

The Grid and the truth drive

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As the thing, as the other, the true dawns through an emotional and almost carnal experience, where the «ideas» – the other's and our own – are rather traits of his physiognomy and of our own, are less understood than welcomed or spurned in love or hatred.

MERLEAU-PONTY M., *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964, 12)

Chatting about this and that to a friend, I let slip that I am thinking of writing something about Bion's Grid. All of a sudden, an expression somewhere between dismay and wry amusement appears on his face. Then he immediately associates *Grid* to the Italian word *grida* (yells). *Who* is yelling? What does this image express? Indeed, why is it that even among Bion scholars and his readers, the Grid is so infamous? Why is it seen as the pinnacle of Bion's frustrating tendency to indulge in abstract speculation? What actually is Bion's Grid, the «notorious» Grid? A cross for his readers to bear? An ingenious invention? A harmless leisure occupation for the analyst? His Rubik cube? And then, is it more like a periodic table of the elements, a Cartesian coordinate system, a naval battle game, a chessboard or a military map? Lastly, what is the meaning of the «mysterious» column 2? Is it the column of lies or of dreams? Again, what can it tell us about the «truth drive», which Grotstein identifies as the key principle of Bion's entire oeuvre?

In this paper I shall attempt to answer these questions on the basis of the fascination and slight sense of annoyance that this instrument has always aroused in myself as well as others. In the first part, I shall examine the construction of the Grid. Allowing my imagination to roam freely, I shall tentatively offer a dynamic, in-relief representation of it. Precisely because it illustrates with such immediacy the compact dialectic that links the various concepts used by Bion, the Grid lends itself to the generation of new interpretative hypotheses. In the second part of my text, I shall consider the meaning of column 2. My basic thesis is that, given its felicitous reinterpretation by Grotstein as the dreaming column, it can throw light on a central aspect of Bion's theory of thought – namely, the concepts of truth and the «truth drive». For I believe that the Grid offers a fascinating perspective on the connections between dreams, knowledge and truth.

A degree of ambivalence towards the Grid is widespread. One is surprised at how casually it is sometimes dismissed or looked at askance, considering that Bion placed it at the centre of as many as two of his splendid books, *Elements of Psycho-Analysis* (1963) and *Transformations* (1965); that he devoted not inconsiderable space to it at the beginning of *Attention and Interpretation* (1970); and that he used it for the title of two other short but incisive essays. The first, «The Grid», dates from 1963, even if it was not published until some years later, in 1997 (Bion, 1997). By a trick of fate in view of the reserve with which it was received in many quarters, it was written with the aim of creating a «lingua franca» to help resolve the controversy between the London Kleinians and Freudians (Grotstein, 2002, 2007; Charles, 2002). The effort deployed in abstracting common elements from the key concepts of the most accredited psychoanalytic theories was intended to allow analysts of different schools to engage in a debate without allowing themselves to be overwhelmed by passion.

After all, Bion had no intention of constructing an *n*th theory, interested as he was in the theory of observation in psychoanalysis, but aspired instead to produce a meta-theory. He wanted to map out a common conceptual terrain. The only path that seemed to him to be negotiable, as with Propp in his study of the morphology of the folk tale, was to define the elements, objects and functions considered in various senses in the principal existing models. The second paper, on the other hand, dates from 1971, and was published in Brazil only in 1977 (Bion, 1977).

However, let us now consider the construction of the Grid. For reasons of space, I shall assume basic familiarity with the fundamentals of Bion's thought.

THE GRID

The Grid is composed of intersecting vertical and horizontal lines that make up a number of squares, as in a crossword puzzle. We thus have eight rows and seven columns, giving a total of fifty-six boxes (or «containers» – Grotstein, 2007, 243). The horizontal rows are identified on the left, from top to bottom, by the letters A to H. Each letter relates to a key concept in Bion's theory of the mind; in order, these are β -elements (A), α -elements (B), dream thoughts, dreams and myths (C), pre-conception (D), conception (E), concept (F), scientific deductive system (G) and algebraic calculus (H). The seven vertical columns, on the other hand, bear numerals, to which the following categories correspond: definitory hypotheses (1), ψ (2), notation (3), attention (4), inquiry (in the first 1997 version – that of the paper presented in 1963 – this column was called Oedipus) (5), action (6), ... *n*. Each box (or «drawer», if imagined in three dimensions) is thus identified by a capital letter and a numeral whenever a row intersects with a column.

The vertical axis expresses growing levels of complexity of thought, from the most concrete to the most abstract, and thus sums up within itself the phylogenesis

and ontogenesis of the subject. In other words, by virtue of the work of removal of sensory and concrete elements and of abstraction (from Latin *abs-* «away» and *tra-herere* «to draw» – Webster, 1961, 8) from the β -elements performed by the mysterious α -function, a transition takes place from matter to α -elements – that is, visual, auditory, acoustic, tactile and olfactory images or pictograms – then to dream thoughts and hence to concepts and numerals. This is a painstaking labour of subtraction of the differences between interdependent or contiguous terms, together with transference of other elements – the base level in my opinion being contact (in terms of rhetoric, metonymy, which is perhaps the most elementary psychological mechanism we are able to conceive) – and then analogy or metaphor. The column is therefore the vector of the assimilation or interpretation of sensible data, of digestion of quanta of reality (the thing-in-itself, O, the Divine, the infinite, etc.) that serves for the formation of thought.

Bion's basic idea is that, in order to become food for the mind, to enter into the anti-entropic process of autopoiesis of a living system, ultrasensible or infrasensible reality («O») first needs to be «cooked» – that is to say, rendered personal. I quote Grotstein (2007, 124):

We are O and are terrified of it – thus the need for inward-directed «sunglasses» that allow diminished illumination and disguise. O is the Real. What we believe we experience is a «virtual reality» – a Reality that has become «virtued» («laundered») by the refractions of phantasy, imagination, illusion, and symbolization, leaving us with a «cooked» «Real» (O) suitable for our timid digestion.

The Grid's horizontal axis, on the other hand, specifies the *uses* that can be made of β -elements at various levels of aggregation and complexity, from A1 to F1, or, in other words, of the various «dishes» cooked in column 2. The area of definitory hypotheses is the supermarket where one goes shopping (the interface with O), while the area of column 2 (C2) is the restaurant's kitchen. Sometimes the raw foods we have bought cannot be used – that is to say, the β -elements cannot be mentalized – and are ultimately evacuated in action or the body. They are therefore accommodated in A6. There are some β -elements which C2 is unable to transform. For example, in row 1, the β -elements, «elements like an unpremeditated blow which is related to, but is not, thought» (Bion, 1977, 3), are transformed into action without passing through thought or semantic memory; boxes 4, 5 and 6 are, after all, empty. However, we know from experience and intuition that they can be memorized in the filing systems of implicit memory as sensorimotor schemes, so that, strictly speaking, «pure» β -elements do not exist. Again according to Grotstein (2007, 46), an infant is born as a «semiotic individual» and is already in possession of a rudimentary (hereditary) α -function, along the lines of Chomsky's generative syntax (*ibid.*, 45). Grot-

stein sees β -elements as α -elements produced by this function but rejected by the mind and degraded, *impersonal and unclaimed* residues of experience. That would explain why, with regard to the $\beta \rightarrow \alpha$ transformation, Bion reversed the alphabetical order of the letters.

