in line with Bion's conception of learning, alpha and beta elements are empty terms in the process of getting filled with meaning. Developmentally, Bion argues that the achievement of a capacity to transform beta elements into alpha elements requires at least two minds. The terms 'alpha function' and 'beta elements' are meant to designate certain aspects of this process.

In *Elements of Psychoanalysis* (1963) Bion defines the alpha function thus:

By alpha function I mean that function by which sense impressions are transformed into elements capable of storage for use in dreams and other thoughts (p. 4).

Bion insists on the importance of the alpha-function in the development of thoughts. In *Learning from Experience* (1962) he writes:

A central part is played by alpha-function in transforming an emotional experience into alpha-elements because a sense of reality matters to the individual in the way that food, drink air and excretion of waste products matter. Failure to eat, drink or breathe properly has disastrous consequences for life itself. Failure to use the emotional experience produces a comparable disaster in the development of the personality: I include amongst these disasters degrees of psychotic deterioration that could be described as death of the personality (p. 42).

Bion's model of the alpha-function resembles the digestive system in that he refers to it as a function liable to create digestible and indigestible elements (Meltzer, 1998). Whereas Freud addresses the issue of libido and its vicissitudes, and while Klein bring them into the realm of object relations, Bion seeks to build a model in which emotions are at the center of object relations which in turn determine the prospect of the development of thought and learning, be it normal or pathological. For Bion, the act of knowing implies a relationship by which raw emotions are transformed through the alpha function into 'food for thoughts'.

The negative aspect of the 'alpha function' is the 'beta elements'. Bion (1962) compares 'alpha elements' and 'beta elements' thus:

In so far as alpha-function is successful alpha elements are produced and these elements are suited to storage and the requirements of dream thoughts. If alpha-function is disturbed, and therefore inoperative, the sense impressions of which the patient is aware and the emotions which he is experiencing remain unchanged. I shall call them beta elements. In contrast with the alpha-elements the beta-elements are not felt to be phenomena but things in themselves... Beta elements are not suited for dream thoughts but are suitable only for use in projective identification. They are influential in acting out. (p.6)

Bion's abstract concept of alpha-function realizes the full potential of its meaning when used in the context of a relationship. His notion of container/contained provides this necessary context.

The Container/Contained Relationship

Grotstein holds that "Bion's conception of the 'container/contained' ($\varphi\sigma$) transformed Klein's intrapsychic psychology into an interpersonal or intersubjective one" (Grotstein, 2002, p. 2). That is, for Bion, intrapsychic life cannot develop outside of a relationship. In his theory of thinking, Bion talks of a 'thinking couple' or a 'creative couple', insisting on the importance of mechanisms that afford communication and the processing of emotions. One of these mechanisms is

projective identification, in which the notion of container/contained is strongly rooted. Bion illustrates this phenomenon in *Elements of Psychoanalysis* (1963):

The infant suffering pangs of hunger and fear that he is dying, wracked by guilt and anxiety, and impelled by greed, messes itself and cries. The mother picks it up, feeds it and comforts it, and eventually the infant sleeps. Reforming the model to represent the feelings of the infant we have the following version: the infant, filled with painful lumps of faeces, guilt, fears of impending death, chunks of greed, meanness and urine, evacuates these bad objects into the breast that is not there. As it does so the good object turns the no-breast (mouth) into a breast, the faeces and urine into milk, the fears of impending death and anxiety into vitality and confidence, the greed and meanness into feelings of love and generosity and the infant sucks its bad property now translated into goodness, back again...I propose an apparatus, for dealing with these primitive [projections], that consists of a container and a contained ♀♂ (p. 31).

Bion adds that this apparatus, ♀♂, is the apparatus for thinking. Hinshelwood (2002) proposes three categories representing the relationship between container and contained. The first one refers to the 'dutiful mother' (Bion, 1959) in which the container reacts by becoming rigid and refusing to respond to what is projected into it. As a result the contents-contained lose their form and meaning, because what is needed is a mother who can feel the disturbance by becoming disturbed herself, prior to integrating and transforming the 'bad' projections through

her alpha function or in other words her capacity for reverie.

The second one represents a flexible relationship, in which the contained enters the container, which is able to tolerate the disturbance while remaining balanced. The container's alpha function is then activated and proceeds to transform the 'bad' contents, before it returns them to the contained in a form that it can tolerate. In such case the child introjects together with his transformed projections the mother's alpha function. This process allows the child to begin to gradually acquire the capacity to think independently from his mother's.

The third type is the opposite of the first. The contained is so powerful that the container feels overwhelmed and either bursts or loses its form and functions. "A mother's mind can literally go to pieces, and she panics or even breaks down" (Hinshelwood, 2002, p. 2).

Bion's model of the container-contained relationship is that both mother and infant derive benefit and achieve mental growth from the experience. He describes the container-contained as susceptible of 'conjunction and permeation by emotion' (Bion 1962).

Correspondingly, this set of emotional, nonverbal interactions is an intrinsic part of psychoanalytic work. The therapist's role is very similar to that of the mother who is optimally able to play the role of a container by receiving and accepting the projections, while remaining calm. As Rosenfeld (1987) points out:

A prerequisite of psychoanalytic treatment is that it is necessary to make enough contact with the patient's feelings and thoughts to feel and experience oneself what is going on in the patient (p. 12).

The notions PS $\leftrightarrow$ D and L H K

According to Bion, the process of mental growth involves the mechanism of thinking thoughts that precede this mechanism. As mentioned earlier, the mechanism of projective identification, symbolized by ♀♂ (container/contained), plays a crucial part in the establishment of the thinking apparatus. However, developmentally this evolution takes place within the dynamic between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, symbolized as PS $\leftrightarrow$ D. The process of projection-introjection inherent in ♀♂, which permits the transformation of beta elements into alpha elements, is

intimately connected to the dynamic between PS $\leftrightarrow$ D
(part/whole, fragmentation/integration).

However, since trying to determine which process precedes the other leads to an impasse, Bion states (1963): "I shall suppose the existence of a mixed state in which the patient is persecuted by feeling of depression and depressed by feelings of persecution... PS may be regarded as a cloud of particles capable of coming together ...and D as an object capable of becoming fragmented and dispersed, PS" (pp. 41-42).

Accordingly, PS $\leftrightarrow$ D and ♀♂ operate simultaneously, while being separate mechanisms of a primary nature. In order to clarify his hypothesis, Bion resorts to a concrete illustration of what he meant. He proposes that the term 'dog' is used when a set of phenomena are recognized as being interrelated yet unknown. The name is the way in which the observed phenomena are bound to avoid the scattering of the phenomena. Having a name for unknown phenomena allows for the exploration of what they are. The term 'dog' at first only signifies certain elements that are constantly conjoined; therefore, it is a product of PS $\leftrightarrow$ D mechanism. Then, the question of meaning arises. This comes into play as soon as the ♀♂ mechanism is activated. Bion states (1963):

The nature of the relationship between PS $\leftrightarrow$ D and ♀♂ thus receives some clarification. On the PS $\leftrightarrow$ D operation depends the delineation of the whole

object: on the successful operation of ♀♂ depends the meaning of the whole object (p 90).

I believe that to the question, "What triggers emotional experience?" Bion would probably answer, 'One human being engaged with another.' This hypothetical response stems from Bion's view of relational engagement. He sees three factors as having the function of linking between people involved in a relationship: Love (L), Hate (H) and Knowledge (K) as well as their negative counterparts -L, -H, -K. Bion conceived of those links as emotional activities. He postulated it thus: X loves Y; X hates Y; X knows Y. In his own words (1962), "Like L and H, K represents an active link and has about it a suggestion that $x K y$ then x does something to y " (p.47).

Bion did not spend much time to consider love and hate as primary emotional experiences as those feelings have occupied the center of psychoanalytic theory and are at the heart of Melanie Klein's body of work. Bion dedicates most of his effort in elaborating his conception of knowledge as an emotional experience.

Because for him the analytic situation is mostly a movement toward knowledge, he insists on clarifying the fact that $x K y$ does not mean that x possesses a piece of knowledge called y but rather that x is in the state of

getting to know y and y is in a state of getting to be known by y. He adds that getting to know or getting to be known is considered by him as a primary emotional experience comparable to that of love and hate¹⁸. Consequently, Bion believes that the question 'How can x know anything?' expresses a feeling of a painful nature which an individual had to either accept, modify or evade according to his capacity to tolerate frustration. I believe that implicit in this statement is the idea of the realization of one's separateness and dependence on a mysterious object (i.e., an ever changing object that always evades thematization).

The notions of L H K extend the idea of alpha function as the mechanism responsible for the transformation of raw emotions and establishing a feeling of confidence at recognizing the truth. The alpha function can be compared to our senses, which through common perception and synchronous confirmation of sense data, afford us a sense of reality.

¹⁸ Bion's assertion that the movements of knowledge are emotional activities goes hand in hand with Levinas' view on the primacy of emotions as organizing the world. Levinas (1957) states: "Emotion does not follow the representation of the object; it precedes it. Before perception distinguishes the properties of the object, a synthesis, which is in fact emotional, organizes the world" (p.43).

The maneuvers of modification and evasion aimed at suppressing the painful feeling, lead to a relationship in which x possesses a piece of knowledge called y so that knowledge becomes objectified or stripped of the experience of pain. Bion (1962) believes that modification and evasion are intended "not to affirm but to deny reality, not to represent an emotional experience but to misrepresent it to make it appear to be a fulfillment rather than a striving for fulfillment." (p.49). Accordingly, truth and lie emerge as the food and poison of thought and growth of the personality.

The distinction between knowing from experience and knowing through modification or evasion as ways to avoid experience was nicely illustrated by Joan and Neville Symington (2001):

In an analytic session, the couple may achieve an understanding through the K relationship only to find out that it then degenerates into having a piece of intellectualized knowledge of it. This reversal occurs as a way of evading the painful realization achieved through the K link... To come upon one's ruthless greed in a relationship is quite a different matter from intellectual awareness of it (p.28).

The negative of the L H K links symbolized the dynamic by which hatred of emotional learning was expressed. Thus,

-L, -H, -K. Under the dominance of one of these negative links, meaningful experience is destroyed.

We have seen how Bion and Levinas' approach relationality within two separate registers. The next chapter will allow for a direct look at ways in which these thinkers converge and diverge.

CHAPTER THREE

BION AND LEVINAS

3.1 The Meeting of Bion and Levinas

In his assertion that ethics precedes ontology, Levinas shakes philosophical ground. In his assertion that thoughts precede thinking, and that thinking is an emotional activity comparable to love and hate, Bion shakes psychoanalytic ground.

Following Bion's classification of thoughts, thinking begins with the idea of an inborn preconception corresponding to an expectation ('thought without a thinker'). This takes place during the earliest days of life, when the mental apparatus is in the process of being developed, but is not limited to that time. Such a state of affairs exists throughout life given particular personality organizations or particular moments in life. Levinas' notion of 'interiority' relates a mental state in which self-preservation and self-preoccupation are at the center of being. In analytic terms this way of being is reminiscent of the psychoanalytic notion of primary

narcissism¹⁹. In Levinas, this state is not conducive to thinking as being is primarily absorbed in its own struggle for biological survival. Levinas distinguishes between the 'living being' and 'the thinking being'. While the 'living being' "is not without consciousness, it has a consciousness without problems, that is without exteriority, an interior world whose center it occupied, a consciousness not concerned with situating itself in relation to an exteriority, which does not comprehend itself as part of a whole (Levinas, 1998).

Bion, on the other hand, believes that since the earliest stages of life a very primitive mode of communication is established between the infant and his mother and that biological components go hand in hand with psychological ones. The use of projective identification begins with life itself and survival of the psyche is at stake from the very beginning. It is worth noticing, however, that while Bion views the tendency for relationality as inborn, he maintains that what characterizes the primary stage of thought is the synchronicity of the mating of a pre-conception with a

¹⁹ Freud, (1914), coined the words 'primary narcissism' for a time in the development in which the child is involved in autoerotic activity and takes himself as his love object before investing his libido in another object.

positive realization which entails a lack of acknowledgment of separation.

Given that Levinas does not organize his thought around psychological issues per se, some of his conceptions fall in between what psychoanalytic thinking would tend to delineate along developmental/dynamic lines. His opposition of 'living being' and 'thinking being' is one of them. While expressing the idea that the 'living being' is in a state of mind that ignores 'exteriority', while the 'thinking being' acknowledges and welcomes it, he gives a definition of responsibility that could be conceived of as inborn, thus instinctive. For example, In "Diachrony and Representation," (1985) Levinas writes: "A responsibility anterior to all the logical deliberation required by the reasoned decision ... Here we have, in the ethical anteriority of responsibility ... a past irreducible to a hypothetical present that it once was" (p. 170).

However, philosophical discourse fails to explain how certain human beings end up in one or the other category of being²⁰. This paradox can be overcome if one uses the notion of responsibility in terms of developmental achievement.

²⁰ It is noteworthy that the idea of categories falls within an ontological discourse that Levinas tried to avoid at all costs. By introducing the realization of separateness, thus of relationality spelled out in Bion's conception of the mating of a pre-conception with a frustration the door to a discourse on ethics opens up.

From this point of view, Bion's notion of the second stage of thought formation as the mating of a pre-conception with a frustration goes hand in hand with Levinas' notion of diachrony. The absent breast or no-breast signaled the interruption of sameness. In such moment 'Otherness' enters my world disrupting its balance and economy and puts me into question. In Bion the outcome of the experience of a pre-conception mating with a negative realization (i.e. the disruption of sameness) on one's capacity to think, depends on several factors:

1. The infant's capacity to tolerate frustration.
2. The infant's capacity to use projective identification successfully.
3. The quality of the container and its capacity to feel disturbed by the projections while keeping a balanced outlook.
4. The container's alpha function.

Levinas stresses the function of the recipient in his assertion that the Other's face, in its nakedness and vulnerability, summons and mobilizes in the object an immediate sense of responsibility. His view highlights the inherent asymmetric nature of the interaction.

Bion on the other hand emphasizes the interactive nature of the container-contained relationship. The infant's active communication through projective identification is as necessary to its development as the mother's containing function.

I believe that the following sequence captures both approaches:

By way of projective identification the infant communicates his vulnerability, distress, fear of dying etc., into the mother. The use of projective identification is in itself a capacity to respond, a 'response-ability' in the baby that is a prerequisite for the establishment of communication, albeit on a very primitive level. In very simple terms, the infant's projective identification is a way to express, "I am here!" (in you and outside of you), unable to contain my hunger, my pain, my fear, my anger. Ideally the mother responds to her infant's distress with her capacity to offer her containing quality by responding: "Here I am", an open ended statement that leaves room for reverie.

By returning the baby's projections in a detoxified form, the mother allows for the formation of thought leading to the development of an apparatus for thinking,

which in turn makes the experience of frustration more tolerable. In the process the mother also gives parts of herself to her infant, namely her alpha function. The asymmetry Levinas (1954) mentions is to be found in the mother's greater maturity and greater capacity for response-ability. Developmentally, the asymmetry needs to be looked at in quantitative and qualitative terms.

Furthermore, following Levinas (1954), the mother's response-ability toward her infant is a response unmediated by reason that comes from beyond consciousness. Thus, we can envision this notion as playing the role of an emotional link.

Bion conceives of Love.Hate.Know. and -Love.-Hate.-Know. as six links representing emotional activities. He suggests that the expression of each link can be translated into one person *doing* something to another.

Based on Bion's definition of links, and on my interpretation of Levinas' notion of responsibility for another as inborn (1954), I would define response-ability (RE) and response-inability (-RE) as emotional links within object relations. Thus, this link, just as L.H.K., is both active and reactive and for that reason it cannot exist outside of a relationship.

At this juncture, I wish to differentiate the proposed (RE) link from other notions as it can easily be confused with them, and also wish to define some of its qualities.

1. The (RE) link cannot be confused with the ♀♂ function or the alpha function, as it is not a function but an emotion.
2. Developmentally, the (RE) link takes place within the fluctuation of the PS $\leftrightarrow$ D position. From the (RE) link vertex, those fluctuations could be conceptualized as movements between participation and non-participation in a relationship.
3. The (RE) link denotes a capacity or incapacity to tolerate relatedness and dependence. Consequently, it also denotes of the capacity or incapacity to tolerate separateness and difference.

In continuing with Bion's classification, the incapacity to tolerate frustration pushes the individual in the direction of evasion of frustration, which results in a significant departure from the reality principle. Consequently what should have been a thought becomes a bad object or a 'thing-in-itself', fit only for evacuation. This situation is the result of a failure to use emotional experience and produces a disaster in the development of

the personality. He includes amongst these disasters degrees of psychotic deterioration that could be equated to the death of the personality.

Levinas expresses a very similar view regarding the consequences that a failed meeting with exteriority entails. He writes (1954):

The interior system of instinct can collide with exteriority as with an absolutely inassimilable object which makes the system capsize in death... [In that case,] the relationship of instinct with exteriority is not a knowing, but a death. Through death, the living being enters totality, but no longer thinks anything at all (p. 15).

Bion and Levinas coincide in conceptualizing the catastrophic consequences of one's failure to apprehend 'reality' or 'exteriority'. Both see in such situation the expression of death (or death instinct) leading to mental and psychic crippling.

Bion refers to the alpha function as a transformative function that changes raw emotions into alpha elements. Beta elements represent the negative aspect of alpha elements. Bion characterizes them thus:

If alpha function is disturbed...the sense impressions of which the patient is aware and the emotions which he is experiencing remain unchanged... the beta elements are not felt to be phenomena but things-in-themselves" (p.6).

Thus, beta elements are not fit for symbolic representation and concrete thinking prevails. Bion calls common sense a mental configuration allowing for the senses to coherently communicate with each other and to coincide in confirming the experience of reality. In psychosis (i.e., when the mental apparatus attacks itself by way of minute splitting and projection) the split off parts of the self create confusional states in which the senses themselves are out of touch with each other.

Similarly, when addressing the issue of the living being as ignorant of the exterior world, Levinas illustrates this lack of cohesion in the personality by saying,

The senses bring [the living being] nothing or only sensations. It is its sensations: the 'statue is a rose smell.' Sensibility as the very consciousness of what lives is not thought that is confused, it is not thought at all (Levinas, 1982, p.14).

In this quote, Levinas is referring to Condillac's²¹ (1982) hypothesis of a human being in the form of a statue, adding one sense at a time, the first being that of smell. Cut off from other senses and the external world, it was in

²¹ Condillac (1715-80) was a French enlightenment philosopher. His theory suggests that all knowledge derives from sensations.

relation to itself only that it smelled. The statue then experienced itself as the rose smell.

In extreme cases, this type of severance of the linking function is found in autistic or psychotic states.

Isolation and fragmentation, serve the purpose of denying affect. The dynamic underlying the severance of links is that of active attacks on them. I propose that in the same way that -L, -H, -K denote such attacks, (-RE) would represent an active destruction of (RE).

