

Wilfred's Razor.

A reading of W.R. Bion's *A Memoir of the Future*

By Giovanni Foresti

Abstract

The Author claims that *Memoir of the Future* is a text which develops with aesthetic and narrative methods the conceptual reform that had already out forward in *Experience in groups* and in *Learning from Experience*. The epistemological continuity between the Bionian texts is seen as a realization of the theoretical precautions and the methodological preoccupations which have been peculiar of the nominalism and the British empiricism: the avoidance of speculative excesses and the ontological distance between objects and concepts.

Key words: group dynamics, group thinking, nominalism

Whoever reads the three books that constitute *A Memoir of the Future* (henceforth MoF) undergoes a continuous assault of heterogeneous stimuli and surprises, and struggles to accommodate the resulting commotion of impressions, ideas and reflections within a single, coherent conceptual framework. "It is like being bombarded with chunks of feeble puns, bits of Shakespeare, imitations of James Joyce, vulgarizations of Ezra Pound", writes the Author in chapter 11 of the first book: *The Dream* (Bion, 1991, p. 51); having ironised Bion's passion for paradoxes with the term "phony", the word battery continues apace: "mathematics, religion, mysticism, vision of boyhood, second childhood, and vision of old age" (ibid.).

My contribution to the reading of MoF attempts to order the far-from-soothing chaos raised by the text, and consists in three key interpretative couplets: 1) psychoanalytical wars and non-psychoanalytical wars; 2) defining hypotheses and epistemological precautions; 3) group dynamics and group thinking.

1. Together with Klein, Sullivan, Bowlby, Winnicott and others, Wilfred Bion belongs to the pioneering group that enabled the "relational" turn in psychoanalytical thinking (Aron, 1996; Civitarese, 2011; Cooper, 2005; Ferro et al., 2013). Bion's contribution can be seen as an attempt to rid psychoanalysis of the excessive internal conflicts that marked the first decades of its existence. The "external" wars apart (i.e., the two World Wars that absorbed the first half of the brief century: Hobsbawn, 1994), we should remember the importance of the great "internal" war that took place in the analytical movement: a conflict that lasted decades and seriously challenged the political unity and conceptual coherence of psychoanalysis (Ferro, 2010; Hinshelwood, 1997; King & Steiner, 1991). Bearing this challenge in mind, I propose that the last words of Bion's book serve as a pacifist rebuke: "Wisdom or oblivion – take your choice. From that warfare there is no release" (ivi, p. 576).

2. The most innovative theoretical and methodological solutions are the products of a single Author's personal abilities, but these products also derive from the philosophical and scientific tradition to which the author belongs. In Bion's case, I assume that his "quest" was strongly influenced by English empiricism, and particularly by nominalism and associated developments (Noel-Smith, 2013; Sandler, 2005). With these premises, I propose that Bion contributed to psychoanalytical theory by alloying it with Ockham's razor and its epistemological principles. Like the English Franciscan Friar (upon whom Umberto Eco based the central character, William of Baskerville, in *The Name of the Rose*), Bion sought to defend the theoretical categories of psychoanalysis from vain, speculative and contradictory proliferation. "*Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*", the nominalists prescribed: the categories of thought – in other words, the *entia* of theory – should not be multiplied beyond need. To this end, detailed epistemological inspection would periodically and usefully prune the categories in question of conceptual excesses. If theory, like an untrimmed beard, is granted unchecked expansion, the analyst may well lose sight of the distinction between conceptions and experience, between defining hypotheses and clinical facts. As Bion states in the Pro-Logue of MoF, the thus-blinded analyst will "remain blind to the thing described" (Bion, 1991, p. 5). To Bion's numerous affirmations in this respect, we should add the continuous expressions of doubt and the methodical quest for the most obscure and elusive features of every issue: "Ultimately your unbelief rescued you from *that* quagmire – sunk without a trace in your own exudate of complacency", Bion writes in the first part of *The Dawn of Oblivion* (Bion, 1991, p. 451).
3. Finally, of all the compound activities that Bion undertook, his work with groups constitutes the most original experience in his *curriculum*, and contributed most decisively to the development of his thought. Bion's research on *group thinking* dates back to the first part of his professional life, when he worked in a non-orthodox psychoanalytical institution, the Tavistock Institute, and served in the British military institutions (Bion Talamo, 1985; Bleandonu, 1990; Foresti & Rossi Monti, 2010). Thanks to these experiences, Bion began to elaborate a conception of psychic life that implicated "the idea of the individual being a 'group'—like Hobbes' idea of the group being an individual" (ivi, p. 215). I believe that the multi-subject and polyphonic voice with which MoF originates derives from these early experiences, which remained ever vivid in Bion's mind. The ironically optimistic aspiration that drove Bion to write MoF influenced the choice of the symbolic container within which to elaborate his thought, an aspiration that is clearly evident in passages such as the following: "I think that it might some day be possible for them all to be awake and carry on a fairly disciplined debate" (ivi, p. 443).

