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and Bionian Developments“

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Simone Webber, BSc BA

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Abstract:

This thesis explores major trends in (Post-)Kleinian and (Post-)Bionian Psychoanalysis. It begins by examining the role of projective identification and splitting within Kleinian psychoanalysis and provides a clinical example of an orthodoxly Kleinian psychoanalytic treatment to highlight the clinical significance of projective identification and splitting. Next, an equilibrium model with four poles is proposed, based on the work of John Steiner. Two poles of the model are described in detail, along with their interactions with the other poles on the equilibrium model. This model is primarily equipped to elucidate the interplay between different structures of experience within a personality. Finally, the thesis reviews (Post-)Bionian ideas on intersubjectivity and suggests that the discussed equilibrium model can be a useful tool to describe structural and functional aspects of the relationship between analyst and analysand. Therefore, the equilibrium model lends itself to describe both intrasubjective and intersubjective interplays. It is argued that both perspectives are of importance. Overall, this thesis provides a comprehensive review of major developments in (Post-)Kleinian and (Post-)Bionian Psychoanalysis, including clinical implications and theoretical advancements.

Deutschsprachiges Abstrakt:

Diese Arbeit untersucht wichtige Trends in der (post-)kleinianischen und (post-)bionianischen Psychoanalyse. Sie beginnt mit der Untersuchung der Rolle der projektiven Identifizierung und Spaltung innerhalb der kleinianischen Psychoanalyse und liefert ein klinisches Beispiel einer orthodoxen kleinianischen psychoanalytischen Behandlung, um die klinische Bedeutung der projektiven Identifizierung und Spaltung hervorzuheben. Als nächstes wird ein Gleichgewichtsmodell mit vier Polen vorgeschlagen, das auf dem Werk von John Steiner basiert. Zwei Pole des Modells werden ausführlich beschrieben, zusammen mit ihren Wechselwirkungen mit den anderen Polen des Gleichgewichtsmodells. Dieses Modell ist in erster Linie dazu geeignet, das Zusammenspiel verschiedener Erfahrungsstrukturen innerhalb einer Persönlichkeit aufzuklären. Abschließend untersucht die Arbeit (post-)bionianische Ideen zur Intersubjektivität und legt nahe, dass das diskutierte Gleichgewichtsmodell auch ein nützliches Werkzeug zur Beschreibung struktureller und funktionaler Aspekte der Beziehung zwischen Analytiker*in und Analysand*in sein kann. Daher eignet sich das Gleichgewichtsmodell zur Beschreibung sowohl intrasubjektiver als auch intersubjektiver Wechselwirkungen. Es wird argumentiert, dass beide Perspektiven von Bedeutung sind. Insgesamt bietet diese Arbeit einen umfassenden Überblick über zentrale Entwicklungen in der (post-)kleinianischen und (post-)bionianischen Psychoanalyse, einschließlich klinischer Implikationen und theoretischer Fortschritte.

1. Introduction

After checking my emails, I found out that on the 24th of February of 2021 at 22:36, I first wrote an email to my Master thesis supervisor, Prof. Thomas Slunecko. Admittedly, it took me quite some time to write this thesis. In many ways, it has been a ‘Schwergewurt’, a difficult birth. In part, I encountered quite some difficulties in finding my rhythm. Being a training candidate myself, I started working with my own analysands. I soon ended up working at full capacity as a psychoanalyst and psychotherapist in training under supervision, which was and is a very demanding task. Not seldomly this task occupied all of my energy. Finding the space, the time and the energy to write my thesis on the side proved to be a substantial challenge, which sometimes mutated into a substantial burden. Accordingly, I wonder to what degree the thesis will feel to readers like a reflection of the fact that it was mostly written during lunch breaks, in two- or three-hour long breaks between morning and afternoon sessions. Not seldom I played with the thought of whether my mother was right all along, despite my resistance to taking her advice seriously at the time and insistence on finding my own way, namely that I should have fully finished my academic degrees before throwing myself full-heartedly into clinical work. On the other hand, psychoanalytic theorising and psychoanalytic clinical work are fruitfully interlinked and can mutually benefit from one another. Getting hands-on clinical experience while simultaneously writing theoretical work can be absolutely essential. I believe this to be fundamentally true. I also believe that in many ways, the direction and the shifts within this thesis, of which there are plenty, could be understood as clinically inspired. I have a general, at times fortunate and at times unfortunate, tendency in my relationship to theory to ‘become’ what I am reading. Yet, by becoming increasingly Kleinian in my thinking, I started feeling stuck and unsatisfied in my clinical work. I want to emphasise that this was my private experience. I am not generalising my subjective experience to Kleinianism overall¹. For me personally, I could feel that Kleinian thought, or at least my understanding of it, felt constrictive and too formulaic and mechanistic after a while. This was when the working title of my thesis was still “*Projective Identification and Splitting*”; in other words, it was increasingly becoming a frustrating experience. Thus, I acted to change the direction. I extended my thesis from a narrow focus on projective identification and

¹ I wonder, however, if it could be that my private experience with immersing into Kleinian thought turns out to be shared or somewhat similarly experienced by more than just me.

splitting to a broader discussion of (Post-)Kleinian positions and pathological organisations of the personality. At this point, I was engaged with Neo-Kleinian theory again, and I was especially interested in the interplay between what I called, based on my review of Neo-Kleinian literature, the PS-P-f (paranoid-schizoid position with fragmentation), the PS-P-ns (paranoid-schizoid position with dual 'normal splitting'), the psychic retreat and the D-P (depressive position). I believed that working out these positional structures and their interplays could be theoretically interesting and clinically useful. More so than an in-depth investigation of splitting and projective identification itself. The differentiation of the PS-P-ns, with strong polar feelings of love and hate, on the one hand, from the PS-P-f, with fragmentation and feelings of apathy and void, on the other, seemed theoretically and clinically interesting. Also, the idea of a 'psychic retreat' (Steiner, 1993), in which analysands avoid all anxieties of the PS-P-f, the PS-P-ns and the D-P in a grand preference of (dysfunctional) harmony and equilibrium over distress, seemed very promising. Indeed, I felt that some analysands reached out to me in order to get out from a state of mind that they subjectively experienced as bearable yet incredibly stuck.

A 'Post-Kleinian' paper by Steiner (1987), *"The interplay between pathological organizations and the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions"*, sets the scene for many reflections of this thesis. The core idea of that paper is that pathological organizations of the personality, which later will be subsumed under the umbrella term of 'psychic retreat', exist as a third pole in a triangular equilibrium with the D-P and PS-P. Steiner argues that psychic retreats are highly organized phantasy webs that are constructed to form a real and illusory shelter from anxieties of the PS-P and D-P, thus providing the analysand with safety at the cost of psychic stagnation. The third position is thus theoretically neatly distinguished from the PS-P or the D-P. These and other Post-Kleinian ideas were an important nourishment for my curiosity. I believe that they profoundly changed how I look at clinical material and life. However, although these ideas had a significant influence on me, I eventually lost most of my interest in them. I often pondered whether the problem was with me - was I moving on too quickly? Was I incapable of persevering and working on my frustration tolerance? Or else, should I follow my gut feelings? Is 'this' just not something for me? Or is my intuition telling me something important about Kleinianism that could be a shared experience – something that others would feel similarly? Although I had many thoughts concerning these questions and a

considerable internal back and forth, I am still unsure of the actual answers. Indeed, these grew into ongoing questions that are not in search for quick answers.

Somewhat paradoxically, the thesis itself might appear not to have massive shifts, which are immediately recognisable at first glance. Hence, a superficial reader might read this thesis from start to finish, thinking that the same subject with the same interests started and ended writing it. From my perspective, this is far from the truth. I would say that, next to the shift from a narrow focus on splitting and projective identification to a wider attention on positional interplays, there is a second major shift in the thesis, namely the shift that inaugurated my interest in intersubjectivity more and more, moving away almost entirely from Kleinian and Post-Kleinian ideas. Ultimately, however, this thesis only briefly touches on this latter shift, and only includes some reflections on intersubjectivity based on a short examination of Post-Bionian-Field-Theory. At the end of the thesis, my main argument is that what I previously elucidated as pure phantasy interplays (on a psychic equilibrium between the four poles of PS-P-f, PS-P-ns, psychic retreat and D-P), could also be conceived in terms of interplays within an intersubjective field. The latter perspective is, however, not meant to replace the former fully but is understood to be a complementary perspective in a dialectical sense. Ultimately, I did not go into depth regarding various field-interplays that can be generated from this novel perspective. Rather, I finished the thesis by reminding the reader that I aimed to emphasise how field-interplays and phantasy-interplays stand in a potentially fruitful, dialectical relationship, which can be shifted depending on personal taste and clinical demand. I see these two perspectives as mutually enriching.

Importantly, Kirshner (2021, p. 914) states:

“My position with regard to psychoanalytic theory for some time has been that it has become a major obstacle to progress in the field. [P]sychoanalytic theories have a way of being applied too literally as ways to identify events occurring in a session. When used in this way, terms like enactment or projective identification can simply freeze what is being thought about in an objectifying way. Rather than simply staying in contact with the affective and verbal context, the analyst has recourse to an idea that seems to explain what is happening.”

This is a significant challenge. How can we create theories that advance the field of psychoanalysis and enhance our clinical practice? I believe that I am still on a quest of seeking answers. In the end, the value of any psychoanalytic theory lies in its ability to provide new insights into (or investigatory tools for) clinical material. However, this thesis fails to mention any of my personal clinical experience, which I see as a major limitation of this present work².

Slunecko (2020) argues for the need to see an increased willingness and courage among social scientists to ‘track their own path’ and let their research be both guided and reflected by their own experiences and immersion in their respective lifeworld. ‘*De nobis ipsis non silemus*’ – ‘*we are not silent concerning ourselves*’ – could then become a refrain among social scientists, encouraging them to break with an epistemic tradition that trains them to be suspicious (at best) and phobic (at worst) of every subjective contamination of their scientific endeavours (see Slunecko, 2020, p. 199). It seems like an obvious given to me that we, as psychoanalysts, cannot hide behind a neutral third-person perspective. Neither in the clinical situation, as we are called upon the task of listening, feeling, asking, ‘punctuating’ (see Fink, 2007), alluding, interpreting, etc. with all of ourselves, nor in our attempts to write theory or case reports. All of ourselves are here and now with the analysand even if we do not openly, explicitly and purposefully bring all of ourselves into the session, e.g. by means of self-disclosures. I believe that the majority of psychoanalysts today are sensitized enough to generally understand themselves as subjectively co-involved in the unfolding of the analytic process. There seems to be a very general consensus on the fact that the subjectivity of the analyst plays a substantial role in the psychoanalytic process. The analyst’s subjectivity is a major contributor to the unfolding of the analytic process just as much as the subjectivity of a friend is a major contributor to a friendship with this person or, if the friendship analogy causes discomfort because of the implied symmetry of responsibilities that is unlike a psychoanalytic process, just as much as the subjectivity of a parent is a major contributor to the parent-infant or parent-child relationship. This simple point seems very persuasive to me. Yet, although this seems to be a consensus among many practitioners, major theoretical strands in psychoanalysis are lagging behind this simple idea. Many papers and books on psychoanalytic object-relationships that focus on the early mother-infant or mother-child relationship fail to

² This is partly due to my own timidity concerning my clinical work, but also because I am still in training. As a result, my professional and clinical identity is still largely unformed and unripe, which can be considered an additional reason why it can be left hanging on the tree of formation for some more time.

put much (or any) attention to the subjectivity and personality of the mother. This manifests, for example, in the odd phenomenon that the directionality of projective identification is predominantly elucidated as ‘from infant towards/into mother’³. With regards to fathers the situation in psychoanalytic theory is not better (or potentially even worse) since their ‘paternal function’ is often reduced to a dull pronouncement of a ‘no’. Their subjecthood robotically vanishes.

Analysts are subjectively co-involved. I have the overarching sense that the power of this claim has reached our clinical and theoretical praxes as well as our self-understanding as analysts only half-heartedly. What does it mean to be subjectively co-involved in an analytic process? What does it mean to be subjectively co-involved in the construction of psychoanalytic theory? At a very baseline level, it means that our understanding of and therapeutic action within the clinical situation and our use and creation of theory are tied to our own experiences, our embeddedness in personal and collective history. This drives us to reflect our own personal and analytic subjectivization and the sociogenetic principles of knowledge production that are tied to the field that we’re writing in (see Slunecko, 2020, pp. 198-199)⁴. From my experience, not seldomly the above sentences make analysts shudder and accuse the proponent of being ‘dangerously relativistic’. Already from this knee-jerk reaction and implied devaluation we can feel the latent ambivalence of some psychoanalysts, we can feel their inherent suspicion, their fundamental aversion to thinking what it means to be subjectively co-involved in the psychoanalytic process and in the creation of a theory. However, how could psychoanalysis not benefit from a stance in which the analyst starts from hir own life-world and hir own reflections upon hir own ‘being in the weave’, hir ‘already being in the phenomenon’ (see Slunecko, 2020, p. 199)? How could the field not profit from analysts wondering why they are hearing the things that they are hearing? Why they are emphasizing what they are emphasizing? How could this not enhance the scientific credibility of our field,

³ Obviously, there are many exceptions to this ‘trend’. I only claim that there is a predominant bulk of literature that still fails to acknowledge the subjectivity and co-constructive role of analysts and caregivers. It is not difficult to find exceptions, which can be seen, for example, in the literature on the transgenerational transmission of trauma, Laplanche’s concept on enigmatic signifiers as embedded in his revision of the ‘seduction theory’, Lacan’s emphasis on the enigma of the mother’s desire, and so on.

⁴ Indeed, such reflections should take place in training analyses.

given that we admit to not being anything close to neutral observers? This is not dangerous relativism. These are the basics of a reflective and self-reflective scientific practice⁵.

