

Oblivion. The value of the negative in psychotherapy between C.G. Jung and W. R. Bion

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Abstract

The article attempts to trace a possible path through the writings of two great psychotherapists: C. G. Jung and W. R. Bion, starting from the value given by both to the term “oblivion” in therapeutic practice.

The initial assumption refers to the thought of L. Wittgenstein and states that one cannot ignore an ethical consideration in examining their ideas.

Starting from this starting point, some themes of current psychotherapy are taken into consideration in order to connect them to the Bionian idea of “evolution of the session” and to the Jungian one, taken from alchemical writings, of “true imaginatio”.

Keywords: psychotherapy, ethics, language, image

Perhaps it will help you if I write you a couple of words in my book: from reading this, in fact, you, and this is my exact opinion, will not get much out of it. In fact you will not understand it; the topic will appear completely foreign to you. In reality, however, it is not alien to you, since the meaning of the book is an ethical meaning. Once I wanted to include in the preface a proposition, which now in fact does not exist there, but which I will now write for you, since it will perhaps be a key for you to understand the work. In fact, I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of what I have written, and also of everything I have not written. And this second part is the important one. By my book, ethics are delimited, so to speak, from the inside; and I am convinced that ethics should only be strictly defined in this way. (1)

Introduction

Facing with an undertaking aimed at drawing a conceptual map that orientates the reader towards a path that capable of comparing ideas of two giants of psychotherapy

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such as W. Bion and C.G. Jung, many doubts arise to the writer. Before continuing, I think it is advisable state at least two. The first doubt put a question of language. This theme is dear to both authors and will be treated throughout the writing.

Indeed, we are facing languages from different times, characterized from different practices, and above all that they use different means of communication; therefore, we are faced with two different forms of thought. Let us then consider a third one: that tries one's hand in the present to approach or compare differences. (2)

Even if we want to put this question aside (taking the empiricity of the "clinic" as a pretext), however, it is a question of preparing for a titanic work, a resumption of very complicated gnoseological questions; recurring issues, throughout the course of Western thought, certainly not resolved and maybe even that wouldn't be enough, given the encroachments towards the "East" that can be traced in the writings of our two authors.

How to find a way to reduce in an article, even just one of the possible issues at stake, without generating either a choking sensation or, on the contrary, a dismay sensation? The famous passage by L. Wittgenstein, reported in the exergue, would like to be an attempt to give at least two indications to build one of the possible paths.

The initial indication would like to convey the idea that, if some kind of comparison can be made, this should be conducted starting from the importance that our authors have given, more or less explicitly, to the level of ethics in the therapeutic experience (3), putting it in direct connection with the question of effectiveness; simplifying a lot we could say: personal engagement and attention to the issue of emotional distance (and therefore proximity) tolerable from a given analytical couple, are seen as closely connected to the effectiveness of a work "being within a psychotherapeutic experience". For both, indeed, there can be no experience without distance: experiencing something means, first of all, *not being* the thing that is experienced but being able *to have* it at a distance as well. On this fundamental point their clinical vicissitudes, with forms of human existence unable to "distance themselves" – therefore to refer to something through discourse, *deal with, allude to, postpone*, etc. – they can represent for us a possible point of departure for a comparison. (4)

As a corollary to this affirmation, the second indication, again inspiring from the words of the Austrian philosopher, would like to emphasize a characteristic device of thinking: the figure / background oscillation or, in Jungian terms, the antinomic relationship between correlated opposites. We bring with us some figures proposed in this regard; only for evocative purpose, without claiming to deepen.

For Jung we could indicate the dynamics between the two forms of thinking, that between conscious / unconscious or that Ego/ Shadow, Person / Soul (Jung, 1936) to arrive at the paradoxical alchemical figures of the last writings, of which I will say something later. For Bion, the waking / dream dynamic - which constantly redefine their relationship thanks to the repeated and continuous action of the "contact –

barrier” (Bion, 1962, p. 285) – the oscillations between schizo-paranoid and depressive positions or that between container and content.