The Battle of Hastings and Norman domination

Funzione Gamma, rivista telematica scientifica dell'Università "Sapienza" di Roma, registrata presso il Tribunale Civile di Roma (n. 426 del 28/10/2004)– www.funzionegamma.it

The beginning of the first volume of MoF evokes a catastrophic change of the sort found in Orwell's descriptions of nightmare revolutions. The initial protagonists of the story – Alice and her husband Roland, the landowners; the maid Rosemary and the labourer Tom, the servants – are buffeted by dramatic events that change their lives forever. On the horizon of the small world they have long inhabited, the perennial English nightmare unfurls: a lost war, and invaders who submit the country to capillary military occupation (we should recall that “occupation” corresponds to the word *Besetzung*, which Freud chose to describe the work of the libido and that was translated into Italian as ‘investimento’ and into English as ‘cathexis’).

In Bion's story, as in First World War Russia, military defeat unleashes social conflict, triggers the overturning of the family structure and brings about the hierarchical reorganization of the farm in which the story takes place. Within this topsy-turvy setting, Rosemary rebels virulently against her female employer (“All right, you bloody bitch, I'll make you pay for this. This is not capitalist England now, you know!” *ivi*, p.15). For his part, Roland – who believes he understands everything, Bion notes with irony – furiously and uselessly inveighs against his consort and blames her for the class war in which they find themselves involved: “You fool!” he says to his wife. “God knows what you have done with your tantrums!” (*ivi* p.15).

This turbulent transformation results in a radical change in perspective.

Alice e Roland, who had always considered themselves to be part of the minor nobility who governed their neck of the woods without hindrance “stood naked, incongruous, alien, without a point of reference that made sense” (*ivi*, p. 27). The defeat suffered by their world “was on a scale of defeat so disastrous that it would be necessary to suppose that something analogous to the Norman Conquest had taken place” (*ibidem*).

And here is the paradox whence the book's pregnant *incipit* originates – a paradox that only the overturning of conceptual perspective and a binocular vision of history allow the viewer to perceive.

The defeat of the Saxon King Harold by the Norman Duke William, which took place at Hastings in 1066, did not merely bring catastrophe to the island's nobility. Paradoxically, it also marked the birth of the United Kingdom. Under Norman rule, England would leave the sphere of Scandinavian influence and enter the cultural area of European countries, particularly that of France. The unity and identity of the English nation does not derive from a victory, Bion notes, but from a defeat.

What of interest to psychoanalysis does this observation contain?

Let us think of the problem from the perspective that Bion attributes to Hobbes: the group as an individual. Psychoanalysis is an investigation of the subject's experiences and of the efforts to which the single individual finds himself subjected. It is only by dealing with one's own defeats, and with the foreign domination that ensues, that the subject/object can hope to become the authentic subject of his/her own story and a protagonist of his/her own life.

The opening of MoF focuses the reader's attention on the history of an entire nation by chronicling a few prototypical individuals and by citing similarly few exemplifying narratives. Buried by the tedium of an excessively quiet life, Alice and Roland are described as lacking a real psychic life and as almost dead (1).

