

## **Bion the mystic**

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### **Abstract**

In order to adequately understand the Bion's mysticism we need to take in account the "catastrophic event" he meet in his life; as a matter of fact, until the half of the '70 Bion wrote amply and skilfully about general psychoanalysis, in a frame of reference that could be sed "aristotelic-kantian", and for the same reason in dealing with groups he took upon himself an evident "military" mindset. In this part of his work nothing is found of a mystical nature.

The event that changed the Bion's life seems to come from his getting in touch with the Nord-American experience and psychoanalysis: this fact de-stabilized his mindset, and made therefore possible his use of "less scientific" and more un-saturated concepts than those of the more precise and formal earlier writings, showing a moving versus a "platonico-matteblanchian" direction. Since that Bion entered in a phenomenic word that does not conceal its derivation from the indian culture in which Bion began his life and spent the infancy. Here we find the "mystic" in its proper sense . The assumption of the "sensory O", of the intuitionistic "non-sensory O"; the functional transformation of the beta elements and of their very nature, moreover the dreaming contact as well as the terror of the meeting with patients: these are aspects of a lay mystic, which by the way corresponds to that take place in the holy mystic.

The reference to a clinical case, to the concept of "sur-limation" here considered, and the coincidence of these later Bion's principles with that of "symmetry" by Matte Blanco do reinforce the concept of a "lay mystic" in this part of Bion's thought.

**Key-words:** mysticism, catastrophic event, sublimation, symmetry.

Owing to an abundance of misconceptions, any treatment of the mystical in Bion necessarily begs specification of that which is not mystical.

A primary consideration concerns the fact that Bion's mysticism does not exactly coincide with that of religious spheres, which define it in the following terms: " A spiritual experience in which, given the absolute reality of the divine, the individual spirit gains perfection in the maximum possible adaptation and resolution of itself in that reality " (G.Devoto, G.C. Oli, 1980).

Indeed, although he was not an atheist, Bion remains undeniably secular in his thinking, even while he treats of an absolute truth that can never be directly perceived (1970), acknowledging, moreover, that religious mystics have probably come closest to expressing this experience. In this regard Grotstein asserts: "I posit that unconscious is perhaps as close to the "God experience" as mankind can ever hope to

achieve" (2000), while Schneide, referring to this, states that this is not a question of: " religious experience per se, but a spiritual, mystical unconscious perception" (2003).

Neither, surely, is the "mystical" content in Bion to be included in what Italian psychoanalyst A. Ferro, who has surely explored this author's contributions most masterfully, defines as "mystical drift" (2005); and this does not only lead to a reading of Bion's texts as sacred and not scientific but, above all, as Ferro points out, to a habit of referring to Bion with " language for the initiated only, instead of one making explicit concepts which, after all, are simple and useful ." since they are "also necessary to avoid using with patients a slang that, rather than potentially leading to transformations, would simply celebrate a ritual of belonging ". As Bion would certainly never, in any way, have wanted, since he believed that it was " impossible to be a Bionian " (Bion Talamo, 1987).

And yet, there is certainly no mysticism where Bion treats of the relationship between the mystic and the group, maintaining that the former, equated with genius, needs the institution-and more specifically the group-as much as it needs him. Indeed, the mystic needs the group to receive and apply his revelations, while the group needs the mystic to make those revelations to them in that context. This is a relationship that could be "symbiotic", i.e. although steeped in suspicion and hostility, potentially benevolent and, as such, vital for both; it could also turn out to be "parasitic" if the group's primary goal is to destroy the mystic or his ideas or, if nothing else, to impose its own truth, in which case its ideas would sink into a quagmire no longer conducive to elaboration.

In a review of J. and N. Symington's book (1996), R. Caper comments that " Bion's ideas of the mystic and the group are an abstraction from psychoanalytic experience.. specifically, the experience of a new idea or state of mind being resisted. A "mystic" in this reading is a new idea or something that conveys a new idea (this may be an interpretation, for example, or a projection of some state of mind, for another.... Bion is providing a model of mysticism abstracted from his psychoanalytic experience of the interplay of interpretation, projection, containment and resistance. But this is a psychoanalytic model of mysticism and not a mystic model of psychoanalysis " (1998, p.420).