However, this device can be found above all in their attempts to think of the “psyche starting from the psyche”. Indeed, the term “psyche” is understood here not so much as a linguistic sign able to indicate an “entity of the world”, which can be traced in some material or spiritual “place” – the phenomenology of E. Husserl (Husserl, 1898-25, p. 421) it must have somehow got into the reflections of both of us - but as a term referable to a continuous process that runs through and characterizes our whole way of expressing ourselves as men. (5) This difficult passage involves the exit from that “misplaced concreteness”, described from A. N. Whitehead (6) which pushes towards the conviction that under the words there must be “things” well defined and determined, observable, and placed “at a distance”. Thus, for all those expressions referring to the psychic that have now become part of common language (conscious and unconscious, dream and waking, introversion and extroversion, container and content, transfert/countertransference, etc. etc.) we do not have a certain reference sign, as common sense would have it, it is only after a necessary but conventional operation of the alphabetically educated language that we end up expressing ourselves, in the discourse, thinking of identifying “entities”. Our two authors, on the other hand, seem to consider the “ultimate” semantic reference of the terms as never exhausting but only pragmatically transformable (psychotherapeutically speaking: capable of producing an expansion of the ways of seeing “reality” in that session, with that patient); I plan to return towards the end of the way on this point.

Once I have caught this first sign, I think it begins to appear how much they both inevitably became interested in a series of figures of that “negative” that seems to act in parallel with any phenomenal manifestation, referable to the human cognitive enterprise.

We could say, simplifying too much, that both authors seem to tend to enhance attention to the moments in which “not being the thing” is constituted, opening up the possibility of gaining experience for a subjectivity; this becomes possible only when a given background, disappearing, allows the object to appear in the image, constituting itself, at the same time, dynamically, as a propulsive thrust, a source of possible renewal of the gaze itself, in a continuous oscillation that enhances the vital process of which it was said.

To return to our title for just a moment: memory and oblivion, as objects of any discourse, co-belong in this vision; remaining in this thinking device, we could say that *a memory is made possible only if, in parallel, something can be forgotten and wherever we can speak of memory, the possibility of oblivion must also be such.*

To justify the term “value” in the title, however, we need to take a step beyond this model and here we encounter the second doubt – I hope correlated with what has been said so far – which involves an inevitable question of opportunity.

It is a question of hinting at the gigantic problem of the alleged “scientific” status of

psychotherapy and, at the same time, the value to be attributed to the attempt to transmit its knowledge, its methods or, more generally, to the value to be given to any possibility to convey “strongly” of a theory of psychotherapeutic technique.

If we imagine this activity only as a revelatory – cognitive enterprise (of a “secret”, a “deep and archaic” unconscious, of a “truer and more repressed biographical past”, of a pre-categorical sensoriality, of a repeated series of traumatizing childhood relational experiences, etc. etc.) – following, to stay on the subject, what can be identified as the first part of Bion’s work (7) and then the one that for at least thirty years has been the dominant thrust in all areas cultural - then the way of comparison, between the ideas of our two, appears, indeed, anachronistic and, at least in my opinion, inappropriate.

We would find ourselves plunged in a paradigm that, very generically, we could define as dualist, determinist and “scientist”, impregnated with a terminology, which is not questioned, where the multiplicity and complexity of the psychic, when recognized, are essentially considered, generically, such as “disturbing” psychopathological occurrences, expressions of symptoms that “disturb adaptation”.

In this position *the negative*, of course, has no value.

Putting it in more familiar terms for psychoanalysis, we could say that Freudian claim of daily “reconquest” of the id (in the name of the Ego) still makes its influence felt powerfully here and, precisely starting from this assumption, I do not think it can go a long way together with Jung who has chosen the relationship and the ways of the relationship between these and other elements of psychological discourse as the privileged object of his theoretical and therapeutic discourses. (8)

Here I do not think we can do anything but pay tribute to both authors, as pioneers of a work carried out with very “difficult” patients, considering them, from a historiographical perspective, as belonging to a heroic era, now past, in which no neither olanzapine nor haloperidol existed.