From the (RE) perspective, as in the example given above, the linking function of (**Q**uestion, **R**esponse, **D**ifference) response-ability is attacked. Internal cohesion falls apart as the three aspects of the link do not communicate with each other. As a result of the attack internal and external communication is made response-unable. Furthermore, if for Levinas the engagement toward the other marks the beginning of thought, the disengagement toward otherness testifies a refusal to be in an affective state that the meeting of another's face inevitably mobilizes. Avoidance of the affective state of response-ability moving on a continuum between suspicion, fear and denial (of change, separation, dependence, participation etc.) would hinder and impair psychic growth.

Under certain conditions the pain of being faced by Otherness, being faced by emotions of loss in separateness, being faced with one's dependence and vulnerability, being faced by the infinite, is not manageable. In reaction, the individual holds on to the illusion of control and possession of the other through projective identification, splitting, and denial. Those defenses against the acknowledgement of separateness and dependence provide a surface functioning, while deeper access to self knowledge and knowledge of the world is avoided. Such a state of mind forbids access to the emotional experience of L.H.K. and (RE).

When the appeal of the other's presence can be tolerated, mental growth proceeds without major disruption. However, some questions remain unanswered. Levinas asks (1987):

But how then is this simultaneity of a position in totality and a reserve or separation with regard to it is achieved? ... It is a problem that is not resolved by the simple affirmation of the separation between free beings-since [it] entails a relationship between beings and engagement in a totality (p. 16).

Levinas wonders how this meeting with exteriority, while "exceeding the terms of vital consciousness" is not fatal to consciousness. He goes on by stating that this

penetration of a total system into a partial one that could not assimilate it is a miracle. From the point of view presented here, this miracle is embodied by what Bion calls the containing function. In other words, an individual does not meet totality in its immediacy. Totality is mediated by a relationship in which a dynamic of projection/introjection is taking place. The penetrating quality of the contained is received by the penetrable quality of the container. Furthermore, when the transaction between container and contained is healthy enough, the inchoate and intolerable infinity of feelings projected into the container is transformed into a gradually more coherent and thinkable infinity by way of the alpha function.

The emotion of response-ability is triggered in the child from an internal state of need. In a certain sense, the organism responds responsibly to its own neediness by projecting it outward. The cry for help projected in the mother is met by her own response-able emotional reaction to her child's distress. If we attempt to artificially dissect such interaction we would see 1) that the infant mobilizes his own response-ability toward internal need and projects it outward; 2) the mother does not turn away from

her child's distress and experiences his feelings. Her response-ability, together with her containing capacity and her transformative capacity are mobilized; 3) the mother returns the projections to her infant in a tolerable form. Together with them she returns her transformative function (alpha function), her containing function, and her emotional response to her child's appeal (her response-ability).

The asymmetry inherent in the mother-child relationship is evident. The mother's response-ability is much greater and more complex than that of her infant. In addition, the emotional capacity to respond to the appeal of another has to be looked at along developmental lines. Bion's notion of $PS \leftrightarrow D$, affords the possibility to look at mental and emotional organization along this continuum. Accordingly, (RE) depends on the position in which an individual is at a given time. As feelings of fragmentation and persecution and primitive type defenses dominate, one's access to response-ability diminishes. Consequently, an attempt to destroy the (RE) link is most likely active. Similarly, as one experiences greater integration feelings of guilt, concern and the need to repair characteristic of

the depressive position, an increased capacity for response-ability most likely follows.

3.2 Emotional Experience in the Therapeutic Encounter

When the two members of the therapeutic couple talk to each other, the emotional experience casts specific links. The analytic couple provides an opportunity for experiencing links and emotional events. According to Bion, the most basic emotional links are L.H.K. Based on Levinas, the meeting with the Other (even in the therapeutic relationship) is a disturbance on which the basis of creativity rests as it requires an emotional movement (RE). The patient's appeal puts the therapist into question and triggers among others, an emotion of response-ability. Within the dynamic taking place between patient and therapist this can take a positive or negative form.

The therapeutic relationship is asymmetrical. It begins with one person entering the relationship while seeking help. Compared to that of the patient, the therapist's response-ability is essential in order to establish contact. Just as in the mother-child relationship, one's capacity to be response-able is greater than that of the other. The therapeutic process then

involves the experience of response-ability on the part of the therapist which ideally gets integrated by the patient. However, depending on the patient's pathology the (RE) link within the PS $\leftrightarrow$ D might either be experienced or attacked.

3.3 Bion's Therapeutic Attitude and Levinas' Notion of the I and Totality.

Bion's therapeutic attitude begins "without memory nor desire." This attitude does not seek to acquire factual knowledge of the patient and can tolerate being in doubt without reaching after facts and reason. This attitude corresponds closely to Levinas' notion of the I as singularity.

The transcendence of the interlocutor and the access to the other through language show that man is a singularity. The I is ineffable because it is speaking par excellence; respondent, responsible. The other is not a known, qualified content, apprehensible on the basis of some general idea (Doutreleau & Zilio, 1987, p. 26).

For Bion, faith in O²² is entrusting oneself into the unknowable origin of knowledge. The psychoanalytic point of

²² Bion (1998) States: "I shall use the sign O to denote that which is the ultimate reality... O does not fall in the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally; it can 'become', but it cannot be 'known'. It is darkness and formlessness but it enters the domain K when it has evolved to a point where it can be known, through knowledge gained by experience, and formulated in terms derived from sensuous experience; its existence is conjectured phenomenologically" (p. 26).

view is that of O, which in essence is 'being' and 'becoming.' O is an analytical fact that could be transformed in the session through the experience of emotions such as LHK and at-one-ment.²³ I will add the potential existence of an additional link (RE).

Not being a psychologist, Levinas uses terminology that does not apply to the therapeutic relationship. However, if one replaces the word 'forgiveness' by 'acceptance' the following quote corresponds closely to the therapeutic couple.

But the conditions for legitimate forgiveness are realized only in a society of beings totally present to one another, in an intimate society ...an intimate society in truth, quite similar in its autarchy to the false totality of the I. In fact, such society consists of two people, I and thou" (Doutreleau & Zilio, 1987, p. 19).

Levinas' reflection on an intimate society of two, which can afford an opportunity for exploration, is of interest as it represents the ambiguous reality of the therapeutic relationship.

From a Bionian point of view, growth occurs through one's exposition to truth. Truth is food to the mind that comes to therapy in a state of starvation. A gradual relief

²³ Term used by Bion (1998) to describe a transformative movement going from O (the unknowable) to K (Know). This movement is represented thus: O↔K.

occurs by encountering emotional truth mediated by the containing therapeutic function, and affords the patient with a growing capacity to tolerate pain as well as pleasure.

What is the nature of this society of two called psychotherapy? This question is a philosophical one related to each clinician's therapeutic stance, with regard to the choice of approach one regards as most likely to lead to mental growth and mental pain relief.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INEFFABLE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

To tackle the notion of ineffability inherent in the process of change is to engage in a paradoxical enterprise, as the ineffable is inexpressible. To ignore it would be as paradoxical given that any practicing clinician knows that most of what happens between patient and therapist is precisely of that nature. To recognize this factor, however, is in itself an important step for it forces us to ponder on the reality of our limitations.

4.1 Bionian Conceptions of the Ineffable

From Bion's point of view, not knowing, if tolerated, is not necessarily a bad thing. It is in fact as valuable as knowing (or understanding) as he sees in this capacity a developmental achievement, and an important aspect of therapeutic work. Using Keats notion of 'negative capability', Bion advocates, "I mean Negative Capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after facts and reason" (Keats, 1817, cf. Bion, 1998, p. 125).

According to Bion, this capability is a prerequisite to good therapeutic work. As indicated by Andre Green

(1973) Bion's stance is particularly provocative as it intends to encourage a "rushed meeting with what is unknown in both parties facing each other, to create the conditions of urgent need rather than to insure against the possible advent of the expectation of a happening" (p. 115). From Bion's point of view, the analytic moment is akin to a mental state in which a preconception (state of expectancy) precedes a realization from which knowledge can arise. This particular state of mind is a state of at-one-ment whose nature is unstable, unsuitable for direct knowledge, and bound to change (Green, 1973). Bion (1963) writes, "I am thus postulating mental space as a thing in itself that is unknowable, but that can be represented by thoughts" (p. 11).

According to Green (1973), Bion's insistence on the notion of the unknowable is essential not because it represents a limit to knowledge or because it leads us to take refuge in fundamental obscurity, but because it is the starting point of what there will be to know. Through language and tolerance for the frustration that it entails a state of no-thing is bound to develop into a state of thought. Green (1973) goes on to say that in light of Bion's fundamental assumption, psychoanalysis rests on an

act of faith. "Yet this faith is specific in the fact that it does not imply a positively revealed truth whose content is definite" (p.117).

In his article "The Area of Faith in Winnicott, Lacan, and Bion," Eigen (1993) gives a definition of the area of faith in the therapeutic work, very similar to Bion's notion of at-one-ment. He begins his paper by stating:

By the area of faith I mean to point to a way of experiencing which is undertaken with one's whole being, all out, 'with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's might' (p.413).

In "Attention and Interpretation," Bion (1998) addresses the issue of the ineffability inherent in psychoanalytic work thus:

Most people think of psychoanalysis, as Freud did, as a method of treatment for a complaint... similar to a physical ailment ... But as psychoanalysis has grown so it has been seen to differ from physical medicine until the gap between them has passed from the obvious to the unbridgeable ... The point that demonstrates the divergence most clearly is that the physician is dependent on realization of sensuous experience in contrast with the psychoanalyst whose dependence is on experience that is not sensuous. The physician can see, touch and smell. The realization with which a psychoanalyst deals cannot be seen or touched: anxiety has no shape or color, smell or sound. For convenience, I propose to use the term 'intuit' as a parallel in the psychoanalyst's domain to the physician use of 'see', 'touch', 'smell', and 'hear' (pp. 6-7).

Accordingly, Bion's conception of analytic work is that psychoanalytic events cannot be stated directly,

indubitably, or incorrigibly. He proposes to use the sign O to denote what he conceives of as ultimate reality, absolute truth, the Godhead,²⁴ or the thing-in-itself. This means that faith in O is entrusting oneself to the unknowable origin of all knowledge (Carrere-Comes, 2001). O does not fall in the domain of knowledge or learning, but can evolve phenomenologically to a point where it can be known through knowledge gained by experience (Bion, 1998). Bion points out that in the course of analysis the patient is inevitably going to communicate information about himself. Likewise the analyst is bound to communicate information about analysis. In the context of psychoanalysis, this means being in the process of 'being' and 'becoming.' Whereas both patient and analyst depend on the senses, psychic qualities cannot be perceived by our senses. Their mental counterpart is a general postulate represented by O. Consequently, the more 'real' the psychoanalyst is the more he can be at one with the reality of the patient and the less he has to rely on thinking based on a background of sense impression. Bion believes

²⁴ Gershom Sholem (1991) refers to the Kabbalistic concept of the Godhead as follows: "the Kabbalists resorted to the expedient of differentiating between two strata of the Godhead; one, its hidden being-in-itself, its immanence in the depth of its own being; and another, that of its creative and active nature, thrusting outward toward expression" (p. 159).

that the analyst is not to wait for the analysand to talk or to be silent or to do any given thing, but he is to wait for an evolution by which O becomes conducive to thought and transformation. Consequently, according to Bion, interpretations depend on 'becoming' and are actual events in an evolution of O that is common to analyst and patient in a given session. Bion (1991) gives an example of what he conceives of as a process of transformation (or change) thus:

A lake in calm bright weather reflects trees upon the bank of the shore opposite the observer. The image presented by the trees is transformed by the reflection: a whole series of transformations is effected by atmospheric changes. Suppose the observer could see only the reflection; he would be able to deduce the nature of O from what he saw. Provided conditions were not too disturbed, the demands on the observer's deductive powers would be relatively simple if he were expected to recognize that he observed the reflection of trees, more difficult if he were to be called upon to pronounce on the species of trees and impossible if he were to state the nature of microscopical features of leaf structure (p. 47).

This model of transformation could be transposed within the analytic setting. The atmospheric conditions are the L.H.K links, whereas the trees on the lake side deemed as O, are replaced by a fact known to the analyst and the patient available to both for transformation (Bleandonu, 2000).

Eigen (1993) points out that for the psychoanalyst the O, or ultimate reality of psychoanalytic experience, is what might be expressed as the emotional truth of the session. He states: "strictly speaking, as psychoanalysts we live in the faith that emotional truth is possible, even necessary as a principle of wholesome psychic growth" (p. 419). He adds that paradoxically, the focus of the analyst's attention is the unknowable. Furthermore, the analyst's faith while reaching toward the unknowable is what allows for the sustained attention that clears a working space for truth.

This attitude demands a different conception of therapeutic work as the 'good therapist' in his genuine attempt to help needs to be wary of the possibility of getting caught up in a subtle controlling or mastery toward the emotional reality of a session. Such a stance endangers his ability to attend to fragile currents of creative movement in the session. Eigen (1993) explains how such phenomena can occur with the best of intentions. He illustrates this point by challenging the idea of 'good containment.' Whereas containment, modeled on the mother's capacity to detoxify her baby's projection, is more concerned with regulating the balance of pleasure and pain,

attention to the emotional truth of situations is to be independent of pleasure-pain considerations as one cannot regulate the movement of truth.

For Bion, emotional truth is not confined to language. Meaning lies in the interplay of conscious and unconscious processes, which more often than not transcend verbalization. Grotstein (1999) reflects on the issue of unconscious-conscious processes and the unknown and points out that

[f]rom the very beginning of life on earth the human being has found himself consciously interposed between two imponderable mysteries, one within him, which came only recently to become known as "the unconscious", and the other that is external to him, the uniqueness or essence of the other, which came to be known as its "Otherness", in other words, "the unknown." Both these domains are ineffable and inscrutable, not unlike the deity, with which mankind has unwittingly equated them (p. 1-2).

Grotstein (1999) differentiates between the dynamic repressed unconscious, where buried memory is stored and the primary unrepressed unconscious in which a-priori categories are located. According to him, this can be translated into clinical techniques between Kleinians and non-Kleinians. Kleinians, being Kantians, attribute priority to unconscious phantasies, while non-Kleinians tend to attribute prime cause to external reality and

consider phantasies to be secondary pictures of this reality.

In Grotstein's view, the 'primary' unconscious is inhabited by an ineffable subject, alongside the phenomenal subject of consciousnesses, both being at the frontier of the unconscious/conscious systems. He considered that each element (unconscious/conscious) is monocular in nature but that when functioning together they allow for a 'binocular vision'²⁵ (Bion, 1963). This 'dual-track' requires that both systems are not in conflict, but that they inform each other and function complementarily and cooperatively. In Grotstein's (1999) words:

In this complementary process, the ineffable subject of the unconscious becomes the ultimate, helpless registrar of agony for the individual, and the phenomenal subject of consciousness becomes 'his brother's keeper,' i.e., the latter experiences derived messages of pain from the former and optimally rectifies the situation or seeks help (p. 3).

The dialectic between the unconscious-conscious (or binocular function) systems and O is that the system

²⁵ This is a term first used by Bion in "Experience in Groups" (1961) to relate a mental state that is both inside and outside the relationship. Later on Bion links this concept to the alpha function, which facilitates the development of reality testing. Meltzer (1998) explains this connection thus: "The alpha-elements are not the experience of the thing-in-itself but an abstraction and representation of it, while it being thus represented both in conscious and unconscious forms simultaneously give the personality a 'binocular vision' of the experience from which the 'feeling of confidence' in its reality derives" (p. 319).

unconscious apprehends O from the point of view of unconscious phantasy, and the system conscious apprehends O from the stand point of logic (Grotstein, 1999). Within the therapeutic relationship, reliance on clinical observation for the emergence of meaning is the result of the interaction of conscious/unconscious processes and is central to the process of transformation. In order to achieve a state of mind favorable to the emergence of meaning and of transformation, the therapist's initial attitude involves: "the exercise of discarding memory and desire ... as preparatory to a state of mind where O can evolve" (Bion, 1998, p. 33).

From a Bionian point of view the ineffability inherent in the therapeutic relationship is the terrain on which transformation and change occur. Far from seeing it as a problem to be solved, Bion and his followers consider it to be the crux of the psychoanalytic work and therapeutic encounter.

To welcome this challenging stance is only one of the ways in which psychotherapists and psychoanalysts of various schools have practiced therapeutic work over the years. Literature in the field of psychology is testimony

to attempts that have been made at trying to understand how and why change occurs in psychotherapy.

4.2 Intersubjectivity and the Process of Change

The notion of intersubjectivity has been invested with much hope with regard to providing answers to the question of therapeutic change. Peter Fonagy introduces his paper "The Process of Change and the Change of Process: What Can Change in a Good Analysis" (1999) thus:

It would be a brave or foolhardy man (or woman) who would stand in front of an audience of psychoanalysts and psychotherapists and announce that he (or she) had the "definitive model" of therapeutic action. Fred Pine (1998) suggested that it is no longer useful to look for a single model of therapeutic action in psychoanalysis, that the mechanism will be individualized according to the patient and therapist ... I shall attempt [to] present a personal heuristic that helps me understand how patients progress through psychoanalytic treatment (p. 1).

Fonagy (1999) proposes the following three types of psychic changes linked to each other as well as to the relationship with the therapist.

- a. Intersubjective representational shifts. These are defensive strategies that enable the patient to establish coherent self states by projecting alien parts of the self onto the therapist. The therapist is to allow for those projections in order to help the

patient tolerate his own treatment while seeking to communicate with the patient.

- b. Changes of mental processes. This process involves engaging the patient's mind in forms of mental activity which felt dangerous in the past.

Technically, Fonagy advocates a focus on mental states in the context of an attachment relationship, together with a consistent and coherent approach. This capacity in the patient develops out of the patient's observation of their analyst's commitment to understanding, thinking ideas, and experiencing feelings.

- c. Changes in mental representations. This entails the restructuring of the representational system in the direction of a fuller and more elaborate representation of the mental states of internal objects and the self. The analyst is to be aware that the emphasis has to be put not on the recovery of past experiences but on the understanding of current ways of being with the other as the key to change.

Fonagy's conception is that the therapist's 'mentalistic elaborative stance' helps the patient find himself in the therapist's mind. As a result, the patient

integrates this image as part of his sense of self and develops a greater capacity for reflective functioning. This capacity is to allow for better access to the patient's internal world as well as for a gradual qualitative differentiation of external and internal reality.

In an article called "The Therapist as Other," Lynne Jacobs (1991) defines the ineffability of the therapeutic relationship thus:

Therapists conduct therapy along a particular 'narrow ridge'. On one side of the ridge is our commitment to and faith in exploring and articulating experience as fully as possible ... On the other side of 'the ridge' is the ineffable. No matter how thoroughly we explore meanings, motivations, the drama of relatedness ..., there is more here. But there are no words ... something that cannot be reduced. It just is (p.5).

She observes that faced with such imponderable, some therapists lose themselves on the side of meaning, while others' reverence for the unknowable fail to help their patients in understanding that which can be known.