Here, however, it would be necessary to underline that this manner of treating groups clearly differs from, and is not suitable for comparison with, that which Bion elaborated in the 1960s, and for which, moreover, he gained notoriety. In this regard, I recall his having personally informed me, at one point, that he no longer considered valid his 1950s and 60s considerations on group dynamics, and that he would only have desired, or have been able, to write once again on groups after coming into contact with schizophrenic thought-a desire he was never able to fulfil.

In any case, even failing to identify a mysticism, his exploration of the interaction between the mystic and the group can be assumed to have represented the watershed between two diverse Bionian modes of thinking, and a radical deviation from his earlier way of thinking that began in the mid-1970s.

In this regard, it must be said that Bion reached remarkable depths in the course of his clinical analytic evolution, revealing a range of mental content, and ways in which it is codified, considered extraordinary by everyone: the realistic projective identification dynamic, thoughts in search of a thinker, bizarre objects, alpha and beta elements, the grid. These and other revolutionary concepts-primarily, the shifting of knowledge (K) to a new position where it gains the same pivotal importance as love (L) and hatred (H)-are clear proof that Bion had entered into the world of complexity (Langlands), and that what had revealed the shortcomings of ordinary ways of thinking and the use of common logic, led him from an Aristotelian-Kantian approach to a new one that could be called Platonic-Matte Blanchian.

Bion was spurred in his achievements by the writings of many contemporary psychoanalysts, among them D. Winnicott, J. Bowlby, P. Fonagy, but particularly significant were those of I. Matte Blanco and his theories on the infinite based on processes of homogeneity and symmetry (1975). All these authors acknowledged both their debt and loyalty to the theories of Freud, but went on to elaborate in exponential and unexpected ways what had only remained implicit in his theories.

Confronted with these explorations Bion found himself confused, and it could be hypothesized that this was probably accentuated by his existential experience-a veritable "catastrophic event"-in the United States, in his relationship with Freud and with North American psychoanalysis. It seems that Bion even feared for his own personal safety during that period.

This North American experience most probably served as the trigger for his moment of crisis, radically shaking the frame of mind he had maintained until that moment: a "military" mindset, a dimension that evidently permeated his conception of the group and that, as much as it may have been concealed, was decisive. As a matter of fact, he had been appointed tank commander at the age of 21 during the First World War and, in 1942, conducted the assessment and selection of officers for the War Office Selection Board (WOSB) on the basis of practical "groups tasks" according to the principles of Lewin (1936). He also supervised the rehabilitation at Northfield Hospital of battle-fatigued soldiers returning from the front. As a consequence of this Bion had introduced a sort of "military regime" into the psychotherapy practised at Northfield Hospital, which continued to be applied even after he had left the hospital. It was, however, in stark contrast with the hospital's medical and therapeutic approach, so much so that Main (1977) could not resist highlighting the protests raised by this unilateral and idiosyncratic re-evocation of the war experience within the hospital setting.

Proof of this assumption, in any case, lies in the fact that Bion's group approach was rooted in the personal experience of "belonging" that resulted from group "activity". An approach that was reinforced-or, at least, was not invalidated-by his experience with M. Klein, who persuaded Bion to consider the basic assumptions he had noted in the group as defensive strategies for dealing with the conflict and threats generated by the group analytic experience. Not without significance is the fact that those very basic assumptions can lead to processes typical of a military combat group, expressed

either in its dependency on and subordination to a commander, the "fight-flight" military strategy, or in a pairing implying the messianic idea of salvation, as was the "Avanti Savoia!" battle cry of the troops of the Italian monarchy.

Before proceeding any further, it would be necessary to elaborate-freely, as one would in a psychoanalytic session-the background and dynamic consequences of what it has been assumed happened to Bion, and the impact that this is believed to have had on how he experienced psychoanalysis.