If, alternatively, we follow a path that comes to consider psychotherapy as an empirical / experimental enterprise, not reducible to the *episteme* alone, in which the latter has, first of all, the task of becoming aware of its own borders, (and, parallel, of his genealogy) opening up to the possibility of reconstituting them, then the path we can follow is certainly different, but to follow it we need the second part of Bion’s work.(9)

Walking in this direction we find the two authors daily in our clinical practice but, on closer inspection, not so much in the form of any technical indication that leads us to a detailed way of proceeding with patients but in the opposite form: as an invitation to practice one's own that radical empiricism, of which it was said, in order to be able to pay attention to the auroral moments in which they make themselves manifest with their power and “dangerousness”, the first techniques that allow us, in retrospect, to speak of “Human Being”: *word, image and their continuous and original contamination*. (10) And so we returned to the initial question: that of the linguistic sign.

Let’s try to say, with a very rash and too synthetic statement, that both of our authors,

at a certain point of their theoretical journey, felt the need to ask themselves questions about the origin of abstract thought, of the sign reference and, above all, of the relations of these with perceiving, remembering, dreaming (we could say, in general, with the problem of the *image*) going back to the “origins” of philosophical reflections on the matter and ending up turning, dissatisfied, to practices on the border of Logos (11); practices where a word wasn’t at stake for granted aimed at defining objectifying, at conceptual circumscribing, at dialectical argumentation (constitutive metaphors of the Socratic spirit of thought and foundations of the whole Western scientific enterprise), but rather a word full of gestures, figurativeness, of sensoriality and also of silence, a word that, by alleviating the pain, could respond to the request: “teach me to live better, if possible”.

From Jung’s “Studies in Word Association” to get to the “language of achievement” (12), the citations would take away an entire article; taking for granted the knowledge of Jung’s sensibility on this question, I hope that the reader will have Bion’s clinical seminars available and carry, as a support to the discourse, these words which, like others traceable in his recent writings, have always given a lot to think about:

In order to read a book one learns the rules of written grammar and the aesthetic rules of written communication (...) Even so, this is a limited statement because you cannot tell, say, James Joyce or Ezra Pound, how to write English and what the rules are of writing it. Nor is it possible to say what the rules are for writing poetry. After a certain point it becomes something to do with the aesthetic capacity of the person concerned. (Bion, 1974, p. 76)

And still:

The simple business of seeing the patient tomorrow is formidable indeed! We have to use an inadequate tool and we even have to invent our own particular way of talking while we are actually talking. It would be convenient if I could get used to a way of talking twchich was consistent in its own universe of discourse and which could be comprehensible to someone who was not me, but was in the room at the same time. (Bion, 1974, p. 85).

The negative and the sense

So, let’s try to continue on this path which, from contrast with the other, we could define as shifted towards the holistic and the quantum, where the *unconventional* and the *sapiential* tend to border on each other (in the sense of P. Hadot, for example) (13). It is here that, together with our authors, we inevitably encounter various figures of *negative* including that of oblivion.

We encounter them, because, on closer inspection, it is only by passing through here

that the problem of meaning is not eliminated from the therapeutic horizon; more concretely and simplistically, the possibility of accompanying the patient who seeks an answer to the question: “why me”?

I realize that this is one of those places bordering on the “religious”, which have led the critics of our two thinkers to join their proposals using the devaluing category of the “mystic”. Only by continuing on this ridge, however, we arrive, as a final point, at what is probably the most contradictory and, in some ways, enigmatic work of Bion: *A Memoir of the Future* (Bion, 1975/1977/1981). Here we find what we could define, approaching Jung, as the paradoxical problem of the “Many and One” (Jung, 1955-56, pp. 48-56). Certainly, however, it is still here that the risk of slipping into a “cosmogony” of the Presocratic type must be pointed out, basically coinciding, in terms of falling into the opposite, with that technical hyperfunctionalism against which our two masters tried to warn us. Indeed, it is clear that such a question certainly cannot be answered

psychotherapeutically by “communicating” any answer, nor can it be postponed to an imaginary individual “Destiny”.