The categories on the abscissa also express growing levels of sophistication and sum up phylogenesis and ontogenesis – this time, in use. At the most advanced level is action. Action is sometimes seen as the antithesis of thought, but this is not always a correct assumption. What makes the difference is whether the action is filtered through thought (to be found in the lower rows of the Grid) or remains confined within row A: in the latter case, the action would be unreflected or impulsive. It is a thought that constitutes at most a trial action, a pre-conception as compared with action that adaptively modifies the environment (Freud's «specific action»), or an «action» in the internal world whereby pre-existing behavioural schemes are modified on the basis of new experiences.

GRATING

Bion suggested using the Grid to «score» session data and to improve one's ability to observe those data. The idea that the Grid may have any practical use should in fact be immediately dismissed. Were we to try to label the facts of analysis during a session, we should be relinquishing the mental condition of negative capability suggested by Bion himself, the state of naïvety or «Faith» whereby the patient can be seen in each session as if for the first time (Bion, 1992). It would also be more difficult to find an authentic language (a language «of achievement») for communicating intuition and using it in a disciplined way. The risk would be of identifying with the patient on the conscious level only, of understanding him rationally, and of confining one's analysis to the facts of material reality.

Aspiring to compress the complexity of the events of a session into a set of boxes is an enterprise doomed to failure. The vicissitudes of analysis are always overdetermined, multidimensional and ambiguous. They can be grasped only *a posteriori*, and never completely. Analysis necessarily involves a constant postponement of sense. Rather than that of «polysemy», which after all will always include the expectation that the entire range of meanings can be known completely, the concept that most precisely expresses the manner in which sense is constructed in analysis, and in which it constantly «slips away» without ever crystallizing, is Derrida's notion of «dissemination» (1972). This coinage, derived from *sema* and *semen*, introduces a principle of contingency of meaning that imparts a radical dimension to Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit*: any text always generates new readings, even if not all of them are correct, because the context will inevitably be different each time.

Nor can the Grid be used as a tool for mental gymnastics on the part of the analyst *after* a session. Nothing arouses more boredom than papers claiming to schematize the course of a session by forcing the events that punctuated it into the categories of the Grid, which then acts, contradictorily, as a Negative Grid (see below). With regard to this aspect, Bion himself ultimately took a more pessimistic view. He often said that the problem with the Grid was the Grid itself. Furthermore, he held that any report was unfaithful, and would be even more so if a mechanical recording system were used. The fact is that Bion was acutely aware that the experience of analysis could be apprehended only aesthetically¹ (Bion, 1967; Ogden, 2007); I would add that it can be apprehended only in the subjective narration of the analyst, which is not on that account false, because it constitutes a redreaming of the session and hence a conscious *and* unconscious summarization of its *truest* aspects.

The most profitable use to which the Grid can be put, on the other hand, is to understand Bion and to build further on his theory. It could be seen, for instance, as the equivalent of Einstein's famous equation expressing the relationship between energy, mass and the speed of light. In other words, the Grid too constitutes the brilliant synthesis, which is not lacking in aesthetic qualities, of an extremely well constructed theory, the true significance of which quite a few analysts find it difficult to grasp. As Bion himself points out, «The visual image [...] has great power of lateral communication» (Bion, 1977, 23). An overall consideration of the elements of psychoanalysis offered by the Grid reveals implicit and also surprising aspects of his thought – aspects that are less obvious when presented discursively.

If, however, the emphasis were placed on the unsaturated nature of the elements (concepts) contained in it, the Grid would appear to us as analogous to an abstract painting. In contemplating it, we could all discover in it significant figures standing out from a chaotic, indistinct background and could then subject them, as in examination of the record of a Rorschach test, to a process of consensual validation. Again, as with many non-representational paintings where the artist wishes to allow for as wide a range of interpretation as possible, many of Bion's concepts could be given the same label: *No title*.

In accordance with one of its own constitutive elements, the Grid can be regarded as a pre-conception awaiting various possibilities of realization – a theoretical device that is sufficiently «open» and not merely «technological» (Charles, 2002) because it facilitates the birth of new thoughts and insights. Hence Bion's suggestion of expanding some of its parts or of creating differentiated Grids. By virtue of its open structure, the Grid illustrates what Bion means by the concept of Faith. As indicated above, this does not imply any concession to mysticism, but only summarizes the

¹ Cf. Bion, who states (1967, 120) that the presentation of a case history is a story like any other: «If the narrative were a work of art it might be reasonable to regard it as more nearly representative of truth than any literal transcription [...]».

mental attitude of someone who leaves himself time to allow the images from the always open workshop of unconscious thought to emerge. For Bion, Faith is a scientific concept or instrument, like Husserl's *epoché*. It is another name for the patience required of the analyst in waiting for a selected fact (an image, idea or emotion) to present itself and confer order on chaos, as well as for the trust that it will sooner or later present itself. Having Faith during a session means trusting the binocular (conscious/unconscious) vision of the psychoanalytic function of the personality (clearly, I am attempting here to apply this principle to the description and interpretation of the Grid itself).

It would also be interesting to compare the Grid with some of the more famous maps of the psyche drawn by Freud. Rather than compartments of the mind, the Grid represents activities, functions and transmutations. In Freud's diagrams of the first topography, the various contents are defined on the basis of the position they occupy in the compartments *Ucs.*, *Cs.* or *Pcs.*, and transfers from one compartment to another must overcome the barrier of the two psychic censorships. The Grid's system of Cartesian coordinates, on the other hand, does not specify any content so definitively. Everything is more liquid and in motion. Instead of predefined psychic provinces, we see energy flows, as if in a «primitive scheme of electrical switches, wires and so forth» (Bion, 1977, 32); as we know, for Bion psychoanalysis belongs to the field of transformations.

However, the Grid offers only a static representation of these extremely dynamic phenomena. That is why it seems abstruse to Bion's readers. It would be less so if it could actually be seen «working». An animated model of the Grid would be needed to make this a reality. It would then be possible to display the rapid movements of subatomic particles of α -elements from column to column and from row to row and back so as to produce «idea atoms» (Bion, 1992) – perhaps in the form of a fabric of multicoloured lights, now flashing and sparkling, now continuous and about to merge almost imperceptibly into other hues, or, eschewing metaphor, into different degrees of transformation of emotions and thoughts (the contents of the Grid). It is like the headlights of a car that approaches and then disappears into the darkness, the flashing of a lighthouse at the entrance of a harbour, the trails of light of a firework – or Arnold Dreyblatt's installation (1998–99) inspired by the «mystic writing-pad», *The ReCollection Mechanism*, displayed at the IPA Congress in Berlin in 2007.

