A CLINICAL APPLICATION
OF BION’S CONCEPTS

Volume 2
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Analytic Function
and the Function of the Analyst

P. C. Sandler

KARNAC
To Ester, Daniela, and Luiz

To the memory of my parents: Dr Jayme Sandler, one of the first psychoanalysts in Brazil, who introduced me to Freud, Klein, and Bion, and Mrs Bertha Lerner Sandler, professional home decorator, who first showed me what Art is all about.
Solomon saith, *There is no new thing upon the Earth.* So that as Plato had an imagination, that *all knowledge was but remembrance*; so Solomon giveth his sentence, that *all novelty is but oblivion.*

One of their heirs who gave utility to their wisdom, Freud, made an observation out of this: *out of the creativity of a couple, claims to originality are but deluded omnipotence.*

(Expanded from Bacon, 1625, on account of subsequent progress due to his contributions.)
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ix

ABOUT THE AUTHOR xi

PREFACE xiii
by James S. Grotstein

PART I: EXTENSIONS INTO THE REALM OF MINUS

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction 5

CHAPTER TWO
The realm of Minus and the negative 13

CHAPTER THREE
Clinical sources 35

CHAPTER FOUR
The hypothesis: a versus link 61
PART II: HERE AND NOW: A MEMOIR OF THE FUTURE

CHAPTER FIVE
Bion’s Trilogy and its reception  79

PART III: ANALYTIC FUNCTION

CHAPTER SIX
Bion’s contributions to the formulation of analytic function  111

CHAPTER SEVEN
An analytic “compass” and “sextant”  131

CHAPTER EIGHT
“Binocular vision” and the practice of psychoanalysis  139

CHAPTER NINE
“Geography” to detect triadic syndromes  169

CHAPTER TEN
An anti-alpha function  189

REFERENCES  208

INDEX  215
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Rathbone and Mrs Anna Nilsen, who helped its progression from an impossible manuscript into a real book.

Naming is an almost impossible activity. Paradoxically, there are good names, in the sense that they convey beautifully the natural function of the corresponding things, events or facts they identify. In a book devoted to the analytic function, it is essential to reiterate the previous volume’s final acknowledgement, which is paradoxically the first one, the reason for the existence of this writing. It seems to me that “Patient” is one of those names which do justice to their function. For ethical reasons, I cannot name each Patient who came to see me for helping analysis. I express my gratitude for their patience, where nature and nurture meets—and, in a special way, their perennial personal forbearance with my failures. Stemming from the medical tradition, the analytic couple is a way to make the best of a bad job: they were able to couple my personal need to care with their need for help—as well my need to share, both with them and with analytic colleagues, to whom I wish a nourishing and hopefully rewarding reading.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paulo Cesar Sandler, MD, MSc, MhFAB, obtained his medical training at the Universidade de São Paulo; he is a Training Analyst at the Sociedade Brasileira de Psicanálise de São Paulo. Author of several books in Portuguese, including an eight-volume series dedicated to transdisciplinary research between psychoanalysis, medical biology, epistemology, mathematics and physics, he has also written more than one hundred psychiatric and psychoanalytic papers in medical and psychoanalytic periodicals, as well as book chapters, some of which have been published in the English, French, Italian and Russian languages. He has translated most of Bion’s books and papers into Portuguese, including the first ever translation of A Memoir of the Future, and has organised several international meetings on the work of Bion. Dr Sandler currently teaches at the Institute of Psychoanalysis of the SBPSP, giving courses on the work of Freud, Klein and Bion; he was formerly a professor on a postgraduate course (in the broad sense) at the Instituto de Psicologia da Universidade de São Paulo, the first one devoted to the work of Bion in Brazil. He has worked in private psychiatric and psychoanalytic practice since 1974, having previously worked with psychotics in a traditional in-patient clinic. He has experience in group-oriented
social and community psychiatry, including the epidemiology of mental disorders, as a former Manager of the Programa de Saúde Mental, at Faculdade de Saúde Pública da Universidade de São Paulo, the local Public Health School. He is an Honorary Member of the Brazilian Air Force, due to voluntary work with group dynamics, and an Honorary Associate of the Accademia Lancisiana (Rome).
Appreciation of Volume 1 of *A Clinical Application of Bion’s Concepts*

*by James S. Grotstein*

In this magisterial work Paulo Sandler continues to distinguish himself as a foremost scholar on the works of Bion. Already well known for his encyclopedic zeal, this present book continues Sandler’s tireless search of Bion’s contributions by this noteworthy clinical application of Bion’s ideas. When one scans Sandler’s bibliography on Bion’s works, one can only be deeply impressed by his rigour and his far-reaching scholarship. His 853-page dictionary, *The Language of Bion: A Dictionary of Concepts* (Karnac, 2005) attests to that. It was so useful to me that I purchased two copies, one for my consulting room and another for home. Both have been well used. Two of the features of his scholarship deserve especial notice. One has been his frequent checking with other Bion scholars, including Francesca Bion, about questions he might have. Another stems from his enormous erudition and scholarship. After the reader immerses him- or herself in this text, he or she will observe a sizeable number of languages in which he is fluent and variegated cultures and disciplines with which he is conversant.