Defeat and foreign domination informs them of the hardships of history and of the complexity of the world. The cards of the social game are reshuffled, and, surprisingly, Alice and Roland's lives recommence.

The book that opens MoF presents itself as the Bayeux Tapestry (2) or as the *Domesday Book* demanded by the victor of the Battle of Hastings. The first of these "texts" (an embroidered cloth that is 70 metres long and almost 2 metres wide) depicts the defeat of Harold Godwinson: "*hic Harold Rex interfectus est*". The second is a catalogue of the property lost by the Anglo-Saxons, or rather an inventory of the goods and the people acquired by the Normans as a result of their victory (3).

To elaborate a period of mourning, i.e., to initiate that strange oblivion *sui generis* that heals psychic pain and enables the recommencement of life, it is important to specify who and what has been lost, and to distinguish loss from what remains alive and capable of forming a relationship. Psychoanalytic wars are marked by the acquisition of metaphorical territories and the more or less partial loss of imaginary sovereignty. The disputed loot consists in the theoretical inheritance of traditions that oppose each other.

Bion is attentive to the conceptual consequences of the struggle between victors and vanquished, and considers this dialectic to be a vital part of cultural comparison and conceptual research. The textual tract that most clearly illustrates the methodological consequences of the historical, theoretical and clinical events of the analytical movement appears, in my opinion, in the third paragraph of the thirteenth chapter of *Learning from Experience* – one of the most explicitly nominalist extracts in Bion's entire *opus*.

"As a method of making something clear to himself the analyst needs his own book of psycho-analytic theories that he personally frequently uses together with page and paragraph numbers that make their identification certain" (Bion 1962, p. 39)

In psychoanalytic theory, clinical dialogue and theoretical discussion are the battle field in which the truly necessary conceptions survive and emerge ("*pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate*"). The analyst should not avail of theories by enthusiastically assisting their spontaneous dissemination. Rather, he/she should appraise them as a legacy of as yet provisional hypotheses: incomplete/unstable constructs to be treated with caution and to be kept in coherent order, so as to permit constructive reassessment.

The exercise of doubt

Let us invert the perspective and think of the individual as a group.

Psychoanalysis is an activity that allows the subject to understand him/herself. However, even the knowledge of someone who studies his/her psychic life intimately will be partial, provisional and not infrequently far from the mark. “I can say that I know who I was when I was at school – we read at the end of the 28th chapter of the first volume – but that is very different from who I was; that I shall never know” (ivi. pg. 130). And, further on, the text returns to this theme even more explicitly: “*even when I am concerned with my own thoughts I am ignorant though I am the person whom I have a chance of knowing better than anyone. [...] even if I know myself better than anyone I shall ever meet, the sum of that knowledge amounts to little*” (ivi., pg. 198).

Thus, even the single subject is a group that experiences considerable difficulty in communicating with its own internal domain because his internal heterogeneity is both synchronic (because numerous processes occur simultaneously at numerous levels within the apparatus that thinks thoughts) and diachronic (involution and, contrastingly, psychic development, transform the structure of the mind by creating relationships that are anything but obvious between past, present and future).

The result of the continuous reshuffling of psychic life is that personal identity is only constructed at the cost of a certain closure to experience and as a result of a fatal excess of theorisation. “*They don't really hate each other* – says the psychoanalyst of *The Dawn of Oblivion* as he comments on the disagreement between the characters who animate the second chapter of the third book of MoF (ivi, p. 438) – they all hate learning – it makes them develop – swell up”

The consequence of addiction to previously established convictions is that the analytic community continuously runs the risk of becoming a “*mutual admiration society*” (ivi. 195). Even if inevitable, recourse to theory (“*Theorising is, I admit, a part of practising psychoanalysis*”: ivi. pg. 201), is dangerous and can prove disconcerting. “*The outcome in psychoanalysts as I have observed them, is bigotry, dogmatism and certitude*” (ivi, pg 198).

On this theme, the Author of MoF sets out his position as early as the pages of the Pro-Logue.