Bion was aware of the deficiencies of the Grid and he himself suggested an animated model of it. In one of his São Paulo lectures (Bion, 1978) and then in the *Tavistock Seminars* (Bion, 2005, 63), he writes: «If you could turn the Grid edgewise on, then it would become nearer to being a grating; the space between these various categories would get smaller and smaller and smaller». In the same way, we should be flexible enough to vary the vertices of observation and put things together in ways (imaginative conjectures) that may initially seem insufficiently controlled. The word

«grating», as opposed to «Grid», is derived from a verb form and already suggests something more dynamic, as evidenced by Grotstein's (2007, 245) use of it to indicate how the alpha-function acts – «like a *grating* to sort out raw β -elements».

Taken as a whole, the Grid could also be thought of as the «scoring», in terms of a new metapsychology, of the film of psychic activity. Its operation could be seen as analogous to the neuroimaging of brain activity, displaying areas of the cerebral cortex in different colours according to the nature and intensity of the stimuli impinging on the senses; or to a second- or third-level abstract representation of the functioning of a mind at a given moment. This would, for example, resemble scenes of a science fiction film intended to portray the path of a nerve impulse by means of a kaleidoscopic, vertiginous sequence of frames.² A β -element, an entity that still possesses the qualities of a thing while already belonging to the psychic order, would then be seen to enter the prism of the mind and to fragment into a fanlike pattern of light beams. These beams take various paths, some of them retrograde and collateral, interweaving and separating at supersonic speeds. In this way they convey an idea of the wiring, this time in concrete form, of the neural pathways on which, according to Freud (1891), the psychic processes of condensation are ultimately based. On each occasion there is the «big bang» of the transition from the body to the mind, from the thing to the no-thing of the idea, from the material to the psychic. We observe the repetition of the quantum leap from the definitory hypothesis, which is still the locus of the concrete and of the symbolic equation (the idea of something awaiting verification, here perhaps in the sense of happening, is inherent in the concept of a hypothesis), to symbolic thought.

How these transformations are brought about remains an open question. If the Grid is thought of as the device that governs them, then the input of course consists of proto-emotions and proto-sensations. Sensory sparks are kindled by the friction of the body with O, the real, *das Ding* (Lacan, 1986), immediately feed into their circuits and reach their relays. The Grid shows in three dimensions what happens when, like an image emerging from a bas-relief, subjectivity springs out of the fine atomic dust of infrasensible or ultrasensible reality. It conveys an impression of the processes of transformation that give rise to the subject. The starting point is the notion that the distinction between subject and world is ultimately arbitrary. We lack an external – i.e. transcendent – view of things, even if we succeed in pretending that this is not the case. Our common sense is absolutely convinced of this. Yet perception is only a text – a *seeing-as*, according to Wittgenstein (Borutti, 1999).

Just as the futurists sought to show ingeniously and in every possible way in the field of art, there is between the body and its environment a mutual penetration, a

² For example, in the second and third parts of *The Animatrix*, 'The second renaissance', by Mahiro Maeda, 2003.

continuous osmotic interchange of energy; the boundaries of the self stand out as dynamic states from the background of electromagnetic fields. The subject is a «field of relations» (Merleau-Ponty, 1945); it comes into being by differentiating itself from the real and can never completely free itself from it. The real is like water to a fish or air to a bird. A modicum of identity with the real (of *truth*, understood as a balance between identity and difference) is absolutely indispensable to life. By portraying the interface with the real diagrammatically, the Grid obliges us to rediscover ourselves in continuity with the real, and to remember that we are part of it.

BIDIRECTIONALITY

Another important property of the Grid is that it can be traversed in both directions, also from left to right and from bottom to top. A thought, action or dream can regain a concrete value, of emotional discharge, *even if it retains its appearance*. An α -element can be partially destroyed and become a β -element again, but with fragments of meaning still adhering to it. This is what happens, for example, when a dream is used to evacuate untransformed emotions, when a concept is reified, or when an element is de-personalized, deprived of what gave it meaning.

This possibility also helps us to define the nature of the elements situated in C1: at all levels, for instance, there are no actual α -elements, dreams or concepts, etc., but β -agglomerates as proto-containers, precursors of α -elements; instead of «pure», unassimilated reality, there are projections of a reality that is beginning to be idiosyncratic, a reality that is already less formless, sense impressions ready to be transformed from C2 into something mental; or else, regressively, elements that retain only the semblance of a concept – i.e. false concepts. An example is transformation in hallucinosis, a phenomenon that describes how it is possible to have correct perceptions of reality which, however, are deprived of meaning because they are projected on to an infinite background and disconnected from each other.

C1 could be thought of as a semiotic (Kristeva, 1974), precategorical level of sense, which is for this reason still obscure or partial – the level described by Merleau-Ponty as intercorporeal or intersensory, which therefore could be recorded only in the implicit, non-repressed or inaccessible unconscious (Bion, 1997).

Like the horizontal axis, the vertical axis too can be traversed in a retrograde direction, from bottom to top. This is a physiological fact. In general, α -elements serve to know things and β -elements to be ignorant of them – the latter being certainly no less important a function than the former. Bion (1992, 182) writes:

Without α -elements it is not possible to know anything. Without β -elements it is impossible to be ignorant of anything: they are essential to the functioning of projective identification; any unwanted idea is converted into a β -element, ejected from the

personality, and then becomes a fact of which the individual is unaware, though he may be aware of feelings of persecution stimulated by it.

I reserve the term, «knowledge», for the sum total of α - and β -elements. It is a term that therefore covers everything the individual knows and does not know.

With regard to the capacity to think, what matters is the curve showing the variation of the ratio of β to α over time. There is no need to confuse the bidirectionality whereby the rows and columns of the Grid can be traversed with what Meltzer (1986, 1987) calls the Negative Grid. In a mature mind, the possibility of traversing these vectors forwards and backwards is equivalent to the balanced functioning, described by Ogden (1989), of the various «positions» (autistic-contiguous, paranoid-schizoid and depressive) whereby we confer a personal sense on experience.

The concept of the Negative Grid indicates that the free, progressive and regressive interplay of transformations performed by the α -function is replaced by a *significant* and *stable* reversal, as when a group is in basic assumption mode. In other words, it is what happens when the dialectic of defences and ways of feeling and of being unconscious collapses into a single mode of functioning. With the Negative Grid, we are unequivocally in the field of pathology. So it is a matter not of negativization *within* the Grid, with which column 2 is concerned, but of negativization *of* the Grid itself. The prevailing links are $-L$, $-H$ and $-K$, which deprive experience of its emotional colour, so that a delusional system becomes established in the personality (Meltzer, 1986).