According to Jacobs (1991), intersubjective theory offers a way in which meaning can stem out of the therapist's empathic attunement to the patient's inner world within the relationship. This represents an "intersubjective system of reciprocal mutual influence" (Stolorow et al, 1987).

The intersubjectivists' perspective rejects the "myth of the isolated mind" (Stolorow et al, 1987) embedded in traditional psychoanalysis. They believe in an interactional point of view, which includes "a wide range of object- relational, interpersonal, bi-personal, attachment, and developmental systems perspectives " (Nash, 2002). Each perspective advocates for a more thorough social understanding of human nature, of the self, and of the therapeutic encounter.

Stolorow (1993) described intersubjectivity thus:

Intersubjectivity theory is a field or system whose central metaphor is the larger relational system ... in which psychological phenomena crystallize. Ours is a vocabulary of interacting subjectivities, colliding, organizing principles, reciprocal mutual influence, attunements and malattunements, conjunction-disjunction - a lexicon attempting to capture the shifting intersubjectivity context of intrapsychic processes, but as forming at the interface of interacting worlds of experience (p. 450).

According to Stolorow (Stolorow et al. 1987), therapeutic change occurs through the analyst's interpretations inasmuch as they demonstrate the analyst's attunement to the patient's central affective states and developmental longings. The novelty of the therapist as an understanding presence, allows for the transformation of the patient's perception of self and others. This stance is

very much in accord with Kohutian self-psychology, in that it emphasizes the importance of empathic immersion into the patient's subjective world (Stolorow, 1993).

4.3 Outcome Studies on Psychoanalysis

Corsini (1989) identifies 450 distinct schools in the psychotherapeutic disciplines. A review of the literature on quantitative empirical evidence aimed at proving that one theoretical approach is more effective than another was done by Nocross and Goldfried (1992). Their findings demonstrate the unremitting inconclusiveness of such attempts. Polkinghorne (1992) states that "the large number of theories claiming to have grasped the essential of psychological functioning provide prima facie evidence that no one theory is correct" (p. 158). Based on such observations it would seem that theoretical orientation has little to do with the effectiveness of psychotherapy.

Petruska Clarkson (1989) addresses this issue by suggesting that one of the reasons therapy research is so often ambiguous and inconclusive, is precisely because it seeks to model itself on quantitative investigatory paradigms of the old physical science. She argues that experimental and quasi-experimental methods cannot do justice to phenomena such as the therapeutic relationship.

David Smail (2001) discusses this point in his paper "The Impossibility of Specifying 'Good' Psychotherapy." In his view, the problem inherent in understanding what constitutes good psychotherapy, is due to the profession's tendency to dwell on specifying the characteristics of what good therapists should be like as opposed to recognizing those traits. He suggests that therapy cannot be compared to technical procedures such as dentistry, which can be carried out interchangeably by any sufficiently trained person, because psychotherapy belongs to a sphere that is much more personal as well as relational. Consequently, Smail (2001) believed that research should concentrate on these aspects rather than to focus on the search for replicable effects of measurable variables such as therapist orientation, length of treatment etc. Smail (2001) remarks that throughout his years of experience with patients he has seen people who have been helped by therapists that he would have considered dogmatic, directive, sentimental, blindly religious, or otherwise incompatible with his own orientation, and that he has to admit that the help those people received is very real and important. Accordingly, the examination of therapeutic outcome cannot be done in conventional research terms.

In another paper "On Not Being Able to Eff the Ineffable," Smail (2000) quotes Ludwig Wittgenstein in his "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus:" 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.' He suggests that the place of spirituality in psychotherapy has to remain unspoken, simply because words are an inadequate means of giving expression to experience. Making a point of avoiding the tendency to glorify ineffability, he clarifies his position by adding:

I would say, though, that there is nothing necessarily 'higher' about the ineffably subjective: it is a mode of experience we all know and which as much informs the clumsy, banal and destructive as it does the rare, sublime and healing (p. 173).

Thus, ineffability is involved in every human undertaking, except that psychotherapy is not only dealing with it, but through it. Consequently, psychologists' attempts at communicating therapeutic work are bound to never be able to tell the whole story.

Nevertheless studies on the effectiveness of psychoanalysis and long-term psychodynamic therapy are done, and yield some overarching conclusions. In 1999, the International Psycho-Analytical Association (IPA) released the results of an extensive review on the efficacy of psychoanalysis. Although the lists of

limitations in such enquiry is extremely long (lack of use of standardized diagnoses, inadequate specification of the treatment procedures, inadequate detail of statistical analysis and inappropriate statistics reported), the IPA review lists a number of major findings based on forty eight studies ranging from long-term follow up of patients treated psychoanalytically, to comparing the effects of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy on varied patient populations.

In terms of *outcome* of psychoanalysis, some of their findings were that complete analyses are invariably associated with greater benefits; that intensive psychoanalytic treatment is generally more effective than psychotherapy; that psychoanalysis can lead to a reduction in health care related use and expenditure; that psychoanalysis can lead to a reduction in the use of psychotropic drugs; that long-term psychoanalytic therapy can reduce borderline symptomatology in the long run and these improvements are maintained; and that psychoanalysis can be an effective treatment for severe psychosomatic disorders.

In terms of *patient variables* the IPA reported that

patients with more severe disturbance specifically benefit from psychoanalysis rather than psychotherapy; that those with behavioral disorders respond less well to psychoanalysis than emotional disorders; that younger children benefit more from psychoanalysis than older ones; that anaclitic problems are better dealt with in psychotherapy, introjective problems in psychoanalysis; and that psychosomatic disorders respond particularly well to psychoanalysis.

In terms of *process-outcome* variables it was found that successful psychoanalytic treatment of severe personality disorder might require a combination of supportive and expressive techniques; that therapeutic alliance at the beginning of treatment predicts outcome; that supportive therapy might be better for psychotic patients in terms of improved capacity for adaptation; and that anxiety, guilt and idealization in the transference might be associated with successful treatment whereas shame, humiliation and existential anxiety are associated with failed treatment.

In terms of *therapist variables* the findings showed that more experienced analysts are not inevitably more effective; that classical psychoanalytic attitudes are

unhelpful in psychoanalytic psychotherapy; and that the match between analyst and patient is a key predictor of outcome.

As seen in this chapter, an all encompassing understanding of the process of change is infinitely difficult, if not impossible and most likely undesirable. However, each contribution toward a deeper understanding of therapeutic work expands the realm of possibilities and enhances our field. The following chapter puts forward a new concept in the hopes of making such a contribution.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESPONSE-ABILITY AND RESPONSE-INABILITY

The first challenge in trying to frame the concept of responsibility within psychoanalytic thinking is greatly due to the fact that responsibility is not a psychoanalytic notion and that as such, it has no points of reference within psychoanalytic theory. The second challenge lies in the effort required to distance one's mind from the abundance of associations this concept is saturated with outside the field of psychoanalysis while keeping it as an important source of meaning. It would be wrong to say that the common use of this notion has nothing to do with the one I am about to propose. However, before the two points of views can be understood as related and mutually informing, they first have to be examined within two separate registers.

When one looks into the use of the notion of 'responsibility' in lay language, it soon appears that its many possible interpretations leave it readily open to be fueled with the beholder's state of mind, set of values, emotions, etc. Moreover, the idea of responsibility not only depends on any given individual's point of view, it

also requires a context to help define the scope of its meaning. In fact, responsibility exists on a continuum stretching between the subjective and personal to the socially defined (cultural) and collective.

5.1 What is Responsibility?

The first and most obvious answer is that responsibility is the capacity to be responsible for something or someone which hints at the presence of a dynamic going from a "self" toward someone or something other. Furthermore, synonyms for 'responsibility' express a subtle range of human perspectives denoting a back and forth movement between internal and external. For example, commitment, burden, mission, obligation, charge, task, undertaking, struggle, caring, chore, role, concern, function, business, accountability, fault, capability, honesty, load, morality, etc., all carry this dialogical quality to them.

The root of the English word, 'response', indicates a dialogical dynamic as a response always relates to a question or 'questioning', the suffix "able" in responsibility/ability means, capable of, fit for, tending to, or causing. Implicitly the presence of such qualities foreshadows their potential lack. By acknowledging the

hidden negative counterpart of the different aspects of the word, namely question-response/ability-inability, this word carries the full weight of what it implicates; namely, a series of states of mind or perspectives, reflecting potential human conflicts inherent in this very idea.

In looking at three languages that are particularly meaningful to me I found an edifying cross-cultural outlook at the notion of responsibility as English, Arabic and Hebrew bring to light different facets of this notion.

Whereas in Latin based languages the emphasis is put on one's ability to respond (i.e. response-ability), in Arabic it is put on one's ability to question. The word 'Masula' in Arabic is the equivalent of 'responsibility' in English. However, its literal meaning would be close to 'question-bearing' as if being responsible involved an internal capacity to bear questions. One could interpret that in Arabic the dialogical motion goes from the inside out. As such, response-ability involves an internal mobilization that generates a question awaiting a response. Thus, an attempt to link the internal with the external is made. This particular movement going from the inside to the outside can be expressed verbally or otherwise. Early on, at the pre-verbal stage of life this type of dynamic is put

in motion through the mechanism of projective identification (Klein 1946, 1955, Bion 1959) used as a non-verbal form of communication aimed at provoking/ mobilizing attention with the intention/hope of eliciting a response from the object.

In English, however, it is in the capacity to be 'disturbed' (as understood by Bion and Levinas)²⁶ enough by this appeal or question coming from outside the self that the concept rests. If tolerated, such 'disturbance' would mobilize in the recipient a propensity to respond or a 'response-ability.' On the other hand, lack of tolerance for those projections would heighten anxiety in the recipient and mobilize defenses likely to result in a state of 'response-inability,' which, in turn, would interfere with a smooth back and forth dialogical movement.

The Hebrew language adds to this configuration as the Hebrew word for 'responsibility,' 'Achrayut', contains the word 'Acher,' meaning 'Other.' In Hebrew, the emphasis is put on difference. Through the meeting with 'not me' one enters the realm of response-ability in relation to difference. In this respect the disturbance mentioned

²⁶ Bion's notion of the container having the capacity to receive and contain projections while keeping a balanced outlook. Levinas' notion of the disruption of one's totality by the call into responsibility of the Other who enters my world.

earlier is first and foremost linked to the realization of 'Otherness' or separateness. The Hebrew version of this notion brings another facet to the idea of response-ability, namely that of the necessity for separateness on the way to achieving meaningful connections. Accordingly, it is only if one can tolerate his or her separateness that questions can be asked and responses be heard.

It is important to note that in spite of the cultural differences that make for the various ways in which the notion of responsibility is dealt with, the relationship between question, response and difference is inherent in all three languages.

This complex relationship between those three elements (Question, Response, and Difference) between 'sender(s)' and 'recipient(s)' constitutes what I call the (RE) link. This suggests that from the point of view presented here response-ability cannot be seen as learned or contingent on cognitive maturation. Rather the primary experience of "response-ability" as a linking function is necessary to the processes of maturation and learning.

At this point, I wish to turn to the notion of 'projective identification', and Bion's notions of 'link' and 'linking function' in order to examine whether the

idea of 'response-ability' fits within psychoanalytic discourse as well as within Bion's theoretical framework.

5.2 Projective Identification and the Linking Function in Relation to the (RE) Link

Since its introduction by Melanie Klein (1946), the concept of projective identification has been one of the most influential in the development of post Freudian Object Relations theory. A quick review of this concept is necessary as to highlight aspects of this notion particularly relevant to the (RE) link construct.

Melanie Klein's work with children lead her to formulate a model in which she asserted that from the first days of life, the infant dealt with two main conflicting impulses: love and hate (Mitchell, 1987). According to that model the neonate coped with the anxiety triggered by its own destructive feelings by splitting its ego and the world into good and bad. In Melanie Klein's words:

I have often expressed my view that object relations exist from the beginning of life, the first object being the mother's breast which to the child becomes split into a good (gratifying) and a bad (frustrating) breast; this splitting results in a severance of love and hate. I have further suggested that the relation to the first object implies its introjection and projection, and thus from the beginning object relations are moulded by an interaction between introjection

and projection, between internal and external objects and situations (cf. Mitchell, p. 176, 1987).

Klein conceptualizes the process of splitting and projective identification as bound up with the infant's fantasy life. Splitting being a defense mechanism typical of the paranoid-schizoid position, that seeks to keep the good and bad objects far apart in an attempt to protect the good objects and good parts of the self from contamination by the bad ones; projective identification is the mechanism by which the rageful feelings due to internal aggression/or frustration are disowned and expelled outward 'into' the mother. Melanie Klein explains her view thus:

Much of the hatred against parts of the self is now directed towards the mother. This leads to a particular form of identification which establishes the prototype of an aggressive object relation. I suggest for these processes the term 'projective identification'. When the projection is mainly derived from the infant's impulse to harm or control the mother (cf. Mitchell, p.183, 1987).

It is important to note that she sees the processes of splitting and projective identification together with the introjection of the good object, not only as normal but as vital for the development of object relations. However, she also believes that the excessive use of projection both of

good and bad parts of the self present with the danger of the weakening and impoverishment of the ego (Klein, 1946). Accordingly, the normal development of personality is bound to the degree to which a balance between projection and introjection is achieved.

While in agreement with much of Melanie Klein's theory, Bion and other Kleinian analysts developed the concept of projective identification further. Bion awards it a pivotal place in the development of object relations. Projective identification in Bion's view plays a vital role in the establishment of communication between mother and infant. If for Melanie Klein projective identification is an omnipotent fantasy in Bion's theory it becomes a reality via unconscious non-verbal communication between mother and infant. By introducing the concept of 'container' and 'contained' Bion considers that projective identification fulfills the role of a powerful non-verbal communicative function between mother and infant. In Bion's model the dynamic between container and contained is such that the container (mother) becomes the recipient of feelings of love, hate, fear, etc. that are projected into it by the contained (infant).

In "Learning From Experience" (1962), Bion expresses this view:

The patient, even at the outset of life, has contact with reality sufficiently to enable him to act in a way that engenders in the mother feelings that he does not want, or which he wants the mother to have (p. 31).

Bion's theory on thinking introduces us to the notion that cognition and emotions are intertwined. Clarke (2002) suggests that

the external object is central in attributing meaning to projected affect and becomes a part of the thinking process. The implication thus far is that for Bion projective identification can be a communicative activity, a way of transmitting meaning by evoking empathy (p. 10).

In fact, Bion believes that within the therapeutic context, the degree to which a patient is able "to manipulate his environment so that the phantasy of projective identification appears to have substance in reality" (1962, p.32) is an indication of his capacity to tolerate frustration as well as a sign that the patient is sufficiently adjusted to reality. On the other hand, for those patients who have difficulty tolerating frustration the omnipotent fantasy of projective identification has proportionately less factual counterpart in external reality (Bion, 1962). Based on these observations, Bion

addresses Melanie Klein's notion of 'excessive projective identification', and suggests that

it may appear excessive because the analyst is forced to be aware of it by the realistic steps which the patient takes to make the analyst in fact experience emotions of a kind the patient does not want to have (Klein, 1962, p.32).

Furthermore, he continues by stating that the excess mentioned above should be clearly distinguished from the type of projective identification that represents a flight from reality. Accordingly, the use of projective identification can be either adequate when used as a form of nonverbal communication, or pathological when used in order to deny reality.

Throughout the years, other psychoanalysts continued to develop the notion of projective identification. Rosenfeld (1988) agrees with Bion's distinction between the two forms of projective identification and adds a third one. In his article "Contribution to the Psychopathology of Psychotic States: The Importance of Projective Identification in the Ego Structure and the Object Relation of the Psychotic Patient," (1988) he describes the way in which each form expresses itself within the therapeutic relationship. He talks of the first one as of a method of nonverbal communication through the projection of intense

and distorted feelings of anxiety into the mother who in turn contains and modifies them. He states that in analysis such a patient

projects impulses and parts of himself into the analyst in order that the analyst will feel and understand his experience and will be able to contain them so they lose their frightening or unbearable quality and become meaningful by the analyst being able to put them into words through interpretation (p. 117).

The second form is a method of evacuation rather than communication, which attempts to deny psychic reality.

Rosenfeld postulates that this type of patient

primarily wants the analyst to condone the evacuation process and denial of his problems, he often reacts to interpretations with violent resentment, as they are experienced as critical and frightening as the patient believes that unwanted unbearable and meaningless mental content is pushed back into him by the analyst(p. 118).

The third form of projective identification has as its purpose to control the analyst's mind by forcing its way into the analyst. In such case the projections of 'mad' parts of the self dominate. The dynamic that ensues is that the patient dreads re-contamination through the re-invasion of his mind by the analyst's own madness. Rosenfeld notes that, although distinctive, all forms of projective identification can be present simultaneously. Accordingly, the nature of projective identification depends on the

force and the quality of the projections, so that it has the potential to be both destructive and constructive.

The movements of projection/introjection and the creation of disturbance in the analyst are addressed in Money-Kyrle's (1956) paper: "Normal Counter-Transference and some of its Deviations." He states that if the analysis is going well

there is a fairly rapid oscillation between introjection and projection. As the patient speaks, the analyst will, as it were, become introjectively identified with him, and having understood him inside, will reproject him and interpret" (p. 23).

Clarke (2002) summarizes the way in which various psychoanalysts viewed projective identification thus:

Segal (1992) argues that projective identification is a powerful means of communication that is designed to evoke a response in others. Joseph (1994) talks of a 'subtle nudge', whilst Bion (1962) expands on the communicative aspect of projective identification in his notion of 'container' and 'contained'. Meltzer (1978) and Bott-Spillius (1988) highlight the importance of Bion's work in terms of thinking about emotion within psychoanalytic theory. Ogden (1990) voices most strongly the interpersonal and communicative aspect of projective identification in which manipulation and coercion are central to the way in which we make others feel... As Hinshelwood (1989) notes these interpretations can be placed on a continuum, I would suggest that the different forms of projective identification are used in differing psychological situations and in relation to the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions (pp. 12-13).

As mentioned earlier, the notion of projective identification in Bionian terms was closely related to the idea of container/contained but also to that of PS $\leftrightarrow$ D. As maintained by Bion, the movement projection/introjection involves or even requires a parallel movement of PS $\leftrightarrow$ D. In Bion's words: "PS may be regarded as a cloud of particles capable of coming together, D and D as an object capable of becoming fragmented and dispersed" (1963, p. 42).

In other words, the container's function is not only that of containing (D) but that of becoming disturbed enough (PS) to experience (and tolerate) the unknown quality of the projections. Likewise, the contained (PS), by re-introjecting his detoxified projections in the context of the containing quality of the container (D), achieves greater and greater psychic growth. Psychic growth in turn depends on the capacity to establish emotional links L.H.K. between the container and the contained through the movement projection/introjection.

The particular quality of those links is to fulfill the function of connecting one person with another. Furthermore, Bion's conception of the love (L), hate (H), and know (K) links entails that one object *does* something to another.