The original problem to which the Author submits the entire question of the value of psychoanalytic theory, and the latter's effect on clinical research, continuously re-emerges as the book's dominant theoretical *leitmotiv*. The defining hypotheses that are implicit in the theoretic models should be taken very seriously “*by those who wish to confront what they believe to be the 'facts', as near to noumena as the human animal is likely to get*” (ivi. 4). This latter is however a *Grenzbegriff*, as postulated by Kant: an extreme concept that indicates something that is never directly cognisable and experience of which is only possible through the effects produced by its asymptotic existence and by its continuous transformations.

“*The psychoanalytic approach* – says Roland’s friend, Robin (ivi. pg. 71) –, though valuable in having extended the conscious by the unconscious, has been vitiated by the failure to understand the practical application of doubt”. The sentence continues with an example of the perspective within which Bion interprets the effects of theoretic abuse: psychoanalysis is damaged, he writes, “*by the failure to understand the function of ‘breast’, ‘mouth’, ‘penis’, ‘vagina’, ‘container’, ‘contained’ as analogies*” (ibid.).

Only doubt preserves the possibility that the thing symbolised is kept distant from the representation that is constructed on the basis of experience. Without the necessary defeat of the signifier – always and exclusively an indirect reflection of the referent (witness the perpetual Hastings of the thinker/researcher) – it is difficult to avoid the risk of becoming what in the second volume of MoF Bion defines, icastically, as “*His Satanic Jargonieur*” (ivi, p. 302).

The doubt that MoF eulogises and actualises is solidly based on the group dimension of dialogue between people who differ radically from each other, notwithstanding their co-presence within a single subject.

Aesthetic enquiry and thoughts without thinkers

Bion’s keen interest in the symbiosis between clinical research and literary practice dates back to the period that preceded the Second World War (Anzieu, 2001; Torres & Hinshelwood, 2013). In the 1930s, Bion had treated an Irish writer who was able, upon completion of therapy and departure for France, to separate himself from the objects that obstructed his thought (principally his mother, as the biographers argue) and to conclude the drafting of his first novel. The writer was Samuel Beckett and the novel was *Murphy* (Beckett, 1963)

In the first pages of *Murphy* we find the description of a character in whom we cannot but see some of the specific traits of the Author of MoF. Murphy describes the symptomatology from which he suffers, and defines it by way of antithesis with his (4). His heart was “*such an irrational heart –Beckett writes – that no physiciuan could get to the root of it*” (ibid.). “*Inspected, palpated, auscultated, percussed, radiographed and cardiographed, it was all that an heart should be. Buttoned up and left to perform, it was like Petrouchka in his box*” (ibid.).

Murphy’s teacher/therapist Neary, and more specifically the latter’s interpretative technique, drew the patient’s undiluted causticism. The language Neary used was obscure jargon. The therapist’s aim was that “*to invest his own with a little of what Neary, at that time a Pythagorean, called the Apnomia*” (ibid.). Not satisfied with this linguistic extravagance, Neary insists on using other useless obscurities. “*When he got tired of calling it the Apnomia he called it Isonomy. When he got sick of the sound od Isonomy he called it the Attunement.*” (ibid.).

It is no wonder that the therapy in question, built as it was on such unstable bases, was not described as a success by the story’s author (“*But he might call it what he*

liked, into Murphy's heart it would not enter. Neary could not blend the opposites in Murphy's heart": ibid.). The conclusion of this extract – and even more its enigmatic launch – are however paradoxical. True, the therapy is halted, but some of its clinical effects are far from banal.

*"Their farewell was memorable. Neary came out of one of his dead sleeps and said:
- Murphy, all life is figure and ground.
- But a wandering to find home – said Murphy"* (ibid.).

Once the unease of separation has passed, Beckett is able to write the brief and extremely pregnant sentence that follows:

"And life in his mind gave him pleasure, such pleasure that pleasure was not the word." (ivi. pg. 4).

And here we are right in the middle of Bion's thought!