Among other things, this ability of the Grid to become transmuted into $-G$ need not always be a negative fact, because it expresses a psychic defence that becomes maladaptive only in the long term, only if not transformed into a more appropriate way of solving emotional problems. The onset of, for example, a symptom of hypochondria could be an indication of a negative container-contained transformation ($-\text{♀} \text{♂}$) – i.e. of a relative reversal of the process of symbolization or of a regression to the (autistic) use of symbols whose meaning has been emptied out. Overall, however, it would represent an attempt to re-establish contact with psychic qualities – a task required to reinstate a condition of adequate somato-psychic integration (Civitarese, 2011a; 2011b).

THE INTERPSYCHIC DIMENSION IN THE GRID

The agent that effects the transitions from row to row and from column to column is the α -function (and then the α -meta-function of the apparatus for thinking thoughts/dreaming dreams). In itself, the α -function, as an empty concept, an x that stands for mental events of which we know little or nothing, thus presents itself as an intrapsychic concept. It becomes less mysterious only if referred to the mother-child

relationship, which revolves around emotional attunement. At birth, an infant has a rudimentary consciousness but not its unconscious complement (Bion, 1967). The α -function, which allows one to dream experience and to perform the task of construction/deconstruction of the contact barrier that separates and unites conscious and unconscious, is not yet established and operational, or else it too is present only in elementary form (Grotstein, 2007). «*Becom[ing] conscious*» (Bion, 1962, 15), in the sense of full consciousness of self – the ability to say «I» – is possible only if the unconscious too has been established and with it the capacity to be aware of oneself. For this to happen, the child's primitive α -elements cannot dispense with the maternal reverie. Hence the α -function cannot develop autonomously on the basis of biological maturation, which, however, it presupposes.

It may be wondered whether the interpsychic origin of the α -function features in some way in the Grid. It would be a serious limitation if the thoroughly intersubjective nature of Bion's theory were not represented in it. The problem was stated by Bion (1990, 32) at one of his São Paulo seminars. A participant asks: «Is it possible to show the model “mother-baby” on the Grid?» He replies: «If it could be shown it would be by something in the area of transformations of visual imagery (C3), like saying, “I had a dream last night”, describing in *words* something that was *seen* when off one's guard as in sleep».

What might this mean? As usual with Bion, it is not easy to say. I construe it as follows. First of all, it could simply refer to the concept of reverie. Secondly, one might note that, unlike theories (accommodated in row F), according to this reply he places the concept of a model in row C (the row of dreams, myths and hallucinations); then, on a different, more specific level, which, with regard to the matter to which he is referring, Bion sees the mother-child *model* (as opposed with the real mother-child relationship) as equivalent to the reporting of a dream as opposed to the dream itself – that is, as the schematization of a phenomenon that is just as intangible as a dream, a phenomenon of which it is not possible to have direct knowledge. This concerns the shared experience of an unconscious, primitive and deep mode of communication which we explain on the metapsychological level by the interplay of projective (and introjective) identification and rêverie. Just as an individual in the waking state confers sense on his dream images recorded in memory, recognizes them, names them and recounts them to himself or to someone else, so we recount the mother-child interaction by means of a scientific model. By this reply, Bion makes explicit the status he assigns to the concept of a model in general, but does not yet tell us *how* the mother-child model is represented in the Grid.

Another answer could also be given to the question put to him at the São Paulo seminar – namely, that the mother-child model is symbolized by the structure of the Grid itself. Let us consider this.

The Grid resembles a fractal³ – that is, a geometrical figure with the property of identical repetition of itself on any scale. Overall, as if it were an ideogram of it, the Grid represents the selective membrane of the mind (thought) that is interposed between stimulus and action (*I*, which stands for *idea*, is the letter which for Bion denotes it in its entirety – 1963, 4). The action *A* depends on the value assumed by the stimulus *S* for the idea function *I* – that is, $A = I(S)$. We thus have a pair of terms functionally separated/linked by a slash,⁴ which symbolizes a contact barrier.

Close examination of the Grid shows that this structure is repeated at the dimensional level of rows and columns. The entire horizontal axis, broadly speaking, reflects the vertical axis. C1 is the reflection of the β category on the horizontal row: both refer to unmentalized psychic elements. The horizontal line between rows A and B separates β -elements from pictograms (α -elements), while that between B and C separates pictograms from dreams and thoughts. Crossing these frontiers – that is, transferring from β to α (intermediate elements between β and the «sensory images» of dreams, myths, narrations and hallucinations), and then from α to dream thoughts and to thoughts or dreams proper – is equivalent to crossing those between C1 and C2 (transformations performed by the α -function) and then between C2 and C3 (transformations performed by the apparatuses for thinking thoughts and for dreaming dreams). So, along the same lines, row C (dream thoughts/dreams/myths) could be seen as a reflection of column 2 (ψ); row D (pre-conception) as a reflection of column 3 (notation); row E (conception) as a reflection of column 4 (attention); and row F (concept) as a reflection of column 5 (inquiry). In fact, boxes D, E and F (pre-conception, conception and concept) might perhaps be seen as a single group, in the same way as 3, 4 and 5 (notation, attention and inquiry). The rows and columns, too, can be seen as pairs of opposites linked dialectically by an interface that separates and unites them at one and the same time, represented graphically by the horizontal and vertical lines.

However, the same can also be said in general terms about the *internal* organization of the Grid's rows and columns, on an ever decreasing scale. *The same essential structure*, that of a binary pair separated/joined by a slash (which is then tantamount to a function), is found not only, as we have seen, in the Grid itself and in the second-order filters represented by the rows and columns, but also in the third-order filters of the actual lines that define the boxes. From the largest to the smallest scale, the Grid

³ In fractals, the same structure is repeated at difference scales in accordance with the principle of «self-similarity». The most common example is a tree. The Grid's resemblance to a fractal should not of course be taken literally, but in my view deserves to be emphasized. If the Grid as a whole is considered to be like a contact barrier that separates and joins two adjacent areas, the same can be said of each row or column, as well as of each side that defines a box (which must filter whatever enters and leaves it). A box as a whole, too, separates and unites its two neighbours (above and below). The «form» that is repeated is therefore in particular a function (but ultimately also a form).

⁴ The English word *slash* onomatopoeically suggests both the «cut» and the «spark» of contact.

as a whole, the columns, the rows and finally all the sides that define a box can be seen as the slashes of an equal number of semi-permeable membranes, or «contact barriers», which simultaneously divide and rejoin two terms, which are thus found to be dialectically opposed. What does this signify? It means that the two terms are not endowed with a fixed and autonomous meaning, but are defined only in relation to each other.

On the level of meta-theory (the theoretical level), this structure could be seen as reflecting the general principle of Bion's method of transcending the caesura and the manner in which, on the basis of this principle, he dialecticizes all the classical oppositions that define the analytic field of experience. The most telling example is the invalidation of the distinction between night dreams and waking dreams (waking dream thought), between *Cs.* and *Ucs.*, between the primary process and the secondary process, between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, etc. After all, if the upper part of the Grid broadly corresponds to the primary process and the unconscious and the lower part to the secondary process and consciousness, the two areas merge into each other without a clear line of distinction between them.