We need a psychoanalytic science that is embedded in life and psychoanalytic theoreticians and scientists that feel responsible for the implementation and the consequences of their theories within life (see Slunecko, 2020, p. 200). Psychoanalysis is at its most 'alive' when it starts from our own life and our own reflections on what resonates with us. At its most narrow, but still immensely precious, this only touches upon our experience within the clinical situation, in which we are indeed sure to be affected if we do our job well. In a psychoanalytic process we are touched, irritated, shocked, moved, fascinated, saddened, exhilarated, angered by our encounters with analysands. This is precious material that attests to the aliveness of the psychoanalytic enterprise! Indeed, this affective encounter is the birthplace of real questions and, thus, the place of origin for a legitimately psychoanalytic science. Our ability to stay in affective and verbal contact with the things that matter to us personally, with the things that move and irritate us in the clinical situation, is bound to create real and alive psychoanalytic questions⁶ (see Slunecko, 2020, pp. 201-204). To listen to our own path, to our own irritations and fascinations, implies that we are able to *"trust in [our] own perceiving and thinking, a confidence in the fact that [our] position in the world [and in the clinical situation] carries an important [...] truth-function"* (Slunecko, 2020, p. 207)⁷. As I stated before, one of

⁵ Slunecko (2020, p. 200) writes: *"Contemporary qualitative researchers are mostly familiar with the idea that specifying one's perspective (e.g. a feminist perspective) together with transparency in regard to one's research decisions increases the credibility of one's findings (at least for cultured recipients). And for a hermeneutic methodology that is not totally out of sorts it is a matter of course that an interviewer cannot be subtracted from an interview, and that an interpreter cannot be subtracted from an interpretation. This is because to understand something is to bestow meaning upon it, and meaning is endowed by (embodied) consciousness. Moreover, meaning is a relational value, i.e., the meaning of an act, a talk, an image etc. unfolds differently depending on what is used as reference or comparison point for it."*

⁶ Commenting how such an alive creation of scientific questions is superior to research questions simply deduced from 'gaps in theory' or 'research desiderata', Slunecko (2020, p. 203) encourages students *"to let loose the grip of hastily familiarized theories and false objects, in order to regain access to – and trust in – their own curiosity; to encourage them to let themselves again be enmeshed with the phenomena and with the irritations that come along with them. To keep a research diary – something that we encourage students to do from the very beginning to document and clarify the genesis of their own research questions – is fundamentally helpful in that regaining access to one's own process as the fundament of a scientific agenda. [...] This is a tracking of one's own path on small scale that nonetheless allows students to become familiar, from the very beginning of their cultural-psychological training, with the stance of epistemic reflexivity, of self-inquiry for 'the sake of science'."*

⁷ Slunecko (2020, p. 208) argues for a social science that validates itself *"through a basic trust in the knowledge potential of one's own questions, one's own irritability, i.e., a basic, yes' to the truth value of one's own position in being; through a reembedding of reasoning and research into the socio-cultural context out of which we reason and do research; through a meta-theoretical understanding that does not confine generalization to a nomothetic research logic, but can have it happen stepwise, through reconstructing a more general or collective picture from what at first seems to be merely owed to accidental circumstances. A science based on such assumptions, a*

the major limitations of this thesis is my shyness in bringing forth more of my own clinical reflections, my shyness in bringing more of myself and my own lifeworld into question. From where I stand now, I wish to be more courageous in the future.

While it is important to track one's very individual path, Slunecko (2020, p. 209) also argues for the need to reflect and track the collective path, the social history, of scientific ideas within a given field. Applied to psychoanalysis, we can argue that it is important to track the history of creation and fading of psychoanalytic ideas within the psychoanalytic field and beyond⁸. This task resonates with my attitude during the writing of this thesis. My dive into Kleinian theory was both motivated by a clinical curiosity and by a wish to 'go through', in a quite embodied manner, the history of psychoanalytic ideas. The influence of Kleinianism upon psychoanalysis was and is massive, probably only surpassed by Freud himself and potentially, some would claim, by Lacan. While writing this thesis allowed me to find some distance and reservations towards the Kleinian enterprise and while I found myself often in disagreement with the emphases that were distinctive of Kleinian and Post-Kleinian thought, I am very grateful to have gone through this experience.

Overall, writing this thesis has been an experience of being in-between at least three worlds. First, I wanted to write something that mattered to me. Something that was relevant in life and to my experience with my analysands. This was not an easy task. Retrospectively, I feel that the thesis lacks in this specific emphasis, leaving me thirsty to write more personally and from a position more embedded in my own life-world in the upcoming occasions. Second, I felt a personal need to acquaint myself with the history of psychoanalytic ideas and found myself lacking in Kleinian knowledge and sensibilities. In this way, the writing of this thesis was an attempt to track a specific path within the history of psychoanalysis and a personal attempt to become what I was not. It seems to me that my thinking acquired Kleinian and Bionian traits without feeling that I became them in my psychoanalytic identity. Third, there

science that takes its impulses from our contact with the life-world, a science whose truth logic is not based in the phantasma of a correspondance of representation (inside) and reality (outside), but is authenticated by this very contact with the life world – only such science will contribute to a „retrieving of realism“ (Dreyfus and Taylor 2015) in psychological matters“.

⁸ The lives of theories and methods have quite different paths within psychoanalysis and without psychoanalysis. Indeed, to bring an anecdote from my personal life, I encountered quite some enthusiasm towards and usage of Lacanian theories in my Bachelor study of philosophy, whereas at my psychoanalytic training institute the reference of Lacanian ideas was generally frowned upon. These are interesting phenomena that can be 'tracked' in their social, political and institutional origins.

was a world of theory 'out there' that was almost able to autonomously create its own questions once one follows the abstractions in depth. The seductive pull of this theoretical world was able to attract me sufficiently. This brought into my process of writing the odd phenomenon, that I was able to formulate abstract questions and theoretical constellations that were lacking in empirical realizations and life experience. I started to search for clinical situations that would 'fit' to my theoretical abstractions. Things made theoretical sense and I was searching for clinical situations that would provide credible support for the abstractions. In hindsight, I believe this enterprise to be rather misguided and have built up an internal dissatisfaction and suspicion towards it. Maybe it is not completely to be discarded, but I have gained an increased belief that psychoanalysis should be a 'grassroot' enterprise that goes from 'thorough empirical immersion towards careful and fallible abstractions'. These emerging feelings, which were actually cognitively present to me before this thesis but that are more immediately felt as truthful from my position now, led me to start predominantly reading case studies and less 'high theory'. This is where I am now, at the time of writing this introduction.

Lastly, let me briefly overview the chapters for introductory purposes:

In Chapter 2, I comment and analyse Melanie Klein's ideas on projective identification and splitting. I briefly summarise the three phases of her oeuvre (see Segal, 1988) and then I proceed to a fine-grained discussion of her statements on projective identification within the seminal paper "*Notes on some schizoid mechanisms*" (1952). Subsequently, I describe how the concept of projective identification is not merely tied to the paranoid-schizoid position within the work of Klein. I outline how projective identification not only conveys the meaning of attributing contents to another person but is also sometimes understood as acquisitive. This links so-called acquisitive projective identification very closely to introjective identification. I show how Klein linked the concepts of splitting and projective identification to envy and greed. Finally, I review Klein's critical stance towards the clinical concept of countertransference and outline how splitting and projective identification can be understood as embedded within Klein's metapsychology.

In Chapter 3, I give a very brief overview of the application of Kleinian concepts, most notoriously splitting and projective identification, to the emerging field of the psychoanalysis of psychoses. To give a detailed account of the kind of work done by Kleinians in this field,

which at the time was revolutionary, I delve into a thorough review of Hanna Segal's (1950) seminal paper *"Some Aspects of the Analysis of a Schizophrenic"*. Major Kleinian themes will become more apparent and crystallise in this case review. I am convinced that most readers will be disturbed by Segal's fine-grained attempts at reconstructing the precise mechanisms of splitting and projective identification that led to the clinical material in the sessions. There is a kind of tight, hyper-explanatory atmosphere to the case, especially towards the end of the case presentation. Without much further commentary, I will point this out and leave this fact to 'breathe'. In retrospect, I believe this was one breaking point that led me to cut my original project of tight investigation into splitting and projective identification and move on to a broader, positional focus of Kleinian and Post-Kleinian theory.

In Chapter 4, which I consider the heart-piece of this thesis, I attempt to accomplish multiple things. In the introduction of that chapter, I already point to the general idea of extending Kleinian positional theory from an interplay between paranoid-schizoid position and depressive position to an interplay between four sub-positions. This idea is not novel and leans on John Steiner's (1987, 1990, 1993, 2011) work. However, how I conceive of these phantasy interplays is somewhat different to Steiner and can be seen as an extension of his thought. In the sub-chapter called *"Post-Kleinian outlines of an intrapersonal distinction between the PS-P-ns and PS-P-f"*, my main focus, then, shifts to outlining the main differences between the PS-P-ns and the PS-P-f. In order to do so, I integrate significant chunks of Post-Kleinian literature. Within this chapter, the focus is still a portrayal of the analysand's internal psychic reality and his personality. At this point, I use various visual illustrations to portray and bring more to life the concepts that I am aiming to clarify. Finally, in the subchapter called *"Towards container/contained, intersubjective fields and interpenetrative immersions"*, I break with the tradition of describing the purely internal workings of the analysand and begin to open a discussion of the interpersonal and, subsequently, intersubjective within psychoanalysis. In order to do so, I start with a depiction of Bion's ideas and slowly extend the discussion to Post-Bionian-Field-Theory. I end the thesis by pointing out how the previous illustrations can be understood as interplays within a field next to being seen as interplays between phantasy constellations within one and the same personality.

2. Splitting and Projective Identification in the Work of Melanie Klein

2.1. Introduction

I read that parents suffering from PTSD are more likely to hit their children. Perhaps there is a monstrous origin to it, after all. Perhaps to lay hands on your child is to prepare him for war. (Vuong, 2019, p. 13)

Strictly speaking, Klein was not the first author to mention the term “projective identification” (the first mention of the actual term is credited to Eduardo Weiss (1925)). However, she surely was the originator of the concept of projective identification (PI) as it is theoretically embedded and discussed today (Spillius, 2012b, p. 3). Klein explicitly mentions PI for the first time within her pivotal paper “*Notes on some schizoid mechanisms*”, which she wrote in 1946 and extended in 1952. In comparison to Klein’s previous works, this paper marks a more radical and clear-cut line of departure from the theoretical language of Freud (Meltzer, 2008, p. 125).

PI is a concept that cannot be understood in isolation. Only in the wider context of Kleinian theory, PI truly takes on meaning. The theory of the paranoid-schizoid position, for example, is of pivotal importance in order to comprehend the central role that PI plays in overall mental functioning according to Klein (Kristeva, 2004, pp. 66-73). As a consequence, it is of significance to embed my exposition of the concept of PI into an account of the essence of Klein’s work. The meaning and weight of further contributions to the understanding of PI by other authors after Klein, contributions that will be illustrated in the subsequent chapters, can also only be grasped if they are measured against this contextual backdrop of Kleinian theory.

2.2. Three phases of Melanie Klein’s oeuvre

Before 1946, Klein had already made important contributions to psychoanalytic theory and practice, especially with regards to the topics of child analysis and the introduction of the depressive position. Hanna Segal (1988) acknowledges these previous contributions in her division of the Kleinian oeuvre into three phases:

(i) Klein's early contributions to the psychoanalysis of children

The first phase of Klein's work is mainly concerned with the theoretical and clinical foundations of child analysis. This project can be seen to culminate in *"The Psycho-Analysis of Children"* (Klein, 1932). In this phase, Klein is still very aligned with Freudian theory, especially with structural theory (id, super-ego, ego, and often also including ego-ideal) and the theory of libidinal stages (oral, anal, phallic, latency, genital), which can be understood to be a part of Freudian drive theory. Karl Abraham, Klein's second analyst if only for a brief time before his premature death (the first analyst being Sandor Ferenczi), was exerting an important influence on the way that Klein read Freud (Rustin & Rustin, 2017, p. 23). Although rather aligned with Freud, Klein differed to Freudian doctrine in as much as she believed that both the super-ego and Oedipal conflicts have their roots earlier in development and are not developments pertaining to the phallic or post-phallic phase (Freud believed that the child needs to reach the phallic stage to develop Oedipal conflicts, which he approximated to the age of 4 to 5 years of age, and he saw the instance of the super-ego as connected to the resolution of the Oedipus conflict and consequently phallic and/or post-phallic). Furthermore, while not breaking away from the theory of psychosexual stages, Klein already laid a different weight on the notion of the object which is tied to the drive. She had her "eye constantly on the concept of the object" as Stein (1990) points out. Klein's contributions in this phase orbit around early infantile anxiety situations (especially paranoid anxieties), early defensive mechanisms, the uses of phantasy, an understanding of play technique as an age-appropriate substitution for free association through speech, the uses of transference already in the analysis of children, and other (at least at-the-time) controversial topics. In this phase, the concept of anxiety becomes progressively more important in her work and is already linked with phantasies of retaliation by a bad and persecutory object, an object which is also already understood to largely be an outgrowth of the subject's projection of his own destructive impulses. Klein already talks about the ego's defensive tendency to split-off unbearable states of mind in order to protect the fragile infantile ego. Most of these topics will become prominent again in Klein's later work. Famously, already at this phase in her writing she started to clash with the ideas and techniques of Anna Freud within the field of child analysis, which later on led to the *Controversial Discussions* (1943-1944).

(ii) **Klein's introduction of the depressive position**

'No, sir, destruction is not necessary for art.' I said that, not because I was certain, but because I thought my saying it would help me believe it. But why can't the language for creativity be the language of regeneration? (Vuong, 2019, p. 179)

It is as if the little child would say to himself, 'Oh, what have my feelings done!'; in order to counteract these feelings, says Klein, a defence comes into being—that of 'making reparation' to the object. We can see here that the theory of the depressive position implies that, in normal development, there is no hate without love, and that the mitigation of hate and suspicious fear by love has enriching and creative aspects. (Stein, 1990)

The second phase of Klein's work is linked to the evolution of her concept of the depressive position (D-P). Put concisely, the D-P is a conglomeration of anxieties, defences and object-relations, in which the main concern of the subject revolves around the survival, wellbeing and reparation of the object, an object which is increasingly perceived as a *'whole object'*. Klein introduces the D-P in her seminal paper of 1935 called *"A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of the Manic-Depressive States"* and deepens this contribution in 1940 with her paper *"Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States"*. It is of biographical importance, that Klein was confronted in 1934 with the death (possibly suicide) of her oldest son Hans, an event which is believed to have induced her to write her 1935 paper (Hinshelwood & Fortuna, 2018, pp. 60-61). Already before, Klein suffered many losses and disillusionments in her life and personally struggled with feelings of depression. However, although the word *'depressive position'* includes a straightforward terminological reference to *'depression'*, the former and the latter should not be confused with each other (Don Carveth makes this point repeatedly in his podcasts on Klein and Bion, see e.g. Carveth, 2016). As a matter of fact, Klein builds on Freud's (1917) differentiation between mourning and melancholia/depression and links the D-P with the subject's capacity for mourning (hence suggesting that the experience of melancholia/depression is indeed a failure or difficulty of reaching and/or sustaining the D-P, a difficulty in the capacity to mourn). Putting it somewhat hyperbolically, depression and the D-P are similar sounding antipodes (for a similar point, see

Carveth, 2016). Moreover, Klein links the ability of mourning inevitable losses and illusions in life with psychic maturity, which immediately sheds light on the fact that the D-P was a rather desirable state of mind in her view.

Klein postulates that the D-P emerges as a mode of experiencing at an age as early as three to six months. The D-P is subsequently repeatedly lost and revisited by the subject throughout early childhood (and in lesser frequency, at least tendentially, throughout life). Although the D-P can never be fully worked through according to Klein (Segal, 1988, p. 80), every time that the position is regained it is furtherly refined, consolidated and the conflicts arising within it are increasingly worked through. The main marker of the D-P is the subject's concern for the object (and not solely for the self). The subject is increasingly focusing its attention on the integrity and wellbeing of the object, it experiences concern, '*depressive anxiety*' and '*depressive guilt*' in cases in which it believes the object to have suffered harm or having been injured (especially if this injury was provoked in reality or phantasy by the self). In the D-P '*whole-objects*' (in contrast to '*part-objects*') begin to be recognized by the subject, leading to the realization of '*ambivalent*' object-relations (with '*ambivalence*' pointing to the perception of '*mixed*' or '*fused*' object relations, not fully ideal and loving and not fully persecuting and hating). Within the D-P there is an increased capacity of bearing the ambivalence of both good and bad experiences about the object and about the self. According to Klein, this leads to an increasing integration of parts which were formerly kept separate and at distance (disowned self-parts can be increasingly owned and felt as integrated aspects of one's self, part-objects can be brought together into whole-objects). The (m)Other is being increasingly perceived, loved and identified-with as a whole person.