Indeed it could be said that his "military" approach-in which it is impossible to discern any "mystical" connotation-was already in crisis as a result of the evolution of contemporary psychoanalysis, but collapsed suddenly in the face of this North American experience; and as a consequence, the Bion of some later years-beginning with the Brazilian conferences and continuing up to "A Memoir of the Future" and the Roman conferences-was a decidedly different one from the original. As I. Matte Blanco reports, in his final writings, Bion "at times even seems impatient with the restrictions that such notions put on the understanding-of, and fusing-with, his present self-whole: the drama of the difference and at the same time the identity between part and whole" (1981).

In reality, according to E. O'Shaughnessy (2005), the later Bion "becomes less bounded, the defects of these very qualities make the texts too open, too pro- and e-vocative, and weakened by riddling meanings". In a word, less "disciplined" and the same author specifies that, "by 'less disciplined' I mean mixing and blurring categories of discourse, embracing contradictions, and sliding between ideas rather than linking them. These features are apparent, indeed intentional, in "A memoir of the future" (1975, 1977, 1979); they are part of the spirit in which Bion offers his autobiographical trilogy. They are present, too, in his later psychoanalytic papers and in the seminar records".

Indeed, Grinberg, Sor, Tabac de Bianchedi (1993) all marked the unusual nature of the concepts and terms used by the late Bion: "caesura" (1977), indicating the separation between two mental states (conscious/unconscious, madness/mental health, present/future, daydreaming/sleep dreaming, and so on); the "transcending of caesura" as the final condition for mental growth and the "need" to study it and its possible pathology; the concept of "language of affection or substitution, of "unison" and, more in general, the "spatial extension of the mind concept", including the "infra- and ultra-sensorial", as well as the model of temporal "continuity" between present and intra-uterine life. These concepts are less scientific and more unsaturated than those of Bion's more precise and formal earlier writings, but they are also truer and more appealing. A. Ferro described them as "the most fascinating precisely because of the insaturation of his texts and the opening of meaning which it continuously allows" (2005 cit.).

There have also been those who have viewed this final dimension of Bion's thought as coinciding with an emergence of the spirit of ancient imprinting and mental constructs that had been missing from his life's scenario up to that point; of the primordial cultural roots of millenary thought to which Bion had been exposed in his

early childhood in India, where he was born, and where he was cared for by an Indian nurse.

In this thinking " fundamental belief is the transcendent unreality of the phenomenal world. While it seems to us Westerners that the senses are indisputable witnesses, in India they are the cause of cosmic error and illusion. For Indians the only immediate, indisputable reality is that which produces consciousness, intuition, and that reveals-above and beyond the misleading aspects of the Id-the Absolute, both in its positive form, the Being per se, and negative form, nothingness " (M. Giampà, 2000).

This cultural derivation of Bion's has, in fact, been elaborated by Italian psychoanalyst Mario Giampà, and is discussed in his contribution to the present edition, departing from Parthenope Bion's assumption that in her father " there was surely a level, a stratum, that had become completely unconscious, of knowledge of an Indo-European language that had been completely forgotten " (Bion Talamo, 1997).

In reality "O" was an Indian invention, and Bion arrived there having departed from the concept of "negative capability", borrowed from Keats (1817), passing through that " suspension of memory, desire and understanding " that he considered the optimal situation for analysis, to the possible achievement of an unsaturated, multi-meaning, dream-like mental state, i.e. "O", which can be experienced for a fleeting few seconds only: hence the formulation of a concept of "infinity" and "formlessness" recalling I. Matte Blanco's theory of the unconscious in his "The Unconscious as Infinite Sets" (1975).

To this end, in "A Memoir of the Future" (The Dream), Bion wrote, "What I am saying is that our physical and sensuous components are manipulable by set theory. Thoughts associated with a thinker are also amenable to set theory. Mind, personality, relationship, 'belief' are not. They cannot even be reasonably defined. 'Reasonable definition' involves 'confinement' to a 'constant conjunction' ."