In his paper "Countertransference and the Therapeutic relationship," Hinshelwood (2002) addresses this issue thus:

Bion hypothesized that the first cognitive working of the mind entails something innate (the organism itself) and something foreign (experience perceived in external reality)... Bion took this as an extremely important characteristic. Linking is not just a coming together like two magnets sticking together, it is much more intimate, like a hand in a glove... Entering one object into another has similarities with projective identification. Thus 'linking' brings together a wide range of psychoanalytic ideas (p.1).

As adumbrated in Hinshelwood's statement, it is very difficult to sort out the difference between the concept of projective identification and that of link. In "Attacks on Linking," (1959) Bion states that there are in fact no differences as "the link between analyst and patient or infant and breast, is the mechanism of projective identification" (p. 313).

I believe that Bion's statement leaves the question open, as when under attack the mechanism of projective identification continues to function as a link, in projecting and communicating the attacks themselves. Thus, the communicative quality of projective identification remains, even if in such case what is communicated is rage, destructiveness, confusion, void, and so on. Therefore, it

seems that what is attacked and can be destroyed are the emotions themselves L, H, and K expressed in -L, -H, and -K.

Following these remarks, two questions come to mind, the first one being: how do emotions come about? The second one being: how to differentiate between the linking function of emotions and that of projective identification?

To the first question Bion's response is that "an emotional experience cannot be conceived of in isolation from a relationship" (1962, p.42). Thus, an emotional experience comes about through the encounter of at least two human beings who are in the presence of one another. I would add, that from the (RE) link vertex, this conception of emotional activity suggests that its foundation requires the acknowledgement, albeit confused at times, of the experience of separateness.

The second question has to do with Bion's conception of projective identification as a function having the role of projecting the emotions of Love, Hate and Know into the object. Thus, projective identification is, I believe, akin to an innate tendency to seek contact with the object by 'forcing' one's emotions into someone else. As such, projective identification is the vehicle through which an

emotional 'disturbance' *moves* the object both on an emotional and an actual level, while the nature of the 'disturbance' varies according to the nature of the emotions and the force with which they are projected.

For instance, a baby's cry elicits an emotional response matched by an actual response such as picking it up, talking to it, etc. The (RE) link construct addresses the specific dynamic of appeal and response, which calls for the *active participation* of all involved. One of the postulates for this work is that an individual who displays a sufficient capacity to ask questions and acknowledge his/her dependence on others, which in emotional terms is a capacity to appeal (Q), is an individual who was responded to and who could tolerate responses (R). As a result of both capacities, this individual was able to develop the third element (Df) or the capacity to tolerate separateness which is indispensable for further mental and emotional growth.

The capacity for (Df), which is in a constant dynamic relationship to (Q) and (R), paves the way for the elaboration of an internal space, a third dimension characterized not only by "not-me" but by "other than me" and "outside of me", and opens up the gates of the fourth

dimension of temporality. It expands the realm of the communicative function of projective identification as it signifies the inevitability of the demand made upon the self through the encounter of someone "other than me" and "outside of me" and requires the ego to deal with this realization. Depending on the quality of the container/contained dynamic, the demands made upon the ego can fluctuate from benign to overwhelming. When manageable, demands conduce to growth and greater individuality, while when overwhelming, at best growth of the personality is stalled and at worst it results in the collapse of the nascent self.

Those for whom their environment was unresponsive or inadequately responsive would experience great difficulties in all areas. For instance a child whose initial appeal or "response-ability" toward his/her own need for help, love and closeness, was ignored or consistently misunderstood, is likely to stop appealing all together. By extension this situation is likely to lead the infant to a narcissistic withdrawal, and the use of damaging defensive maneuvers aimed at protecting a very fragile and primitive self. In such case the initial (Q), responded to by the absence of an adequate response is experienced as an attack (-R),

which propels the infant into a premature realization of "two-ness" experienced as a rupture. This goes against a gradual and healthy process of separation, replaced by a denial of separation and time (-Df).

According to this conceptualization, in the beginning of life the emerging self's meeting with this "otherness" is the background in which one's capacity to question, to respond, and separate takes place.

How does this come about? When does the "Other" make its first entrance?

5.3 From Sameness to Difference

Beginning with Melanie Klein's Object Relations theory, the conception of infancy becomes increasingly more complex. According to her, the baby comes to the world with two innate drives (life and death) with which he/she struggles from the very beginning by ways of projection and introjection, in a world made of satisfying and frustrating experiences. Although Melanie Klein's thinking is very much rooted within the Freudian tradition, she redefines the notion of drives. She maintains that

drives are no longer directionless, tension producing stimuli which become secondarily attached to objects serving as the vehicle for gratification. Drives contain objects as a constitutive part of their nature ... Drives for

Klein are relationships (cf. Greenberg and Mitchell, p. 146, 1983).

Furthermore, in contrast to Freud's notion of primary narcissism based on the belief that during the first months of life the infant is entirely preoccupied with his own pleasurable sensations unmediated by concepts of self and other, Melanie Klein asserts that a primitive ego is present from birth and that any plausible theory of mind has to have a relational core. In "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," (1946) Melanie Klein expresses her view on the early ego:

I would say that the early ego largely lacks cohesion, and a tendency toward integration alternates with a tendency towards disintegration into bits. I believe that these fluctuations are characteristic of the first few months of life. We are, I think, justified in assuming that some of the functions which we know from the later ego are there at the beginning. Prominent amongst these functions is that of dealing with anxiety... The fear of the destructive impulse seems to attach itself at once to an object-or rather it is experienced as the fear of an uncontrollable and overpowering object. Other important sources of primary anxiety are the trauma of birth (separation anxiety) and frustration of bodily needs (cf. Mitchell, 1987, p. 179).

This picture of infancy found much resistance within the psychoanalytic community primarily because while Melanie Klein sets forth the immediacy and importance of

the relational aspect in development, her conception of early object relations calls attention to the infant's struggle in dealing with the death drive. She asserts that the infant's primitive ego has to defend against the overwhelming anxiety that feelings of hatred, envy and greed elicit. However, it is important to remember that while Klein recognizes the presence of aggression in infants at no time does she give primacy to feelings of hatred over feelings of love. In fact she emphasizes how from very early on the child feels concern, even responsibility for his/her loved object. In "Love, Guilt and Reparation" (1937) she writes,

Even in the small child one can observe a concern for the loved one which is not, as one might think, merely a sign of dependence upon a friendly and helpful person. Side by side with the destructive impulses in the unconscious mind both of the child and of the adult, there exists a profound urge to make sacrifices... In the depth of the mind, the urge to make people happy is linked up with a strong feeling of responsibility and concern for them, which manifests itself in genuine sympathy with other people and in the ability to understand them, as they are and as they feel (p. 311).

In this passage Melanie Klein expresses clearly that she regards the urge to make sacrifices for a loved one as an innate unconscious process. From the point of view presented here the "strong feeling of responsibility and

concern" for someone other than the self is the outcome of the establishment of a dialogical dynamic (Q, R, Df) in which all parties are actively involved in the building of a shared emotional reality. The emotions involved in the feeling of 'responsibility', and the capacity to make sacrifices at such a young age is possible because the establishment of a response-able dynamic is successful. In other words not as the "I" sees them but "as they are and as they feel". Her interesting choice of the word sympathy as opposed to empathy stresses the notion of separateness between subject and object: sympathy being a state of mind in which an individual feels *for* someone other than him/her, as opposed to the state of mind of empathy in which boundaries tend to get blurred and involve a mirroring experience. While in sympathy one approximates someone else's experience, in empathy one come into contact with the same experience.

Many analysts, among the most influential Abraham, Anna Freud, Winnicott, Mahler, and Klein dedicated their work to a greater understanding of children and their environment.

Esther Bick developed a method of infant observation based on the minute observation of infants in their natural

environment, namely their home and their family. It was started in the late 1940's at the Tavistok Clinic in London for the purpose of training clinicians. Hinshelwood (1997) states

Esther Bick's ideas arrived by accident. She had first sought a method of teaching. The first skill that of a psycho-analyst and a psychotherapist need before making interpretations, before learning theory, is to be able to *be with* the patient. Baby observation was a method of teaching that skill (pp. 310-311).

The rigor of Bick's method requires of the observer to observe an infant/mother-family relationships in their home for a period of two years. Winship (2001) remarks that

the technique of observation is akin to ethnographic or anthropological fieldwork where the observer/researcher aims to be as unobtrusive as possible when gathering data over an extended period of time (pp. 245-246).²⁷

The practice of infant observation is very difficult, it requires of the observer to be at once emotionally available while keeping from obstructing the family dynamic (even when expected or invited to do so). It also involves the ability to pay attention to details such as the

²⁷ Incidentally Bick's method has been criticized by some analysts as highly speculative. Amongst them Andre Green, who rejects the idea that infant observation or experiments tell psychoanalysts anything. In his view, the observers are inevitably biased and can only see what their theoretical orientation lead them to see. Both the method and its findings continue to be the subject of controversy among psychoanalysts.

position of a leg, the movement of an arm going toward or away, the blinking of an eye, sounds, the quality of an interaction, a game, a feeding, etc.

Over the years the wealth of infant observation has revealed the complexity of the interactional dynamic between the infant and his family from the first days of life, and shows how each family member (baby included) contribute to mutual growth and change.²⁸ Based on such observations, Myriam Boubli (1999) remarks:

After more than thirty years of baby observation the idea of a passive and undifferentiated baby moved uniquely by his physiological needs, is no longer thinkable" (p. 15).

Recent infant research confirms the hypotheses of a very early capacity to initiate communication in infants as well as that of the recognition of the "other" with whom the baby engages in preverbal dialogues termed "proto-conversations."

²⁸ One of the most important findings of Bick's method of infant observation reveals that "...the most primitive parts of the personality do not possess an internal binding strength, and fall apart if an external object having this binding function fails to be introjected" (Boubli, 1999, p. 27). The introjection of an external object having the capacity to fulfill this function allows for the establishment of boundaries between inside and outside and leads to the development of a "psychic skin" (Bick, 1968, 1986). The establishment of an inside outside space provided by the creation of a psychic skin involves not only the baby and its mother, but the father and the family as a whole.

In a paper entitled "The Virtual Other in Infant's Minds and Social Feelings," Stein Braten (1992) differentiates between what he calls "presentational or felt immediacy" and "representational mediacy". In his words:

In the shared cultural lifeworld of *experienced* participants, intersubjective understanding may be considered to be mediated by acquired internal representations in the form of generalized, evoked, simulated, or imagined other (Braten, 1973ab, 1974, 1982; Harris, 1989; Mead, 1934; Stern, 1985). But such an internal working model (Craik, 1943), or "theory of mind" (Astington et al., 1988; Bretherton, 1991), formed on the basis of previous face to face interaction experiences, can hardly be attributed to the neonate... The formation of means for understanding the other in representational mediacy requires somehow a primary ground that enables some initial pre-understanding through a way of directly feeling the other (p. 79).

Braten asserts that "felt immediacy" is a phenomenon in which the actual other is felt directly by the newborn who has the capacity to enter into an engagement of feeling with another within the first 24 hours after birth (Braten, 1992; Trevarthen, 1979). According to him, such engagement is made possible because the baby is born with an inborn dyadic circuit with "the companion space of the virtual other" which is ready to be filled by the actual other directly sensed in presentational immediacy, and not through re-presentational mediacy. He continues,

affective feelings of vitality are elicited and shared by the participants in the sense of what Stern (1985: 54-57) terms "vitality affects." They differ from emotions displayed through expressions that may be characterized in terms of discrete categories such as 'joy', 'surprise', 'disgust', 'rage', etc. The modus of immediacy feeling of vitality affect is here termed the presentational mode of felt immediacy... Breast feeding, for example, is a prototypical situation in which nature invites mother and baby to engage in felt immediacy... Bodily touch in itself need not entail felt immediacy. It involves the immediate mental presence and engagement in the actual other (p. 81-82).

Trevarthen (2003) remarks that "the axiom of the infant psychology that we see most widely accepted in the academic literature and most represented in textbooks appears to be that the crucial sympathy of intelligence between persons, on which all social and cultural achievement depends, must be learned" (p. 162). Since the 70's, Trevarthen's research of neonates interaction with their environment leads him to conclude that contrary to mainstream beliefs, healthy newborn are well-coordinated, that they explore the sensations of being alive from within and from outside their bodies and that they display the capacity of anticipating, choosing and registering the consequences of their moves. Furthermore, he asserts that

newborns are able to communicate their intentions and feelings to people and seek reciprocal engagement.

According to Trevarthen,

Infants' emotions are subtle, complex and exceedingly effective in eliciting sympathetic reactions from others, in the broad sense of the word 'sympathetic', meaning responsive in matching or complementary emotional ways, not necessarily protective or generous (2003, p. 164).

The picture Trevarthen proposes is that of an active newborn, seemingly prepared to encounter the other and interact with him/her as soon as it is born. This particular aspect of infant research emphasizes the immediate awareness of separateness between mother and infant. This comes in sharp contrast with the idea that newborns exist in a state of fusion and confusion in the first month or months of life. It is important to note that, while from the (RE) link perspective the idea that the infant's perception of the presence of something "Other" is immediate, the process of separation and the acknowledgment of such separation is a lengthy and emotionally charged one. The (Df) aspect of the (RE) link is one that can only be achieved if a healthy enough dynamic of (Q) and (R) can be established. Notably, such development occurs within fluctuating movements of $PS \leftrightarrow D$,

namely between states of greater or lesser integration and the type of anxiety accompanying such states. Thus, in the view presented here the infant's capacity to engage in a creative and active dialogue with a 'real' object includes the presence of powerful fantasies and the potential distortion of actual experiences given the type of defenses used to cope with various situations.

Experiments done on babies less than two days old show that the heart rate of neonates involved in an interaction with someone else varied based on whether the infant initiated action or awaited a response. Nagy and Molnar (1994) observed that a newborn's heart beat accelerated when they were in a state of 'provocation', namely that of engaging the other person in a back and forth interaction. On the other hand the heart beat decelerated as the baby became attentive in anticipating a response. Trevarthen (2003) sees this as

an important demonstration of the human readiness for negotiation of expressive 'statements' and 'questioning', or 'assertion' and 'apprehension' in face-to-face dialogue (p.166).

This inborn capacity to initiate contact by "appealing" to the "Other" or putting the other "into question" both physically and emotionally is considered to be the Q part of the (Q, R, Df) dynamic in the (RE)

construct. This aspect of the link requires a certain emotional mobilization which involves a movement from the inside out. The nature of what is inside and going out varies according to the "sender's" state of mind and is aimed at mobilizing in the "receiver" a response. While body language, facial expressions and gestures are important modes of communication, projective identification is I believe the first and most efficient means of communicating internal states.

The complexity of the dialogical web established since the beginning of life requires "the presence of sensitive and ready participants" (Braten, 1992, p. 85). The ® part of the dynamic is first and foremost to be found in an innate propensity to respond to the appeal of someone other than the self, outside of the self and different from the self. It can be conceived as a spontaneous response to an aesthetic experience. The aesthetic experience is that of the encounter with the "Other" as an awesome mysterious object (Meltzer, 1988; Levinas 1984). At an affective level, this aesthetic experience is transformed through the encounter with the "Other" into an ethical experience. The 'felt immediacy' postulated by Braten (1992) includes I

believe both experiences. Braten (1992) gives a small vignette which goes as follows:

Katarina (26 weeks) reacted to the sobbing of her sister Kine (4 years) and was felt to comfort her. They were in bed with their mother who had the baby on her stomach fingering a piece of paper. Kine was lying beside, begging for a juice bottle. She started sobbing. Katarina then stretched her arm and leant toward Kine. Their faces touched. Kine began to laugh. "She comforted me!" she later explains (p. 77).

This example as well as others of the same nature point to the existence of innate and spontaneous tendencies to attend to the "Other's" appeal as well as to a natural propensity to respond to such appeal in a caring, sympathetic manner.

Emanuel Levinas (1982) writes,

Responsibility is an individuation, a principle of individuation. On the famous problem: 'Is man individuated by matter, or individuated by form,' I support individuation by responsibility for the other (p. 108).

Levinas' conception of responsibility for the other as the basis for individuation is explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

A CASE STUDY: OEDIPUS IN LIGHT OF RESPONSE-ABILITY AND RESPONSE-INABILITY

The images in dreams, wrote Coleridge, figure forth the impressions that our intellect would cause; we do not feel horror because we are haunted by a sphinx, we dream a sphinx in order to explain the horror that we feel.

Jorge Luis Borges

Freud's interpretation of the myth of Oedipus is one of the cornerstones of psychoanalysis. In a letter to Fliess (1897) Freud writes:

One single thought of general value has been revealed to me. I have found, in my own case too, falling in love with the mother and jealousy of the father, and I now regard it as a universal event of early childhood...If that is so we can understand the riveting power of Oedipus Rex, in spite of all the objections raised by reason against its presupposition of destiny;... the Greek legend seized on a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he feels its existence within himself. Each member of the audience was once, in germ and in phantasy, just such as Oedipus, and each one recoils in horror from the dream-fulfillment here transplanted into reality, with the whole quota of repression which separates his infantile state from his present one (p. 265).

Relying on material from his self-analysis and on anthropology, Freud develops the Oedipus complex and sets

out to map the human psyche by introducing the concepts of the ego, the super ego and the id. According to Freud's paradigm a (male) child's coming-into-being selects at first his mother as the object of libidinal investment. In the child's fantasy this challenges and arouses the father's anger who would retaliate by castrating his rival. Pushed by fear the child has no choice but to renounce his libidinal strivings toward his mother and to internalize the father's prohibition by identifying with him. Through this process the child gradually joins in the social order.

Whereas Freud sees the Oedipus complex as being played out during the 'phallic phase' between the ages of three and five, Melanie Klein asserts that an oedipal constellation is in place practically from the beginning of life. As opposed to Freud who believed that guilt is associated with incestuous strivings, Melanie Klein attributes guilty feelings to the experience of frustration followed by aggressive and destructive fantasies carried out on the loved object by the infant.

In *Mourning and Manic-Depressive States* (1940), Klein wrote,

the baby experiences depressive feelings which reach a climax just before, during and after weaning. This is the state of mind in the baby

which I termed the 'depressive position', and I suggested that it is melancholia in *statu nascendi*. The object which is being mourned is the mother's breast and all that the breast and the milk have come to stand for in the infant's mind: namely, love, goodness and security. All these are felt by the baby to be lost, and lost as a result of his own uncontrollable greedy and destructive phantasies and impulses against his mother's breasts. Further distress about impending loss (this time of both parents) arises out of the Oedipus situation, which sets in so early and in such close connection with the breast frustration that in the beginning it is dominated by oral impulses and fears... The sorrow and concern about the feared loss of the 'good' objects, that is to say, the depressive position, is, in my experience, the deepest source of the painful conflicts in the Oedipus situation, as well as in the child's relation to people in general (p. 345).

Bion revisits the myth of Oedipus in light of his conception of human psychic development and his theory on thinking. While Freud's and Klein's theories address the child's struggle with both his/her libidinal and aggressive strivings, Bion extends Klein's notion of "epistemophilic impulse" (Klein, 1928).