In terms of Bion's theory of thought, on the other hand, it would not be wrong to see in this obsessive *specularity* an allusion to the mirror function performed by the object for the infant psyche, which is mediated by the process of projective and introjective identification – a reflection which, once internalized, becomes the sense of existing, the capacity for self-reflection (for being two in one).

Hence the binary pair obtained by selecting any two elements of the Grid separated by the caesura of a slash (the side of any box) symbolizes, *both* in structure *and* in functioning, the mother-child relationship (the pair by *antonomasia*) and the model of it that we construct. This is essentially suggested by the fact that it is the only relationship model that can give an idea of the working of the container-contained mechanism which governs the passage from box to box at all levels, and of which the α -function is an expression.

This structural persistence is found to reflect the constitutive duality (group nature) of every mind, *in so far as this is represented in the Grid itself*. Its syntax alludes on macroscopic and microscopic levels to the essentially interpsychic (bipersonal/multipersonal) nature of meaning, and to Bion's radically social/political theory of the birth of the psyche. Pursuing our fractal metaphor further, this dual/group-type level would appear as the natural continuation of what, on a larger scale, would be two or more Grids ($G_1, G_2, G_3 \dots G_n$) in a dialectical relationship with each other.

The contact barrier, seen not only as the filter interposed between unconscious and conscious, but also as the specialized surface governing the porosity of any «container», describes the schematic anatomy of the mind (of the Grid/Idea). The container-contained mechanism ($\text{♀} \text{♂}$) represents its physiology. This is a concept which Bion (1963) «abstracts» from the Kleinian theory of projective identification:

scattered elements of experience become meaningful when they are combined in a container that confers a recognizable form on them. The relationship is dialectical and reversible in terms of the roles. The container too is modified by the contained. From another point of view, on a larger scale, each container may in turn represent a contained. A «container» or a «contained» is of course to be understood not as a psychic location but as a process. It is a matter of «to contain or to be contained» rather than of inert, structurally fixed envelopes (Bion 1963, 7; Ogden, 2005).

Of all the concepts used by Bion to describe psychic transformations, the container-contained ($\text{♀} \text{♂}$) mechanism is the most general and abstract in scope, because it is the least common denominator of the $\text{Ps} \leftrightarrow \text{D}$ oscillation, of the oscillation between negative capability and selected fact ($\text{NC} \leftrightarrow \text{SF}$), and of the $\text{PI} \leftrightarrow \text{r}\acute{\text{e}}\text{v}\acute{\text{e}}\text{r}\text{sie}$ circuit. For unlike these, the container-contained ($\text{♀} \text{♂}$) mechanism in its various forms (convivial, parasitic, symbiotic, reversed or negative) can be applied to both the intrapsychic and the interpsychic levels.

The container-contained ($\text{♀} \text{♂}$) mechanism is the factor that on each occasion governs the transition from one row of the Grid to another. That is why, at all levels, the slash is also the interface where turbulence is generated. Even when a contained encounters a container which is a perfect fit for it, so that they become *a unity*, in the same way as an antigen «recognizes» an antibody, the process is never (entirely) painless: it always entails an interaction in which each term recognizes and at the same time negates the other, and vice versa. Being in unison is the outcome of a process of neg(oti)ation, involving the sacrifice of aspects of the self and, in a specular manner, of aspects of the other. In exactly the same way as for the purpose of categorization, and so that we can then recognize ourselves in the concepts we use, we need to obliterate the differences and emphasize the similarities between things (i.e. to abstract).

Upon each slash, the proto-emotions – a term that is of course not susceptible to unambiguous definition and denotes a range of states – record the noises of the battle for recognition between container and contained. Before being identified – that is, before being contained in an idea or clothed in a film of thought and hence used on the level of cognition and/or motivation because they express a movement of repulsion or attraction – they are the bearers of an excess. Emotions inform the mind about the state of its relations with the object (with the world). They display the balance of its cathexes. However, if untransformed, they are scattered in an immense mental space, so that the subject may in effect «bleed to death in his own tissues» on account of a surgical shock (Bion, 1970, 12).

THE SECRET PAINTER OF THE MIND

Of all the Grid's caesuras, I am for the present concerned mainly with column 2. My approach to the Grid is in fact inspired by Grotstein's reading of it (2007, 236):

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For me the contact-barrier is a cognate of α -function as well as its object. It corresponds, I believe, to Column 2 of Bion's Grid in so far as Column 2 is not only the *lie* column (*denial*) but also the *negation* column, which is necessary for differentiation of one object from another (secondary process). I see the contact-barrier, in other words, as the *continuation* of α -function.

Again:

Column 2, to me, constitutes the *dreaming column* – that is, the α -function column – which must aesthetically alter (*quasi-falsify*) the β -elements from Column 1 (Definition Hypothesis) to make α -elements suitable for subsequent mentalizable portage through the rest of the Grid (*ibid.*, 249).

In agreement with Grotstein, I suggest that the «mysterious» column 2 is the Grid's real theoretical treasure, because it is derived from the α -function that coincides with the contact barrier.

The importance of column 2 is immediately obvious. What we observe is that before C2 thought does not exist, but after C2 all thought is «false»! *In other words, in the Grid nothing has meaning before the passage of β -elements into C2.* As we have seen, in C1 concepts too exist only in the form of connected agglutinations of β -elements; they are not thoughts, but «souls of thoughts» waiting to be actually dreamt; hence they are proto-concepts or pre-conceptions, like the bed of a river as opposed to the water that flows over it (but which could also *not* flow). In C1, things have *sense* (from the Latin *sentire*, to feel), but lack *significance* (*signum*, a sign) (i.e. meaning); all mental contents are concrete. The contradiction can be overcome only by imagining a linear progression from the communicative register of the semiotic to that of the semantic, from sense to significance (meaning).

Considered in these terms, C2 could be the column for the work of the negative, which extends over a continuous spectrum that includes repression, splitting, disavowal, foreclosure, rejection, negation, and so forth (Green, 1998). In order to succeed, any process of mentalization must necessarily pass through column 2. Column 2 is the agent of *aesthetic* processing (of the treatment of sensation/*aisthesis* by thought/dreaming) which transforms O into a fictional truth – that is, a lie that is to a greater or lesser extent shared.