Footnote 14 to this excerpt explains that the Blanchian approach " would seem to throw light on many of the events and episodes that are familiar to me in using psychoanalysis to explore the personality. It is especially relevant to thoughts and ideas that have never been conscious, i.e. the vestigial residue of something that seems to be primordial 'thinking' before birth " .

And here we have it! That "mysticism" we were looking for in Bion, which Elizabeth Tabac (2005) has called " philosophic mysticism a doctrine which, recognizing the impotence for human reason to solve the fundamental metaphysical problems, approaches them with a special intuitive knowledge ". The same author adds, " I believe we psychoanalysts also (but not only) deal with fundamental metaphysical problems: life and its sense, death, being, plus the search for truth about psychic reality - truth/reality which ultimately many of us consider infinite and unknowable but whose search implies learning and mental growth. And many of us believe that intuition is one of our tools in this search; that intuition will, sometimes, produce a

revelation/discovery. Believing this implies an "act of scientific faith" (Bion, 1970) and, philosophically, a move from Kant to Plato".

It is clear how removed Bion was now from that rationality that characterized his early explorations in psychology. Proof of this change lies in the fact that, while in his 1962 *Learning from Experience* "O" was the process and experience of acquiring knowledge, instead, in more recent works, sensory "O" deriving from the impact with physical or psychic reality (an already potentially infinite scenario) is associated with ultimate reality, truth, the absolute, divinity, the infinite and the thing-in-itself. Behind the sensory "O" lies indeed another mysterious and intuitionistic non-sensory "O": in a word, zero as the origin of all things. This is also borne out in the transformation undergone, as discussed below, by the "beta element"; and it is clear that, for Bion, the authentic psychoanalytic position, scientific psychoanalysis, now lay in gaining control of "dream-like memory". It was precisely this in its evolution that had led to that absolute apex of mental life that, for Bion, coincided with becoming, with being in non-sensory "O", or better, with an expanding spiral of "K" and "O" transformations: to whose endpoint the psychoanalyst must, in any case, bring all his tension to bear, aiming for moments of "attunement" with the patient, to understand, at best, that nothing is comprehensible any longer -and it is here that one arrives at the threshold of mysticism!

In order to adequately understand this transformation some preparation is, in any case, necessary, beginning with the need to go beyond "structural knowledge"-traditional, illuministic, categorical knowledge based on the principle of post hoc erga propter hoc- to an anti-nomic multi-dimensional "matrix" where post hoc erga ante hoc : a knowledge in which the division between the observer and the object observed dissolves, where the perceiver alters the perceived and vice versa, and where the fact that things are relative and not axiomatic, probability and not truth, constitutes a code of knowledge (Ancona, 1999).

In fact, classical psychoanalysis has introduced this new possibility for knowledge, replacing induction/deduction with abduction in most of its researches, moreover indicating which clues to follow in order to reach the desired destination: not, certainly, those sharp, clear foregrounded facts easily processed through rational control procedures, but those marginal, fleeting, residual, mythical ones processed in emotional and affective terms only accessible through unconscious participation.

Nevertheless, classic psychoanalysis remains trapped in a web of intellection, of "structural knowledge", i.e. anchored to that "ocnophilic" process (Balint 1937) that makes it impossible to expand its patients' inner world to endorse the "philobatic", multi-personal nature of their relations-a failure that has cost both the defection of Jung and the incorporation of the psychoanalytic scientific code into that of group analysis.

Bion too, in his Kleinian phase, was clearly quite concerned with these intellectual obstacles but, at the moment of the transformation here in question, had broken free of them, thereby forcing his reader to make a similar transformation: passing from the

earlier Aritotelian-Kantian approach to a new one, which could be called Platonic-Matte-Blanchian.

According to this approach, the essence of the psychoanalytic pursuit consists of intuiting the truth about the subject being analyzed and in transforming oneself with, and into, that subject. In line with this, Bion was able to formulate " a pre-natal level of the mind and [...] related to this primitive level, the conjecture of the existence of a sub-thalamic terror as a possible explanation of certain human violent actions without previous thought ".