Beckett appears to have learned a lot about psychoanalysis as he worked with this psychoanalyst who had not yet become a psychoanalyst. But perhaps we should ask who learned from whom? Is it Beckett who taught Bion to express himself clearly? Or is it Bion who with Beckett developed the central themes of his research, namely, the investigation of the means by which we predispose, organise and exercise thought?

Whatever the answer (Didier Anzieu investigated this issue at length and we know that his results were not unequivocal), it is a fact that this was one of the principle motifs behind the writing of MoF.

"His Satanic Jargonieur took offence; on some pretence that psycho-analysis jargon was being eroded by eruptions of clarity. I was compelled to seek asylum in fiction. Disguised as fiction, the truth occasionally slipped through" (ivi, p. 302).

This extract could be read as a response to the page in which Beckett spoke of his therapist. Its self-descriptiveness is analogous to that of the subjects who, in *The Dawn of Oblivion*, voice the complexity of the subject by returning to eras that preceded his pre- and post-natal life. The words that correlate most significantly with the Beckett-Bion theme currently under discussion, is central to the final pages of MoF.

"P.A. A danger lies in the belief that psycho-analysis is a novel approach to a newly discovered danger. If psycho-analysts had an overall view of the history of the human history, they would appreciate the length of that history of murder, failure, envy and deceit" (ivi, p. 571).

To conceive the unconscious as a "newly discovered *danger*" and to imagine psychoanalysis as a "*novel approach*", is to mislead and to fuel isolation, endogamic

stagnation and unhealthy pride. The therapy that Bion proposes for this *discipline of "unpleasant warmth [...] and arid abstractions"* (ivi, p. 470), is a very generous dose of doubt-and-modesty combined with a mighty re-activation of surprise-and-inquiry abilities.

To view human spirit in its entirety, it is necessary to avoid parochial closure and to actively combat intellectual conceit. *"If the analyst observes functions"* (notice the mathematical term that Bion uses as far back as 1962 to rethink the functioning of thought: the psychoanalytical function of the mind) *"and deduces the related functions from them, the gap between theory and observation can be bridged without the elaboration of new and possibly misguided theories"* (Bion 1962, p. 2).

The idea is that psychoanalysis is merely a stripe on the tiger's fur, and that the task of psychoanalysis is that of rethinking thoughts that others had previously intuited and thought. This idea is at the origin of the thesis – entirely counter-intuitive and yet extremely convincing – whereby psychoanalytic thoughts were formulated before psychoanalysis existed, both in humanity as a whole and in the single subject: protops psychoanalytic thoughts in search of a thinker who can think them over again.

As if to deny the idea of perennial and incomprehensible obscurity, *The Dream* yields a dialogue that illustrates this point – that is, the spontaneous emergence of psychoanalytic thought in the writings of numerous literary and philosophical writers – with ironic clarity.

“MAN [...] Sometimes you have to my knowledge claimed that certain well known figures of the past, not only of the recent past as Sigmund Freud himself, were gifted with a profound capacity for understanding their fellow men?”

BION Certainly. We can gauge their actions and behaviour from what has been recorded of or by them, and allowing myself anachronistic – like poetic – license. I would call them very considerable psychoanalysts before anyone had heard of such a term.

MAN Is this not an instance of claiminig that there is such a ‘thing’ as psychoanalysis, that there always has been such a thing as psychoanalysis, whether it could be verbalized or not?

BION I would say that it is an example of a thought which, before Freud existed to think it, was ‘without a thinker’.

MAN I am not really clear why you postulate a thought without a thinker. It seems an unnecessary complication.