Any element in the first column, definitory hypotheses, results from schemes emerging from β -elements,⁵ swarms of sensations, which do not yet constitute thought; hence, in order to become thought, they must necessarily undergo the «fal-

⁵ Bion (1997, 30f.) defines β -elements as non-thoughts, bizarre objects, «gross darkness», «a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing – zero, O», negative numerals, «infra-red» and «ultra-violet», rhythm-like, «the sort of thing the musicians know about».

sification» of the ψ (*psi*) filter. It is not by chance that Bion, to denote this column, also uses the initial Greek letter of both *pseudos* (deception, lie, but also «poetic fiction») (Derrida, 2005; Chantraine, 1999) and *psyche*. This is where the mind is born. Mind and mendacity (lying) have the same root in *mens* (López-Corvo, 2002, 309): «You cannot let something become unconscious if α is not done to that something» (Bion, 1992, 139). Consciousness depends on the α -function. The elements of column 1 become accessible to thought, dreaming, memory and attention only after passing through C2. Prior to this passage, they are β -configurations with different degrees of complexity, which, however, have not yet been dreamt. Perhaps β should be thought of as the base level of α . Pure β -elements may perhaps not be able to exist – or else, as Grotstein says, they are degraded α -elements or, conversely, according to Bion, rudimentary α -elements.

Dreaming, as the unconscious psychological work of creating meaning (essentially, the α -function), therefore, is not found in row C – it is there as a contained, but not as a function – but is present *at all levels* in column 2. For this reason, Grotstein (2007, 284) also defines it as the *column of dreams* («*Column 2 constitutes a container-dreamer-thinker-function!*»). This idea is supported by a note by Bion himself (1963, 80n): «category C2 is intended to contain dream thought [...]». This is the difference between row C and column 2. However, row C is important because, in the Grid, it ideally denotes the point of equilibrium between unconscious and conscious thought, between symmetrical and asymmetrical thought, between the primary process and the secondary process, between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, and between animism and abstraction.

The elements of row C, night dreams and waking dreams, as well as all gradients of dreaming, on the other hand, are produced by the apparatus for dreaming dreams, a kind of α -meta- or super-function (Ferro, 2006), whereas all the lower rows (D, E and F) have their origins in the apparatus for thinking thoughts: both functions make use of the dream thoughts produced by the α -function (α -elements). The acquisition of language could admittedly be accommodated between the α -function and the apparatus (or apparatuses) for dreaming dreams and for thinking thoughts, but, after all, why should we make a radical distinction between the two psychic mechanisms? Could the analogy with the mathematical figure of the fractal not apply here too? The α -function, the apparatus for dreaming dreams and the apparatus for thinking thoughts could be conceived of as increasingly complex levels of one and the same basic function, or ones applied to products of increasing sophistication (abstraction), even if Bion specifies that the *manufacture* and *use* of dreams could lead to two different systems.

The only real difference might be that, in order to cook O, some take as their starting point the raw food of semiotic language and others the precooked food of symbolic language, but both can be seen as expressing one and the same drive to simplify

and/or categorize. All the psychic contents located to the right of column 2 are infiltrated by dreaming at any level of the progression from β -elements to the most abstract thought and to action. Algebra too is infiltrated by dreaming, because it arises from the equating of the similar and the dissimilar. In nature, however, two equal things do not exist, unless the differences are disregarded. No two trees are identical. If I create for myself the concept of a «tree» or I put two trees together, this means that I am metaphorizing one with the other, that I am transferring the properties of one to the other, that I am *obliterating* the differences – which, as we know, is the work of C2! Bion (1992, 71, my emphasis) writes:

A child learning to walk is engaged in attempting to make conscious material unconscious; only when this is done can it walk. *The same is true of every piece of learning ever done* – its success depends on the central operations by which dream-work- is able to transform conscious material into unconscious material suitable for unconscious waking thinking.

Abstract thought too presupposes a series of unconscious processes and the neutralization of potentially confusing stimuli. This, after all, is the original sense of the mechanism of repression, imagined by Freud in the «Project» (1895) along the lines of the physical elimination, as undertaken by the mother, of stimuli that might disturb the child. Knowing, transforming β -elements into α -elements, entails the capacity to forget, to pretend (in the sense of imagining, shaping or moulding), to relegate inessential elements of the figure to the background and to act as if they did not exist:

A determination not to experience anything can be shown to co-exist with an *inability to reject or ignore any stimulus*. Sense-impressions can be seen to have some meaning but the patient feels incapable of knowing what the meaning is (Bion, 1962, 18, my emphasis).

Sense can only be conferred on things by virtue of a process of negation, of the hallucinatory element that inevitably infiltrates perception (Botella & Botella, 2001), just as exposed and unexposed frames alternate in the physical substrate of a film. Like a *sieve* (Freud, 1895), the α -function retains elements that are useful for its purposes and rejects others.

Hence column 2 is effectively the hinge between the human, the real assimilated in dreaming and the capacity to be conscious of it, on the one hand, and, on the other, the pre-human element of the impersonal, formless and infinite O, or the dream of primary animal consciousness from which waking is impossible. *In the column of definitory hypotheses, there is as yet no mind, for its existence would entail the capacity to distinguish between self and not-self*. The constant conjunction of two

facts, their linkage on this level by a bond of contiguity, *cannot yet be thought*. True symbolization does not yet exist. This is born with ψ , with unconscious «lying». Dreaming does not make a mind except after column 2. Even before C2, however, there is a sense which pre-exists the establishment of an ego and which on the one hand passes to the child from the mother, in so far as she embodies his future α -function as a component of the dyad, and on the other takes the form of innate psychophysical dispositions, pre-conceptions, primal fantasies, etc.

WHAT IS THE TRUTH FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS?

However, is column 2 then the locus of the lie, in accordance with many authors' interpretations and as ambiguously suggested by Bion himself, or is it the locus of dreaming? Can liars be treated? And if all thought is false, what is the meaning of the proposition that the subject is moved by a «truth drive»? Is this the engine of the Grid's functioning (what the Grid represents)?

A passage from the «second» Grid essay suggests that Bion invented C2 in response to the view, expressed privately to him by Klein, that liars were untreatable. He objected to her that, during an analysis, her own theory of projective identification «could itself be presented in the course of analysis as a series of lying statements» (Bion, 1977, 5). Considered in these terms, there would not be a single patient who does not lie in analysis. Even the distinction Bion draws immediately afterwards between (voluntary) lies and falsehood leaves the problem unresolved.

He himself recognizes that man's capacity to survive depends also on his capacity for illusion – broadly, for lying to himself and lying in general: «It is difficult to accept real life because frustration is an essential feature of real life. In an extreme position it obstructs the development of thought» (ibid., 28). Again:

[...] man owes his health, and his capacity for continued health, to his ability to shield himself during his growth as an individual by repeating in his personal life the history of the race's capacity for self-deception against truth that his mind is not fitted to receive without disaster (Bion, 1992, 192).

However, seemingly contradicting this assumption, Bion also writes that the capacity to survive depends on «a constant supply of truth» (ibid., 99), because truth is food for the mind. He thus sees the search for truth as a central drive, so that Meltzer even writes that his theory of the mind is «epistemological», while Grotstein invokes a «truth drive».⁶

⁶ Cf. Grotstein (2007, 52): «[...] I put forth the notion that beneath the hidden order that runs through the entirety of Bion's works lies the concept of a *truth drive* and that all the ego's defence mechanisms are principally counterposed to the irruption of unconscious truth rather than of libido and aggression [...]». According to Grotstein, Bion himself had mentioned the concept of a truth instinct to him in 1979.