Let us again mark a point of reference before continuing, it is only with the “second Bion” that psychotherapy also becomes an ethical enterprise; only here does it make sense to speak of the *value* of the “negative” as a constant background of the *episteme*, with which analyst and patient are confronted from time to time. From here you can proceed by combining the suggestions of both for the attention to be paid to the “present” of the session and their iconoclastic position relative to a conceptualizing practice that inevitably slips into a “slang” position. Given what has been said, we should be clear that the alternative is independent of ethics and brings psychotherapy into the position of the “expert”, in possession of linguistic keys capable of opening all doors, who certainly “knows” but does not put in difficult position the forms of knowledge itself.

Instead, remember how important it is to forget in order to act therapeutically! This might sound like their fundamental indication.

Obviously, this exhortation is full of paradoxes and, rightly, cannot please at face value, the thinker epistemologically warned, who is faced with an expression, put into words, which invites us to be suspicious of words or a technical indication that invites you to be wary of every technique.

The latter would also be right to think that all this talk of negatives, of oblivion, of *Bion's analyst without memory and desire*, or of Jung's invitation to the alchemical *rumpite libros*, is none other than one of the fundamental devices of the phenomenological attitude: the *epochè*. Isn't it here at the bottom that ours finally arrive?

Indeed, one could answer yes but also: not only!

Not only if we consider that even with its exceptional merits, relating to the understanding of the other and his unease, phenomenological psychiatry does not seem to have reflected enough on the implicit excessive power of the alphabetically

educated word, on how much it still implicitly creates a pragmatic dress, essentially in a “cognitive - descriptive” direction, a habit that tends to postpone its relationship with the occurrence of the image; the revision present in the last Husserl, that of *Krisis*, would perhaps have unlocked many issues. (14)

It should be added, indeed, that only starting from the paradoxes i mentioned, can it be possible to broaden the semantic reference of the term “technique” and then come to understand how this term is connected with the terms *word* and *image*, retracing them at the same time genealogy. In short, we arrive at Jung’s synthetic and paradoxical affirmation according to which: “Psychology is doomed to cancel itself out as a science and therein precisely it reaches its scientific goal”. (Jung, 1947/1954, p. 223) (15)

Finally, the term *value* must be underlined as we are not faced, for both authors, with an exhortation coming from conceptual and abstract devices, of a theoretical, philosophical or aesthetic character, (therefore from linguistic games, Wittgenstein would still say, which have yes links with the psychotherapeutic one but which, basically, are profoundly different) rather from empirical justifications, rooted and confined “from within” a certain way of practicing psychotherapy aware of the limits imposed from the linguistic tools through which such a practice is carried out. A practice that does not want to remain blind *to the event of meaning of that word and that image*, thus avoiding being induced to dogmatically believe in their metaphysical meaning of truth (which, if anything, is in the convention not in the eventuality). We still report the core of the words of the Austrian philosopher quoted at the beginning of our journey:

(...) the ethics are delimited, so to speak, from the inside; and I am convinced that ethics should be strictly defined only in this way.
(Wittgenstein, cit.)

Oblivion is the word, the image

After having made one’s way towards this direction and having tasted the roughness of the terrain, we return, if only for a moment, in contact with the news of psychotherapy, in view of a conclusion that, I anticipate, will limit itself to indicating a direction.

Let’s consider, first of all, that only until a few years ago oblivion was considered from common sense, and not only, as a sort of “enemy of memory”, as a force that has the power to destroy the “positivity” of remembering everything other than of value.

For a long time also in analytic practice it was identified with the figure of the repression of the first Freud probably because the psychopathological model of reference was that of hysteria. (16)

Only with Remembering, Repeating, Working-Through does the idea appear in Freud that the possibility of *remembering* and that of *forgetting* are closely overlapped

(Freud, 1914) (17); only here the possibility of recalling images, in the present, is considered in the light of an *elaborative oblivion* in the past which, still acting underground in the present, is able, so to speak, to “make room” for thought rather than to the act otherwise concretized in the compulsion to repeat.