We could call the move into the D-P an emotional repositioning of the subject in relation to the object. This emotional repositioning, in which both self and object are perceived as more integrated or whole, leads to a shift in the subject's primary concern, as stated, from the survival and wellbeing of the self to a concern for the welfare and survival of the object upon which the subject depends on. The subject is afraid of its own destructiveness. As such, the subject's own destructive and hating phantasies towards the object lead to feelings of guilt ('*depressive guilt*'), anxieties of loss, sadness, states of pining, and phantasies of or attempts at reparation and atonement. The state of increased integration has the potential to lead the subject to experience strong feelings of anxiety and guilt, both rather painful affective states,

which are difficult to bear. In order to protect itself from the mental pain of the D-P, the subject is drawn to use a set of new defences, e.g. obsessive and/or manic attempts at reparation or even the manic denial of damage caused to the object.

Additionally, it is important to note that the perception of increasingly whole-objects, implying the coexistence of both gratifying and frustrating aspects within one and the same object, implies the loss of the idealized or idolized part-object, fully loved and perceived as fully gratifying. Indeed, the fear of loss refers first and foremost to the fear of loss of the ideal object in itself and less so to the fear of loss of the whole object. As I will note later on in this chapter, in Kleinian theory the self develops around the ideal object, the ideal object is progressively internalized during realizations of loving and blissful experiences, and the self is able to gradually build up around this internalized crutch. After the ideal object has been understood to be a mere phantasy, due to the splitting of the object, the subject now feels that one's internal foundation, which also served as a means of identification with the ideal object, is a void. The pure love and perfection that was experienced through the lenses of infantile phantasy was never there in the first place, but was the result of the splitting of experiences. This loss might be so difficult to face that one is never entirely giving up this phantasy of initial (or hidden) bliss. It is as if one is constantly living in the "fear of loss" and never quite reaches the "experience of loss" of the ideal object (see Steiner (1993) for the sub-categorization of the D-P into "fear of loss" and "experience of loss"). In certain cases, this lack of inner foundation can bring about a great deal of confusion and lead to a renewal of splitting, since the loss is experienced as too threatening to the survival of the self (and with the focus on the survival of the self we are back in the PS-P). In other cases the lack of inner foundation causes an increased focus on the preoccupation with the gradually-more-whole object. Showing concern and attempting reparation to the increasingly more whole object fosters the good elements in the relationship and relieves one's sense of guilt after one's aggression. In this sense, the fear of loss of the object is now also connected onto the increasingly more whole object (but only as a secondary movement, since before it was connected to the ideal object only). Furthermore, the very fact that we have to say "increasingly more whole object" suggests that this process of object-integration is never fully reached, and the ideal object (as well as the bad object, the inner persecutor) are never quite fully abandoned in phantasy and mourned. We could say that the D-P is the positional

battleground in which this loss of the ideal object is first feared and then, at least under favourable conditions, more and more experienced, endured and mourned. This also implies that the infant needs to increasingly turn to the whole and therefore imperfect object (and less so to the ideal object) in order to relieve his own persecutory fears, which results in a loss of immediacy of relief. The increasingly more whole (m)Other is still aimed to be introjected in order to function as an inner protector against feelings of persecution. However, s/he is not as efficient in protecting the subject since s/he now also contains less-than-ideal properties. S/he is unable to secure the immediacy of relief. If this loss of immediacy is endured, the consequence of this psychic movement is an increased capacity to bear frustration. Following these reflections, it is clear that ability to bear frustration establishes itself in parallel to the capacity to tolerate ambivalence. By increasingly working-through the D-P, the ideal object, and with it the immediacy of relieving protection, are incrementally experienced as lost and have to be mourned. This psychic motion can be avoided by manic denials of the loss of the ideal object, in which the subject keeps its phantasy of an idealized saviour intact. The good object is not given up and the D-P is abandoned in favour of a PS-P or a transitional zone between the PS-P and the D-P. This is essentially the melancholic struggle within the D-P. Should the loss of the ideal object be tolerated, this however implies the increasing realization of 'good-enough' objects and object relations. The perception of frustration by a 'good-enough' object can be endured, without recurring to (i) the phantasy that the frustration was caused by a separate persecutory object and (ii) the phantasy that the frustration could be magically and immediately recovered by the intervention of an ideal object. For Klein, this development furtherly leads to an increased capacity of symbolic functioning, creativity and sublimation as ways of dealing with disappointment and lack. Life gets more complex and diverse in the D-P since both the self and the objects can be seen in many facets. This implies that both positive emotions as well as negative emotions and distress are more fused together and spread out over time, instead of being isolated, split-off and kept apart to moments of paranoid anxieties and moments of idealized bliss, perhaps creating what Ocean Vuong (2019, p. 122) called a "*deep purple feeling, not good, not bad, but remarkable simply because you didn't have to live on one side or the other*".

(iii) The paranoid-schizoid position

The third phase of Klein's work can be said to truly begin with "*Notes on some schizoid mechanisms*" (1946), in which Klein introduces the paranoid-schizoid position (PS-P). Shortly defined, the PS-P is defined by a subject absorbed in phantasies orbiting around the question of its own survival. Within this position one's anxieties are foremost of a persecutory nature and the ego, threatened by the threat of its own annihilation, employs various defences to protect itself from this danger, most importantly by employing phantasies of splitting and projective identification. Starting from this paper the concept of projective identification finds its first explicit mention and gets to inhabit an increasingly important role. Although revolutionary, the PS-P was not an entirely new development for Klein at this point, since many of the earlier contributions already mentioned specific constellations of early, especially paranoid, anxieties and defences, which can be understood as being part of the PS-P. What was truly new was Klein's elaboration and systematization of these anxieties and defences (as well as phantasies about self and objects), into a new position, the PS-P, which she then sides to the developmentally subsequent and more emotionally mature D-P. This is an extraordinary moment within the Kleinian oeuvre, since it firstly and firmly establishes the dualistic conceptualization of psychic positions, PS-P versus D-P, which became the constitutive hallmark of Kleinian theory. The PS-P and D-P dualism can be seen as a theory trying to conceptualize the development and ongoing fluctuations from emotionally less mature to emotionally more mature states of being. This is a grand and difficult task, which sets the stakes high and invites both admiration as well as harsh critique to the theory.

When we encounter the PS-P we enter the world of nightmares, witches, monsters, demons, dungeons, but also the world of heroes, gods and goddesses, extasy, pure bliss and gratification. Klein assumes that in the PS-P there is a rudimentary although unintegrated ego since the start of life, which is engaged in object-relations. These object-relations are mediated and perceived through the lens of infantile phantasy. Klein thinks that the young infant suffers (at least at times) a considerable amount of anxiety and that these anxieties are experienced as overwhelming and threatening to the young ego with disintegration. Broadly speaking, Klein differentiates between constitutional sources of anxiety, which, as we will see, Klein links to her concept of the death instinct, and environmental sources of anxiety, mainly stemming from the infant's interpretation (in phantasy) of environmental frustrations or

traumatic blows. Although there have been different interpretations of the Kleinian oeuvre in this regard (e.g. see Carveth, 2016), we could say that most authors underlie the tendency that Klein especially emphasises the anxiety that emerges from the activity of the death instinct. Rosenfeld (1971) perfectly summarizes Klein's ideas on these early anxieties and their connection to the death instinct:

[Klein] believed that anxiety arises from the operation of the death instinct within the organism, which is experienced as a fear of annihilation. In order to defend itself against this anxiety the primitive ego uses two processes: Part of the death instinct is projected into the external object which hereby becomes a persecutor, while that part of the death instinct, which is retained in the ego, turns its aggression against the persecutory object.

In this reading offered by Rosenfeld, it is the activity of the death instinct within the organism that sets all these processes of defence into motion. It can be observed that primordial and apparently objectless fears of annihilation are turned into object-centred persecutory anxieties. Carveth (2016) instead emphasizes a different reading of how persecutory anxieties come into being according to Klein. In this second reading it is the infant's still rudimentary and immature psychic apparatus that leads the infant to experience hunger, frustration and the lack of the presence of a loving object, not as the absence of goodness within its current experience but as the presence of a persecutory, hating and bad objects. Klein believes that the infant cannot think frustration in terms of lack and absence yet. Instead, the infant lives in a world of concrete presence of good or bad things. Put differently, the infant is not capable of forming an object-constancy yet, which would allow him to represent absence in his mind (Rosenbluth, 1965). As Carveth points out, Klein offers this second explanation as an additional and parallel explanation to the former. Thus, it can be said that Klein offers two parallel accounts for how persecutory feelings arise in the infant.

However they may arise, Klein postulates that the presence of evil and persecutory objects causes a great deal of distress in the infant, since the infant is afraid of its own annihilation by these forces. As a consequence, the infant is preoccupied with phantasies orbiting around its own survival. These phantasies take on the character of defences against annihilation or persecution. In particular, the ego tries to deal with and defend against existential threats and

anxieties through the defensive phantasies of splitting, projection, introjection, idealization, omnipotent control and denial. Rosenfeld (1971) connects the characteristic splitting, projection and introjection of the PS-P with the death and life instincts:

[Klein] emphasizes that it is characteristic for early development that the idealized and the bad persecuting objects are split and kept wide apart, which would imply that the life and death instincts are kept in a state of defusion. Simultaneously with the splitting of the objects the splitting of the self into good and bad parts takes place. These processes of ego splitting also keep the instincts in a state of defusion. Almost simultaneously with the projective processes another primary process, introjection, starts, largely in the service of the life instinct: it combats the death instinct because it leads to the ego taking in something life-giving (first of all food) and thus binding the death instinct working within.

It could be argued that splitting can be seen as the most foundational mechanism characterizing the PS-P. According to Klein, the subject in the PS-P splits experiences pertaining to both self and object into good and bad. A world emerges in which goodness and evil is polarised and kept far apart. The splitting of the object leads to the infant's perception of part-objects, which for the time being are mistaken as the whole. Klein thinks that a subject in the PS-P is not able to bear feelings of ambivalence (love and hate) towards one and the same object and hence an object, which in its whole has a mixture of good and bad aspects, is experienced by the infant as two distinct objects, one purely good and hence loved and one purely evil and hence hated. The experiential landscape that emerges for the infant is a world filled with intense experiences and pure feelings. Melanie Klein stresses the infant's capacity for both love and hate and how early development is essentially experienced by the infant as a pure confrontation with goodness or evil, loving or hating forces. One function of splitting is that the split-off content can then be projected in phantasy. The subject can expel a part of itself outside of the sphere of what has to be perceived and tolerated at any given moment and attribute that part of itself to any object in phantasy. As Stein (1990) notes, Klein (1930) had already pointed out that "*the ego's first mode of defence [...] is not repression, as Freud thought, but rather expulsion*". According to Klein, this splitting fulfils manifold other

functions, one of them being also the protection of the good object from the badness and hatred stemming from the self and/or other internal objects, which could potentially spoil or destroy the goodness. Indeed, Klein comes to the view that this binary splitting is a vital condition for healthy development, enabling the infant to isolate the goodness, taking it in and holding on to it sufficiently in order to introject this pure goodness, warmth and security as an established, central and reliable core of its being and experiencing (Spillius et al., 2011, pp. 95-96). Only after the primordial introjection of goodness, in which goodness is kept apart from evil, the infant can proceed to integrate contrasting, bad and frustrating aspects of the object and of the self. As stated, Klein's view of the PS-P implies both the splitting of the object and the splitting of the self or ego. Klein argues that a split-view of the object (only good or only bad) already implies a splitting of the self (only loving or only hating feelings enter one's self-perception and experiencing towards the world).

Furthermore, Klein argues that in the PS-P there is both an early distinction in phantasy between self and object (and hence the possibility for the self to get-rid of contents and attribute them to the objects in phantasy), but also a strong merger between the two (in-so-doing self-states get confused with the other and it becomes unclear who is feeling or thinking what). As suggested, the infant perceives its own state of hunger not as a pure self-state, but it perceives this state as the presence of a persecuting and malevolent bad breast. This is essentially a form of projective identification, since a bad, frustrating, unbearable and still unconceivable self-state is projectively attributed to a bad and harassing object in phantasy. We could say that through projective identification the mind creates an object out of a feeling. As Stein (1990) points out "*Klein assumes that in psychic reality, feelings create objects*". This example also serves as an illustration of both the distinction and merger of self and object in Kleinian metapsychology (which I will illustrate in greater detail later on). Self-object boundaries are very fluid, confused and fluctuating in the PS-P. Indeed, Klein describes the evolution of a cycle in which both good and bad objects are introjected, projected, re-introjected and re-projected, which essentially challenges, at least in phantasy, the stability, mutability and texture of self-object distinctions.

2.3. Embodied sentiments: confusing and controlling attacks

The confusion and fluctuations between self and object brings us closer to projective identification (PI). For Klein, PI is an unconscious phantasy in which good or bad parts of the self (or one's internal objects) are split-off and then projected into an object. Importantly, Klein understands PI as a phantasy of the projector and does not talk about interpersonal forms or consequences of PI. For most of Klein's work, PI is understood as an omnipotent phantasy in which parts of one's self are expelled, then put into someone else and controlled from within the object. For Klein, PI is bound to the splitting processes of the ego in the PS-P (Rosenfeld, 1971b). PI adds a further step to the splitting processes insofar bad or good parts of oneself are first split-off, dis-identified from one's self, and then projected into an object. As such, splitting and PI are intertwined pairs for Klein. The added processual step of PI leads the subject to identify the projected contents with the object, which has been projected into. Since the content, however, is de facto a part of one's own self, PI leads to fusion with the object. Klein also suggested that PI leads to paranoid anxieties of a retaliatory kind in the projecting subject if his projected contents were filled with aggressive and destructive elements. Again, for Klein, all of these processes are happening within the phantasy of the projecting subject and are not truly actualized in an interpersonal sphere. Only later, analysts will point to the evocative and interpersonally inducing functions that the projector has on a receptor, but Klein sticks to describing PI as a phantasy, limiting herself to happenings within one subject.