From this it may be deduced that in his clinical practice Bion applied a relative and not an abstract⁷ concept of truth. The analyst's standpoint is never that of a moralist, philosopher or historian, as he would otherwise use different investigative methodologies. In the same order as above, he would examine the correct interpretation in the language of catechistic precepts, evaluate the rigour of logical argument, seek documentary evidence, and so on. In analysis, on the other hand, it makes no sense to claim that truth is the absolute antithesis of a lie. Instead, truth should be defined on the basis of the specific parameters of the theoretico-clinical field of psychoanalysis, combined in the binary oppositions of conscious/unconscious, explicit/implicit and sustainable/unsustainable. Let us consider these in that order.

First, what matter is the subject's unconscious truth, because if there is psychic suffering, what he knows about himself must be insufficient: there is not enough food for the mind. As to the unconscious/conscious parameter, however, it is also the case that the «liar's lie predicates the truth in disguise-like dreams» (Grotstein, 2007, 149). In some cases, lying may be the only, or the most effective, recourse of the patient to protect himself from anxiety and pain, as well as to make himself understood. The truth of O and the encounter with O (the anonymous, indeterminate and infinite reality that must be rendered meaningful in personal form by dreaming) is involuntarily expressed also in intentional lies. Like a dream, reverie or symptom (Ogden, 2001), a lie too is a metaphor, not a direct vision, of the subject's unconscious experience. For this reason, from the analyst's point of view, the problem of the lie can arise only as a symptom; it is at any rate not an insurmountable obstacle to the treatment.⁸ Hence the parameter of conscious intentionality does not help us to resolve the contradiction between the need for truth and falsity of thought.

Whereas by definition we can have only explicit knowledge (a feeling or idea) on the conscious level, on the unconscious level a distinction must be made between explicit or representational «truth» (the repressed unconscious) and its implicit-affective or non-representational counterpart (the inaccessible or non-repressed

⁷ Cf. Sandler (2005, 400): «Instead of focusing either on truth or the lie per se, Bion focuses on the binomial relationship truth/lie. That is, the "and" replaces the "or"».

⁸ At the risk of repeating myself, I should like to expand further on this point. In accordance with a post-Bionian model of the analytic field (Ferro, 1992; Civitarese, 2008; Ferro & Basile, 2009), which must in my view be linked dialectically to a model of the subject in isolation, I listen to anything a patient tells me – not in the form of ongoing monitoring, but allowing myself to be «surprised» by this perspective – as a product of the unconscious communication between minds. From this – but only this – point of view, the problem of the falsehood or veracity of his words does not arise for me. If his being a liar reflects an unconscious conflict in him, how can I treat him otherwise than by helping him to be more authentic, and hence not to have to hide behind intentional mendacity? Not even someone who lies on purpose is in control of his own unconscious, whereas a person who espouses virtue and truth at all costs might, depending on the circumstances, be expressing sadistic impulses or a false self. If I had a child who constantly lied to me, I might well conclude that I need to reinstate a seemingly lost communication, of which systematic recourse to falsehood is a symptom. I would therefore not confuse conscious communication with the profound, unconscious communication of emotional attunement.

unconscious). Consequently, increasing the patient's area of truth may mean either helping him to accept knowing more about himself or learning to know how to do more things, even if he would be unable to say how – for instance, being better able to confront certain situations in emotional terms. This is an area in which the subject's ability cannot be based solely on ideas (which may, on the other hand, be adequate for other purposes and tasks in life).

The third parameter – sustainability/unsustainability – already evidenced at the beginning of the paragraph with the quotations from Bion, is perhaps that which best expresses the specificity of his vision, which is that one's starting point should be an intersubjective psychoanalytic theory. The truth that interests Bion (ourselves) in analysis is the truth that feeds the mind and is adaptive with respect to external reality only when it is emotionally sustainable (and also compatible with the ecology of the internal world), only when it does not involve an excessive degree of frustration and does not «obstruct the development of thought». Otherwise the effect will be the opposite of that desired – undermining instead of increasing the patient's capacity to dream and/or to think.

However, the notion of sustainability concerns what is true not only for the analyst but also for the patient. Conversely, a truth that arises only in the analyst's mind may be poisonous to the patient. In order to be the food that feeds the mind, the truth must be receivable – that is, shareable – which is the case when the patient is in possession of sufficient mental space to receive, recognize and assimilate it. Hence the need to introduce an intersubjective or social definition of truth as something involving common sense and arising from emotional unison, from the experience at the beginning of a child's life that creates the object first and foremost as something that is common to the senses. For a better understanding of the nature of this sharing, the model of the birth of thought (truth) in mother–child interaction can be used.

THE TRUTH DRIVE

It is only by virtue of reverie (Bion) and the mother's capacity for holding and handling (Winnicott) that a newborn succeeds in emerging from a state of non-integration and in coordinating his senses in such a way that they confirm each other. It is the mother who makes up for the infant's immaturity with her own mind. What is true for the infant in perception, in the sense of «common to the senses» – touch tells sight: «Received loud and clear; what I am feeling corresponds to what you are seeing», and vice versa – stems from an infinite set of micro-experiences of emotional confirmation, unison and consensuality. These minimal emotional experiences (of sense) interweave to form the stuff of thought. The mother helps the child to confer order on the chaotic flow of stimuli in which he is immersed and so to speak passes on the method of so doing to him.

At the beginning of life in particular, this drive towards integration and the construction of a psychic space can obviously be fulfilled only on the basis of emotional unison, and not yet by intellectual agreement, because, if any type of categorization is already present, it is preverbal and prereflective, semiotic, affective and not yet truly conceptual in nature. At this stage, the emotions directly express the principle of value essential for survival, and they continue to do so throughout life, even when accompanied by logico-rational thought – because there will always be reasons of the heart or body which the mind cannot represent to itself but can only feel.

For this reason, it is in my opinion wrong to see truth and lies as absolute opposites. A more meaningful conceptualization is of a gradient extending from the truth of the minimum possible level of emotional accord and consensuality compatible with life to that of the maximum attainable degree of attunement with others and oneself. For the same reason, in analysis a truth other than unconscious, emotional, shared truth is of scant importance because, in accordance with its own model of psychic functioning and in terms of the declared aim of treatment, unconscious emotional life is the specific level of action of psychoanalysis.

So the answer to the first of the questions that began the previous section is that C2 can be both – that is, both the column of lies and the column of dreams – because, if it is seen as coinciding with the contact barrier or the α -function, what matters is how it functions. If it functions well, the result will be the dream («digestion») of reality, the shared lie of commonsense reality, the as-if of perception; if it works badly, there will be undreamt dreams (night terrors) or interrupted dreams (nightmares – Ogden, 2005) expressed in various symptoms and pathologies. These might also include intentional lying or an inauthentic, even if hyper-adapted, life or, in the limit, the use of factual reality for deception (Derrida, 2005).