Bion (1962, 1963), tried to approach the Oedipus myth from a vertex which looks at those other elements which were displaced by the emphasis given to the sexual component of the myth, although it does not exclude the essential importance of the latter. He points out its different components are linked on a narrative form, and in such a way that none of them can be understood by themselves in isolation. He proposes to study specifically the elements

related to the K link, that of Knowledge (K), so essential in the human being as are also the Love (L) and Hate (H). The riddle of the Sphinx is an expression of the curiosity toward himself, but that curiosity is also represented by the determination with which Oedipus pursued his investigation into the crime, against the warnings of Tiresias (Grinberger, 1993).

Bion insisted on the destructive aspect of Oedipus' hubris²⁹ by highlighting: the Sphinx's riddle and its destruction when the riddle is answered, the blind Teiresias who possessed knowledge and who begged Oedipus to stop his search, the Oracle who provoked the search, the King whose search completed blinded himself and went to exile. This series of events which lead to Oedipus' self – inflicted fall represented in Bion's paradigm a combination of psychotic mechanisms likely to cause mental crippling. According to him, the convergence of curiosity, arrogance and stupidity found in certain patients' communications during psychoanalysis, indicated that the analyst was in the presence of a psychological disaster (Bion, 1957).

Freud's analysis of the Oedipus Myth led him to formulate the universality of a crucial stage of

²⁹ Bion (1957) sees in Oedipus' arrogant pride in his search for truth the presence of psychotic processes in which omnipotence and omniscience dominate. From the (RE) link point of view, this state of mind is dominated by a blind search for the acquisition of facts as objects obstructing the dynamic of (Q,R,Df).

psychosexual development, namely: the child's unconscious desire for the parent of the opposite sex and his/her feelings of rivalry and hostility for the same sexed parent. The resolution of this conflict through the renunciation of libidinal strivings toward the parent of the opposite sex and the identification with the same sex parent permitted further psychological development. A lack of resolution on the other hand generated neurosis. Bion's approach to the myth emphasized Oedipus' ruthlessness and blind arrogance, which he found to be linked to the presence of strong psychotic features in the personality. Notably, both theories reflect a specific point of view with regard to human psychological struggles. Freud places the height of the Oedipus conflict, which deals with issues of identification, around the ages of three and five.

Bion's theory on thinking used the myth narrative to reveal a complex web of relationships between the infant's capacity to tolerate frustration, envy, hatred, and the containing function of the mother, with curiosity and the development of an apparatus for thinking thoughts. While both interpretations of the myth are essential nexuses in understanding human psychological development and psychopathology, both do so by concentrating on Oedipus as

a man, while his first experiences as an infant within his original relational environment are kept in the background and never addressed directly. By contrast, Klein offers a vision of oedipal conflicts that allow for the infant Oedipus to emerge. Her interpretation is explicitly organized around the infant's struggle with relational pain. In other words, the intrapsychic world of the infant is not to be seen as cut off from its environment, rather it evolves and develops as a result of its constant interactions with a real external object/environment. It is from this point of view that this dissertation is approached.

6.1 Between Dream and Reality

In a paper titled "Who Is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream and Who is the Dreamer Who Understands It?," James Grotstein (1983) writes:

The dream is the quintessence of narrative, and narrative is the artistic and awesome arrangement, in a linear, plot-oriented sequential form, of a story which absorbs the passionate outcries of psychic disturbances and perturbations and permits these outcries to "tell their story" in a special and pre-ordained way (according to the law of narrative) so that the story may be told-and heard (pp. 363-364).

Myths are to the group what dreams are to the individual. In this sense they share the same function, namely that of expressing, and exploring through representation human existential, internal, and relational struggles. In this paper, I will treat some aspects of the Myth of Oedipus as a dream reflecting "psychic disturbances" whereas at other times I will refer to it as a story articulated around external reality. This position is I believe close to the phenomenology of therapy in which the fluctuation of dynamic movements involving internal and external, conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, intellectual and emotional are inherent. Furthermore, as in the therapeutic work, flexibility is of the essence in order to open up to a space characterized by what is unknown rather than by what is believed to be known.

This attitude involves the use of what Bion calls the "capacity for reverie" in which conventional reality is replaced by a sort of mental flânerie,³⁰ which in blurring the boundaries between dream and reality gives us access to interpretation. It also calls for the use of 'binocular vision' (Bion, 1962) which correlates two views of the same

³⁰ Flânerie is a leisurely walk, during which one takes one's time and allows oneself to be led by whatever presents itself and attracts one's attention.

object by using conscious and unconscious vertices simultaneously.

Donald Meltzer (1988) remarked that in dreams the unconscious made a dream involving the other person, the stranger. In his words:

But what is the content of the dream, then? Why, it is our primal dream of love (or hate) in which we cast the stranger as protagonist and estimate his fitness to the part, as a stage director casts his play, and as the theatre critic views the opening night. Our minds are full of characters in search-not of an author, for we ourselves are the author- but of players to fit the parts (pp. 37-38).

Viewed from that perspective, Oedipus' dream reflects his unconscious search for answers through players who play the parts of his internal drama.

This paradoxical space (transitional space), between dream and reality I am seeking to create in the analysis of the myth of Oedipus requires of the reader to surrender to inconsistencies by accepting shifts in his/her point of view from that of tragedy to that of nightmare and vice versa as well as from unconscious fantasies to conscious experiences. Those inconsistencies are desirable in that they destabilize the sequence of cause and effect and have the potential of carrying us to unpredictable thresholds. Consequently, at times the characters will be regarded as

real people, at other times as states of minds, functions, or relationships of various natures.

While Freud and Bion related to the myth as mostly centered on the character 'Oedipus', from the (RE) link point of view, that is to say the relationships between the capacity to appeal, respond, and differentiate, "There is no such a thing as Oedipus." This quote, modeled on Winnicott's provocative saying, "there is no such a thing as a baby", calls attention to these dynamics by emphasizing that Oedipus is first and foremost the product of the interaction of an individual with his environment. As stated by Winnicott (1952) "... The center of gravity of the being does not start off in the individual. It is the total set up ..." (p. 99). In other words, for the infant, the processes of going-on-being and becoming depend on its relationship with the mother's body throughout gestation and after its physical birth as well as on its relationship with her psyche regarding its psychological birth. As discussed in the previous chapter, years of psychoanalytic and infant research have confirmed that infants come to the world with innate tendencies and temperamental traits.

Consequently, in order to approximate a truthful representation of the (RE) link dynamics in the Oedipus

Rex, the interplay of the subject's (Oedipus) intrinsic traits (i.e. aggression, greed, envy, love, hate, etc.) with those of his environment have to be considered simultaneously.

In Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex", we are introduced to Oedipus as a man. By the time one begins to realize that his tragic fate has roots in a past he has no conscious memory of, it is already too late for him and for the spectator. Oedipus just does not manage to inspire sympathy. The concentration of sheer arrogance, impulsivity, unreliability, paranoia, rage and murderous impulses he represents are quite an indigestible combination. In fact Oedipus seems to embody un-thought and unthinkable experiences which Bion defines as beta elements. In Bion's words:

Beta elements are not amenable to use in dream thoughts but are suited for use in projective identification. They are influential in producing acting out. They are objects that can be evacuated or used for a kind of thinking that depends on manipulation of what are felt to be things in themselves as if to substitute such manipulation for words or ideas. For example a man may murder his parents and so feel free to love because the anti-sexual internal parents are supposed by this act to have been evacuated... Beta elements are stored but differ from alpha-elements in that they are not so much memories as undigested facts... (1962, pp. 6-7).

Whereas alpha elements and the alpha function operate on the awareness of emotional experience which in turn allows for sufficient contact with both internal and external reality, beta elements can only relate to the world of inanimate things. From the (RE) link vertex, while the range of questions (Q) accessible to the individual who can make use of his/her alpha function is open ended - i.e. Who? Why? When? What? How? etc., - the individual in whom beta elements dominate is limited to only ask "What"³¹ which by itself would be considered to be (-Q) or an attack on the individual's capacity to appeal through verbal means or by using projective identification as a means to communicate. This state of affairs does not stand alone, it immediately brings to mind the two other aspects of the (RE) link, that is response (R) and difference (Df). One can assume that the presence of (-Q) indicates the presence of (-Df), characterized by attacks on differentiation expressed through the diffusion of boundaries and identity

³¹ The concreteness of thinking characterized by the dominance of psychotic processes is addressed by Bion (1959) as follows: " The problem that has to be solved on this early, yet superficial, level must be stated in adult terms by the question 'What is something?' and not the question 'Why is something?' because 'Why?' has through guilt, been split off. Problems, the solution of which depends upon the awareness of causation, cannot therefore be stated, let alone solved (312).

confusion, via projective or adhesive identification,³² as well as with (-R) attacks on one's capacity to respond adequately, characterized by rage and impulsive acting out.

As in Bion's conception of the L.H.K links, the (RE) link is active along the PS $\leftrightarrow$ D positions, meaning that the positive and negative aspects of the link depend on whether the individual is in a state of mind of a greater or lesser psychic integration with regard to the psychotic and non-psychotic parts of his/her personality.

Frances Tustin (1981), a child analyst whose work is centered on schizophrenic and autistic children writes:

If the mother cannot hold her infant together in these intense states of excitement and cannot seem to bear the "overflow", and process it by empathy and understanding, the infant experiences a precocious sense of "twoness" which seems fraught with disaster. Instead of experiencing ecstasy as a peak of sublime oneness which helps him to feel "rooted" in a nurturant situation, the infant feels cut off from it. He feels adrift and alone. The insecurity of this precocious sense of "twoness" leads to pathological maneuvers to reinstate the sense of oneness (pp. 191-192).

In line with these last remarks it is notable that although Sophocles' entire play is structured around a

³² Bick (1968, 1986) describes a type of narcissistic identification characterized by a "defensive mode of being 'stuck onto' in two dimensionality by using skin-to skin contact or any other sensorial modality that assumes the tactile aspect of a suction tentacle, (Symington 1995) as well as imitation such as echolalia. This defense is meant to protect against the dead-end, where one can either fall endlessly or liquefy (post-natal anxieties)" (cf. Haag, 1997. p. 382).

question and response format, at no point does Oedipus ask "why", at no point does he link his present condition to his biological or adoptive parents' past actions, at no point does he blame anyone but himself for the damage done. Considering that Oedipus discovers that he was condemned to death by his own parents and lied to by his adoptive ones, one could expect a certain level of resentment, and anger toward those who failed him as a child and as an adult. None of this is expressed; instead Oedipus turns the blame on himself because he cannot afford to recognize the "Other" or (Df), due to what such an admission would imply. Thus, he safeguards his fantasy of omnipotence in his persistent defensive denial of his past and present dependence on others (-Df), and of their past and present failures toward him (-Q, -R).

Meltzer (1988) writes that "signs are indicators of information; but meaning must find its representation in symbols in order that the emotionality of human relationships may be thought of and evolved" (p.66). Thus, as a man, Oedipus' incapacity to appeal (-Q) to those who love him precludes his access to symbolic representation (Q, R, Df), thus his relentless search relies on "what happened" and never leads him to ask "why it happened".

Consequently, Oedipus functions at an operational level, he is a collector of signs and facts as opposed to a man capable of entering the realm of meaning by asking why the people who should have loved and protected him rejected him, lied to him, and even tried to kill him. Quoting Mircea Eliade (1963), Enriquez (1987) writes about remembrance and the continuity of human behavior:

[T]o recover from the work of time, one must go back and rejoin the beginning of the world' or, in other words, recover the past so as to know it and give it sense and thereby prevent it from breaking in on the present unless it be to signify that certain events not only happened, but helped to shape one's identity and being in the world (p. 96).

In order to achieve such a state of mind and to inscribe himself in temporality, Oedipus would have had to be able to recognize others, their impact in shaping his identity, and to have sufficient access to his internal world while being able to link it with external reality. At the time we meet Oedipus as a grown man, all of the above preconditions are either missing or lacking in depth. As Bion observed, Oedipus is paradigmatic of what a psychological disaster looks like (Bion, 1957).

Looked at from the (RE) link standpoint, Oedipus' tragic life unfolds around the theme of response-inability (-Q, -R, -Df). When positive (Q, R, Df), the three elements

forming the (RE) link, allow for a coherent approximation of reality, and a healthy way of relating characterized by: an internal sense of reality, a capacity to tolerate the other as other, a capacity to feel empathy for the other without losing one's own identity, a capacity to recognize one's dependence on the other, a capacity to make sacrifices for the other without undue amounts of depletion, a propensity to participate in life and relationships creatively, a capacity to tolerate and contain emotions, a capacity to ask questions while tolerating responses that are not necessarily answers.

When negative, the configuration (-Q, -R, -Df) denotes mental states characterized by an internal sense of unreality; a denial of separateness leading to an incapacity to relate to the other as other; a propensity to lose one's own identity in relationships; a denial of one's dependence on others; an unconscious desire to control the other; an incapacity to make sacrifices for others without having a strong sense of depletion bordering on persecution; a tendency to avoid participation in relationships and in life; a limited capacity to ask questions denoting a propensity to flight from both internal and external reality; difficulties in tolerating

and containing emotions; a tendency to distort experience; and an intolerance for responses that are not answers.

Notably, the above description of the two configurations is only meant to highlight and contrast extremes. Bion's concept of the PS $\leftrightarrow$ D continuum is helpful in keeping in mind that individuals oscillate between those two positions and move to and fro from one to the other to a greater or lesser degree according to their ego strength and the amount of stress life events put on them.

In the first months of life, the relationship between (Q) and (R) could be compared to bats' use of ultra sounds. The baby's various projections outwards constitute his/her attempt to appeal (Q) to an unknown entity out there (which represent an unconscious preconception of something "other"). Braten (1992) concludes from his observation of infants that infants are born with the other in mind. This preconception of the other in the infant's mind he called the "virtual other." I believe that it is toward this virtual other that the child first addresses himself/herself by way of projections. At this early stage of life, those projections are blind, inarticulate, incoherent and highly charged. However, they are aimed at a

target outside of the self, and as with bats return a particular configuration of this external reality. The mother's emotional, physical and vocal responses (R) to her child is the reality-configuration he/she will receive. Thus, very early on the infant learns to navigate, and adjust to whatever configuration is returned to him/her (Df).

Preferably, at first only minimal adjustments need to be made and a smooth enough dynamic of (Q), (R), and (Df) can take place. The mother's capacity to receive, transform and return the projections (Bion, 1962), gives the infant a chance to experience the beginning of a sense of separateness in a non-threatening way by providing it with the illusion of having control over his environment. It is noteworthy, that the sense of control the infant has is not entirely an illusion. When a mother is sufficiently attuned and emotionally available to her infant, the infant has in fact a real capacity to mobilize her attention and clue her toward his/her needs. Winnicott (1948) saw the "mother's job" as that of providing consistency, predictability, and containment. He wrote:

She provides opportunity for the baby to make the transition between the quiet and excited state, not suddenly coming at the child with a feed and demanding a response... At first she lets the

infant dominate ... being willing to hold herself in readiness to respond... Gradually she introduces the external shared world, carefully grading this according to the child's needs which vary from day to day and hour to hour (p. 161).

It is evident, that Oedipus dealt with a very different mother. His initial appeal (Q) is received by rejection (-R), followed by the piercing of his flesh (the pinning of his ankles) which can be understood as representing his feeling of being torn apart by a rushed and violent process of separation (-Df). In other words for Oedipus the mode of separation is characterized by rupture (-R) rather than by an on going process of communication that affords the child a sense of containment and continuity leading to a gradual realization of his/her separateness from the mother (R) . The myth of Oedipus introduces us to a parental couple who does not display any capacity for empathy and who fails to provide shelter to him. Instead this combined monstrous couple assaults him, wounds him and attempts to kill him.

In the beginning of life both the infant's body and psyche are under tremendous strain. Breathing, feeding, feeling, digesting, crying, are only some of the ways in which a lifelong struggle for physical and mental survival

starts. In this state of utter neediness and dependence, the environment that greets the child in the world is as fundamental to his psychic development as his heart or stomach are to his physical one.

In Ethics of the Fathers 1:14, Rabbi Hillel asks: "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, then when?"

From the (RE) link vertex, these three questions are at the core of human development and are omnipresent in Sophocles' play "Oedipus Rex". In looking at Oedipus as a case study, I will follow Rabbi Hillel's three questions as I believe that they are omnipresent in the myth.

If I Am Not For Myself, Who Is For Me?

This poignant existential question is one that ideally no child should have to ask. Any child whose environment provides him/her with the sufficient amount of support and love is spared from having to ask it prematurely. However, for the child Oedipus it is a crucial one from the moment he is born. Before he is three days old Oedipus is rejected by his parents who give him to a shepherd with the order of exposing him on a hillside with a pin through his ankles³³ until he died. Their reason for acting in such a cruel way

³³ Oedipus in Greek means 'swollen ankle.'

was to protect Laius from the Apollo oracle's prophecy who told the King that he would be killed by his own son.

It is important to note that at this point in the story no prophecy is made regarding Oedipus' future incestuous relationship with his mother. Yet, Jocasta does not object to the death sentence put upon her infant. In agreement with her husband she becomes an active participant in handing it herself to the shepherd. It is fair to say that the couple's response to the birth of their child is quite atypical. Marked by a complete lack of empathy, an unusual amount of sadism and disregard for life, it is in fact horrific.

Thus, Oedipus' personal myth begins with dangerous and sadistic parents whose unambiguous shared decision to kill him evokes the Kleinian concept of the early Oedipus complex. Melanie Klein postulates that in the child's fantasy the parental couple formed a combined figure engaged in uninterrupted coitus.

According to Klein (1929, 1930), the beginning of the Oedipus conflict is placed at a period when sadism predominates. She writes,

According to the child's fantasies (or 'sexual theories') of parental coitus, the father's penis (or his whole body) becomes incorporated in the mother during the act. Thus the child's sadistic

attacks have for their object both father and mother... The attacks give rise to anxiety lest the subject should be punished by the united parents... (1930, p. 219)... According to the early sadistic super-ego, which has already been set up, these united parents are extremely cruel and much dreaded assailants (1929, p. 213).

In a more recent view of the oedipal situation Ronald Britton (1989) formulates a view of the oedipal triangle in the depressive position. He remarks that "the acknowledgement by the child of the parents relationship with each other unites his psychic world, limiting it to one world shared by his two parents in which different object relations can exist" (p. 86).

This configuration includes two links connecting the child to each parent, while he is confronted with the link between them by which he is excluded. According to Britton (1989) if the child is able to tolerate the parents' exclusive relationship

it provides him with a prototype for an object relationship of a third kind in which he is a witness and not a participant. A third position then comes into existence from which object relationship can be observed (p. 87).

Britton (1989) notes that some of his patients seem unable to tolerate their analyst's relationship with others, in the same way that they cannot tolerate the idea

of parental intercourse, which they can only anticipate as a disaster. Britton observes that such patients lacked the "third position" and that they could not include "within their personal version of me my relation with others and it was intolerable to them that I was communing with myself about them" (p.88).