In the extended "*Notes on some schizoid mechanisms*" (1952), Klein mentions the concept of PI in connection with the infant's phantasies of attacking the bad part-object, the bad breast or an extension of the breast. She differentiates these vengeful attacks onto the bad breast from other attacks, which take on a more introjecting and oral form, namely of sucking dry, scooping out and greedily robbing the breast from its goodness. PI is hence firstly associated more closely to anal or urethral forms of attacking the bad object. Klein writes:

The other line of attack derives from the anal and urethral impulses and implies expelling dangerous substances (excrements) out of the self and into the mother. Together with these harmful excrements, expelled in hatred, split-off parts of the ego are also projected on to the mother or, as I would rather call it, into the mother. These

excrements and bad parts of the self are meant not only to injure but also to control and to take possession of the object. In so far as the mother comes to contain the bad parts of the self, she is not felt to be a separate individual but is felt to be the bad self. Much of the hatred against parts of the self is now directed towards the mother. This leads to a particular form of identification which establishes the prototype of an aggressive object-relation. I suggest for these processes the term 'projective identification'. (Klein, 1952, p. 8)

From this description we can immediately see an important feature of Klein's style of theorizing, which has been controversially discussed, namely her use of body-oriented language. Bell (2001, p. 130) notes that in so doing Klein follows Freud's dictum that "*the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego*" (Freud, 1923). Furthermore, she can be still understood to follow a certain at-the-time predominant psychoanalytic style of constructing an explanation, which includes the use of oral, anal, genital, etc. vocabulary. At this point however, her employment of these theory-laden words is already very distinct and distant from the Freudian theory of libidinal stages (Likierman, 2001, pp. 67-69). Klein (1952) states that she is aware of the severe limitations of theorizing about the internal world of the infant in earliest development, since infants do not possess language yet and cannot think in words. As such, she is convinced that her way of putting the infant's preoccupations and mind-states into language intrinsically suffers from somewhat of an adult bias. Klein, however, believes that we can still make meaningful hunches and approximations of how infants might internally perceive themselves and their objects and which unconscious processes could be ongoing within them. She believes that bodily processes build the foundation of later thinking processes, which are later carried out by words, insofar e.g. orality and swallowing can be perceived on a bodily level as a process of taking-something-in, introjecting the object, whereas anality/urethrality and expelling (also vomiting or spitting-out on the oral level) can be perceived on a bodily level as processes of projecting, letting-out and attacking an object (in states of hatred) or gifting a certain body-excrement to an object (in states of loving). This shows that Klein believed that infants "*lean-onto*" the language of the body within unconscious phantasy in order to process and think emotional states. Thus, in orality and anality/urethrality, the infant's embodiment allows to process thought-functions which orbit

around “*in or out*”, “*me or you*”. Thought-functions of splitting, introjection/introjective identification and projection/projective identification are achieved by leaning onto the experience of the body and its bodily fluids. Furthermore, it seems of importance that it is not the employment of the faeces themselves, for example, to determine the hatred expressed through the phantasy, but faeces can be employed in phantasy as both a vehicle of harm or as a prized possession that is given as a gift to an object, depending on whether hating or loving states of self-experience and object-relations have to be represented in phantasy. It is of additional importance in Kleinian theory that the infant uses not only its own body to represent thought, but also the body of the (m)Other. This (m)Other’s body can be attacked through PI and filled with the infant’s own projected body parts and fluids.

In the above quote, Klein underlines the aggressive and injuring qualities of PI, however she does not stop there, since she points to the infant’s wish to take control and possession of the object. In discussing unconscious aims driving the subject to employ PI in the work of Klein, Bell (2001, pp. 131-132) points to a specific and a more general unconscious aim behind PI. Bell talks about motivation, but I prefer to employ the word ‘aim’ in this context. The specific aim is associated to the subject’s need to rid itself of a particular feeling or thought (linked to a part of the self or an internal object), whereas the more general aim is associated to the fact that the whole process of PI generates a sense of unconscious (if not also conscious, at least sometimes and in certain facets) control-of and possession-over the object. If in my phantasy a bit of me is put into you through PI, then you are less unpredictable, because you are less different. Enigmatic externality is reduced by the ejected internality. The object’s mind and intentionality is read through the phantasy-screen of the PI. In states of the PS-P, in which whole-object relations are not yet present, the perception of the object’s autonomy and difference is impaired or split-off and the object’s intentionality is hence almost exclusively coloured by projective processes. The sense of control, exerted through the PI, is also determined by the fact that within the PS-P the object can be malleated in phantasy in order to take on specific functions for the subject: in this sense it seems that Klein was pursuing an idea, in which through the infant’s PI the subject is able to omnipotently enter (in phantasy) the object and exert control over the object’s thoughts, intentions, volitions and actions from within. This process could be visualized by a puppeteer’s relation to his puppets and the filling of a hand-puppet (an object seen as mindless on its own) with

one's hand, which is indeed a part of oneself. Given that the infant has an inherent dependency over the life-giving object, an object which is effectively entirely deciding over life and death for the infant, Klein postulates that this intuited dependency activates a set of anxieties, which in turn need to be defended against through possessive and controlling phantasies. These latter phantasies have the function of securing within the mind of the infant the continuation of life-giving supplies. It seems obvious that one's sense of control and security is augmented, if in phantasy the subject can cast itself as heroically damaging and defeating his enemies and making-presents-to and rewarding his ally and source of life. Within the PS-P it does not matter yet that the infant does not indeed possess this magical control over his objects of dependency (Likierman, 2001, p. 158). Splitting and PI are seen by Klein as the foundational functions and vehicles through which the omnipotently controlling phantasy can be built together and carried out and, as such, splitting and PI are phantasies of more basic importance for the functioning of the mind than e.g. control, denial, omnipotence, etc., which are defences which can become operative only through assemblies of splitting and PI.

In the above quote, Klein argues that the phantasy of greater control and possession over the object leads to a blurring of self-object boundaries, in the sense of a merging into the object or a denial of separateness. Indeed, it is part of the seemingly paradoxical nature of PI that it can be described to have both a distancing and a merging function: (i) on one level, by getting rid of certain contents and projecting them in phantasy into the object, the subject is distancing himself from certain parts of himself (s/he is dis-identifying from them) and perceives the object, which is now the vessel in phantasy of the content, as accordingly different and distant from himself, and (ii) on another level, by putting a bit of himself into the object, s/he is de facto reducing the differentiation between self and object, s/he is merging himself into the object or denying the object's separateness. This distancing and merging function of PI can be attributed, at least partly, to two different points of view, the phenomenal point of view of the projector, who is feeling more and more distant from the object (through dis-identification from a content, hence projection and identification of the projected content within the object), and the point of view of the 'actual exchange of fluids' so to speak (perceived by an ideal external observer?), in which the projector is de facto increasingly making the object into himself (Bell, 2001, pp. 131-133). What seems of importance to an understanding of Klein's metapsychology is, that Klein believes that an infant (or a subject in

the PS-P) is equipped with an early ego and that this ego enters into object-relations from the very start of life. Klein's rejection of the concept of primary narcissism, a developmental phase in which object-relations are not yet present, is another view that has become a trademark of Kleinian theory. I will comment on this aspect of Kleinian theory in greater detail later on, but what is of relevance for the moment is that, in Klein's view, the ego is related to objects from the start and that Klein's view implies that the infant differentiates, at least somewhat, between itself and its objects since the very start of life. Within this context, PI takes on the role of influencing or malleating this very differentiation by both distancing and merging the boundaries between the self and objects. Klein, hence, believes that the self-object differentiation (as well as the lack there-of) is heavily constructed and created through splitting and PI within the PS-P, a process which clearly is an impediment to the perception of separate whole-objects. This view of splitting and PI as constructive of self-object boundaries seems evident also in Klein's view that frustration is not represented as an absence of the object/breast, but as the persecutory presence of a bad object/breast, which points to the subject's inability within the PS-P to represent lack to itself, to perceive and think separateness and absence of objects. The infant, in Klein's view, is trapped in the present, a present in which all is presence, all is "*da*" and nothing is "*fort*", meaning that there is an absolute lack of lack - a state evocative of intense anxieties and feelings of persecution.

Bell (2001, p. 131) notes that merging and fusing qualities of PI are not only determinable from the point of view of the 'actual exchange of fluids' but also from the point of view of the projector himself, even if s/he is dis-identified from the content. In Kleinian theory it is a matter of debate to which degree the projector still maintains psychic contact with the projected content even after dis-identification (see Conolly (2018, pp. 44-49) for a cogent summary of the debate). If the subject would recognize the projected content as its own after re-introjection, it could be argued that some form of contact (which then determines the feeling "*this was actually mine*" or "*this is me*", etc.) was always unconsciously maintained with the projected content (Grotstein, 1994; Sandler, 1987). The split-off content was never fully made foreign, some of it still screams with familiarity. As such, in this view a split is never fully achieved. Just as in repression, in which the repressed returns in disguise through the symptom, the dream, the parapraxis, etc., the split-off content has the tendency of undoing the split in one way or another and this tendency is fuelled by the uncomplete loss of contact

with the split-off content itself. Furthermore, as Conolly (2018, p. 48) suggests, the maintained unconscious contact with the projected content can help us to understand the deep psychological connection that the projector often feels with the receptor (in his phantasy) of the content. Bell describes some aspects in which the unconscious psychic contact of the projector reaches into conscious perception of the projector in a symptomatic way. He states that one aspect of the conscious experience which sometimes accompanies subjects after the employment of PI in phantasy is a mysterious sense that others know or may know something about oneself, that others might indeed have a special access to one's thoughts, that one's mind feels open for everyone to read, and that hence boundaries between self and others are perceived as disturbingly insubstantial, indeed the contrary of distant. Bell argues that this state is a perfect description of the self-object confusion that especially accompanies an excessive use of PI. Subjects that do not predominantly inhabit the PS-P might relate to glimpses of this sensation, for example, immediately after waking up from a dream, say next to a partner, it is not only possible for the affect and content of the dream to colour one's view of the partner in the morning, but we might even act under a certain more or less mild belief or stance that the partner on some level senses what is in our minds or indeed has some access to the dream. A mild self-object confusion and weak persecutory feelings potentially arise in this situation.

2.4. The aftermath: feeling weak, empty and persecuted

Continuing on the text passage of Klein (1952) from above, she goes on as follows:

When projection is mainly derived from the infant's impulse to harm or to control the mother, he feels her to be a persecutor. In psychotic disorders this identification of an object with the hated parts of the self contributes to the intensity of the hatred directed against other people. As far as the ego is concerned the excessive splitting off and expelling into the outer world of parts of itself considerably weaken it. For the aggressive component of feelings and of the personality is intimately bound up in the mind with power, potency, strength, knowledge and many other desired qualities. (Klein, 1952, p. 8)

In this paragraph it becomes clear that feelings of persecution increase when the infant aims to harm or control the object in phantasy through PI. As a consequence of the projection the main ensuing anxieties orbit around paranoid fears of *retaliation* by the object. The relief that the infant obtains by attacking the object with a bad part of itself through PI is short-lived and is deemed to backfire, since the infant now starts to perceive its external world as having acquired the projected contents, making the world into a terrifying and threatening place. Hence, the PI of bad and hostile contents into the object leads to menacing persecutory feelings, which add to the ego's already pre-existing preoccupation with the survival of the self. Klein goes further in describing that the (excessive) use of PI forms the basis for some fundamental infantile anxiety situations, which are essentially paranoid. Klein (1952) argues that a PI with the aim to forcefully enter the object in order to control it, can result in anxieties of being controlled in turn by the object. We fear that others do onto us what we have done onto them. These anxieties are perceived as a danger that the subject who has invaded the object will be caught, controlled, imprisoned and attacked from inside the object. According to Klein, these processes underline later disturbances of male potency and are also foundational to the psychodynamics of claustrophobia. Furthermore, Klein argues that the introjection or re-introjection of a previously forcefully entered object (in phantasy through PI) is complicated and riddled with perils, since the introjection of an object that contains dangerous and expelled aspects of the self greatly strengthens the subject's feelings of inner persecution. A projected-into object is more difficult to swallow. Resultantly, Klein states that these varieties of persecutory situations, in which retaliation is feared from both external as well as internal sources, are a foundation of paranoia and other psychotic disturbances.

Bell (2001, p. 135) notes that these abstract-sounding processes can be illustrated well with certain nightmare scenarios in popular movies. The movie "Alien" (1979) is a good illustration portraying a view of the world "*much like Klein's view of the infant's early months of life*" (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999, p. 284), in which we can locate the splitting of the object, as well as retaliatory anxieties after attacking a bad object, and the fight between love and hate towards an object within the infant: in the movie, humans land on an unknown planetoid, they leave their spaceship (which they call "*Mother*" and which, at this point of the movie, can be understood as the good and safe part-object) in order to explore this rather hostile planetoid, on which they will find an eerie and dark derelict spacecraft within which they

enter and hence will be attacked by an alien force, which clings itself onto the mouth of a human (this spacecraft as well as the alien force can be understood to illustrate the attacking, dangerous and orally-punishing bad part-object/breast, the counterpart to the good “Mother”). Attacks onto the spider-like alien creature prove to be highly dangerous, and although the creature later-on dies and hence the threat disappears, this sense of victory and calmness quickly backfires and is substituted by persecutory fears, since the alien creature deposited embryonic parts of itself into a human. These embryos grew inside the host, slowly but steadily taking the host over and destroying him from the inside. This sequence can be understood to illustrate retaliatory fears after attacks onto the bad object through PI. From this point on, the good part-object “Mother” becomes increasingly spoiled and threatening by the danger lurking from within. Spaces of safety are getting slimmer and slimmer, which leads to claustrophobic anxieties. Indeed, one of the humans proposes to abandon “Mother” with the escape shuttle, termed “Narcissus” - an idea which others decline on the grounds that this isolated and safe shuttle is too small and tight for all survivors to escape. An interesting turn of events in the movie is when Ripley, one of the humans, accesses the “Mother” console in order to query “Mother” about why they are being unable to get rid of the intruder, hence neutralizing the badness. “Mother” cannot clarify and instead refers to a special order, which is only accessible to the science officer on board, named Ash, who then turns out to be an android on a cynical mission to bring an alien specimen back on earth, to be used as a weapon, no matter the costs. In this sequence, “Mother” firstly turns out to be not all-good, the good-part object is not only infiltrated with alien badness, something alien which is still split-off from the familiar goodness of “Mother”, but the previously all good part-object is now seen as also having malevolent intentions and secrets, which are connected to third parties and thus possibly evoking Oedipal themes within the movie. In the movie this does not lead to a depressive position and ambivalence towards “Mother”. Instead, the badness is too overwhelming, which leads to the final destruction of “Mother” and an escape through “Narcissus” by Ripley, the only human still alive.

In the quote above, Klein also mentions that excessive splitting and PI of parts of the self into the object considerably weaken the already fragile ego. She argues that the projection of hating parts of the self into the object results in an impoverishment of certain important aspects of the mind associated with “*power, potency, strength, knowledge and many other*

desired qualities". Bell (2001, p. 132-133) notes that also the projection of good and loving aspects of the self into the object weakens the ego, for example in strong feelings of romantic adoration, in which the projector feels himself to be nothing or minuscule in comparison to the adored object, which radiates absolute perfection. Indeed, it is a defining characteristic of schizoid states of mind, that the PI of self-facets has brought about feelings of inner emptiness and unreality in the projector. As Conolly (2018, p. 46) has pointed out, the impoverishment of the ego implies a subjective sense of deficit, a non-availability of an experiential layer of one's mind, which might contribute to the above-mentioned sense of unconscious connectedness with the ejected self-parts that have been projected in phantasy into an object.

Klein sees a closeness between processes ongoing in the PS-P and phenomena described by psychotic analysands. The experience of being invaded, controlled and possibly annihilated by evil forces, the feeling of being fragmented, split into pieces, of losing parts of oneself and feeling disintegrated, as well as the division of the world into goodness and evil, rescuers and persecutors, are all part of the psychotic dimension of experience. In the psychotic dimension of experience these inner states of mind are oftentimes concretely perceived through delusions, hallucinations and other distortions. Segal (1957), in her famous paper "*Notes on symbol formation*", points to the confusion between self, object and symbol as a consequence of excessive PI in order to account for the concreteness of the psychotic. This concreteness of the psychotic analysand, who is not able to differentiate symbol from thing, representation from represented, the grocery list from the groceries, can lead such an analysand, at moments in which the analyst is experienced as the bad part-object, to actually (and not metaphorically, or in an "*as-if*" manner) experience the analyst's interpretations as alien, destructive and invading. S/he might feel his own mind under threat of destruction or deception from this external invasion. Under such threatening circumstances, the analysand may feel forced to take on an identity as powerful and pure as that of God in order to ward off the attack, which in turn might backfire into spoiling a positive link to the analyst even further, since the analyst might now be perceived as enviously gazing at the analysand's powers, wanting to rob him of this glory. Interestingly, Klein herself never worked with psychotic patients over an extended period of time (with the possible exception of Dick (see Klein, 1939), an analysand who she followed since a child and for many years, but who would more likely be diagnosed as autistic

nowadays), but Kleinians, most notably Segal, Rosenfeld and Bion, made the work with psychotic analysands a common praxis, linking the Kleinian approach distinctively with the investigation of and clinical confrontation with psychosis, a task which until then was seen as not recommendable and even impossible by Freudians (Bell, 2001, pp. 136-137).