Elizabeth Tabac points this out when speaking of the installation of a mode in which to qualitatively " feel and tolerate the emotional storm of being mentally in touch with someone else, to make the best of feelings and thoughts without putting barriers in the mind, to tolerate the dangerous emotional experience of the meeting of pre-natal and post-natal parts of the personality, to practice psychoanalysis not excluding the intuition of the most primitive aspects of the mind, and to tolerate not understanding, hopefully searching for news ideas and trying to make them public in a creative way ".

It is easy to understand, therefore, why the patient needs to become accustomed to " standing with his emotion, fear, alongside this unknown, indefinable as a being or a non-being, formless, infinite, ineffable, the non-existent " (Giampà cit.).

The analyst is tempted, for this dramatic event, to take the frozen stance of the paranoid-schizoid in search of unpredictable thoughts, " like the officer with his soldiers on the battlefield ", and what fills him then is the awareness " that in the session one is concerned with two dangerous and ferocious animals " (Bion, 1978, 1980); since even his thought apparatus is primitive and sketchy, similar to that of the patient he is analyzing, " he himself is " bad news " in so far as he cannot be completely analyzed and that, at the end of his analysis, "I have to make the best I can of who I am" (ivi).

As mentioned earlier, with this aim in mind the analyst must necessarily place himself in what S. Langslands describes as being as close as possible to a dream-state, i.e. he must offer to listen to what his patient is revealing as if he himself were dreaming, in a state of reverie. This state shares with the dream-state a greater detachment from external stimuli, increasing the possibility for contact with inner stimuli, which is equivalent to allowing oneself to be touched emotionally by the patient. At the same time, Langslands specifies that this state differs from the dream-state in that the analyst is obliged to somehow maintain a link with external reality, i.e. with the patient, as well as with certain other circumstances such as time (watching the clock) and space (realizing a possible fire having broken out). This makes for a state of "reverie" that resembles, but is differentiated from, a state of hallucination close to that of psychosis.

This is the state without "memory, desire or understanding" leading directly to "O". The psychoanalyst's imagination will lead him not so much, or not only, to change a given element so as to produce another, but to be capable of producing a new form, seeing what was not there-and, at the same time, to feel completely alone in this.

In this undertaking Bion does not prove to be " an orthodox thinker; if anything, he is a mystical one who knows truth to be unreachable, but also that we cannot give up going towards it, even if the journey is painful and sometimes impossible " (Ferro, cit.). His is a gaze that makes no attempt to see, that waits for something to develop, for meaning to arise, within the borders of a field where nothing is sought. This same state of confusion is, on the other hand, what Bion's reader experiences in texts such as "A Memoir of the Future" and his final marvellous, visionary narrations, which adopt a highly figurative style reminiscent of film or theatre. Texts, as Tabac de Bianchedi has pertinently pointed out (cit.), " which are impossible to synthesize, banalize, or bury as something already known, since one has to read them (preferably aloud, in a group context) without memory, desire or understanding, appreciating the poetry, the science-fiction, the verbal fun, as well as the many short psychoanalytic essays included [...] taking up Bion's use of Keats' definition (cit.) of "language of achievement" and "negative capability" and firmly resisting the idea of being in the presence of a psychotic text, as can be verified in this excerpt from 1975:

CAPT. BION : I stared at the speck of mud trembling on the straw. Wot 'happened then? 'E fell on is arse. And 'is Arse wuz angry and said, Get of my arse! You've done nothing but throw shit at me all yore life and now you expects Englands to be my booty! Boo-ootiful soup; in a shell-hole in Flanders Felds. Legs and guts. must 'ave bin twenty men in there-Germ'um and frogslegs and all strarts!".

Analyst, Bion and reader all adrift in this vast ocean, are simultaneously blinded and illuminated, frightened, and for this very reason attain the apex of fullness .