From this point onwards paths opened – we only recall, as examples, the treatment of A.L. Lurija (Lurija, 2004) or the poetic visionary of J.L. Borges, (1983) – which led to the current revaluation of oblivion; a sort of revision that has now expanded its semantic territory (18), eventually identifying different figures in psychotherapy (different “types” of oblivion), some sources of torment others of relief. Let’s get inside one more time, with some images, in this cultural climate. The widow elaborates, forgetting it, the mourning of her husband and comes out of an identification with a devitalized object; the teenager manages to forget the loss of his first love and comes out of the “twin fantasy”; the victim of violence suffers the trauma and leaves the illusion of omnipotent control. If it is true, however, that, to date, oblivion no longer tends to be seen, in psychotherapy, as something to “fight” at all costs, it is also true that this revaluation continues to be impregnated with that being sick, generically, of "past" that leads, in some cases, to frankly too reductionist, concretistic and causalistic drifts of temporality (consequently of thought and imagination), where are lost precisely those questions of subjectivity and sense of which it was said about.

From this point of view, however, the attempts of our authors cannot but appear worthy of a form of attention differently placed with respect to the many issues with which analytical psychotherapy of the last thirty years has been dealing. Let's list at least three of them, just as a starting point, without any pretense of deepening, to better understand what we are dealing with.

The individual

Here we find, first of all, the consequences of taking note of a multidimensionality of the psychic (as of the linguistic (19) which tends to throw us into a worrying situation in which it becomes coherent to redefine the boundaries of the Individual (we are accepting it more and more, in these pandemic and virtual times) in the sense of crossing the idea that the latter is held together from an “Undivided” substance/essence (which then inevitably leads to all those paths that lead to the search for this essence in opposite directions spiritual/materialistic: “Human Spirit”, “Human Brain”, etc.), as if Man had always been the same and individual/collective relationships always the same.

Rather, again with Wittgenstein, we can imagine for the psychic, as for language and thought, a complex, ineffable but organized and, only within certain limits, predictable, matrix of exchanges between “parts”; continuously changing matrix (when vital), which underlies events that we define affective, imaginal and, only subsequently, linguistic. In short, we are confronted with an “atmospheric” metaphor and with an individuality to be traced, in metaphor, not only in a single tree but, at the

same time, in the leaf, in the tree, in its roots, in the soil on which they grow and, especially, in their ongoing relationships; these images appear to us today much fresher than the “trench wars” between psychic areas or instances, evoked from psychoanalytic writings that run throughout the 1900s. Of course, the metaphor of the ego still appears heuristically appropriate, but not such as to consider the latter as a single center, acquired once and for all and such as to capture, within its conventionality, our alliance as psychotherapists. (20)

The temporality

The immediate correlation of this change of perspective is the necessary consideration of a *multitemporality* present in all of us, which cannot be reduced only to the linear and conventional one, expressed through the polite word (the famous narratives).

The analyst (and the patient) attends an activation of different times and spaces, during the session, as in a dance; consequently *desire*, as a look turned unilaterally to a conventional “future” or *memory* as a look turned to an equally conventional “past” are rightly criticized from Bion – who in *A Memoir of the Future* constructs fictitious verbal expressions to allow such multitemporality to express themselves – because it is certainly only by criticizing them that it is possible to reactivate possibilities never used and not realized (not always with the patient’s “favor and gratitude”, of course ...)

Regaining the idea that there are practices (21) that constitute the semantic background of the terms appears indispensable at this point. Here, passing, still “in passing”, for E. Husserl, the question appears really very complex: that an event can be called “past” depends on the agreement and confirmation, in the present, that makes it conventional as such but also after G Edelman (Edelman, 1991) can we still ignore the fact that the present codes, affectively connoted, selectively guide our attention and, consequently, influence our way of telling our story and consequently our categorization of time?