2.5. When goodness prevails: trust in love over hate

Klein (1952) goes on as follows:

It is, however, not only the bad parts of the self which are expelled and projected, but also good parts of the self. Excrements then have the significance of gifts; and parts of the ego which, together with excrements, are expelled and projected into the other person represent the good, i.e. the loving parts of the self. The identification based on this type of projection again vitally influences object-relations. The projection of good feelings and good parts of the self into the mother is essential for the infant's ability to develop good object-relations and to integrate his ego. However, if this projective process is carried out excessively, good parts of the personality are felt to be lost, and in this way the mother becomes the ego-ideal; this process too results in weakening and impoverishing the ego. Very soon such processes extend to other people, and the result may be an over-strong dependence on these external representatives of one's own good parts. Another consequence is a fear that the capacity to love has been lost because the loved object is felt to be loved predominantly as a representative of the self. The processes of splitting off parts of the self and projecting them into objects are thus of vital importance for normal development as well as for abnormal object-relations. (Klein, 1952, pp. 8-9).

In the above paragraph, Klein mentions the projection of good and loving aspects of the self, a kind of PI in which it becomes apparent that PI is not exclusively an aggressive phantasy. Indeed, both splitting and PI are also employed, for Klein, in order to isolate and protect goodness. As such, while tendentially the ego attempts to introject the good and project the

bad, this has many exceptions. As was stressed by Ferenczi (1949/1980) and in a different fashion by Anna Freud (1936/1987), when the subject is confronted with abusive (external) objects, the *introjection of* and *identification with* the malevolent object can be understood as an attempt to gain more insight into the mind of the abuser, into their malicious plans and hence achieve a sense of control over the threatening situation (Segal, 1988, p. 26). Another instance, in which the tendency of the ego to introject the good and project the bad is shifted, concerns PI: Klein argues that certain times the good can only be protected and kept safe when it is projected outwards, e.g. when the ego is overcome with an overwhelming sense of badness and destructiveness inside, in which it fears to destroy also its good internal object, or in which, through the projection, the ego needs to create an anticipation of a godly and saving object, coming as a rescuer in need. A PI of good aspects of the self or internal objects results in the idealization or idolization of the object. As a consequence, the self might feel extremely dependent on this object, it might feel that it would be impossible to live without it and it might feel that this object contains all the goodness found in the world, that indeed the world would be dark and empty without the object. This amount of feelings of dependency are terribly hard to bear, which is also why Heimann (1942/2004) pointed out that under such extreme circumstances the self might even feel persecuted by its good object, since it experiences itself to be utterly subservient and dependent on it and its love. These are the dynamics which, according to Klein, underlie a compulsive clinging to the good object. The clinging is motivated out of strong separation-fears and fears of catastrophe following even temporary object-loss. Segal (1988, p. 27) points to the fact that PI can hence be employed precisely with the aim to avoid separation. Importantly, in these instances, an object-loss is also perceived as a loss of parts of the self, since the self has projected parts of itself in phantasy into the object. Consequently, mild to severe fears of breakdown can appear in the phantasy of analysands when it comes to the temporary object-loss during a therapeutic break, say summer-break.

I believe that in order to understand Klein's view it is essential to comprehend the connection between PI and healthy development or, more specifically, between the PI of good feelings and good parts of the self into the object on the one hand and the development of ego-integration and integrated, secure and good object-relations on the other hand. As stated, in the PS-P the self has a split relationship to its primary object, which it splits into two objects:

the ideal and gratifying breast and the demonized, persecutory breast. Both of these objects are created and sustained by PI. As Segal (1988, p. 26) puts it, the infant will then make two sets of experiences: (i) the projected phantasy of the ideal object will merge and be validated by gratifying actual experiences of love and feeding by the caretaker and (ii) the projected phantasy of the persecutory and demonized object will merge and be confirmed by actual experiences of deprivation, pain and hatred by the caretaker. The actual parenting will hence take on the role of confirming or dis-confirming phantasies and hence shaping future expectations and trust in the object and in the self. Experiences of gratification and love keep persecutory phantasies out of mind and the burden of persecutory experiences and annihilatory anxieties during moments of deprivation is ameliorated by the timely, consistent and predictable arrival of renewed gratification. Since the infant aims to introject, keep inside and identify with the ideal object and since it most fears that the bad object will get inside of the ego and annihilate both the self and the ideal internal object, both environmental gratification and the infant's capacity to project and expect idealized and pure goodness appear to be essential for healthy development. As Stein (1990) put it, Klein *"writes about the urge, rooted in anxiety and existing from the earliest days of life, to get constant evidence of the mother's love, she writes in a way which (except perhaps by Ferenczi) has not been written before in psychoanalysis about the urge to get love to allay inner destructiveness."*

When describing the PS-P one can come to the misleading picture that the earliest months of the infant's life are persistently characterized by intense anxiety, persecution and fears of annihilation. This picture is a caricature of Klein's view, since while Klein does believe that infants enter these desperate states and that these fears and anxieties are the main difficulties during the first months, it also needs to be acknowledged that Klein believes that in favourable circumstances the infant spends most of its time in peace, either gratified by actual experiences or gratified in and by states of sleep, hence experiencing actual or phantasized pleasures. Under favourable conditions, Klein's view emphasizes the gradual and steady introjection and assimilation of the good object, thus leading to an increasing ability of the self to integrate itself. This gradual introjection of the good object can also be understood to describe the preconditions of the positional move from the PS-P to the D-P. The PS-P gradually eases away and yields to the D-P when there is a predominance of good over bad experiences, as well as loving over hating self-states (the predominance of life over

death instincts in Kleinianese), which enable the progressive introjection of the good object and the trust in this good object to consolidate. In this process the ego acquires increasingly more capacity to cope with anxieties without having to massively employ splitting and other defences. The distance between the good and the bad object, which were kept split-off and far apart, is progressively less necessary and hence goodness and badness are allowed to come closer together, slowly enabling states of integration and thus of ambivalence. Furthermore, the self becomes increasingly more aware of the limits of its own aggression and hence develops tolerance for its own destructiveness. The aggression directed towards the object is seen as less overarchingly and terminally destructive and can thus be directed also at a loved object. However, once the self recognizes that the aggression was directed towards the whole object in the first place, that there were no two distinct objects (one good and one bad), then the self will start to feel depressive guilt for its own aggression, for the possible harm that it has caused to the object, even though it has witnessed the object to survive its attacks. Although the object did not completely crumble under the previous attacks, the depressive guilt will lead the subject to centre its new anxieties onto the concern for the object and the conditions for its wellbeing. The need to project itself into the object through PI lessens, the subject's capacity for self-object differentiation grows, both self and object are seen as more whole and integrated - all these concatenated processes are mental activities operating in the D-P. Following the described dynamics, it becomes clearer how PI is involved in the interplay between the PS-P and the D-P. When it comes to getting into the D-P, Klein stresses the importance of a stable introjection of the good object, an object which at first needs to be created through projective mechanisms in phantasy, but that then merges with actual experiences in favourable conditions. We could say that for Klein phantasy paves the path for the emergence of reality. In this way, Kleinian theory essentially seems to be a theory which stresses the importance of trust in the object and trust in love over hate. Isn't trust inherently some form of projection into the future?

2.6. Projective identification between the PS-P and the D-P

It is evident that Klein believed that even if both splitting and PI have pathological potentials, especially when they are excessively employed, both are also part of perfectly normal and healthy development. As Segal (1988, pp. 35-36) notes, splitting grants the fragile ego to

surface from an experience of chaos and to order its world of experience. This primordial order of split-up emotional and sensory impressions, even if excessive, creates the foundation for later more mature and sophisticated capacities which involve degrees of at least temporary splitting, e.g. the faculty of discrimination, differentiation, attention, judgement, and so on. With regards to PI, Klein emphasizes the importance of PI for creating both a prototype for good and trusting as well as bad and harmful object-relations. With regards to the experience of being persecuted by a bad object, an experience which emerges out of binary splitting and which is heightened and sustained through PI, Klein sees this experience as a precondition for the recognition of actual danger and actual evil later on in life. When it comes to experience of being fully loved, gratified and rescued by a good object, Klein stresses how these experiences form the basis of later situations which contain passion and at least some amount of idealisation, e.g. experiences of being in awe of beauty, of falling in love, of sexual craze, and of being passionate about social or political ideals. In later papers Klein (1955, 1959) will come to argue that PI forms the underlying basis for empathy in everyday life. In “*Our Adult World and its Roots in Infancy*” (1959), Klein writes:

Projection has many repercussions. We are inclined to attribute to other people—in a sense, to put into them—some of our own emotions and thoughts; and it is obvious that it will depend on how balanced or persecuted we are whether this projection is of a friendly or a hostile nature. By attributing part of our feelings to the other person, we understand their feelings, needs, and satisfactions; in other words, we are putting ourselves into the other person's shoes. (Klein, 1959, pp. 252-253)

I believe that this statement documents Klein’s recognition that PI is not only a phenomenon of the PS-P, but that it endures in the D-P and in adult life, in forms which have to do with the scanning of one’s environment for objects with whom one might link, extend-into, relate and empathize. It could be argued that Klein already saw these forms of PI as useful and perhaps essential processes for communicative purposes, as beneficial in order to understand the objects that surround us. Hence, I believe that the Kleinian framework allows for the existence of variations of PI in the D-P. I believe that these variations have at least two properties, which differentiate them from forms of PI in the PS-P: (i) the projected content does not need to be

fully disavowed and rendered split-off in and by the projector, meaning that there is at least a higher “degree of contact” of the projector to the projected content (dis-identification does not need to be radical or even total, if that is possible), and (ii) the projected content does not need to be either good or bad like in the PS-P since the D-P allows for more integration and, as such, the PI can include contents that are both good and bad at the same time. In fact, empathically “*putting yourself into someone else’s shoes*” does neither require you to split-off your own identification to the content projected (dis-identify from it fully), nor does it imply that the projected content needs to be fully polarized, either totally good or bad. A property, on the other hand, that seems to be consistent in PI, both in PS-P and D-P, though probably to differing degrees, seems to be the property of control exerted over the object, since also in forms of empathy (and what we could call mentalization) the object is rendered more predictable, which essentially is a projective process of control and mastery over the unpredictability of the environment and the insufficiency of induction to secure causal knowledge. Klein (1955) seems to be alluding to a PI with the properties of (i), when she discusses the PI of good contents without a sense of depletion within the establishment of a securely established good object:

I would suggest that a securely established good object, implying a securely established love for it, gives the ego a feeling of riches and abundance which allows for an outpouring of libido and projection of good parts of the self into the external world without a sense of depletion arising. (Klein, 1955, p. 144)

Interestingly, if we pursue the path of contributions of PI to healthy development, contributions that reach into the D-P, Segal (1957; 1988, p. 36) states that the process of PI also provides the earliest foundation for symbol-formation. The objects, which are identified with projected parts of oneself, are as such representations of oneself, they stand in for oneself and, ipso facto, form the most primitive symbols. Symbol formation will eventually lead the subject away from the concreteness of the infantile world-view, in which all is present presence, and lead the subject to the experience of absence, loss and lack of omnipotent control. If we look at Freud’s (1920) famous description of a child’s reaction to absence and loss of one’s primary caretaker, namely the famous fort-da narrative, in which Freud observed his grandson Ernst seemingly trying to playfully deal with his own anxiety and ambivalence

over the absence of his mother, we can perhaps come closer to understand the connection between PI and symbol-formation. It seems, that Ernst tries to symbolize his mother, disappearing and reappearing, through his play of “*fort*” and “*da*”. In so doing, Ernst tries to reassure himself by exerting some form of control onto the internal object, which represents the lost external object, and thus phantasizing that the disappeared object can be brought back at his own will. It can be argued that this form of phantasized control and mastery can only be carried out through the employment of PI, in which an object is manipulated in phantasy. However, it appears clear that the particular kind of PI employed by Ernst has to be already influenced by the D-P, since one specific characteristic of a PI in the PS-P is missing, namely the impossibility to represent absence/frustration for the lack that it is and indeed the representation of absence/frustration as persecution from a bad object instead. Indeed, I believe that the ability to perceive, think and feel lack can be described to be an additional property that is part of PI within (or approaching) the D-P, which differs from the properties of PI in the PS-P. Put differently, in the D-P the projective contents attributed to the internal objects do not fully reach out onto our perception of the external objects in the world, there is, so to speak, already a greater distance between internal objects and the perception of external objects, since the subject is increasing his awareness of the gap between inner and outer world through symbol-formation (e.g. the grocery list is not the groceries anymore and the internal (m)Other is not the actual (m)Other anymore). However, and this is crucial, the emotional link between the internal and the external object are still of abundant subjective relevance and, as such, a reparation carried out onto the internal object is also felt to be of importance onto the external object. This view might render Segal’s (1988, p. 36) mention of “*primitive projective reparation*” less enigmatic and simply point to the capacity of the subject, who reached (or is close to reaching) the D-P, to carry out a reparation through PI onto the internal object, which is felt to have reparative effects also onto the outer, separate and independent external object. The transitional zones between the PS-P and D-P mentioned here, with their transitional employment of PI in particular, can also be linked to Steiner’s (1993) sub-position of the D-P, in which the main concern of the subject is the “fear of loss” of the ideal object. Primitive projective reparations are serving as a manic attempt to protect the ideal object from the fall into the void, the consequent loss of foundations and the rising pressure of experiencing and mourning the loss of the ideal object.

Put concisely, my argument in the two preceding paragraphs was that Melanie Klein's own views about PI cannot be limited to the sphere of the PS-P, since she talks about PI in ways which presuppose capacities outside (or on the transition outside) of this position. Klein herself does not acknowledge this and, as such, my argument is that this lack of co-extensiveness between PI and the PS-P is only implicitly represented in Klein's works. This argument is, in my estimation, mostly of didactic (and less of clinical) importance, since PI is often (but not always!) discussed, in my view mistakenly, as a phenomenon entirely related to the PS-P. It seems clear to me that confining the concept of PI to the realms of the PS-P would put a tight corset around the former. I believe that, if we look closely, the concept of PI has already broken out of this corset since a while in theoretical debates, also in the Kleinian (not only in the Bionian) sphere of theory. Therefore, I agree with the spirit of Grotstein's (1985, pp. 123-138) unique exposition, who talks about PI at different levels of positional functioning.

2.7. Minds for grabs! On the phantasy of projective acquisition of other minds

C'mon, baby, c'mon darling, Let me steal this moment from you now.