BION *'Doubt' is always regarded as an unnecessary complication. That is clear whenever an individual asserts certainty.*

MAN *You used the word 'certainly' just now.*

BION *Touché. I agree.*

UOMO *But you reply in the language of a game of combat?"* (Bion 1991, p. 168-169)

Wilfred's razor and the asymptotic O: a paradox

The community of Bion observers has generated numerous questions that have greatly helped me to conclude the reasoning that I here attempt to develop (Aguayo, 2013). Given this essay's aims, I shall now reduce the issues I have raised to the following and essential three themes. Firstly, does the latest phase of research on Bion amount to a turn that unveils a completely new theoretical horizon, or does it merely represent an extension of the previous phase? Does the *aesthetic turn* whose most substantial product is MoF (Matt ffytche, 2013) constitute a new cycle in Bion-oriented conceptualisation, or is this a question of prosecuting what is known as the "epistemological" phase of his thought (Bléandonu, 2000)? And, of particular importance: what relationship is there between, on the one hand, the proposal of condensing the connections between thinkers and between subjects into three diverse typologies (L, H e K) and, on the other hand, the hypothesis that psychic experience is the effect of transformation into O?

According to Hinshelwood, there is an evident rupture between the three consonants of *Learning from Experience* (Bion, 1962), symbols for connections of hatred, love and awareness, and the vowel that, from *Attention and Interpretation* (Bion, 1970) onwards, sends the reader back to an "unarrivable" thing-in-itself. In addition to the group phase, the research on schizophrenic thought and the so-called epistemological phase, Bion's work demands recognition of a further theoretical stage that begins with an essay written at the end of the 1960s (Bion, 1970) and proceeds to various additional publications in the following years (Hinshelwood & Torres, 2013).

The key concept of this last cycle is "intuition"; assessment of said concept's *quid* should bear in mind the differentiation, established by Bion's research in the 1960s, between empirical sciences and psychoanalysis (5). Even on this basis, it is difficult – "*it is a moot point*" Hinshelwood & Torres observe (ivi p. 186) – to establish whether the word *intuition* is truly the best suited to (i) defining the given methodological model and (ii) evaluating the degree to which this notion differentiates itself from, for example, Winnicott's notion of *intention* as a recognisable element from the point of view of diverse subjects.

Within the context of the foregoing questions, I am convinced by the thesis that Bion's continuous research activities yield grand and radical conceptual novelties, but I also believe that said novelties are balanced by certain methodological constants that derive from Bion's cultural identity, from his theoretical *domus* and from his institutional education.

The paradox that MoF obliges us to consider is the result of a permanently unstable dialectic tension that in turn creates a virtuous cycle between order and disorder, between complexity and simplicity. The constant attempt to lighten theory – Bion's epistemological objective in the 1960s (H, L, K) – is pursued in the given texts by way of negation, i.e., by illustrating the labyrinthine complexity of psychic life.

To distinguish between truly necessary concepts from those that end up as mere jargon (6), we have to compare our theorising with the enigmatic reality of experience. This latter is however obscured by the habit, long since established in the history of our species, of recourse to “sequential thinking” – a way of exercising reason that lays out “what it purports to describe” (ivi, p. 85) in excessively linear series. We have difficulty recognising the invariants of psychic life not because our argumentation proceeds in clarity→confusion sequences, as we tend ingenuously to suppose, but rather because the excess of constructions based on confusion→clarity sequences prevents us from seeing the reality of psychic life (ivi p. 89). The strategy of MoF is to overturn the flow, multiply the sources and mix up the currents.

More than theorising on the reality of O, Bion's text constrains the reader to experientially digest the continuous dialogic exchange that in turn begets the thought of minds that are inclined to meet. The internal world of subjects is organised by the eternal “laws of O—the perfect blanc”, Bion observes with irony (ivi, p. 277). The concept of ultimate reality is here expressed by two words, one French and the other English: ‘blanc’ as in white, and ‘blank’ as in empty. We thus have on the one hand the disquieting white of dizzying movements of the colours of the mind. On the other hand there is the empty space – the blank between the lines of the text, for example – which acts as an attractor, like an unconscious organiser of the group's thinking: the negative blanc/blank around which the swirling spiral of thoughts gyrate.

In Bion's view, the razor that resolves the essential from the superfluous remains ever the distinction between K and –K, which is explicitly described in the last page of *Learning from Experience*: “in K the group increases by the introduction of new idea or people; contrastingly, “in –K the new idea (or person) is stripped of its value, and the group in turn feels devalued by the new idea” (Bion, 1962, p. 99). And cautious of the epistemological specificity of ideas, Bion writes: “The relationship of K to – K can be epitomized by saying that in K particularization and concretization of the abstract and general is possible, but in – K it is not because the abstract and the general, in so far as they exist, are felt to become things-in-themselves” (ibid.).