The emerging phenomena

Finally, and this is perhaps the most enigmatic but also the most stimulating issue for the theme of oblivion: the taking into consideration of the “eventualities” that are manifested in therapy through that interaction which, we understand, is played out on different levels but first of all on an aesthetic level – at the level of the *Leib* I believe the phenomenologist can say, or at the level of the “atmospheric”, as T. Griffero clearly highlighted (Griffero, 2017). Here we encounter issues such as “becoming O”, *the evolution of Bion’s session* and Jungian *synchronicity*, arguments that are certainly out of way of these notes. In a nutshell, we could say that these issues constitute the ground for rethinking the relationships between sensoriality, representation, memory, perception, image and word and, consequently, between sign and symbol.

What is the role of oblivion, as a figure of the negative, in all this?

Evolution of the session and Vera Imaginatio

Oblivion fragments the space-time continuum. If oblivion did not act there would be no absences, but then there would be no distance, difference and time (conventionally understood); there would not even be thought, understood as the possible sudden occurrence of images in the absence of the sensory concreteness of the object. To return to the introductory paragraph only for a moment: only with the possibility of oblivion do we begin to be able to remain in misunderstandings and only here can a never complete path of approaching “reality” begin; with Bion we could say: in order to continue thinking, one must open up to say the possible, not the existing.

The clinical reflections of our authors in this regard are, to varying degrees, decisive. For some patients the words take on the concreteness of the thing, they are not signs that “refer” but objects that must be concretely present as oblivion is not left to act; here the mere presence of the word is equivalent to a concrete destruction / incorporation of the object to which the word refers (it would tragically take the place of the “sacred” sensorial fusion with the object), it becomes a “sign of death”, of “irreparability”. Here what is defined from common sense as “entering the community of speakers” is equivalent to entering the community of “destroyers”, of those who generate a break with the “original” one that *cannot and must not be talked about*. This gaze fails to see the other half of the question: the saving word, the word that generates, even for a moment, communion, which reopens to life. If the fundamental issue at stake is that of survival, moment by moment, remaining in a continuous time, which does not give a moment off, then the possibility of moving to a rhythm must be considered only in the light of the action of oblivion; only oblivion can give rise to the occasional experience of simultaneity in a two-way speech: it happens that our words and those of the patient seek and find each other - only occasionally, “at the same time”, in that “contingent” situation that Bion defines «at-one-ment» (translated into Italian with the term *unison*) (Bion, 1970, p. 296). and Jung «Synchronicity» (Jung, 1950/52).

It is obvious that for the patient (and the analyst) it becomes fundamental, from a psychotherapeutic point of view, to go through these “real” experiences together, where the word is inextricably connected with images, gestures and affects and able to open new perspectives of revision of the “real”. Only in this way, with Bion, can the session evolve. Only in this way is the analyst, with Jung, making use of the alchemic *vera imaginatio*. (22) How many times have we instead found ourselves with patients used to receiving words shifted, one-way, onto the conventional and conceptual, words that we could define as explanatory, effective, functional, “revealing” but, precisely “not effective and not inclusive”, in the sense of producing that experience, of awakening and wonder that Wittgenstein still evoked as the aim of philosophy.