*C'mon, angel, c'mon, c'mon, darling, Let's exchange the experience,
oh.*

*And if I only could, I'd make a deal with God, And I'd get him to swap
our places. (Kate Bush, 1985, in the song "Running Up That Hill (A Deal
with God)")*

It is of importance, that Klein's views on PI do not limit themselves to so-called attributive processes, in which the subject attributes certain internal contents to objects. In her paper "*On Identification*" (1955), which is a rather close commentary on a novel by Julien Green entitled "*If I were you*" (1947), Klein talks about a process in which the self projects itself into an object in order to appropriate itself of the object's inner contents. Ronald Britton (1998, pp. 5-6) termed this process "acquisitive projective identification" in order to distinguish it from PI of the attributive kind, in which the phantasy of the subject revolves around getting rid of a content and attributing it to the recipient of the projection. Britton made this distinction, between phantasies of PI as being felt to have either "acquisitive" or "attributive" properties, arguing that it is already implicitly present in Klein. "Attributive PI", summarized

by Britton as “you are me”, is the phantasy of getting rid of aspects of one’s own self by attributing them or related aspects to the object, whereas “acquisitive PI”, summarized as “I am you”, is the phantasy of entering the psyche of the object, projecting oneself into the object so to speak, in order to acquire certain desired parts of his mind. This very distinction between acquisitive and attributive processes is often very hard to determine, since a blurring of self-object boundaries goes along with the phantasy of PI. As such, the distinction between acquiring or attributing traits from/to an object becomes somewhat obscure.

PI, understood as an acquisitive process, is used to describe processes in which the subject is becoming, for example, Napoleon within his phantasy. In psychotic subjects there emerges an unshakable belief that one indeed acquired Napoleon’s identity, and as such that one indeed is Napoleon without doubt. The main character of the novel by Julien Green, named Fabian, is very unsatisfied with his own self and life and he is highly envious of the life of others. The resentful Fabian will be given the opportunity, through a pact with the Devil, to follow his greedy and envious phantasies in ways otherwise impossible to humankind, namely by projecting his whole self into other objects and thus exchanging places with these others at his own will and losing both the memories and the character-traits which constituted the original or previous Fabian. Klein argues within this paper, that it is of special importance into which persons Fabian will choose to project himself in order to acquire their identity. She argues that these persons represent split-off parts of Fabian himself, parts that Fabian wants to heighten through some form of hyper-identification. The controlling elements of PI, which were discussed before with relation to attributive forms of PI, seem to also hold for acquisitive projective phantasies, since the phantasy of taking over the lives of these people by acquiring their character is also an extreme way of exerting control and mastery over envy-evoking objects. The book proceeds by illustrating how Fabian feels unfulfilled, trapped and limited in each of these acquired personalities, and ultimately wishes to become himself again. In this regard, Klein points to the fact that the author of the book intuited the “*intrinsic need for integration*”, which is so pivotal in Klein’s understanding of mental health. In the end of the book, Fabian is indeed re-united with his former original self, a self which was left in a coma for three days, but then, right when he is “*back in himself*”, when he begins to long for love and begins to experience a mysterious sense of happiness, he dies. Commenting on this paper, Grotstein (1985, p. 130) writes:

Though Klein did not emphasize it in her interpretations, my own rereading of 'If I Were You' compels me to mention the first stage in projective identification. Klein laid stress on the second stage, that of fusion with an other, but it is important to note the earlier step, that is, the basic quest for invisibility. Projective identification involves the desire of the infant - or the suffering adult - to become invisible, to disappear, or generally speaking, to negate one's own existence. Such phantasies of disappearing usually come at a high cost to self-esteem, the sense of authenticity, and self-connectedness. Patients who describe this phenomena believe that the body or soul that they have denied is no longer available to them for reparation.

Acquisitive processes stress the quest for invisibility in a different way from attributive projective processes, but this seems to be mainly based on a matter of particularity in how the phantasy is represented. If one feels to have become Christ, the emphasis of this acquisitive process lays on the acquired identity. However, the „*ridding itself*“ of less pure, humble, compassionate and forgiving parts of oneself is also a function of this acquisition. This is a seemingly paradoxical element of acquisitive PI: although something is acquired in phantasy, the overarching personality is still disidentifying from self-aspects, leading to different degrees of self-disintegration. It seems to me that the robust and totalizing identification with an internal good object, say Christ, leads to the attribution of other parts of oneself, which do not correspond to Christ, to the external world. This external world, filled with one's not-Christ-like-aspects, is now potentially experienced as envious of one's holiness and generosity. In this way acquisitive and attributive processes of PI merge together as two phantasy-sides of the same coin, the coin representing (differing degrees of) splitting, self-disintegration and self-object fusion.

Conolly (2018, pp. 71-72) argues that the term “acquisitive projective identification” is equivalent with what Klein called introjective identification. Since multiplying terms that account for the same phenomena violates the principle of conceptual parsimony, Conolly argues that the use of the term acquisitive PI is not warranted since the concept of introjective identification covers for the exact same acquisitive processes. In a panel discussion on PI (Steiner, Spillius, O'Shaughnessy, & Sodr , 2012), Steiner brought up a similar point to Conolly

when discussing Freud's contribution on Leonardo da Vinci from a Kleinian perspective. He comments:

[...] there are multiple identifications, and I always think they are beautifully described by Freud in his paper on Leonardo da Vinci, where Freud says that Leonardo identified with his mother, and took as his object himself. So in our parlance we would say he projected a child self in his pupils, and that was projective identification, disowning the self and attributing it to the pupil. But that's not the only thing that happened, the other thing was that he acquisitively identified with his mother, and one question I'd like to ask the panel: what about introjective identification? If you take in an image of a mother – is that introjective? Or do you project yourself into the mother and acquisitively grab that identity?

Conolly and Steiner raise the question if there is a substantial distinction between acquisitive PI and introjective identification at all. Commenting on his own conceptual distinction in this very same panel discussion, Britton argues that the difference between introjective identification and acquisitive PI has more to do with the quality of the acquisition/assumption of identity. When it comes to acquisitive PI, Britton argues that the identity of the object is not really taken in through a process of introjection, but that the assumption of the identity is more like getting into someone's clothes, dressing up in something foreign without really being touched by it or becoming it in a more meaningful way. Britton further comments his distinction and, like Grotstein, links acquisitive projective identification with the task of invisibility:

An extreme example of [acquisitive projective identification], for instance, [can be found in] the poet Rilke, who writes a novel, which is an autobiographical novel, of his terrifying childhood really. He used to have a dressing-up basket, and he used to assume characters and dress up in them, and then look in the mirror; and he was absolutely terrified on one particular day, which he describes terribly vividly, because he thought he'd ceased to exist; he thought that this character that he'd managed to assume, and could see in the mirror,

existed, but he had ceased to exist. [...] [I]t's not at all like taking something in, it's disappearing into something, with even the anxiety that you might totally disappear. And, when we meet it clinically, I think you'll find that we are unmoved, it's a form of projective identification [...] in which we are unmoved. [It feels] like reciting hymns without the music, and it's like somebody who comes into your sessions and they recite all these hymns without any music; and so, you hear the words, and the feelings you would expect to be having are missing. And I think that's a very particular clinical situation.

Although I believe that introjective identification and acquisitive projective identification are indeed familiar concepts, I think that the quest for invisibility (or “*disappearing into something* [or someone]”), which can be found in acquisitive projective identification, provides for a unique element that exceeds the concept of introjective identification. This phenomenon of invisibility could however be posited again as a “*ridding of*” (and potentially also “*attributing to*”), which is more hidden in the process of acquisition, since the object from whom one acquires does not have to be the same object to whom one attributes (I will demonstrate what I mean by this later on). That being said, I believe, as Sodr  (2004) pointed out, that introjective and projective processes operate almost always in parallel when it comes to the blurring of self-object boundaries. This sheds light on the rather abstract and model-driven nature of these conceptual differentiations (between introjective identification, attributive projective identification and acquisitive projective identification, etc.), which at least problematizes their clinical relevance and makes us question whether our efforts of conceptual clarity are warranted and, if so, why.

- 2.8. [Envy as the greatest sin of all: on the destruction of what is good](#)
When envy is intense, the perception of an ideal object is as painful as the experience of a bad one, since the ideal object arouses unbearable feelings of envy. Hence, [an attacking] type of projective identification may be directed at the ideal object as well as at the persecutory one.
(Segal, 1988, p. 56)

In her pivotal booklet "Envy and Gratitude" (1957), Klein follows in greater depths her previous hints to the phenomena of greed, envy and gratitude. With regards to PI, Klein builds on her previous contribution in 1955, in which she already remarked the importance of envy for PI, and expands on the links between envy and projective tendencies. For Klein, envy has severe effects on mental development, since it leads to an attack onto the good object and onto the love felt for it. The problem of envy arises out of the subject's unconscious or conscious perception of at least some amount of separation from the envied object: separateness brings out the problem of envy, as the good object is able to arouse two sets of feelings, which are both based on the fact that the good object represents or is filled with things that one would want for oneself, namely (i) the self perceives itself to be dependent on the provision of goods by the object, and (ii) the self feels anxiously inferior about its own good qualities and feels diminished in comparison to the good object, the goodness of which evokes anger. Both feelings of dependency and inferiority are painful to feel, and as such, Klein saw envious attacks onto the good object as defences, which aim at spoiling the goodness of the object, so that these difficult feelings can be avoided. Helpfulness, love, competence and admirability is met with hate and resentment in order to forego distressing feelings of one's own insignificance and insufficiency.

Klein differentiates envy from jealousy. The latter is founded more firmly in loving feelings and "*aims at the possession of the loved object and the removal of the rival*" (Segal, 1988, p. 40). As can be noticed, while jealousy is based on a triangular relationship between oneself, the desired object and the rival object, envy is aroused in a dual relationship between "*empty self*" and "*full object*", so to speak. In the usual exegesis, the Oedipus complex involves a triangular relationship in which jealous object-relationships come to the foreground. The desired whole-object is in relationship with another whole-object, who is perceived as a rival, since s/he enjoys the desired object in ways which are barred from oneself. This stirs up ambivalent conflicts ripe with jealousy, which can be mostly located in the D-P. Klein adds to this conventional analysis of the Oedipus complex earlier strata of perception of the parental couple. These earlier strata can also be understood as PS-P distortions of the Oedipus complex or as false triangulations. Indeed, Klein believes that the subject can also employ an envious attack onto the parental relationship, which is perceived as a "*full unit*", a couple that bears fruits. Their productive intercourse and linking generates a form of goodness, which is then

seen as arousing of feelings of inferiority and dependency (for example, “they are better than me”, “I am nothing in comparison to them”, “without them I am nothing”, but also, arguably, “they prefer each other, because I am worthless, I am nothing at all”). Envious attacks onto the parental couple by means of PI result as a defence against these feelings of inferiority and ultimate dependency. The Oedipal relationship, that is usually ripe with difficult feelings of jealousy, is further complicated and distorted if the subject’s relationship to the parents is mostly of an envious kind and s/he hence needs to devalue the parental couple, individually and their relationship as a couple itself.

Klein also distinguished envy from greed, which she describes as a phantasy of ruthlessly and completely sucking dry the object and, indeed, of possessing all the goodness that inhabits the object with no regards for the object’s wellbeing. Segal (1988, pp. 40-41) points out that the destruction of the object is only incidental within greed, whereas it is purposeful and wished-for within envious attacks. Of course, envy and greed can, and often do, go hand in hand, in the sense that the object can be exhausted by the concomitant phantasy of sucking in and possessing all its goodness and the phantasy of denigrating and depleting the object of all its goods by spoiling it with badness. Most importantly, both envy and greed are destructive PI attitudes towards the good breast and not the bad breast. Precisely this misfiring onto the wrong object, so to speak, is Klein’s new argument in this paper. Not the bad object but the good object is attacked, which leads, if excessively carried out, to severe difficulties. It seems to me that, while greed is associated to attacks employing the phantasies of introjective identification and acquisitive PI, envy is associated to attacks employing the phantasy of attributive PI. Furthermore, both greed and envy are at least somewhat of an impediment to gratitude after moments of gratification. If greed or envy are strong, the subject might even reject the introjection of goodness altogether, s/he does not swallow and instead spits the nourishment out immediately. Klein thought that gratitude is one of the first blissful expressions of love by the infant towards a gratifying object. Stein (1990) further points out that for Klein the experience of gratitude lays the groundwork for the later developing capacity to share and be generous. If gratifying experiences are attacked and rendered bad, there is no protection, through goodness, against the bad and persecutory object anymore and ultimately the gradual introjection of a secure and good internal object is impeded. Accordingly, Klein (1957, p. 189) writes:

Strong envy [or greed] of the feeding breast interferes with the capacity for complete enjoyment, and thus undermines the development of gratitude. There are very pertinent psychological reasons why envy ranks among the seven 'deadly sins'. I would even suggest that it is unconsciously felt to be the greatest sin of all, because it spoils and harms the good object which is the source of life. This view is consistent with the view described by Chaucer in The Parsons Tale: 'It is certain that envy is the worst sin that is; for all other sins are sins only against one virtue, whereas envy is against all virtue and against all goodness'. The feeling of having injured and destroyed the primal object impairs the individual's trust in the sincerity of his later relations and makes him doubt his capacity for love and goodness. (Klein, 1957, p. 189)

Klein underlines the fact that envy has the developmentally disruptive potential of interfering with otherwise normal schizoid mechanisms of early infancy, most importantly with the splitting of the object into a persecutory, bad and an ideal, good breast. As such, envy complicates the early and essential binary split between good and bad experiences, and leads to a mixing of goodness and badness too early and, hence, in a destructive and confusing fashion. As a consequence, the ego will soon find itself in a state of pure confusion, not able to differentiate anymore between good and bad aspects of itself and its objects. Increasingly, the infant will be less and less confident that there is any goodness left in the world to introject and all lights are starting to fade into a mass of darkness. Herbert Rosenfeld (e.g. Rosenfeld, 1950) will develop the Kleinian understanding of confusional states.