As to the second question, on the basis of the foregoing the answer is yes, it is possible to treat liars. How? Just as in other situations, it is a matter of attaining emotional unison. «Communication» (Strachey's translation of *Verständigung*, which literally means understanding or agreement – Freud, 1895, 318) allows the patient to increase his capacity to think and to achieve a higher degree of agreement, even with regard to material reality and the facts of his present and past life, so that he no longer needs to lie.

We now come to the final point, the truth drive. The concept of truth having been redefined as un/conscious, emotional and shared, and hence as something accommodated along a continuum and not like a rigid antithesis between truth and lies, a sense will be gained of the possible meaning of a truth drive: not, of course, the urge to appropriate in abstract terms a given system of true statements about reality, but the impulse to achieve ever greater degrees of emotional attunement with the other, which, it is important to note, also constitutes the foundation of thought-based communication, albeit only secondarily. Considered in this way, the contradiction

between the intrinsic falsehood of thought and the truth (relative falsehood) that promotes growth of the mind is seen to be invalid, because it is now reduced to a quantitative rather than an qualitative factor.

So the truth drive is found to consist in the search for this special attunement with the other. This means that truth feeds thought. The same idea could of course also be expressed as the search for the object and the satisfaction of libido, or by other models. If Bion chooses to speak of truth, a term that should always be used with a degree of modesty, it is because his conception of it is social and relativistic, and because, I would say, it demonstrates better than any other term that the factor which promotes life and makes for development of the mind is the thirst for sociality. This in my view constitutes the specificity of the concept of the truth drive, and explains why Bion prefers it to the equivalent Freudian formulations.

The value of the concept of the truth drive (reformulated as the urge for emotional attunement) is not confined to the sphere of analysis, because it helps us to see that any type of truth recognized by a community – in the limit, including, too, the truths of science – is a particular case of communication, and also has its roots in emotional accord, in being-in-unison. Given the centuries-old tradition of contrasting the passions with reason and dreaming with waking, the idea that judgement concerning factual reality is ultimately rooted in emotional and «oneiric» reality may seem bizarre, but, given the premises of Bion's theory, it is not. In moving on from «somatic *emotional* categorization» (Grotstein, 2007, 276f.) – i.e. semiotic categorization – to the concept, all we are doing is getting to know reality by simplifying it and reducing it to a system of relationships (of «invariants»).

To return to our original images, the Grid has a certain quality of «tankishness» (Souter, 2009), which pervades all Bion's writings, so that it is in some respects like a military map, a naval battle or a «psychoanalytic game». It shares the difficulty and diabolical perfection of the Rubik cube, the speculative character of the system of Cartesian coordinates, and the ingenious combinatorics of chess.

While as it were constituting a Mendeleev-type periodic table of the elements of psychoanalysis, the Grid has the inestimable epistemological, theoretical and technical merit of being, on the one hand, an effective representation of the continuity between the unconscious and the conscious – considering that, in order to be expressed, the position of every psychic event requires a parameter on the vertical axis (use) and another on the horizontal axis (thought) – and, on the other, a visually intuitive synthesis of dreams, knowledge and truth.

In particular, the importance of C2 is evident in the light of the foregoing, because it so to speak rules out from the beginning any absolute, metaphysical or positivistic conception of truth and enables us to grasp the scope of the seemingly

⁹ Cf. Grotstein (2007, 218): «Thus, truth is the invariant, and emotion is its vehicle or container».

contradictory concept in Bion's theory of the truth drive. Column 2 is the secret painter of the mind (Grotstein, 2007) – our inner Monet.

SUMMARY AND KEYWORDS

Bion was the first to express dissatisfaction with the Grid. He nevertheless assigned it a central role in some of his most important writings. The Grid in fact proves useful not for its original purpose (of «scoring» a session, enhancing the analyst's powers of observation, etc.), but for understanding and building further on Bion's thought. The Grid offers an immediately intuitive depiction of the close-knit dialectical relationship between the various concepts in his theory of the mind. In particular, column 2, as felicitously reinterpreted by Grotstein as the column of dreams, facilitates comprehension of the meaning assigned by Bion to the «truth drive».

KEYWORDS: α -function; Bion; column 2; Grid; lie; truth drive.

LA GRILLE ET LA PULSION DE VÉRITÉ. Bion a été le premier à exprimer son mécontentement envers la Grille. Pourtant, il a attribué un rôle central à cet instrument dans certains de ses écrits, les plus importants. En fait, la Grille ne se révèle utile dans les buts pour lesquels a été créé (parapher la séance, augmenter la capacité d'observation de l'analyste, etc.), mais pour comprendre et élargir la pensée de Bion. La Grille visualise, immédiatement et intuitivement, la dialectique serrée qui passe entre les différents concepts de sa théorie de l'esprit. En particulier, la colonne 2, heureusement relue par Grotstein comme la colonne du rêve, aide à saisir le sens que Bion donne à la « pulsion de vérité ».

MOTS-CLÉS : Bion, colonne 2, fonction α , Grille, mensonge, pulsion de vérité.

LA TABLA Y LA PULSIÓN DE VERDAD. Bion ha sido el primero en expresar insatisfacción hacia la Tabla. Sin embargo le asignó un rol central en algunos de sus escritos más importantes. De hecho, la Tabla no se demuestra útil para los fines que se pensaba antes, (es decir: registrar las sesiones, incrementar la capacidad de observación del analista etc.), sino para comprender mejor y ampliar el pensamiento de Bion. Con intuitiva inmediatez la Tabla evidencia la escueta dialéctica que existe entre los varios conceptos de su teoría de la mente. En particular, la Columna 2, felizmente rebautizada por Grotstein como la columna del sueño, ayuda a coger el significado que Bion asigna a la «pulsión de verdad».

PALABRAS CLAVE: Bion, Columna 2, en función α , mentira, pulsión de verdad, Tabla.

DAS RASTER UND DER WAHRHEITSTRIEB. Bion war der Erste, der mit dem Raster unzufrieden war. Trotzdem hat er ihm in einigen seiner Schriften eine zentrale Rolle zugewiesen. Das Raster erweist sich als unangemessen bezüglich seines Zweckes (die Kodifizierung der Sitzungen, die Förderung der Beobachtungsfähigkeit des Analytikers usw.), aber es verbessert das Verständnis der Theorie Bions und hilft diese weiter zu entwickeln. Das Raster zeigt die Dialektik, die die verschiedenen Begriffe seiner Theorie der Psyche durchdringt: im Besonderen die Kolonne 2, die von Grotstein als die Kolonne des Traumes interpretiert wird, ermöglicht das Verständnis der Bedeutung, die Bion dem «Wahrheitstrieb» zuschreibt.

SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER: α -Funktion, Bion, Kolonne 2, Lüge, Raster, Wahrheitstrieb.

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Original Italian version:
Riv. Psicoanal., 2012, 2, 335-360

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