Notes

1. (Wittgenstein, 1914, pp. 72 -74).
2. That Bion's patients watched television, Jung's patients barely had the telephone, who is writing the computer and how much all this reverberates in the language used, from reflection, in thought, and finally in the way of meeting the experience, it is something that is not often considered despite M. Foucault (Foucault, 1966) has warned us about the idea, of common sense, according to which a man can "experience", "observe", "think" as if he were doing it in a vacuum, regardless of his social and cultural determination that dictates the implicit rules of "discursive practices" (to be carefully distinguished from expressive practices). Coming out of this position that would like man to be skilled to "make good use" of *his* tools, I feel closer to the position that considers how precisely those specific tools shape man's way of experiencing and thinking, not only his way of communicating. That our form of thought, educated from the use of computers, is different from that of those who barely wrote letters on paper I believe cannot be questioned, for further information: (Sini, 2009); (Tagliapietra, 2017).
3. I believe that this question is easily found in the writings of both. As examples, I believe emblematic, we can think of the pages dedicated from Jung to the question of the Shadow, culminating in the Answer to Job, (Jung, 1952) and to Bion's interest in the question of "truth" and of the lie (Bion, 1970).
4. «The reality is unequivocal», Bion begins precisely in introducing his most affirmed, accepted and known work (Bion, 1962a, p.7) "for this reason the analyst and the analysand can easily indulge in withdrawing from experience" (Ibidem), refusing to accept the painful frustration of being able to stay only in *continuous misunderstandings* (the sign references, indeed, which refer to a reality that can never be fully grasped, once and for all from any discourse).
5. Deepening this issue could usefully be the subject of another article. It must certainly be said that Jung, at times, also uses ways of thinking, based on topical or hierarchical models of the psyche, but the relationship between opposites remains his privileged device. I take the liberty of postponing my article: (Manciocchi, 2015) and I plan to say something more about it later.
6. The exchange, between what works (as abstraction) and what "is", removes that fundamental interlocution of the discourse that institutes the whole Western enterprise: the word "how" (Whitehead, 1925).
7. Here I quote only: "K, to which the analyst is restricted" (Bion, 1962, p. 338). Where with the letter "K" Bion means "Knowledge".
8. Here, however, we must pay attention to this conjunction in order not to mistake Jung for a theorist of the relationship. The relationship for the Swiss psychologist is the way in which a certain activity is made manifest and becomes nameable: the term

that Jung has used since 1912 is: “Symbols of Transformation” (Jung, 1912-52); activity that precedes the relationship itself and is manifested through elements that hold together images, affects and bodily sensations: *autonomous complex* which may or may not enter, to varying degrees, in relation (with each other and with Ego's complex). On this point, the merit of having consistently followed him (with due differences) in this path should be recognized above all to J. Hillman. See for example: (Hillman, 1975); for further information on the theory of the *autonomous complex*, I refer to this paper from Amedeo Ruberto (Ruberto, 1997).

9. Starting from 1970 Bion moves more and more towards the attempt to specify a language (understood in a broad sense) that can enhance not only the revealing function of the word but the transformative one. We could say that the word must not only “work” but must be in a certain way ethically “true”. Here the term “growth” as well as “catastrophe” become central elements of the therapeutic process and an idea of psychotherapy is increasingly present where knowledge, ethics, and “transformation” are inextricably linked. Of course, the relationship between *truth* and *affectivity* in Bion's work would require a much more deep discussion, certainly it is not within this article reach. Once again I limit myself to reporting a figure, this time referring to psychotherapeutic activity, to justify such a vision: the “*negative capability*”, repeatedly cited from Bion to describe that state of waiting in absence from which abstract thinking can take shape.

10. This discourse implies that *technique* and *human* are two terms that belong together: there is no man before technique. Technique is in a way what allows us to use the term man. I borrow this view from Carlo Sini (Sini, 1996 - 2003); (Sini, 1991).

11. *Logos* is an example of those terms whose semantic reference is hardly exhaustible; we say, perhaps too simplistically, that this term could be equated to “Discourse”: to a certain “enunciative” activity. See for example: (Grassi, 1997). Before continuing, I state that in the now numerous and stimulating works dedicated to the comparison between the ideas of our two authors, I have not found writings aimed at deepening the problem of the relationship between word, abstract thought, concrete thought, image, which also seems to frequent, as a coherent and constant attempt at clarification in their work. From the words of Jung's illiterate blacksmith (Jung, 1912/52, pp. 101 et seq.) who attempted to *speak* of the image of the wind-producing sun phallus, to Bion's patient (Bion, 1970, p. 231) who seemed instead to *talk about* ice creams (icecream) and instead tried to talk about screams of pain (I scream), the references could be multiple.

12. The term “language of effectiveness” (*language of achievement*) originally appeared in a letter from J. Keats to his brother and was later borrowed by Bion to indicate a communication method that was capable of describing and transmitting an experience of a dynamic nature, in progress, proper to the analytic session.