2.9. Klein as the “counter-countertransference”?

She said we should think of counter-transference in the good old way Freud described it. If you have a strong counter-transference reaction first you've got to analyse what's the matter with you! [T]here was an analyst who died very young - David Davidson – and he came to her one day, full of stuff, and said 'and the patient projected into me all that confusion' and Mrs Klein said, 'No, dear, the patient didn't project

into you all that confusion – you were very confused!’ (Hanna Segal, 2001, in an interview with Daniel Pick)

In comparison to the subsequent explosion of literature on the topic of PI, Klein herself wrote relatively little about PI itself. Indeed her first mention of the concept in 1946 is almost in passing, with no big acknowledgement of any conceptual innovation and with no link between PI and countertransference. This impression of relative unimportance is somewhat counteracted by a look into Klein’s unpublished works and notes (Spillius, 2012, p. 4). As a matter of fact, as Spillius points out, in the Klein Archive one can find both theoretical reflections as well as clinical illustrations that treat PI as protagonist (most prominently the file B98 (1946/1947) and the file D17, probably from the late fifties). In B98 Klein stresses the following points about PI: (i) it involves both good and bad aspects, (ii) introjection and projection often go hand in hand (*“In the first sucking of sadistic character you do not only suck out but you put yourself in”*), (iii) if the introjection of a good and secure object is hindered, the subject tends to *“unselectively”* introject its surroundings, which leads to detrimental development, (iv) excessive PI leads to the depletion of the self. In D17 Klein puts the accents on the following themes: (i) the distinction between projection and PI (on which I will comment later on), (ii) the notion that, in order to understand, the analyst needs to project himself into the analysand and also introject the analysand, (iii) again, the projection of both good and bad parts, and (iv) the emphasis that PI takes the form of an unconscious phantasy. Interestingly, Klein does not mention PI in connection with countertransference in these notes. This is in keeping with Klein’s understanding of PI as a phenomenon exclusively pertaining to the subject’s own phantasy life and, precisely, not as an interpersonal phenomenon. As such, Klein’s object-relational theory is still, for the most part, a *“one-person psychology”* and not an intersubjective theory (Reis, 2013; Delgado et al., 2014). Furthermore, the missed connection between PI and countertransference is consistent with Klein’s general disinterest towards questions involving countertransference. John Steiner (2017) recently edited other hitherto unpublished material from Klein, namely (i) *“The Lectures on Technique”*, a series of six lectures which she gave in 1936 to training candidates of the British Psychoanalytical Society (BPS), and (ii) a series of seminars on technique which Klein held in 1958, two years before her death, with young analysts of the BPS. Especially the latter contribution is of importance for this discussion here, since the members of the seminars

were quite preoccupied with questions around countertransference and thus repeatedly pressure Klein to clarify her own views on the matter. The timing of these latter seminars is important, since, on the one hand, Klein had already published her definitive contributions to the concept of PI and, on the other hand, countertransference was becoming more and more a buzzing concept in the world of psychoanalysis. To mention just a few contributions, by this time, Paula Heimann (1950/2003), a previously ardent but then distanced follower of Klein, had published her highly influential paper *"On counter-transference"*, the Balints (1939) had published *"On transference and counter-transference"*, Winnicott (1949) had written his significant *"Hate in the Counter-Transference"*, Heinrich Racker (1953), in Argentina, had published his paper *"A contribution to the problem of counter-transference"* (as well as subsequent publications building on the topic), and Money-Kyrle (1956) had presented his no-less influential work *"Normal counter-transference and some of its deviations"*. All of these papers contributed to turning the literature on countertransference on its head, suddenly and increasingly advertising the examination of countertransference as a source of important information about the analysand, leading to a metamorphosis within psychoanalysis that progressively took off in the fifties and endures to this day. This led Kleinian analysts to explore the connection between countertransference and PI in particular (Hinshelwood, 2002, pp. 61-66). Importantly, however, this is not the case for Klein herself and, indeed, as Steiner (2017) suggests, some of Klein's disinterested views with regards to countertransference might be attributed to a personal and "political" reaction against Heimann's views, especially the idea that the analyst can understand his analysands better through an examination of his own countertransference, an idea which reached its pinnacle in Heimann's assertion that *"the analyst's counter-transference is not only part and parcel of the analytic relationship, but it is the patient's creation, it is a part of the patient's personality"* (Heimann, 1950). In the 1958 lectures, Klein makes it repeatedly clear that while she does indeed believe that the analysand's PI greatly affect the state of mind of the analyst, she does not consider an examination of the countertransference to be of any value in the analytic process. As such she sides with a rather classical view, namely the belief that examining one's countertransferential reactions can be of profound personal use in order to understand oneself (possibly also to understand oneself in the role of being an analyst, whatever that is), but is useless to understand the mind and actions of the analysand. In the following

statement, Klein (1958/2017) herself neatly puts her doubts about the use of countertransference in the analytic process:

I have to say a little more about counter-transference in general, which has seen extremes of fashion in recent years. On one occasion I have even been called 'counter countertransference'. Now that isn't so. [O]f course, the patient is bound to stir up certain feelings in the analyst, and this varies according to the patient's attitude, and according to the type of patient, but these are [...] the analyst's own feelings that he has to become aware of. I have never found that the countertransference has helped me to understand my patient better; but, if I may put it like this, I have found that it has helped me to understand myself better. (Klein as quoted in Klein & Steiner, 2017, p. 103)

In a similarly straightforward quote, Klein states:

Using the counter-transference to say that because a patient has stirred in me this or that feeling, I can from this fact more easily draw my conclusions about the patient, this I do not believe. [...] I draw my conclusions from what goes on in the patient, from his material, his emotions, his moods, and what I see in the patient, not what he raises in me. (Klein as quoted in Klein & Steiner, 2017, p. 103)

Klein declares that she never understood the logic of using the countertransference as a guide towards understanding the analysand. She goes on to suggest how important it is to search for the difficulty in oneself when one is led to a mistake in the analytic process and, apparently, how she found at least some danger in the concept of countertransference as a narrative to get rid of one's own responsibility for those mistakes. Indeed, Klein rather emphasises the dangers involved with countertransference than its uses, apparently not sensing that perhaps there is a connection between the use and the danger of countertransference and that the danger might indeed be a consequence of a sloppy examination of and lack of interest in one's own countertransferential reactions to the analysand. This association of countertransference to danger goes as far as Klein suggesting that countertransference should be indeed avoided or blocked. She makes this link especially

when it comes to the handling of heavily psychotic analysands, who will come to use the analyst in extremely destructive ways. Klein writes:

[...] A particular case in which counter-transference can come in as a very anxiety-stirring factor is where there is strong projective identification by the patient. It applies particularly to very ill patients. There one feels that they are pushing into one their whole depression, their whole anger, their whole envy, everything they have got. Or, alternatively, one feels that they are eating everything they can out of one. [...] One is aware that the patient is pushing something into me and it depends on me whether I let him push it into me. I mean, there are two of us here, he pushes it into me, but I won't have it pushed into me. I would rather consider what he is doing at that moment when he is pushing. It sounds all very perfectionist, and I don't like having to put it like that, because I know it needs a great deal of experience, patience, even tolerance to come to that point, and nobody comes to it at once. But it is a matter of principle [...]. (Klein as quoted in Klein & Steiner, 2017, pp. 104-105)

It is of interest that Klein focuses on the analyst's own determination and willpower to avoid projections by deciding not to be affected by them. To me it is somewhat unclear how Klein might have actually meant this, since her view of simply saying "no" to a projection, of simply stating that she "won't have it pushed into" her, seems unrealistic and overly masterful, as if the analyst would at all times possess the conscious mastery over what s/he is allowing inside of hir. Furthermore, since Bion's (1962, 1963, 1965) emphasis on the analyst's receptivity towards projections, especially his focus on the importance of the analyst's alpha-function in the containment of the analysand's unmetabolized PIs, Klein's view, prima facie, appears obstructive to the analytic process itself. Blocking the analysand's projections would effectively make the analyst into an "obstructive object" in Bionian terminology (Vermote, 2019, pp. 73.74). Steiner (2017, p. 19) makes the point that Klein otherwise repeatedly focused on the emotional availability of the analyst and that he thus believes that Klein might have had "something else in mind", not the recommendation to shut oneself off from the analysand's projections by sheer willpower. As an alternative, it seems rather plausible that

Klein, not taken simply to the letter, might be suggesting that the analyst attempts not to act-out on his countertransference and, if this indeed happens, that the analyst attempts to recover his analytic position after having noticed his contribution to the re-enactments. This view implies that there is a “proper” analytic position. For Klein, the “proper” analytic position or attitude is not only infused with a set of respectful and mildly benevolent feelings but especially determined by the analyst’s “wish to know”, the analyst’s wish to explore the analysand’s mind, narrowing his whole attention and curiosity onto that mind, regardless of how that mind is like and especially regardless of the analyst’s moral and aesthetic judgments on it. Klein herself puts it in the following manner:

I really do not believe that one can do good analytic work without a good deal of sympathy, and tolerance and empathy with the patient. If we see such character traits acted out against ourselves we can try, instead of feeling ‘Now I can’t bear this patient’, or ‘that proves that he is this or that’, [...] we can feel ‘Well I want to study him, if he is so greedy, and so envious, that is part of his psychology, that is why he came to me, and that is what I want to understand’. Behind this attitude is another element, not only empathy, and that is the wish to know. Now, the wish to know, I think, is a very important thing in being an analyst; the wish to explore the mind whatever the mind is like.
(Klein as quoted in Klein & Steiner, 2017, p. 105)

This assertion of Klein essentially argues that the analyst’s wish to know should help him to not develop a hateful, resentful, disgusted, etc. countertransference, which would remain unproductive for the analytic process. In summary, it seems to me that, when speaking of countertransference, Klein warns of traps involved in acting-out on certain countertransferential reactions which can lead the analyst far astray from his “proper” analytic position. Klein warns of this danger and connects this danger with strong PIs surfacing in the analysis. Klein does not, however, see a benefit for the analytic process in examining the specific ways in which she is countertransferentially touched by the particular analysand in question. With regards to the “wish to know”, which Klein is promoting in the analyst’s attitude, it is interesting that topics of knowledge and indeed the analysts receptivity and openness to the yet unknown have been very prominent in the Kleinian tradition ever since

(Hogan, 2021), while at the same time Klein herself and some Kleinians have been criticized for their overly “*blueprint-like*” and “*already-knowing*” way of interpreting the analysand’s material, which shows little to no openness for newness to emerge (see Phillips, 2007, pp. 46-47).

2.10. The embeddedness of splitting and PI in the meta-psychology of Klein

I have attempted to explicate Klein’s views on PI by putting the concept in the context of her wider theorizing. It seems interesting to me to take this task one step further by connecting PI to Klein’s meta-psychology, a set of implicit point-of-views, value-systems and explanatory modes inherent in Klein’s theories.

In order to understand Klein’s meta-psychological views it is important, in my mind, to compare and contrast them to Freud’s views. Much work has been done in showing the Freudian foundations of Klein’s theories (especially by elucidating how Klein’s views rest on certain Freudian text-passages) (e.g. see Blass, 2012). For this reason, I want to explicate Klein’s views not by pointing to the similarities and foundations but rather to the divergences and contrasts in comparison to Freud. Freud’s (1914) paper “*On Narcissism*” is an especially interesting point of juxtaposition in this regard, since it can be seen as representing, in many ways, rather opposing views to those of Klein, at least in my reading of the paper. For Freud (1914), at that time, there was a curious double-dualism in his conception of the human psyche (see Gast, 1992, pp. 66-68): putting it in a somewhat reduced and simplified fashion, (i) on the one hand he differentiated between a self-preserving instinct (SPI) and the sexual drive and (ii) when it comes to the latter, he differentiated between ego libido and object libido as libidinal energies of the sexual drive. To contrast himself from Jung (1912), who believed that Freud’s sexual libido theory failed to account for phenomena that arise in the psychoses without encountering major contradictions and who believed that libido should consequently to this theoretical failure be understood as a force that goes beyond the realms of sexuality, Freud insisted on the fact that libido is a fuelling energy which only pertains to the sexual sphere, but that the libido in the sexual sphere can be subdivided into, precisely, ego libido and object libido. Freud’s (1914) new conception does not end here: he posits a developmental line in which the self-preserving instinct (SPI) precedes the sexual drive, and in which the latter indeed develops by leaning onto the SPI (“*in Anlehnung*”), at first, through

auto-erotism: as such, Freud posits that the self-preserving instinct of sucking on the mother's breast for survival and a calming of the infant's hunger, at some point, will lead to the infant's enjoyment of the action of sucking itself, completely cut-off from the taking in of milk and thus from a self-preservative function, an action that the infant can perform auto-erotically by itself through thumb-sucking. This enjoyment, which develops by leaning onto the self-preserving function at first, eventually uncouples itself from the self-preserving instinct to become independent and auto-erotically fulfilling, meaning that thumb-sucking is an auto-erotic sexual activity for Freud, in line with Freud's wide understanding of sexuality and polymorphously perverse conception of infantile sexuality. Interestingly, Freud (1914) believes that the ego is a structure that develops by being cathected with libido. As such, for Freud (1914), there is no ego from birth, but the ego has yet to be constituted. This constitution develops out of the auto-erotic activities: Freud writes that primary narcissism develops out of the the auto-erotic activities of the infant, and primary narcissism essentially constitutes the founding of the ego for Freud (1914). This conception leads Freud to his famous "amoeba metaphor", a conception that is fully pertaining to the sexual sphere as it is meant to describe the concentration of libido cathexes. Freud writes:

Thus we form the idea of there being an original libidinal cathexis of the ego, from which some is later given off to objects, but which fundamentally persists and is related to the object-cathexes much as the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out.
(Freud, 1914, p. 75)

This original, *libidinal* cathexis of the ego coincides with primary narcissism, a state in which all libido is ego libido. Only with time, the amoeba sends out pseudopodia onto objects, forming object-cathexes, and thus transforming the libido into object libido. This is the first time in Freud, in which he differentiates between ego libido and object libido. Whenever the pseudopodia deteriorate and the libido retreats by being sent back to the ego-libidinal nucleus, Freud speaks of secondary narcissism. Applying these theoretical innovations, especially the detachment of libido from the objects onto the ego due to the libidinal movement into secondary narcissism, Freud tries to account for diverse psychotic conditions (then so-called "*paraphrenic*" or "*narcissistic neuroses*"), e.g. hypochondria, megalomania and paranoia. Since in this conception the ego is filled with libido which has been de-

cathected from the objects, Freud speaks of (i) megalomania as the attempt to psychically master all the libido withdrawn to the ego, (ii) hypochondria as the failure to psychically master the libido withdrawn to the ego, which causes a concentration of libido in one's somatic self-perception and hence an over-preoccupation with one's body, (iii) paranoia as a pathological and desperate attempt to restore libido onto objects to end the withdrawal of libido onto the ego and re-cathect the external world. Overall, Freud's (1914) conception sees the sexual drive (which later will become subsumed by Freud's "life drive" or Eros), the ego and object-relations (relations of the infant to its objects, which for Freud are based on libido) as not existing from birth but as developmental achievements, which can also go wrong. Accordingly, there is also an idea in the Freudian clinic that there is such a thing as a psychotic analysand who has established a fixation in the stage of primary narcissism, never even having reached object-relatedness.