While it is essential to recognize the often violent fantasies of early childhood, from the (RE) link point of view, the Oedipus myth addresses the issue of the meetings of inward and outward realities which interweaves relational dynamics between parents and children. The threat presented by the entrance of a child into his parents' world should not be underestimated as few things in life bring to the fore emotions with such force. The mixture of familiarity and otherness in a newborn lends itself to powerful fantasies in the parents. It activates anew, among other things, the "me and not me" question. Thus, among the first challenges parents face are those of recognizing and accepting the "otherness" of their child, of responding to his/her appeal (aesthetic as well as emotional), while tolerating the potentially destructive fantasies that both he/she and they can be prey to. The bleakness of this depiction of the first encounter between

parents and infant is rarely addressed. The idealized image of birth represented for centuries in art, literature and religious imagery might bear witness to the dire need for such idealization. In an article entitled "Hate in the Countertransference", Winnicott (1947) gives an edifying account of the reasons why a mother hates her baby. Due to the length of the quotation, I will only include some of the reasons Winnicott mentions:

The mother, however, hates her infant from the word go...We know about the mother's love and we appreciate its reality and power. Let me give some of the reasons why the mother hates her baby... The baby is not her own (mental) conception ... The baby is a danger to her body in pregnancy and at birth. The baby is an interference with her private life, a challenge to preoccupation... The baby at first dominates, he must be protected from coincidences, life must unfold at the baby's rate and all this needs its mother's continuous and detailed study. For instance she must not be anxious when holding him, etc. ... At first he does not know what she does or what she sacrifices for him. Especially he cannot allow for her hate... He is suspicious, refuses her food, and makes her doubt herself, but eats well with his aunt... If she fails him at the start she knows he will pay her out for ever ... He excites her but frustrates- she mustn't eat him or trade in sex with him (p. 201).

Laius and Jocasta proved unable to tolerate any aspect of this challenge. Their quest to the oracle, followed by their interpretation of its message is akin to a state of mind driven by a need for concrete answers to the mysteries

of life. The royal couple fails to hear the oracle's symbolic communication which merely acknowledges that each new generation signals the beginning of the end of the previous one, that each growing child inevitably challenges his/her parents' capacity to love and to hate as well as their capacity to tolerate their child's love and hatred. In fact if Laius had had the capacity to love, hate, and learn, he would have heard that the oracle was telling him that his was a perfectly normal infant. He would have been able to accept the challenging proposition offered by any child who carries within him/her the potential to love and to hate, to kill, and to save.

However, because Laius' and Jocasta's *modus operandi* inscribes itself within the (-RE) configuration, the entrance of the infant Oedipus into their lives is a vexation to them, for each of his heartbeats forces them to recognize the passage of time and the loss of their fantasy of omnipotence. Consequently, Laius experiences the oracles' open ended response as an attack (-R), namely, he will be killed by his own child. This indicates that to begin with, the king addressed it with a false question (-Q), which functioned more as an evacuation (of his own envy, hatred and murderous rage) than as a link aimed at

eliciting a real response (R). Within the (RE) link construct, what follows is that Laius and Jocasta also failed to experience Oedipus as "other" than them (-Df). Because of their utter response-inability (-R) in which concreteness of thinking is predominant, they mistake their new born for a persecutor. As is typical of borderline and psychotic modes of functioning, they substitute thought for action in the actual killing of their son as to rid their psyche of those persecutory feelings.

Hannah Segal's (1991) concept of "symbolic equation" illustrates powerfully Laius', Jocasta's and later on Oedipus' mode of functioning. According to her, the symbol is formed by the subject in the process of working through mourning and, while it represents the object it is a creation of the subject and therefore can be freely used by him/her. The use of symbolic equations on the other hand denotes the predominance of concrete thinking over symbolic thinking. In Hannah Segal's (1991) words:

In the symbolic equation, the symbol-substitute is felt to be the original object. The substitute's own properties are not recognized or admitted. The symbolic equation is used to deny the absence of the ideal object, or to control a persecuting one. It belongs to the earliest stages of development. The symbol proper, available for sublimation and furthering the development of the ego is felt to *represent* the object; its own characteristics are recognized,

respected and used. It arises when depressive feelings predominate over paranoid-schizoid ones, when separation from the object, ambivalence, guilt, and loss can be experienced and tolerated. The symbol is not used to deny but to overcome loss (pp. 41-42).

When applied to Laius' and Jocasta's reaction to the birth of their child, it becomes evident that Oedipus never achieves an independent existence in their psyche (Df). Furthermore, as opposed to being contained by his parents through the natural response-ability asymmetry generational difference should afford him, he becomes the recipient-container of toxic and inarticulate projections. The opportunity for mourning and psychological growth that the oracle's symbolic message bears is experienced as a narcissistic injury by the royal couple, who embody a (-R) pathological state of mind. This same opportunity for the establishment of (Q, R, Df) denied to Oedipus from the beginning, perpetuates the work of denial, splitting and primitive projective modes of functioning, which ultimately lead all those involved to tragedy.

Thus, Oedipus' dream introduces us to a monstrous mythical parental couple who could not tolerate the interruption or rupture of the perseverance of their being (Levinas, 1998) by the entrance of a stranger in their

lives. Levinas uses the concept of "living being" to describe a thoughtless state of mind, characterized by the incapacity to recognize anything exterior to the self. He writes (1998):

The living being per se, then, is not without consciousness, but has a consciousness without problems, that is without exteriority, an interior world which center it occupies, a consciousness not concerned with situating itself in relation to an exteriority, which does not comprehend itself as part of a whole... The interiority that, to thinking beings, is opposed to exteriority, plays itself out in the living being as an absence of exteriority. The identity of a living being throughout history contains nothing mysterious: The living being is essentially the Same determining every Other, without the Other ever determining the Same (p. 14).

Levinas' notion of the Same corresponds closely to a (-RE) configuration incarnated by Laius and Jocasta. Solely preoccupied by carnal survival, they do not have the capacity to fathom Otherness and to engage in a dialogue bound to lead to change and discovery. Instead, they attempt to disengage from this process by erasing Oedipus' existence.

Faced with parents who cannot 'be for him', Oedipus is left with no other alternative than to 'be for himself'. Thus, the first part of the question, "If I am not for myself...", is followed by an infinite void and dread.

If I Am Only For Myself What Am I ?

In the context of early experience, the affirmation of neither the "I" nor the "I am" can be taken for granted. In this sentence "I am" is preceded by the conditional conjunction "if" which introduces the idea that coming into "being" is not the certain outcome of being alive. "If" suggests that "I am" depends on something outside of itself. By contrast "only for myself", negates the relationship with "other than myself", and is characteristic of a state of mind absorbed in conatus (i.e. the tendency of a thing to persist in its own being).

Thus, the first six words of the question - "If I am only for myself" - bear both the recognition and the negation of one's existential dependence on others. From the (RE) link vertex, this sequence implies that "If" gives to the "I am" the necessary relational dimension that the feeling of psychic reality requires, namely a smooth enough dynamic of communication (Q, R) and the gradual establishment of separateness (Df). In other words, in the "if" we find the a-priori condition of dependence that allows for the "I am" to emerge. For this to happen, the infant's original appeal (Q) in which it communicates its

vulnerability and its need to be found - "I am here!" - has to be received by the open ended and containing mother's response (R) "Here I am." On the other hand, the words "only for myself" signify a withdrawal from relational engagement and suggest the presence of attacks on (Q, R, Df).

When, the movement of appealing (Q) - "Who is for me?" - is derailed (due to the infant's incapacity to appeal, to excessive envy, to the mother's incapacity to respond, or other reasons), and returned as a negative response (-R) it results in the terrible realization of "only for myself" which represents a traumatic awareness of two-ness (-Df). These words however, can only be pronounced by someone outside of the experience, for the experience from within is inarticulate. Void, chaos, dread and, persecutory fantasies, create an internal mayhem dealt with by using primitive defenses such as splitting and projective identification which afford short term relief while perpetuating a state of isolation and leading to an ever-growing distance from reality.

The last part of the question "What am I?" reflects the devastating consequences that such experience has on the child's psyche. Both a question and a response, this

phrase sounds like a warning against the fall from the human world ("Who") to a world of things ("What").

However, it is important to note that the extent, depth and flexibility with which one is able to move from the world of beings to the world of things is indicative of the extent and depth of the psychological disaster mentioned earlier. Thomas Ogden's (1998) notion of the Autistic-Contiguous Position addresses this issue thus:

The isolation associated with experience of an autistic-contiguous sort involves a more thorough detachment from the world of human beings than either of the two forms of isolation described by Winnicott. Isolation of an autistic-contiguous sort involves to some degree the act of substituting a self-generated sensation environment for the mother-as-environment. The mental activity involved in the creation of this sensation-environment has the effect of suspending the individual somewhat precariously between the land of the living and the (psychologically) dead (p. 186).

Ogden (1997, 1998) associates this form of relatedness to objects with the most primitive mode of attributing meaning to experience. Just as with Klein's notions of Paranoid-Schizoid and Depressive positions, Ogden's notion of Autistic-Contiguous position relates to a particular psychological organization and the predominance of a particular type of anxiety. According to him, within this position, the experience of the self is based upon the

ordering of the sensory experience, particularly sensations at the skin level on which a sense of boundedness and the experience of a cohesive self rest. The type of anxiety associated with this position is the terror of falling into shapeless space. Ogden (1998) suggests that in order to defend against such dread the individual attempts to form a "second skin" (Bick, 1968, 1986) which can be expressed through the individual's "tenacious eye contact, continuous and unrelenting talk, compulsive wrapping of oneself in many layers of clothing, and so on" (p. 140).

As was mentioned earlier, Oedipus the infant had to 'be for himself.' In the first pages of the play, Creon (Oedipus' uncle and brother-in-law) returns from the Oracle of Apollo, to which he had been sent by Oedipus to find out what was afflicting the City of Thebes, with a response that goes as follows:

Here is what I was told by the god Apollo. He ordered us, in clear terms, to drive out the thing that defiles this land, which we, he says, have fed and cherished. We must not let it grow so far that it is beyond cure (*Oedipus the King*, p. 6).

Two aspects of the response are particularly striking. The first is that Oedipus is referred to as a "thing." The Oracle's message has a teasing quality in Oedipus' dream as

the author knows that the "thing" he is drawing attention to is a man. This rhetorical split placed at the beginning of the play acts both as an afterthought and a preamble to Oedipus' emotional journey. The transformation of his status of King to that of "thing" evokes a sharp break reminiscent of the birth caesura through which an omnipotent sense of weightlessness and needlessness gives way to a heavy, clumsy, painful, hungry, and naked existence warranted by birth. The already traumatic birth caesura is intensified when Jocasta and Laius pin his ankles together and make him feel like a painful 'thing', a 'thing' to be disposed of. As in "The Emperor's New Clothes," one becomes aware of the thin-skinned surface of Oedipus' power. In his dream, which is increasingly turning into a nightmare, Oedipus has a vision of himself as a 'thing dressed in King.'

The other aspect of the Oracle's response that calls for attention is the reference to the danger of "it" being beyond cure. In light of the first part of the response, one might assume that "it" (the thing) is Oedipus himself. However, the communication is ambiguous as "it" could stand for both Oedipus and the City. This vagueness diffuses boundaries and suggests a state of fusion between Oedipus

and Thebes. The City here fulfills the role of an exoskeleton and a container which provide him with masculine and feminine supportive qualities he failed to internalize.

In a paper called "The Current State of Clinical Diagnosis and Treatment Outcome", Cooper and Maxwell (1996) write about patients dealing with narcissistic type pathologies thus:

In our experience, this type of patient often lives in a transitional space. This is not in the Winnicottian sense of facilitating development, but, rather, in a way that stultifies any development. As Steiner (1993) said they find 'home' in external structures. Home is a shelter, a fortress, a carapace skin, so it is often a retreat where none is allowed in and a state of limbo is ensured (p. 19).

Under the pressure exercised by Apollo's warning, Oedipus' 'home' begins to crumble. Unambiguous this time, the message indicates clearly that in order to restore itself, the curable part (the City/Oedipus) will have to dislodge and "drive out" the part of it that is beyond cure (Oedipus/the City). In other words, the semblance of stability Oedipus sought to create is no longer tenable, and the painful process of separation has to begin.

In the play, as he discovers that the King

and Queen of Corinth are not his biological parents, Oedipus and a Corinthian messenger have the following dialogue (pp. 73-74):

Oedipus:

A shepherd, were you?
A wandering laborer?

Corinthian Messenger:

Yes, but at that moment
I was your savior.

Oedipus:

When you picked me up,
was I in pain?

Corinthian Messenger:

Your ankles would bear
witness on that point.

Oedipus:

Oh, why do you speak of
that old affliction?

Corinthian Messenger:

You had your ankles pinned
together and I freed you.

Oedipus:

It is a dreadful mark of shame
I have born since childhood.

Corinthian Messenger:

From that misfortune comes the
name which you still bear.

In this passage, Oedipus' vulnerability is palpable. His immediate reference to pain has an undefended quality uncharacteristic of him. In a hopeful gesture he exposes himself in asking an emotionally significant question "was I in pain?" (Q) to which his savior gives a concrete response by locating the pain in the scarred part of

Oedipus' body (-R). It seems that in this context the shepherd's saving function is that of erecting a wall of defenses against Oedipus' experience of uncontained and uncontainable pain. The scars on his skin bear witness to his failure to acquire a protective envelope necessary for the establishment of boundaries (-Df). We can clearly see here the displacement of pain from a state of shapelessness awaiting transformation through the care giver's (mother) capacity to give it meaning (R), to that of an inarticulate 'thing' located in the body (-Df) and functioning as a blind, deaf and mute container (-Q, -R). In her paper "The experience of the skin in early object relations," Esther Bick (1968) writes:

In its most primitive form the parts of the personality are felt to have no binding force amongst themselves and must therefore be held together in a way that is experienced by them passively, by the skin functioning as a boundary... (p. 484).

Bick's observation of infants and their mothers leads her to realize that skin contact and sensations have a psychological correspondence in the mental experience of boundedness and coherence of the self. This point of view requires a reevaluation of the type of defenses associated with the primitive experience of boundedness or lack of thereof. According to Hinshelwood (1997), in this view

defenses are operated primarily in order to preserve a sense of boundary against the anxiety of flowing over or liquefying. The building of a 'second skin' having the function of palliating the lack of proper containment can be expressed through the development of a muscular 'second skin' in cases of hypertonicity or of a heightened postural and motor investment (Boubli, 1999). In addition, 'second skin' phenomena are characterized by the rigidity of their containing function and are quasi-hermetic to penetration by meaning.

The dialogical nature of the (RE) configuration is both the foundation and the supply for the evolving subject who can afford to explore internal and external worlds and be engaged in the discovery of an ever changing Self. Within such a configuration, the individual's participation in the world has a flexible quality, capable of integrating, changing, and adapting to external demands while keeping a strong enough sense of internal reality.

On the other hand, within a (-RE) type configuration one's sense of existing relies on external cues. The dialogical dynamic is derailed; both internal and external worlds are distorted and reflect psychological impasses resolved by the adoption of predictable and rigid forms of

functioning. In such a situation, what determines who one is, is reversed. Oedipus's "I" is not the container of his kingship, rather his kingship functions as the container of the "I." In other words, Oedipus feels that he exists because he is King without knowing who the king he impersonates is (-Q, -R, -Df). Consequently, Oedipus' sense of identity is predominantly determined by "what" he is rather than by "who" he is.

As Sophocles forces us to enter Oedipus' nightmare we become witness to the violence of his internal struggle. In an article about dreams, Grotstein (1983) addresses the complexity of dreams by analyzing in turn the various aspects of dream composition. In a passage dealing with 'the actors' in dreams, he speaks of psychotic or pre-psychotic dreams characterized by the creation of new internal objects that have been imaginatively created by projective identification and that begin to improvise and take matter into their own hands. In Grotstein's analysis, such an 'actor' is invested with enormous omnipotence, and, "seeks to take over the whole stage ... trying to break out of the shackles of the "dream" in order, like the Devil Himself, to epiphanize in the real world what his

imaginative birth has denied him access to" (1983, p. 367). He adds,

it is not difficult to see that the strange task the ensorcelled victim [the dreamer] must perform is an estranged and projected element of the victim's life now on its return trajectory. In the meanwhile, the hapless victim believes himself impaled on a strange, inexhaustible, and eerie drama-compelled to play it out-but without it having any personal meaning for him-except for the unconscious guilt which compels him to undertake the journey (p. 368).

This description fits well with Oedipus' experience as represented in the play. Pushed by some uncontrollable estranged parts of himself he engages in an unrelenting personal vendetta. The brutal attacks he unconsciously inflicts on his own protective 'carapace-king' shed it layer by layer until nothing of it is left. No longer protected by his royal garments the King stands naked. Wrapped in his skin only, the marks of suffering are obscenely exposed.

It is then no surprise that the mere mention of the scars evokes strong reactions in Oedipus. The first one, "Why do you speak of that old affliction?" denotes of a (-Q) state of mind in which questioning is attacked within the question itself.

The second one, "It is a dreadful mark of shame I have born since childhood," combines awareness and denial.

Oedipus is ashamed of his scars, while he doesn't know what they signify. Ostensibly indifferent, he refers to them as "an old affliction" and shows no curiosity despite the fact that his very name is charged with history. We can see here the (-RE) quandary Oedipus finds himself in. While his constant questioning sustains the illusion that he is engaged in a search for truth, he is in reality unable to tolerate any part of (Q, R, Df) and rejects all aspects of the link that could lead to a dynamic of communication and self knowledge. In fact with few exceptions Oedipus' questions are defensive injunctions having for function to control communication rather than to stimulate it (-Q). Thus, all aspects of the (RE) link are stifled. Oedipus cannot ask, cannot hear and cannot come unstuck from his mute scars-container. His cries, his need to be heard, held and loved are gagged in the flesh that covers the old wounds.

Thus, Oedipus' scars bear out the failed process of separation and mark the original trauma of rupture (-R). Inchoate, he is tied to his wounds which remain in the realm of the un-thinkable, the unknowable, the thing in itself.

Bion (1990) describes a situation in which the infant's projections do not find an appropriate container able to process them. Instead of giving them the meaning they lack, they are returned unchanged or rather worsen by the mother's incapacity to tolerate the anxiety they contain and provoke.

[T]he infant takes back into itself the sense of impending disaster which has grown more terrifying through the rejection by the mother and through its own rejection of the feeling of dread. The baby will not be able to feel that it gets back something good, but the evacuation with its badness worse than before. It may continue to cry and to rouse powerful anxiety in the mother. In this way a vicious circle is created in which matters get worse and worse until the infant cannot stand its own screams any longer. In fact, left to deal with them by itself, it becomes silent and closes inside itself a frightening and bad thing, something which it fears may burst out again. In the meantime it turns into a 'good baby', a 'good child' (p. 54).