Entirely in keeping then are the clinical conclusions drawn from this by Sonia Langslands, which can be paraphrased as follows: in analysis 'idea associations' work like a series of metonyms pointing the way, while the various 'signifiers' work like metaphorical associations indicating the transformations continuously taking place along this route. In order to help the patient continue composing his own poetry, the analyst needs, on the one hand, to participate in the relationship with the patient and, on the other, to have enough humility to show the patient that he doesn't need the analyst, in order to leave room for ideas that he may wish to test on his own. Only in this way, departing from this experience of bond and separation, will the analyst be able to help the patient test his own ability to create bonds with the world from that point on, as well as to tolerate separations, which, in fact, is the same thing as being able to accept one's own situation of dependence or isolation.

As mentioned earlier it is within this odd and intense dynamic, both theoretical and clinical, that the "mysticism" in which Bion is located, and to which he leads, is fully realized: a lay mysticism, but a state that corresponds fully with that of religious ecstasy, for which it can, in any case, supply an interpretive framework. Indeed, both cases call for an act of faith: scientific in nature in the work of psychoanalysis (1970), and religious in the sphere of the sacred.

In this regard the following considerations could be opportune: a 1966 study on the dynamics of religious mysticism, this author analyzed the Carmelite Saint Maria Magdalene de' Pazzi, proposing, in her case as well as in all cases of obvious neurosis

in saints, the recognition of the interjection of a supernatural force into the human psychic structure, capable of transforming the substance of human actions by unifying them. This process was subsequently defined as "surlimation", the opposite of what is clinically defined as "sublimation": the Freudian process of being elevated, taking place only within the sphere of instinctive impulses and thus leaving the human at his level. The purpose at the time was to present 'surlimation' as having an upward moving tendency that passes through every living person-some of whom may deny it, ignore it or else embrace it in the most variable of degrees-reaching its maximum of fruition in the mystic.

However, careful examination reveals a disconcerting analogy, practically an overlapping, between this dynamic image and one of the founding aspects of Bion's theory: the transformation of beta into alpha elements.

In the first part of his theoretical evolution Bion had thought that beta elements consisted of untransformed sensory impressions: raw, undigested emotional experiences inappropriate to thoughtful elaboration and highly mutable; as such tending to be externalized and projected, resulting in a chaotic agglomeration of psychotic thought, a wild state on which the " domesticating function of the alpha elements would intervene ". (Ferro, 1999)

This concept is not very satisfying from the clinical viewpoint, however, and Matte Blanco was very convincing in his demonstration of its inner contradictions, stating in this regard: " My puzzlement increases or at least is not solved when I consider the beta-elements; . I do not succeed in being at peace with the beta-elements... I cannot digest them...from my own vantage point, the beta-elements appear to me something rather like an open wound " (1981, cit.).

In fact, in Bion's subsequent elaboration-that which interests us here-he managed to conceive of beta elements as the ancient matrix for the alpha function, the rudimentary precursors of mental content seeking a container within which to transform themselves: a symbolic auditory and rhythmic experience originating back in the womb (Meltzer, Harris, 1989) and, as such, the possible root of both psychosis and mysticism.

From this point of view beta elements rise radically up through their previously under-estimated ranks to join the intuitionist "O" and somehow express the dynamic of " status nascentis ". They are revealed as the "bizarre thoughts" of the dream-state, of the individual and collective unconscious, and thus possible fonts of creativity. Indeed they undergo a sort of transcendent evolution toward the sublime or toward the abject. In fact, they are able travel from the deepest parts of the cerebral system to those of the upper cortex, or else, in the absence of this transcendence, to continue to activate those emotional primordial regions: the latter representing the process of becoming psychotic, the former of becoming a mystic, which seems to be precisely that of "surlimation".