13. Hadot (1995). Vedi anche Detienne (1987).

14. Here, too, there would certainly be a need for closer examination but to resume what was said at the beginning on the relationship between human beings and linguistic practice. I would like to underline the fact that our authors, unlike the phenomenological attitude, take a position that is not limited to knowing - describe, implicitly remaining within the absolute value and the claim of an

“objectifying” word that recalls the anthropological intent of B. Malinowski (1922, p. 18) who in his epic enterprise in the Pacific, quote his words: «grasp the point of view of the observed subjects, in the entirety of their daily relationships, to understand their vision of the world».

The question relates precisely to such a *grasping* (developed from the concept); to how much such a *grasping* does not implicitly constitute a habit (aimed at grasping) and how much such a dress ends up contradicting the very intentions of which it is intended to be the bearer. Concretely speaking, it is imagined that the *epoché* allows to let emerge a place of original transparency that allows an emersion of the essence, a place that waits to be discovered, described and shared in an equal relationship, without prejudices. Such an intent with respect to positivistic positions has an exceptional value. What escapes, however, is the paradoxicality relating to assuming such a habit, implicitly determined from the value attributed to conceptualizing; indeed, what emerges through such a device is in any case a function of a given practice (linguistic game, I think, Wittgenstein would say) subtended to the same device, therefore it cannot claim an absolute value. To resume what has been said: in this position, once again, the negative has no value because it gets out of being consciousness that in "using a certain light" inevitably generates darkness simultaneously; hence the now centuries-old debate on the idea of the “unconscious”. On this point, without making any claims, I still refer to the ideas of C. Sini (Sini, 1992).

15. At this point of his thought Jung has already encountered alchemy. The elaborate and imaginative instructions of the alchemists appear to us today as paradoxes (bordering on the *double bind*), relating to logical structures whose purpose is to block discursive functions - conceptual, discriminative, sequential to produce a stimulation of holistic, “imaginal”, analogical procedures.

16. At the beginning of the last century there was a hurry to give a guise of “medical abnormality” to a series of phenomena that previously ended up in the religious or the hypnotist; psychoanalysis itself contributed to this pathologization by assuming, as a fact, the idea that the neurotic suffered from memories. The suffering of memories indicated a condition of the present in which the repressed images of the past, dissociated from affection, influenced secretly and subtly. In the well-known archaeological metaphor they were therefore unearth, led again to the “true affection”, fighting against the force of Lethe: remembering “cathartic” and above all telling

through the conventionally educated word was favored.

17. Freud here proposes the idea that the actions of the present can be considered as gestures, as attempts to remember “by staging” events that cannot be verbalized because they are not “forgotten”. Hence the idea of the *compulsion to repeat*.

18. Extending to the same cognitive sciences and neuroscience. The current metaphor of neural “Pruning” is indicative in this regard. See for example: (Gessa Kurotschka, Diana, Boninu, 2010).

19. It is well known that today we can easily speak of “linguistic universes” also in psychoanalytic psychotherapy, also thanks to Bion.

20. One of the biggest misunderstandings of our time, writes E. Zolla, "is always considering the "healthy" and "the adapted" equivalent (Zolla, 1980, p.35). Moreover, even an American psychoanalyst like C. Bollas refers to the epochal problem of the “normotic” personality (Bollas, 1987).

21. These are human! Of animals or infants who “dream” knowing they are dreaming or infants who “look at their mother” knowing that she is the mother, we will only be able to speak, until some monkeys or parrots decide to build a narrative of the his first-hand experience.

22. Jung borrows the term again from alchemy. Very hastily we could speak of the attempt to describe, through this figure, a state of particular receptivity loaded with images, for which one makes oneself susceptible to “visionary” experiences; the *imaginatio* indeed entails for the alchemist the possibility of entering a sort of intermediate kingdom, what he calls the kingdom of *subtle bodies*; Jung draws an analogy between this figure and that of the receptivity to the symbol which has the property of always manifesting itself in areas on the border: between the psychic and the organic, between the conscious and the unconscious, between the spiritual and the material, etc. etc. It is only in this *place - not a place* that one gives experience, here the opus (the process of individuation) can find possible fulfillment.

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