Transformations into O are that towards which the subject's interest tends when he/she is able to experience thoughts as if they were analogies and metaphors, and not thing-in-themselves. What distinguishes thought from idle chat and from jargon is the conceptual vitality instanced by a container/content when it becomes a factor of the thought of a group.

Conclusions

Having reached the end of this task, and desirous of compressing the characteristics of the bionian razor into a sprinkling of syllables, I shall avail of a concise formulation devised by Umberto Eco and described by the cultural page of daily newspaper in the 1970s.

Without ever having read a single line of MoF (not least because at the time the book had not been published), the Italian semiologist was able to express the principle upon which these books are based: *One has to learn to confound ideas in order to have clear ideas*. The curious coincidence – another instance of thoughts looking for a thinker – probably depends on the fact that Eco, who was known to have little time for psychoanalysis, had read the work of William of Ockham, and was well versed in medieval philosophy and English nominalism (Eco, 1970, 1987).

As I have done throughout the article, I shall conclude with a few extracts from MoF that seem to me to be coherent with what I have attempted to argue. *“We follow the lead given to our shepherds”* – Roland says, parodying an attitude of supine devotion. *“You need not to be sheep”* – replies P.A. in all seriousness. *“We do not aspire to be leaders or shepherds; we hope to introduce the person to his real self. Although we do not claim to be successful, the experience shows how powerful is the urge of the individual to be led—to believe in some god or shepherd”* (ibid.). The reasoning – such reasoning that reasoning was not the word – concludes as follows: *“I should not like to replace one dogma by another; the erection of any god should be studied”* (ivi, p. 267).

Bibliography

- Aguayo, J. (2013). Foreword, in: Torres N. & Hinshelwood R.D. (Eds) (2013) *Bion's Sources. The shaping of his paradigm*. London: Routledge.
- Anzieu, D. (1998). *Beckett*. Genova: Casa Editrice Marietti, 2001.
- Aron, L. (1996) *Menti che si incontrano*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Beckett, S. (1963). *Murphy*. Torino: Einaudi, 2003.
- Bion Talamo, P. (2011) *Mappe per l'esplorazione psicoanalitica*. Roma: Borla.
- Bion, W. (1962). *Learning from experience*. Tr. it. *Apprendere dall'esperienza*. Roma: Armando.
- Bion, W. (1970). *Attention and Interpretation*. Tr.it. *Attenzione e interpretazione*. Roma: Armando.
- Bion, W. (1975). *A Memoir of the Future*. Tr.it. *Memoria del Futuro. Il sogno*.

- Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 1993.
- Bion, W. (1977). *A Memoir of the Future*. Tr.it. *Memoria del Futuro. Presentare il passato*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 1998.
- Bion, W. (1979). *A Memoir of the Future*. Tr.it. *Memoria del Futuro. L'alba dell'oblio*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2007.
- Bléandonu G. (1990) *Wilfred Bion*. Roma: Borla.
- Civitarese, G. (2011) *La violenza delle emozioni. Bion e la psicoanalisi postbioniana*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Cooper, A. (2005). *The Quiet Revolution in American Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge.
- Eco, U. (1970). *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino*, Milano: Bompiani.
- Eco, U. (1987). *Arte e bellezza nell'estetica medievale*, Milano: Bompiani.
- Ferro, A. (2010). *Tormenti d'anime. Passioni, sintomi, sogni*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Ferro, A. (a cura di) (2013). *Psicoanalisi oggi*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- Foresti, G., Rossi Monti, M. (2010). *Esercizi di visioning. Psicoanalisi, psichiatria, istituzioni*. Roma: Borla.
- Hinshelwood, (1997). The Elusive Concept Of 'Internal Objects' (1934-1943) Its Role In The Formation Of The Klein Group. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 78:877-897.
- Hinshelwood, R. D. & Torres N. (2013) Conclusion. Bion's nomadic journey, in: Torres, N. & Hinshelwood, R.D. (Eds) (2013) *Bion's Sources. The shaping of his paradigm*. London: Routledge.
- Hobsbawn, E. (1994). *Il Secolo breve*. Milano: Rizzoli.
- Karnac, H. (2008) Introduction, in: Karnac H. (ed.) *Bion's Legacy. Bibliografy of Primary and Secondary Sources of the Life, Work and Ideas of Wilfred Ruprecht Bion*. London: Karnac.
- King, P. & Steiner, R. (1992). *The Freud-Klein Controversies 1941-1945*. London: Routledge.
- Matt, ffyche (2013). Investigating Bion's aesthetic turn. A Memoir of Future and the 1970s. in: Torres N. & Hinshelwood R.D. (Eds) (2013) *Bion's Sources. The shaping of his paradigm*. London: Routledge.
- Noel-Smith, K. (2013). Thoughts, thinking and the thinker. Bion's philosophical encounter with Kant, in: Torres N. & Hinshelwood R.D. (Eds) (2013) *Bion's Sources. The shaping of his paradigm*. London: Routledge.
- Sandler, P. C. (2005). *The language of Bion*. London: Karnac.
- Torres, N. & Hinshelwood, R.D. (2013). *Bion's Sources. The shaping of his paradigm*. London: Routledge.

Notes

1 "Falstaff, a known artifact, is more 'real' in Shakespeare's verbal formulation than the countless millions of people who are dim, invisible, lifeless, unreal, whose births, deaths—alas even marriages—we are called upon to believe in" (ivi, p. 4).

2 Created by Queen Matilda of Flanders (William “the Conqueror’s” wife) upon commission by the victor’s half-brother, Bishop Odo, the tapestry depicts the antecedents, the developments and the bloodiest phases of the battle between the Normans and the Anglo-Saxons. The end of the pictorial story is marked by the Latin epigraph “*ET FUGA VERTENTUR ANGLI*”: and the Anglo-Saxons were put to flight.

3 “*Are you Mr and Mrs Trubshaw? Who’s this? You Miss Slocombe, the maid? Have you seen...’*, he consulted his paper... ‘*Mr Jeremy? He’s the man isn’t he? It’s nothing to do with us, but contact the liquidation people; they may have made a mistake.’* ‘*But do you mean*, said Alice flushing angrily, ‘*you take these things away?’* ‘*That is all we have to do.’* ‘*Do you give us a receipt?’* The man seemed almost shocked. ‘*Whatever for?’* As soon as it’s all been checked and found correct they will give us a receipt’ (ivi, pg. 17).

4 “*Murphy had lately studied* – we read on the second page of the story (Beckett 1963, pg. 4) – under a man in Cork called Neary. This man, at that time, could stop his heart more or less whenever he liked and keep it stopped, within reasonable limits, for as long as he liked. This rare faculty, acquired after years of application somewhere north of the Nerbudda, he exercised frugally, reserving it for situations irksome beyond any endurance, as when he wanted a drink and could not get one, or fell among Gaels and could not escape, or felt the pangs of hopeless sexual inclinations”.

5 The former base their experience on sensorial data, while experience in the latter discipline originates from the encounter between minds (O) and accordingly cannot be seized by the senses, but merely intuited by means of thought.

6 “*Jargon passes for psycho-analysis, as sound is substituted for music, verbal facility for literature and poetry, trompe d’oeil representation for painting*” (Bion, 1991, p. 307). To go beyond jargon and escape from that which has substituted experience of the internal world, it is necessary to rediscover the complexity of psychic life and to attempt to improve and deepen the perception of what is one’s own continuous and elusive psychic material.

Giovanni Foresti is full member of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society (SPI); secretary of the Milan Centre of Psychoanalysis “Cesare Musatti”, affiliated to the IL NODO group, Turin, and OPUS, London

Email: battista.foresti@gmail.com

Translated from Italian by William Cooke