We all know very well how this dynamic works within the framework proposed by Bion (1962): the newborn cannot resist bombarding the nourishing mother's psychic breast with lethal sensory elements, an asymbolic set of sensations of which he

intends to rid himself. And it is precisely the adequate mother's capacity to assume a state of "reverie" that allows her to field this barrage of beta elements and transform them into the vital alpha elements; which she, in turn, offers to the newborn child, thereby fostering its ulterior development: along with the alpha elements, in reality the baby re-introjects this very elaborating function of the mother herself, thus triggering the transformation from the beta elements' earlier primitive nature into a new one. The lethal consequences of the absence of this process revert, redoubled in strength, to the infant, flooding it with untransformed beta elements and, therefore, with a sense of death and plunging it into the depths of "nameless terror": creating the possibility for future psychosis and, in any case, saddling the newborn with the task of completing a transformation rendered impossible by the absence of that maternal reverie.

This is precisely the dynamic that Pope Benedict XVI (2006) describes regarding the theological process of Love, which starts out from the lower levels as sensual, ascending eros, to later be transformed into spiritual, descending agape -object love-closing thus the circle and returning as charity the possible origin of the mystical state. This cycle could be viewed as analogous to the re-introjection of the alpha dimension!

If this, however, is the scenario unfolding in the mind, then the original looming presence of countless beta elements directly recalls the Bionian principle that human life and knowledge begin (Bion, cit) with preconceptions represented by beta elements, which, therefore, constitute a sort of innate disposition waiting to be realized. Arising from this is a feeling of expectant, boundless, a-symbolic multi-dimensionality expressed as pure emotion destined to meet up with sensory experience-in other words, with that logical three-dimensionality of the logic leading to consciousness. It follows that the first dimension can obviously not be contained within the second, unless it is reduced, i.e. it is only possible to know the space-time results of emotional experiences. Therefore, their translation into perceived reality ends up limiting them severely while they, in truth, actually remain an unknowable, indefinable, dimensionless emotional field "O", a totality that both attracts and terrorizes.

Matte Blanco also insisted on the distinction between an original, undifferentiated, homogeneous corporeal sensing -devoid of space or time and thus infinite and capable of making infinite-and a separating, heterogenicising knowing: two irreconcilable and antithetic modes, the former symmetrical, the latter asymmetrical.

And since logical knowledge belongs to the asymmetrical mode, we are faced once again with the impossible containment of symmetry within asymmetry: the unbridgeable gap between sensing and thinking, for which thought is always only a "pale representation, a partial selection of the relations that could be brought out in three dimensions, as compared with the multidimensional totality already experienced emotionally" (Oneroso, 2004).

This very reason renders essential the fact that a group is destined to receive its impact only to the extent that someone within that group, who is most in sync with the contingent situation, is able to feel one of the thoughts going on in by the group and make it resonate within him/her, and is able to intercept it and express it verbally: this is the function of the lay mystic, which corresponds with what takes place in the holy mystic.

This further elaboration of the psycho-dynamic therefore confirms a possible coincidence with that of the mystical psycho-dynamic, first of all owing to the fact that it contains the almost always vague and inadvertent-but possibly complete and definitive-awareness that God immeasurably surpasses the human being, and that this latter is nothing more than a fragile alif , a fleeting wisp of nothingness, that " nada " so masterfully expressed in the Qoheleth (1987).

The same coincidence is also revealed in the fact that, in reality, the holy mystic relies on a continuous and ever deeper oration that appropriates the supernatural essence that, according to Paul, flows unceasingly through the human creature: a supernatural essence from which it is equally possible to become alienated through neglect, conflict or exhaustion, as it is to embrace and develop it.

The same could be said of the successful "alphabetization " (Ferro,cit.)of the beta elements in advance of establishing the conditions for the lay mysticism discussed here, or the failure to do so, thereby constituting the conditions for psychosis.

The following assertion by Grotstein seems entirely in keeping with these considerations: " I believe Bion left behind the saturated pre-conceptions of the psychoanalytic establishment and ventured inward in a soul-searching, mystic journey with what I have come to believe was a mission to transcend the positivistic certainty of its determinism and "messianically" return it to its provenance in numinous parallax and doubt, where the ultimate mystic and relativistic "science of man" truly resides. What emerged perhaps become the state of the art in psychoanalytic meta-theory and meta-psychology " (1996).

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