From the (RE) link point of view, Oedipus had no choice but to disengage from a dynamic of response-ability, and to adapt to the void by clinging on to formal/executive responsibility. Thus, while giving the appearance of a highly functioning character, Oedipus is in fact a powerful Golem unaware of his own psychological death.

And If Not Now Then When?

Why now? This often referred to question at the beginning of therapeutic work introduces time as a given. However, due to the subjectivity of the experience of time one should never assume that time is a shared and granted point of departure for exploration. Even in the world of physics the notion of absolute time, held by the illusion of a universal "now" is no longer tenable. The idea that past, present and future happen in that order has long been challenged by Einstein's theory of relativity.

Thus, when does time begin psychologically and how is it related to the establishment of a relationship between an internal and external space remains an open question. Furthermore, while time is usually understood as movement or change, the arrest of time and the severe limitation of space expressed in their extreme form in autism show that human experience can include the negative counterpart of movement and change. Although, seemingly paradoxical (i.e., experience cannot exist outside of time and space), Bion's conception of attacks on emotional links and their relationship to reality, adumbrates the idea that a negative reaction to time and space is conceivable.

From the (RE) link point of view, the dynamic of (Q, R, Df) is the premise for the beginning of time-space experiences. This is true, not only because the three elements relate to each other, thus creating an internal/external multidimensional dialogue, but because of the participatory aspect of the link. I believe that the infant's sense of psychical movement is made tangible by its active participation in the relationship, while at the same time the baby's participation has to be attended to, to be felt to be real.

On the other hand, a (-RE) configuration hinders the process of participation and isolates the three parts of the link as to make them alien to each other. Under such circumstances the time-space experience collapses on itself, thus alienating a relationship with 'otherness' and reducing it to 'sameness', with a limited to null capacity for change. This state of mind can be found on a continuum going from autistic withdrawal to the adoption of 'highly functional' behaviors. Whereas the differences between the various modes of functioning are obvious, they share traits such as rigidity, fear of change, and lack of real participation ranging from complete avoidance to conformism.

Whereas standard time is ticking, from the (RE) link perspective Oedipus belongs to those who conform to external reality by adopting conventional motions while living in an isolated internal capsule arrested in time.

In a paper entitled "The Intuition of the Negative in Playing and Reality," Andre Green (2000) writes:

When Winnicott speaks of the negative side of relationships, he means "the gradual failure that has to be experienced by the child when the parents are not available" (1971, p.2). This lack of availability of the parents gives rise to two different experiences. One is the feeling of the badness of the object with all the aggression included in crying, screaming, being in a state of agitation and turmoil: here the negative is identified with the bad as the converse of the positive, namely the good. Otherwise, this unavailability is related to the non-presence of the object. You will notice that I do not use the word absence, because in the word absence there is the hope of a return to the presence. It is also not a loss because this would mean that the loss could be mourned. The reference to the negative in this second instance is to the non-existence, the void, the emptiness, in other words, the blankness... Winnicott's contribution is to show how this negative, the non-existence, will become, at some point, the only thing that is real. What happens afterwards is that even if the object reappears, the realness of the object is still related to its non-existence. The return of the presence of the object is not enough to heal the disastrous effects of its too long absence. Non-existence has taken possession of the mind, erasing the representation of the object that preceded its absence. This is an irreversible step, at least until treatment (pp. 103-104).

Andre Green's notion of the non-existence of the object as opposed to its absence reflects the way in which Oedipus' state of mind is viewed here. The premature and brutal separation from his mother at the age of three days leaves little doubt with regards to his capacity to have mourned her loss. We can imagine the distress of a three day old baby, abandoned in excruciating pain and the devastating impact it has on his psychic development. Bettelheim's lifelong work with autistic children convinced him that all childhood psychoses and autism in particular could be traced to the child's conviction that he/she is in mortal danger. Benedetti Gaddini (1987) speaks of the 'agonic' nature of loss for a young child who is confronted with separation before acquiring a capacity for mental representation. Due to the child's lack of maturity, the mind is unfit to come to the rescue and the experience remains unthinkable. She categorizes this type of loss as agonic self-loss.

In his book "The Empty Fortress", Bettelheim (1972) describes the reaction of children for whom the first experience of mounting need tension is not met by the object thus: "In the early days of life, tension mounts and is not relieved by a "final unification with the satisfying

object" (or what I prefer to view as satisfaction within a context of mutuality) there is impotent rage in which "anticipation and with it future is obliterated... Certainly all autistic children insist that time must stand still" (pp. 84-85).

Passed from one hand to the other by consecutive saviors (one shepherd, then another, then the king and queen of Corinth), the helpless infant is at once rescued and objectified, losing in this process his capacity to participate in his destiny, he becomes a passive recipient, a spectator (-RE).

Although autism is rare in its extreme form, autistic enclaves in functioning people are common. Tustin (1986) writes:

Certain neurotic patients have much in common with autistic children... Such patients feel that they are unreal and that "life is just a dream." On deeper investigation it becomes clear that their sense of existing as a person is tenuous. In such patients, cognitive and affective development seems to have taken place by bypassing a "blind spot" of arrested development which then becomes a capsule of autism in the depth of their personality. In this capsule, as in the overall encapsulation of autistic children, there are the potentials for the development of self, but secure and authentic self-representation has never been satisfactorily achieved (p. 215).

Tustin (1981) equates such encapsulations in neurotic patients as "elemental forerunners of "repression, of denial and of forgetting". Rosenfeld (1997) refers to Tustin's work with autism as follows:

As Tustin points out (1981), autistic patients are fearful, despite having this 'protective shell,' because they feel there is a hole in it. She also states that even parts of their bodies can be used by these children as 'autistic objects,' which create a cluster of sensations that provide them with the illusion of being impenetrable, all-powerful, safe and protected (p. 164).

In the present analysis, Oedipus' scars are seen as representing the partial autistic encapsulation of a traumatic experience placed in the soma. When we meet Oedipus in Thebes where he was left in the first place, together with him we are not watchful of the time-space dimension. No wonder, since Oedipus' tragedy is one of oblivion, in which sequence, causality, and generational difference have no place. We enter his dream with the same state of mind, with no prior knowledge of who he is and where he comes from. We are unaware as he is, that this state of mind is akin to that reflected in a (-RE) configuration, in which the boundaries of past, present and future dissolve entirely in the vacuum of sameness. A king

no longer and not yet a king, he is cut off from the passage of time.

Oedipus' 'false self' organization is powerfully illustrated in the only part of the play in which Oedipus mentions something of his life in Corinth: "I was regarded as the greatest man in that city" (p.55). This impersonal evaluation of his worth has a disembodied quality reflecting his vacuous grandiosity. Oedipus cannot see himself and is not sure that he exists; he is only able to perceive himself vicariously through others' eyes. What follows this statement however indicates an abrupt turn in the narrative: "...*until* something happened to me quite by chance, a strange thing but not worth all the attention I paid it." The event that Oedipus is about to relate is of such proportion that it pulls him out of his protective shell. The word 'until' marks the reentrance of the time dimension into Oedipus' psyche. As if pierced again at that moment the old wounds begin to leak their hidden meaning. If up to this event, Oedipus had been able to stay outside of his own history as stated earlier, a spectator rather than a participant, this stance is shattered in an instant. The rest of the quote goes as follows:

A man at the banquet table, who had had too much to drink, told me, over his wine, that I was not

the true son of my father. I was furious, but, hard though it was, I controlled my feelings, for that day at least. On the next day I went to my parents and questioned them. They were enraged against the man who had so taunted me. So I took comfort from their attitude, but still the thing tormented me-for the story spread far and wide. Without telling my parents, I set off on a journey to the oracle of Apollo, at Delphi. Apollo sent me away with my question unanswered but he foretold a dreadful, calamitous future for me-to lie with my mother and beget children men's eyes would not bear the sight of-and to be the killer of the father that gave me life. When I heard that I ran away (pp. 55-56).

The drunk's disclosure has for effect to shake Oedipus beyond reason, and we can see him struggling to minimize the impact of what he considers to be a disproportionate emotional mobilization. However, it is to no avail as its impact reactivates the dynamic of questioning (Q) he had renounced. He appeals to his adoptive parents, acknowledging his dependence on others' minds to alleviate his anxiety and to give it meaning, attempting in this gesture to revive a lost dialogue. His appeal falls on deaf ears. His adoptive parents deny him a potentially redemptive active participation in his history, revealing in turn their own incapacity to tolerate the disturbance it would provoke, and displaying in their denial their own incapacity to respond, question and separate (-RE). In

desperation, he tries to believe them, but the porosity of his inadequate scars-container becomes ever more evident with each failure to have his appeal met with satisfactory responses. Distrustful of the human world he turns to the gods. Apollo himself leaves his question unanswered and foretells instead "a dreadful, calamitous future for me - to lie with my mother." This addition to the original prophesy (i.e., he will kill his father) is not coincidental. As the small window of opportunity for a renewed (RE) dynamic afforded by the drunk's candid revelation is shattered, the most archaic aspects of Oedipus' yearning for his mother's womb are unleashed. Meltzer (1988) refers to what he calls the aesthetic conflict in his paper "Concerning the Stupidity of Evil" in these words:

I explored the conflict incited by the beauty of the world, and its primal representation-the breast and face of the feeding mother. This conflict aroused by the impact of the manifest external forms and the ambiguous internal mental states(feelings, intentions, attitudes) of the object of attachment, may be thought of as activated in the new-born, arousing passionate emotions, of love, hate, of a yearning to know the inside of the object its 'heart of mystery' (p. 561).

Terrified and out of options, Oedipus runs away from Corinth as torn and defeated as he had arrived while his

failure to establish internal and external communication (-RE) perpetuates the original dread and void of his first experience. Meltzer (1992) describes mental life as taking place within a spatial temporal dynamic thus:

The 'worlds' in which human mental experience takes place are various, at least four in number, fundamentally: outside, inside and the interior of internal and external objects. To this must be added, in the case of schizophrenic phenomena, a fifth world which is essentially 'nowhere' that is, having no dynamic or structural links with the other four (p.117).

In a state of despair and confusion Oedipus is to be found "nowhere" which corresponds closely to a (-RE) configuration. After a brief apprehension of time and continuity Oedipus is cut off once again from space and time. The thin membrane of his dream is broken and he plunges into a delusional state of mind dominated by rage, contempt and paranoia.

Whereas in neurosis the dream work allows for the symbolic elaboration of unconscious conflicts, affording the psyche an intrapsychic mode of communication between the conscious and the unconscious, in acute psychosis

when the ego is temporarily or permanently not capable of carrying out the task involved in producing a neurotic or normal dream...there is often no distinction between a hallucination, a dream, and a real event (Segal, 1991. p. 64).

Oedipus' feverish psychic path back from Corinth to Thebes is that of a madman. Unstoppable, he ruthlessly eliminates all obstacles that stand in his way. First he kills an old man (his father) together with all but one of his servants over a small dispute (-R). Evacuating the old man from his psyche, he holds neither sorrow, guilt, nor remorse for what he has done and, victorious, he pursues his delirious journey.

The surrealistic character of the saga increases with the appearance of the Sphinx in the scenery. Coming out of "nowhere" the hybrid creature made of part objects: the head and bust of a woman, body of a lion, eagle wings, and serpent tail, threatens to devour or strangle (cannibalism and suffocation being two of the most primitive anxieties) those unable to answer her riddle. Oedipus' hallucination of the mighty Sphinx encompasses all the elements discussed earlier and embodies his struggle with separation, the acknowledgment of time, and his search for identity. From the (RE) link perspective, the challenge she represents is precisely that of the (Q, R, Df) dynamic, Oedipus has been struggling with since birth.

However, before going further I wish to look briefly at the function of hallucination from a psychoanalytic

point of view, as well as to give a short account of the appropriateness of a Sphinx-like hallucination with regard to Oedipus' psychological making.

In "Formulation of the Two Principles of Mental Functioning" (1911) Freud writes:

Neurotics turn away from the reality because they find it unbearable-either the whole or part of it. The most extreme type of this turning away from reality is shown by certain cases of hallucinatory psychosis which seek to deny the particular event that occasioned the outbreak of their insanity (p.218).

From Freud's point of view, the first step in explaining hallucinations is the denial and rejection of an unbearable reality which he addresses in 1894 in his paper "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence" thus:

There is, however, a much more energetic and successful kind of defence. Here, the ego rejects the incompatible idea together with its affect and behaves as if the idea had never occurred to the ego at all. But from the moment at which this has been successfully done the subject is in a psychosis, which can only be classified as hallucinatory confusion (p. 313).

The second step according to him is the reconstruction of a "historical truth which they have brought up from the repression of the forgotten and primaeval past" (Freud, 1937d. p. 5059). The power of this piece of 'historical truth' is to be found in a forgotten past. Freud explains further:

Perhaps it may be a general characteristic of hallucinations to which sufficient attention has not hitherto been paid that in them something that has been experienced in infancy and then forgotten returns - something that the child has seen or heard at a time when he could still hardly speak and that now forces its way into consciousness, probably distorted and displaced owing to the operation of forces that are opposed to this return...The essence of it is that there is not only method in madness, as the poet has already perceived, but also a fragment of historical truth; and it is plausible to suppose that the compulsive belief attaching to delusions derives its strength precisely from infantile sources of this kind (p. 5058).

Thus, the psychotic defensive mechanisms at work in the creation of hallucinations, involve first the rejection of reality (or part of it), based on an unbearable non-symbolized (archaic) experience, and the reconstruction of an alternative reality having for function to substitute external reality for an internal reconstruction projected outward and perceived outside in the form of delusions and hallucinations.

The fact to which I now wish to call attention is that the content of a hallucinatory psychosis of this sort *consists precisely in the accentuation of the idea* which was threatened by the precipitating cause of the onset of the illness. One is therefore justified in saying that the ego has fended off the incompatible idea through a flight into psychosis. The process by which this has been achieved once more eludes the subject's self perception, as it eludes psychologico-clinical analysis. It must be regarded as the

expression of a pathological disposition of a fairly high degree and it may be described more or less as follows. The ego breaks away from the incompatible idea; but the latter is inseparably connected with a piece of reality, so that, in so far as the ego achieves this result, it, too, has detached itself wholly or in part from reality. In my opinion this latter event is the condition under which the subject's ideas receive the vividness of hallucinations; and thus when the defence has been successfully carried out he finds himself in a state of hallucinatory confusion (Freud, 1894. p.314).

Kleinians and post-Kleinians link hallucinations with the paranoid-schizoid position in which only part objects are perceived. The mothers' breast as gratifying and frustrating represent the prototype of the 'good' object (i.e. helpful and gratifying) and the 'bad' object (i.e. internal and external persecutors). Melanie Klein (1952) gives an account of the infant's relation with the bad breast thus:

I shall first describe the ramifications of the infant's relation with the bad breast. If we consider the picture which exists in the infant's mind-as we can see it retrospectively in the analyses of children and adults- we find that the hated breast has acquired the oral-destructive qualities of the infant's own impulses when he is in a state of frustration and hatred. In his destructive phantasies he bites, and tears up the breast, devours it annihilates it; and he feels that the breast will attack him in the same way (p. 63).

During the first three months of life, paranoid anxieties such as disintegration, annihilation, fragmentation and intrusion dominate and are defended against by way of splitting, denial, projective identification, and narcissistic idealization. For Klein, the use of projective identification has the function of ridding the psyche of painful and unbearable feelings while aiming at controlling the object. This mechanism is often accompanied by envious impulses which are triggered by the desire to possess the life giving qualities of the idealized object (the good breast). Melanie Klein (1957) addressed the destructive aspect of the infant's envy as follows:

A distinction should be made between envy, jealousy and greed. Envy is the angry feeling that another person possesses and enjoys something desirable-the envious impulse being to take it away or to spoil it. Moreover, envy implies the subject's relation to one person only and goes back to the earliest exclusive relation with the mother (p. 181).

Klein considers that when excessive, envy and greed indicate that "paranoid and schizoid features are abnormally strong and that such an infant can be regarded as ill" (p. 183). Accordingly, the spoiling of the good object by envious attacks lead to despair, as the good object is felt to be spoiled and renders impossible good introjections.

Bion sees the subject's greater or lesser capacity to tolerate frustration as one of the key aspects of the capacity to develop an apparatus for thinking and linking internal and external reality (see chapter on Bion). He insists on the importance of the mother's containing quality through which inarticulate projections (beta-elements) are transformed into tolerable experiences capable of being thought about (alpha elements/function). When the mother's capacity for reverie or her alpha function fails, and as the infant's projections are returned worsened by their lack of containment, the infant experiences "nameless dread." Under such circumstances, the experience is one of that being surrounded by 'bizarre objects,' which consist of fragments of reality 'encapsulated' by the part of the personality which has engulfed it (Bleandonu, 2000).

Bion (1962) clarifies the difference between beta elements and bizarre objects thus: "The beta-element differs from the bizarre object in that the bizarre object is beta-element plus ego and super ego traces" (p. 25). For Bion, hallucinations are made of bizarre objects the subject feels he is surrounded by. However, following Freud's view that delusions may be "the equivalents of the

reconstruction which we build up in the course of analytic treatment-attempts at cure" (Freud, 1937, cf. Bion, 1958), Bion observed that bizarre objects could possibly have a trace of a capacity for judgment (originally projected out via projective identification) and could be employed in the service of 'therapeutic intuition'. He writes (Bion, 1958):

Splitting, evacuatory use of the senses, and hallucinations were all being employed in the service of an ambition to be cured, and may therefore be supposed to be creative activities (Bion, 1958, p. 342).

Using Freud's, Klein's and Bion's conceptions of delusions and hallucination, let us go back to Oedipus. His life in Corinth was at a status quo of which very little is known except that in retrospect it would seem that Oedipus had been able to maintain a semblance of sanity, by way of a 'false self' psychic organization and denial. His psychological fragility however, becomes apparent from the moment the question of his origins is asked. This event is of atomic emotional proportion for Oedipus and thrusts him into the abyss.

Utterly abandoned by those who could have provided containment and meaning, Oedipus is not given the opportunity to mourn. Instead he turns away from an

unbearable reality "to deny the particular event that occasioned the outbreak of [his] insanity" (Freud, 1911). Greed, envy and murderous impulses dominate his state of mind as he fashions a new reality. The scenery of the meeting of the three roads (past, present, future) in which he meets his father ends up in bloodshed. In the point of view presented here the killing of the father is not symbolic, and does not have the tragic quality of a mistake. Laius and his 'gang' embody Oedipus own murderous, rageful and envious internal objects he expelled outward and which return in the form of external attackers threatening him of imminent annihilation. Oedipus' use of primitive defense mechanisms such as denial and projective identification deepen his confusion. At this point he is unable to make the difference between real and unreal, and does not know whether he is hallucinating or not.

In killing Laius, Oedipus enacts the original attack on separation (-Df) first carried out by Laius' attempt on his son's life. Both Laius and Oedipus believe that by eliminating each other they can rid themselves of the persecutory parts of their personality which threaten their omnipotent denial of time. In other words the decades that separate father and son have no bearing as their

relationship lacks the acknowledgment of asymmetry necessary to psychological growth.