A major feature of Sandler’s approach to studying Bion has been to contextualise the background of Bion’s assumptions. In so doing, he extensively investigates the cultural and historical antecedents,
especially including the philosophical and scientific points of view. From them Sandler selects Romanticism and its dialectical relationship with the Enlightenment. Among the many characteristics of Romanticism is imagination, at best creative, but also idealisation and hyperbole. It is its imaginatively creative nature that Sandler believes applies to Freud’s, Bion’s, and Klein’s theories of dreams, phantasies, and myths. Romanticism can also apply to the preternatural concept of Mother Nature, and derivatively to the numinous quality Freud assigned to the instinctual (biological) drives. For over a century since its creation psychoanalysis had been mainly thought of as a body-rooted psychology, which emphasis was used by its practitioners to require that analysts should be physicians.

The Enlightenment, on the other hand, was a trend in which man was gradually developing ideas of certainty, ideas which would lend “scientific” calibration, i.e. measurable truth, to the measurement of a vast array of living and non-living objects. Consequently, even though the origin of the instinctual drives emerged from a numinous “Romantic” matrix, the drives became enlisted to become “first cause” for all psychological phenomena. Freud (1923) declared magisterially, “It is the destiny of the instinct [drive] to be expended in the cathexis of its descendants” (my addition). Classical Freudian and its derivative, Kleinian analysis, became associated with certainty—with the drives as “first cause”, whereas Bion’s way of thinking became associated with uncertainty, which he was to name “O”, the Absolute Truth about an Ultimate and Infinite Reality.

Sandler discusses Bion’s way of being “scientific”, one notable aspect of which is his distinctive use of theories, which he distinguishes from models. Theories, Sandler states, are “a system of interrelated statements, originally corresponding to their counterparts in reality and deriving (as representations) from this very same empirically observed reality” (p. 2). I (JSG) think Sandler is suggesting that theory is the condensation of an invariant truth that summarily captures the hidden order of a phenomenon. Justifiable theories are few and seldom need to be added to. Models, on the other hand, are analogues that exist outside the system they are being applied to. They are instruments to vicariously approximate, measure, and calibrate the objects or phenomena to which they are being applied, e.g., the sphygmomanometer for blood pressure.
The Chapter titles, along with their contents, reveal the range and depth of Sandler’s exploration: Chapters One, Two, Four, Five and Six examine Freud’s and Bion’s theories of dreaming. Chapters One and Three deal with the cultural and contemporaneous scientific background settings which helped contextualise and shape each of their formulations about dreaming. Chapter Seven deals with observation and communication, followed by Chapters Nine and Ten, which discuss the container and the contained. Chapter Eleven deals with catastrophic change. In Chapters Six and Eight Sandler presents extensive and highly credible clinical illustrations of his ideas. His discussion of dreaming, the container and the contained, and especially of invariance is of high order, clear, and inspiring.

Sandler has written another brilliant textbook on Bion’s thinking that constitutes a highly useful and practical handbook on the subject.
PART I

EXTENSIONS INTO THE REALM OF MINUS
FAUST What is your name?
MEPHISTOPHELES The question seems absurd / For someone who despises the mere word, / Who treats appearances as vain illusion / And seeks the truth in such remote seclusion.
FAUST But with you gentlemen the name / And nature’s usually the same, / And we can often recognise / The Liar, the Destroyer, or the Lord of Flies. / Who are you, then?
MEPHISTOPHELES A part of that same power that would / Forever work for evil, yet forever creates good.

(Goethe, Faust, Part I Scene iii)

In psychoanalysis it is assumed that a theory is false if it does not seem to minister to the “good” of the majority of mankind. And it is a commonplace idea of good. The whole idea of “cure”, of therapeutic activity, remains unscrutinised. It is largely determined by the expectations of the patient, though this is questioned in good analysis (as I know it). But in nuclear physics a theory is considered to be good if it aids the construction of a bomb that destroys Hiroshima. Too much of the thinking about...