Oedipus pursues his journey to be faced by the same question in his meeting with the Sphinx. This mysterious and dangerous creature made of agglutinated part objects is the embodiment of a bizarre object composed of beta-elements which cannot be experienced as phenomena but as things-in-themselves. The Sphinx is the thing-in-itself, unknowable. She bears the life giving breast of a mother, while being a cold blooded killer. The tantalizing combination of life giving and life taking attributes bring us back to the notion of envy enhanced by the withholding quality of a Sphinx like maternal figure³⁴. Meltzer's and Harris's (1988) account of the mysterious "beautiful devoted mother" addresses this particular conflict thus:

Truly she giveth and she taketh away, both of good and bad things. He cannot tell whether she is Beatrice or his Belle Dame Sans Merci. This is the aesthetic conflict, which can be outside of the 'beautiful' mother, available to the senses, and the enigmatic inside which must be construed by creative imagination (p. 22).

³⁴ Britton (1989) talks of some patient's dreadful fantasies of parental intercourse thus: "... a monstrous amalgamation of the separate maternal and paternal identities attributed to me. The amalgam that would result from this union was an ostensibly loving maternal figure who had inside her a contradiction of her own nature; a presence that made all her apparent good qualities treacherous" (p. 92).

We see in Oedipus' hallucination the profile of a dangerous mother, offering a deadening cold breast to those who approach her. Oedipus most primitive and traumatic experience of a bad, threatening, and punishing mother is expressed very clearly in the figure of the Sphinx. Bettelheim (1972) observed in some of his autistic patients hallucinatory behaviors and believed that "it is exactly what these children hallucinate: the person behind the feeding, the person whom they never reached emotionally and whom they both search for, and wish to get rid of" (p. 203).

The communication between the Sphinx and Oedipus takes place in the form of a riddle which is the prototypical (RE) configuration. However, several elements interfere with the actual dynamic of (Q, R, Df). The first one is that the riddle is not the Sphinx's creation. She learned it from the Muses, who are the daughters of Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. A less poetic way to analyze this relationship is that, being devoid of creative power (Muses) and empty of memory (Mnemosyne) the bizarre object (Sphinx) imitates the sounds of a riddle she cannot understand. Consequently, the riddle as we know it is to be understood as a psychotic distortion of the original one

via the mouth of the bizarre object. The second element, closely linked to the first has to do with psychotic processes in which the evacuation of thoughts is 'mistaken' for thinking (Grotstein, 1983). In the case of Oedipus such evacuation returns in the form of the riddle " What is it that walks on four feet in the morning, two feet in the afternoon, three feet at night and has only one voice?"

Oedipus' psychic life and death are played out in a game of question and response (Q, R). The death sentence attached to 'not knowing' is characteristic of a state of mind intolerant of 'negative capability'. In his book, "Attention and Interpretation," Bion (1998) used Keats' notion of "negative capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" Keats, 1817, cf. Bion, 1998, p. 125).

Viewed from the (RE) link point of view, the difference between the capacity to tolerate an open ended, unsaturated response to a question addressing the mystery of life, versus the need to cancel it by providing a factual 'answer' to it is a measure of an individual's oscillation between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions.

The Sphinx' question is a false question, as it can tolerate one and only one answer. In this instance, (Q) is not meant to stimulate communication but rather to stifle it. As such it is an attack on questioning (-Q). Oedipus does not know who he is, he does not know who his parents are, he does not know where he came from and he does not know time. Then how could he have knowledge of 'man'? Thus, Oedipus' response is a false response (-R) which mirrors the Sphinx' (-Q) in the perpetuation of an omnipotent and omniscient delusion at the service of the denial of separation (-Df).

Oedipus' attempt to cure himself through the creation of a hallucinatory reality (Bion, 1958) fails for lack of help by an external object capable of containing and transforming it. What ensues is a debacle. Oedipus' triumph over the Sphinx rids him of the idealized 'bad' object and leads the way to a reunification with the idealized 'good' one. Meltzer (1992) describes some of his patients' psychic retreats as refuges inside the mother's body (her head, breast, vagina, and rectum) - a place of "absolute loveliness in a world of bizarre objects" (p. 191).

In the beginning of the play, we meet Oedipus precisely there, in his mother's body (-Q, -R, -Df). As

Oedipus many of our patients' are to be found there, and as Andre Green (2000) mentions with hope, it is where they dwell and "this is an irreversible step, at least until treatment" (pp. 103-104).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PROPOSED CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Concluding Remarks

By introducing the notion of responsibility within psychoanalytic discourse this dissertation is proposing that contrary to a common perspective, responsibility is a basic emotion and not a learned skill. This assertion is based on the following two main postulates.

First Postulate:

In the very early stages of life, the infant's capacity to call its mother into attention through its vocalizations, body language, and projections is understood as the child's capacity to respond adequately to his/her internal needs and stimuli. In other words, to act "responsibly" toward his/her needs by calling into question his/her mother's capacity to respond to such appeal. On the other hand, the mother's capacity to read into her child's *appeal* and to *respond* adequately to its interpolation is the manifestation of a specific emotional connection established through a back and forth dialogue between the two. Implicit and necessary to such exchange (as to any

exchange), is the conscious-unconscious realization of *difference*, which is necessary to the nascent process of separation. From the get-go, the back and forth movement between mother and child introduces gradually the idea of "Otherness." If mother and child have the capacity to negotiate well enough each aspect of the connection, emotional and cognitive growth ensues for both. However, when the mutual meeting of the child and his/her environment presents with difficulties in the interrelated dynamics of *appealing-responding-differentiating*, the child's psychological growth is stalled, and the establishment of a productive relationship between parent and child compromised.

For the sake of clarification here are a few examples - among an infinity of possible constellations - of the types of difficulties mentioned above: certain infants might not have the capacity to initiate an appeal toward their mother, others might be thrown prematurely into the realization of their separateness from the mother, certain mothers might not be able to tolerate their infant's demands on them, and others might not be able to negotiate their separateness.

Second Postulate:

The dynamics of *appealing-responding-differentiating* functions as an emotional link that is active throughout life between people and present in the therapeutic relationship.

Based on these two postulates, this dissertation is proposing a new construct called the (RE) link composed of three elements: (Q) for questioning, as the appeal is a form of questioning; (R) for responding, and (Df) for differentiating. This construct offers an additional view of dynamics pertaining to issues of self/other boundaries, the capacity to tolerate separation/separateness, the capacity to ask questions and hear responses, as well as to manifestations of rage and despair in life and within the therapeutic relationship.

The main conceptual tools used to pursue this research are to be found in the philosophy of Levinas, in Bion's theory of human development, and in infant research. This dissertation highlights the most pertinent aspects of each point of view regarding the concepts of response-ability and response-inability.

Levinas was a Jewish French philosopher whose entire family died in the Holocaust. This traumatic life event led Levinas to a profound crisis during which he began to distance himself from Western Philosophy, whose roots belonged in the spirit of the Greek philosophical tradition ruled by a desire for totalization and the reduction of the universe to an ultimate truth. After the war, Levinas became increasingly critical of such position, as the notion of universality reduced individuality and difference to "sameness". He proposed that ethics should be what guides philosophy. However, for Levinas, "ethics" does not mean what is typically referred to as morality or code of conduct. Levinas' notion of ethics is a calling into question of the same, or in psychological terms a calling into question of the "self." According to him, what brings the self into question is the encounter with the "Other." This encounter, which, by its nature, impinges on an individual's space, time, and psyche, is a disturbance to his/her self-involved continuity and calls for his/her responsibility for someone who is not him/her, who is other than him/her, and who de-centers him/her.

Accordingly, for Levinas the meaning of ethics is not to be found in facing responsibility but in being faced in

relation to difference. In his view, responsibility is a personal, immediate, and unmediated response that an individual has when faced by another. One is not responsible by choice; rather one is made responsible by one's encounter with another human being. As such in Levinas' philosophical logic, responsibility precedes rationality and is by nature asymmetrical. The asymmetry of response-ability is obviously present between parents and infant and should be looked at in quantitative and qualitative terms. This distinction applies to the therapeutic relationship as well.

Grotstein holds that "Bion's conception of the container/contained transformed Klein's intrapsychic psychology into an interpersonal and intersubjective one" (Grotstein, 2002, p. 2). For Bion, intrapsychic life cannot develop outside of a relationship. In his theory of thinking, Bion talks of a "thinking couple" or a "creative couple", insisting on the importance of mechanism that afford communication and the processing of emotions. One of the mechanisms, which, in Bion's mind, affords the establishment of communication between mother and infant is projective identification. In his model, the dynamic between container and contained is such that the container

(mother) becomes the recipient of feelings of love, hate, fear, etc. that are projected into it by the contained (infant). In this scheme, projective identification is a non-verbal communicative activity, a way of transmitting meaning by evoking empathy.

In conjunction with the container-contained paradigm, Bion conceives of the emotions of love, hate, and knowledge (in the sense of being in the process of getting to *know* someone) as having the function of linking people involved in a relationship. He suggests that the expression of each link is an emotional activity in which one person is *doing* something to another. In other words, when two (or more) people are engaged in a relationship, emotions inevitably *move* them on all levels. Furthermore, the linking function of emotions is two sided - on the one side, it is an intersubjective link between the outside (mother) and the inside (infant), and, on the other side, it is an intrapsychic link connecting different parts of the self.

For Bion, the emotional links (Love, Hate, Know) are the way by which a connection between the self and external reality is established. However, there are situations in which the links could be attacked by the psyche due to a combination of inborn predispositions and the environment.

Under such circumstances, the L.H.K links become -L.-H.-K. The negative counterpart of each link, does not express its opposite (i.e. -L is equivalent to hatred); rather, it signifies an incapacity to tolerate emotions of Love, Hate or Know at a given moment and is dealt with through the mechanisms of projection and denial of such emotions.

Important findings established throughout the years in psychoanalytic practice and theory as well as in infant research and observation have not only changed the way in which infants are looked at but also influenced and enhanced therapeutic work. A greater attentiveness to very young infants has heightened therapists' capacity for observing what is happening in oneself and in the patient. This particular outcome of infant research is mentioned by many analysts who see it as having a profound impact on their technique and attitude in the room. Some recognize that infant observation has the effect of amplifying one's capacity to take note of patients' somatic and phonetic subtleties often experienced at a non-verbal level. Angela Sowa (1999) summarizes this by saying:

[I]t is not what one learns about babies in infant observation that contributes to one's clinical capacity, but that one learns something of the fine art of being an 'observer-participant' in one's own and another's emotional life (p. 13).

In addition a greater knowledge of early experiences and defenses such as adhesive and projective types of identification or autistic defenses found in very young children expands the realm of experiences in the relationship and allow for a deeper awareness of 'infantile transference.'

Infant research has proved that infants are ready for socialization from the beginning of life. The image of an infant disconnected from the outside world and responding to internal stimuli and needs only is obsolete. Early dynamics between the child and his environment are often active in the transference during therapeutic interaction. A greater awareness and sensitivity to nonverbal or preverbal communications sheds light on difficulties pertaining to the 'infantile transference' and thus broadens clinical work.

7.2 Proposed Clinical Implications

Within the therapeutic relationship, when the two members of the therapeutic "couple" work together, the emotional experience casts numerous links. Here I only wish to identify those pertaining to the (RE)/(-RE) link construct.

The Beginning of Therapy

People come to therapy for many different reasons while sharing at least one thing in common - the inevitability of having to deal with the frame. Viewed from the RE link vertex, the way in which each individual deals with the frame at the onset of therapy is a very powerful tool which puts the therapist in touch with conflicts pertaining to (Q, R, Df) from the first session on.

To begin with, the therapeutic relationship is not symmetrical. Thus, from the start, the three aspects of the (RE) link are "activated" within the relationship, in tranferential, countertransferential, and actual ways.

The therapeutic work commences with what constitutes the first aspect of the (RE) link, namely an *appeal* or Q. It is my belief that at this early stage of therapy when the patient's demand is clearly stated in terms of: "I am here, seeking help from you," the underlying emotional charge is directly connected to issues of dependence and trust central in the (Q) part of the link. Thus, conflicts pertaining to this aspect of the therapeutic relationship are likely to be played out right away.

The therapist's capacity to attend to the patient's call for help constitutes the second aspect of this link through his/her capacity to attend to the patient's appeal and to *respond*.

The third element, *differentiating*, pertains to dynamics of self/other boundaries, connection /disconnection, participation/non-participation within the relationship.

In order to examine the three aspects of the link as interrelated, I will address in turn each aspect of the link and then summarize the dynamics involved for each of the following two vignettes.

Mr. C is a 53 year old short chubby man who was never married and lives with his 83 year old mother. He came to therapy due to a deep depression caused by the loss of his job (the company he worked for moved to a different State). Mr. C reported that he had fallen into a debilitating state of depression which happened to him every time he lost a job. In his first therapy session Mr. C explained that he hated change and that he would have been happy if he only could have stayed in the same place for the rest of his life. He also felt that he had all the bad luck in the world and that whenever he felt good something always happened to spoil his life. Mr. C's therapist listened attentively to his story and felt quite connected with him when, after his long uninterrupted painstaking monologue, Mr. C asked her "So, How can I get better?" Taken by surprise by the scope of such question, the therapist found herself speechless as if she had been projected into an infinite void. The following sessions confirmed what the

therapist had been confronted with, namely a constant flow of 'impossible questions' leading to an utter sense of 'response-inability' on her part.

Ms. G. is a very pleasant and friendly young woman who was abandoned by her mother at a very young age and left to the care of an aunt. Ms. G saw herself as very responsible, always taking care of other people both in her personal and professional life. She began therapy with quite an extraordinary statement: "Yesterday my brother killed a man, because he refused to give him a cigarette." Following the first session, an unusual amount of mix-up having to do with the therapeutic frame happened. On several occasions, she arrived at the wrong time, or on the wrong day finding herself faced with an absent therapist and a closed door. Ms. G would then leave confused phone messages, which in turn confused her therapist who then felt compelled to verify that she was not the one having made the mistake.

In the first vignette, Mr. C's *appeal* is formulated in the form of 'impossible questions' that have the effect of paralyzing the therapist's capacity to respond (-R). We can see clearly here a dynamic pertaining to a (-Q) and (-R) state of mind, in which the patient's questioning functions in fact as a way to control the therapeutic work and bring it to a status quo equivalent to (-Df). Mr. C expected one concrete answer to existential or abstract questions whose scales always exceeded the boundaries of one's mind. In terms of the container-contained relationship, Mr. C's

questions had the effect of exploding the container and leaving it in a state of response-inability making its inadequacy painfully felt by the therapist. Becoming aware of such a dynamic early on allowed for the understanding of how the patient's use of questioning was in fact not a sign of curiosity, but quite the opposite. His "false questions" reflected his avoidance of dependence on another's mind and perpetuated his denial of separation. Viewed from the Re link vertex this realization allowed the therapist to interpret the transference related to the patient's terror of change and his emotional collapse when he faces the loss of palliative external structures (his job) which keep intact the illusion of sameness. In Mr. C's case the constellation of $(-Q, -R, -Df)$ hints at a deeper level of pathology than he presented with on the surface. Although his mental collapse was the result of a particular crisis, I believe that the issue of time (i.e., When does it hurt?) has to be suspended for a while to give a fuller place for the question of space (i.e., Where does it hurt?). With this understanding in mind, some of the therapeutic work is an attempt to help the patient acquire a greater capacity to acknowledge separateness and dependence, thus to tolerate a (Q, R, Df) dynamic and replace a hopeless

monologue with a greater capacity to tolerate unpredictability and dialogue.

The second vignette, regardless of the actuality of what Ms. G reported, can reflect in my opinion, unconscious communications pertaining to the (RE) link dynamic. From the (RE) link point of view the subtext in the context of the beginning of therapy highlights two things: the first one is that Ms. G's experience of need or dependence is unbearably painful; the second one is that rejection or the refusal to have her demands met lead to disaster and murderous rage. Right at the beginning, and still in the context of her first session, Ms. G conveys at once her fear of rejection and of dependence as well as her distrust concerning having her needs met while making a statement in which aggression dominates. This complex set of feelings is then enacted by Ms. G who mistakenly puts herself in front of a closed door. Her appeal (Q) - that we can even hear in the ringing of the door bell - remains unanswered (-R), she is greeted by a deaf, blind and mute therapist, who cannot hear her, see her or respond to her. I believe that this unconscious communication is incredibly ingenious. It carries at once Ms. G's despair while allowing her to attack (safely) her inadequate and unavailable therapist.

Furthermore, her continuous confusion projected into her therapist who joins her in it, blurs the intolerable boundaries of separation (-Df).

These two examples are of course schematic and only meant to illustrate some of the ways in which an awareness of the (RE) link can shed light on underlying transferential and countertransferential dynamics.

I believe that careful attention should be paid to the use of questions (in the larger sense of a patient's way of appealing) and their function within the therapeutic context. This is particularly helpful when looked at from a countertransferential point of view, if one agrees that a question is always an attempt to provoke a response. The nature of the provocation varies however, as some questions may function as evacuations, some as glue, some as weapons, and so on.

In addition it is important to keep in mind the three aspects of the link as they are in a constant dynamic movement. When one aspect is readily visible (for example -Df, in confusional states or separation anxiety) one can infer that the other parts of the link are included in the dynamic. This point of view can be useful as one can

approach the same issue from at least three different angles.

In conclusion, although this dissertation is approached from a theoretical point of view, the (RE) link construct is meant to be used in clinical work. Furthermore, given the strong social connotations the notions of response-ability and response-inability carry, further research in the areas of group therapy, family therapy and other types of group dynamics could broaden the scope of its applications.

Conclusion

I wish to conclude this dissertation with a passage from The Book of Questions by Edmond Jabés.

"Our hope is for knowledge," said Reb Mendel. But not all his disciples were of this opinion.

"We first have to agree on the sense you give to the world knowledge," said the oldest of them.

"Knowledge means questioning," answered Reb Mendel.

"What will we get out of these questions? What will we get of the answers which only lead to more questions, since questions are born of unsatisfactory answers?" asked the second disciple.

"The promise of a new question," replied Reb Mendel.

"There will be a moment," the oldest disciple continued, "when we have to stop interrogating, either because we will not be able to formulate any further questions. So why should we begin?"

"You see," said Reb Mendel "at the end of an argument, there is always a decisive question unsettled."

"Questioning means taking the road to despair," continued the second disciple, "we will never know what we are trying to learn."

"True knowledge is daily awareness that, in the end, one learns nothing. The Nothing is also knowledge, being the reverse of the All, as the air is the reverse of the wing."

"Our hope is the wings of despair. For how would we progress otherwise?" replied Reb Mendel.

"Intelligence," said the third disciple, "is more dangerous than the heart, which relies only on its own beat. Who among us can assert that he is right?"

"If truth which is in man is void," continued the oldest disciple, "we are nothing in a body of flesh and skin. Therefore God, who is truth, is also nothing?"

"God is a question," replied Reb Mendel, "a question which leads us to Him who is Light through and for us, who are nothing."

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