Klein's meta-psychological conception differs substantially from the Freudian ideas presented above. Directly referring to the Freudian idea of a phase of primary narcissism, Klein (1952a) writes:

The hypothesis that a stage extending over several months precedes object-relations implies that—except for the libido attached to the infant's own body—impulses, phantasies anxieties, and defences either are not present in him, or are not related to an object, that is to say, they would operate in vacuo. The analysis of very young children has taught me that there is no instinctual urge, no anxiety situation, no mental process which does not involve objects, external or internal; in other words, object-relations are at the centre of emotional life. Furthermore, love and hatred, phantasies, anxieties, and defences are also operative from the beginning and are ab initio indivisibly linked with object-relations. This insight showed me many phenomena in a new light. (Klein, 1952, pp. 52-53)

Klein does not follow Freud that there is an autoerotic phase and then a purely narcissistic stage (primary narcissism), which constitutes an ego in the first place and precedes the formation of object-relations. For Klein, there exists an ego from the start, sufficiently equipped with certain faculties to experience anxiety, use defensive mechanisms against

these anxieties and indeed form primitive object-relations in phantasy and in reality (Segal, 1988, p. 24). As we have seen, the kind of object-relations that the infant is capable of forming in early infancy, according to Klein, are only partial and not yet whole-object relationships. As Stein (1990) argues, the Kleinian notion of the object goes beyond a simply instinctually gratifying or frustrating object, but extends onto “*loving and loved, or a hating and hated, or envious or envied, object*”, hence giving the object an importance beyond the gratification/frustration of a drive aim. The object is unfailingly involved in all kind of phantasies for Klein. It is as if for Klein “[t]he ego’s task [is] to deal with the struggle between life and death instincts by doing all kinds of things with itself and with the objects [in phantasy]” (Stein, 1990). It can be noticed that Klein formed a theory of early psychic functioning that centres around the notion of phantasy. It is through phantasy that infants subjectively represent and engage with their inner bodily tensions and the pressures exerted onto them from the outer world. Indeed Klein believed that unconscious phantasies are the ubiquitous bedrock of analytic investigations, since, in her view, they underly every mental function and since they can be seen as the first properly mental experiences originating at the borders between soma and environment. This is a key factor in Kleinian metapsychology: the conception of unconscious phantasy in Klein implies that our mind constantly tries to represent its own activity to itself. Consequently, Klein makes a distinction between an instinctual activity or a mechanism of defence on the one hand and the phantasy through which this activity or mechanism is represented unconsciously on the other. In this way, phantasy can be understood as some form of *mirror screen* (Bell, 2001, p. 143) trying to translate and depict vague perceptions and experiences into the form of unconscious narratives. This is what de Bianchedi and colleagues (1984) have referred to as the “*dramatic point of view*” in Kleinian metapsychology, referring to the fact that the Kleinian conception of phantasy transforms mental activities into plot-lines with characters who play a part in those plots. Within her highly influential paper, “*The nature and function of phantasy*” (1948), Susan Isaacs defines phantasy as follows:

Phantasy is (in the first instance) the mental corollary, the psychic representative, of instinct. There is no impulse, no instinctual urge or response which is not experienced as unconscious phantasy. [...] The first mental processes, the psychic representatives of bodily impulses

and feelings, i.e. of libidinal and destructive instincts, are to be regarded as the earliest beginning of phantasies. In the mental development of the infant, however, phantasy soon becomes also a means of defence against anxieties, a means of inhibiting and controlling instinctual urges and an expression of reparative wishes as well. The relation between phantasy and wish-fulfilment has always been emphasized; but our experience has shown, too, that most phantasies (like symptoms) also serve various other purposes as well as wish-fulfilment; e.g. denial, reassurance, omnipotent control, reparation, etc. It is, of course, true that, in a wider sense, all these mental processes which aim at diminishing instinctual tension, anxiety and guilt also serve the aim of wish-fulfilment; but it is useful to discriminate the specific modes of these different processes and their particular aims. (Isaacs, 1948)

From this paragraph we can extract that phantasies function to (i) represent both instincts posited by Klein, namely the life and death instinct, (ii) defend against anxieties, by means of e.g. denial, control, reparation, etc. (depending on the currently operating position, D-P or PS-P, of the subject towards the object), and (iii) fulfil wishes (e.g. also by simply diminishing anxiety or guilt – a wish-fulfilment in a wider sense). In this sense phantasies are truly ubiquitous, and since, for Klein, phantasies are understood as always involving an object and never functioning “in vacuo”, object-relations are accordingly ubiquitous. In this way, Klein assumes a “*much tighter and more reciprocal enmeshment with the object than Freud's theory would allow*” (Stein, 1990), which can also be noticed clinically in the Kleinian emphasis on interpreting transference with insistence, a technique which I believe contributes to introduce and suck the analyst into the phantasy orbit of the analysand. Klein’s conception of phantasies leads to descriptions of psychic life, which resemble a theatrical plot unfolding between different characters. The link between the concept of “*internal objects*” and Klein’s understanding of the function of phantasy becomes evident. Internal objects are, so to speak, internal dramaturgic play-things, moulded into stories, tales and plays of differing kind, in order to represent experiences, defend against anxieties and/or fulfil wishes. Melanie Klein’s own history in the field, starting out her psychoanalytic career by working with children, can

be sensed in her way of theorizing: her attempt to discern the underlying narratives animating a specific play within a session was a constitutive part of her play technique. Therefore, Klein's focus was less on an energetic or mechanistic model, but more on a narrative, dramaturgic one. As Vermote (2019, pp. 18-20) points out, this conception of phantasy is the forerunner to quite some of Bion's concepts, e.g. "*waking dream thought*", "*alpha-function*", the "*proto-mental realm*" (as a realm antecedent to the emergence of "*alpha elements*") and so on.

As could be noticed, although I admittedly did not lay too much focus on this aspect of her theory in this chapter, Klein posits a dualism between life and death instincts, both operative from birth. As such, Freud's self-preserving instinct (SPI) and sexual drive are both subsumed into the life instinct for Klein, which coincides with Freud's own merging of the SPI and the sexual drive into one life instinct, starting from "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*" (1920). Interestingly, however, with the focus on object-relations from the start of life, especially with Klein's focus on part-object-relationships and indeed the infant's originally most important relationship to the phantasized and actual breast, Klein's conception of the life instinct tended to emphasize the SPI-aspect (feeding, sucking-in of milk, being satisfied by an object, experiencing love and bliss for the presence of a gratifying breast) rather than the sexual drive aspect, namely the polymorphously perverse action of sucking for the sake of sucking itself. Green (1995) emphasizes this implicit theoretical shift within Klein in his influential paper "*Has sexuality anything to do with psychoanalysis?*". Green laments the diminishing role of sexuality within psychoanalysis and he believes that the Kleinians have only contributed to this downfall. Indeed he states that his "*main objection to the Kleinian body of knowledge [...] is related to the progressive disappearance of sexuality in her work*". On top of this objection, Green (1995) points to another main implicit shift in Klein, namely that Klein gives precedence not to the life instinct but to the death instinct, which was closely related to destructiveness and aggression for Klein. How substantial this precedence of destruction really is in the work of Klein, seems debatable, as Klein herself was very critical of an overfocus on destruction to the expense of the imperious role of love in psychic life (Klein & Steiner, 2017, pp. 111-112), but it can be argued, as Green does, that the shift to destruction motivated a further drifting away from Freud's "*opposition between pleasure and unpleasure towards another couple of opposites: the good and the bad object*" (Green, 1995). Ultimately, Green argues, this led to a model in which destructive instincts arouse terrible anxieties and erotic instincts are being

employed as defensive measures against the overwhelming destruction. In Klein's model if *"aggression and anxiety become excessive, libido is called upon to overcome the anxiety, and becomes fixated there"* (Stein, 1990). Green quotes from Hoffer (in King & Steiner, 1992, p. 723), who evidenced the shift neatly by writing:

According to Freud, the neuroses are the specific diseases of the sexual function, according to Mrs Klein's theory, the neuroses might be called the specific diseases of the destructive functions. (Hoffer in King & Steiner, 1992, p. 723)

Furthermore, we can ask what is the matter with references to instinctual forces in Klein, especially with references to the death instinct? What is this instinct supposed to be? Especially, what kind of death instinct is Klein talking about? In my perception, Klein's understanding of instincts/drives starts with a view of human beings as biologically constituted in some form, and herein especially entailing an inborn potential to experience love and hate. In Klein's view, these "inborn potentials" express themselves from the start onwards to varying degrees, due to endowment or temperament, and can then be cultivated and/or inhibited throughout life. This ongoing and lifelong conflict between love and hate, in which for the sake of mental health the forces of love need to resist and prevail over hate, is essential for Klein's view of humankind. When talking about the death instinct, Klein points to potentials of aggression and destruction and equates this with Freud's *"Todestrieb"*, even though Freud's concept is much wider and richer compared to what Klein's use of it implies. Klein asserts that the infant needs to project its death drive outwards and that the projected destructive content latches onto objects in phantasy. drives are inherently and inseparably directed towards objects. There is an *"inherent object-relatedness [of] the drives"* (Stein, 1990) in Klein's conception of the drives, which exceeds and indeed opposes Freud's less object-centric understanding of the drive. In this way *"fear of annihilation (death) [...] takes the form of fear of persecution"* (Klein, 1952). Klein gives also a second account on how paranoid feelings originate in the infant who lives in the PS-P. In this second explication, which I have briefly mentioned previously, Klein formulates that, due to the infant's still emotional and cognitive immaturity, the infant experiences moments of frustration as the presence of a hurting and malevolent object. It is a matter of contention to which extent Kleinian theory truly necessitates references to instinctual forces, since in the end, what actually matters for

Klein is the mental representation through phantasies. Stein (1990) picks up and extends on exactly this thread in her re-examination of Klein's theory, as she states that "*Melanie Klein's theory can very profitably be viewed as a descriptive theory of strong emotions rather than an instinct or developmental theory*". Unconscious phantasies, which evoke strong emotional states, are what matters for Klein. If those phantasies originate from and represent an inborn destructive impulse, a moment of frustration or even something else entirely, is actually rather secondary throughout Klein's work. On similar grounds, the distinction between projection and projective identification has been seen as unfounded or unnecessary: among contemporary Kleinian authors there is a tacit assumption that "projection" and "projective identification" mean precisely the same thing, since efforts to differentiate one from the other have not succeeded (Spillius, 2012b, p. 50). Grotstein (1985, p. 132), for example, emphasizes that projection and projective identification are interchangeable terms and that the distinction between the two concepts "*reflects a rigid distinction between ego and the id*", insofar Klein spoke of projection in terms of a projection of the death instinct (instinctual projection of the Es and not of the Ego, so to speak) and of PI in terms of a projection of some self-aspects. Grotstein argues that this distinction is not useful, since "*personality is integral*" and "*a drive alone cannot be projected [...] without being reidentified in the object*" and without being in some way part of one's person. It could be that Klein, by making a distinction between projection and PI, wanted to adhere onto meta-psychological categories from Freudian structural theory. On a similar but not identical note, both Bell (2001, p. 134) and Spillius (2012, pp. 16-17) argue that Klein uses the concept of projection to mean the "mechanism of the mind", which tries to rid itself of contents, and that she uses the concept of PI to mean the unconscious phantasies which represent the mechanism to the mind. Therefore, by this definition, PI is the representation of projection within fantasy. Again, since, in the end, the bedrock that mattered for Klein were phantasies, the distinction falls short of usefulness and can be seen, in my mind, as simply a Kleinian labyrinth of technical language. Technicalities indeed.

What seems substantial to me, in order to understand Klein's own implicit metapsychology, is that the concepts of splitting, PI and also introjective identification are essential fantasy-creation-tools, in the sense that the subject can employ them in order to malleate experience into all sorts of phantasies. As Stein (1990) asserts: "[T]he individual will attempt to deal with

[...] *emotional conflicts by unconsciously manipulating (i.e. splitting and projecting, introjecting or idealizing) parts of himself and of his internal objects [...]*". By putting such foundational weight on these mental functions, Klein creates (i) a very spatial / geographic metaphoric of mental functioning, and (ii) a view based on "*economic policies*" or "*anxiety distribution strategies*" (de Bianchedi et al., 1984). With regards to (i), the spatiality of Klein's theory, it can be sensed that inside and outside, introjecting something external into an internal space or projecting outwards into an object, are essential leitmotifs. Indeed both introjective identification and PI imply the, at least phantasized, existence of spaces within and between objects. Splitting, too, implies a cutting into pieces of mental experiences, which are then spatially kept apart. Grotstein (1985, pp. 19-29) describes splitting as a "vertical cutting through" of the personality, a cut which vertically divides and fragments an integral whole, and he differentiates splitting on spatial grounds from repression, which he accordingly describes as a horizontal cut. Klein's description that at the foundation of mental life lies the construction of an inner world, build-up through processes of introjective identification and PI, and that "*the ego develops largely round [a] good object*" (Klein, 1959, p. 294), is a spatial metaphor meant to describe the letting-in of a good object, after which one can construct one's own ego around it, leading to healthy development. Moreover, phantasies such as "*internal objects*", "*internal world*", "*the inside of the mother's body*", etc. are all by themselves already spatially connotated and depict, for Klein, the subject's phantasized processing of sensorial internality and externality. Klein's "*description of the geography of fantasy life*", as Meltzer (2008, p. 367) called it, provides the landscape on which all plot-lines will unfold in the generation of meaning. Authors, which stood under Klein's influence, such as Bion and Meltzer developed the spatial dimension of Klein's thought further: as such, Bion tries to develop metaphors beyond the "*idea of three-dimensional space*" (Bion, 1970/1984, p. 8) and Meltzer (1975) develops the idea of a "*no place*" within delusional defensive systems, which indeed extend beyond the gravitational field of objects into a void space. As a consequence, Meltzer did believe that in certain cases phantasies can be unbound from objects, something that Klein ferociously denied.

Also Klein's view of "positions" (instead of developmental "phases") has spatial connotations, however, this connotation is not the prevailing reason for the innovative character of the concept of positions. "Positions" are understood as the leading gravitational constellations of

anxieties, defences against those anxieties and subjective positionings in relation to objects. In a “position”, the subject unconsciously organizes its anxieties and defences in relation to objects in specific ways. Klein held that there are essentially two prevailing positional moulds of mental life, the PS-P and the D-P. Analysts, such as Ogden (1989) and Grotstein (1996), have tried to add to these positions either anterior or posterior ones, as in Ogden’s *“Autistic-Contiguous Position”* (AC-P) or in Grotstein’s *“Transcendent Position”* (T-P). Importantly, the focus on “positions” can be seen as a substantial break away from Freudian drive theory and, especially, from the importance laid on a theorization of developmental phases in chronological time. Indeed, already in Klein’s work but more prominently and explicitly in Bion’s work, the importance is instead put on the continuous oscillation between positions, which Bion depicts as “PS ↔ D” (starting with his book *“Learning from Experience”* (1962/1991)) and which are meant to reflect emotional thought-processes in motion. Bion’s depiction underlies that the PS-P and the D-P are structural and not chronological concepts which co-exist within one personality autonomously and concomitantly (Stein, 1990). With regards to the Kleinian “positions”, Meltzer and Harris (2011/2018, p. 108) describe the main gist in the following way:

The paranoid-schizoid and the depressive position are the main economic principles of relations with the object. The paranoid-schizoid position is a value system in which the health, security and pleasure of the self dominate, whilst the depressive position is a value system in which the health, security and happiness of the object prevail. (Meltzer & Harris, 2011/2018, p. 108)

This leads us to (ii), Klein’s view that mental life can and should be described in terms of leading “*economic policies*” or “*anxiety distribution strategies*”. Indeed it can be noticed from all the descriptions above, that Klein puts a strong emphasis on overarching grouping principles or approaches of organization, unconsciously structuring and regulating the leading anxieties, defences and object-relations. The two positions can be understood in these terms, as economic policies in relation to objects. In this regards, there is a shift from the Freudian economic model of quantitative libidinal ego- or object-cathexes, onto bigger unconscious policies of psychic equilibrium, an equilibrium that entails the self and objects as well as the feelings attached to them (see Joseph, 1989; Stein, 1990). This psychic equilibrium can be

understood as an attempt of the self to reach a certain homeostasis in trying to regulate anxieties through a wide system of defences, which become constitutive of one's personality functioning. In this sense, it can also be said that Klein's main focus was not on a libidinal energy-based framework, or a tension-relief framework, in which objects have the main function to gratify or frustrate instinctual aims, but rather on a model which focuses on the emotional centrality of objects and, in connection to this centrality, the subject's mental pain and anxieties that need to be handled in a systematic manner by its psychic apparatus (Stein, 1990). Klein's point of view gradually became a trend within the Kleinian literature, which started to focus on so-called "*pathological organisations [...], [which are] extremely unyielding defensive organisations whose aim is to protect the individual from the primitive anxieties of both the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions felt to be unbearable by severely restricting his contact with internal and external reality*" (Spillius et al., 2011, p. 210). Many Kleinians believe that within these organizations, the fluctuations between PS-P and D-P are modified and rendered more difficult, which makes growth and a learning from experience more difficult. Steiner (1993) will come to talk about "*psychic retreats*", another rather spatial metaphor, in order to describe "stuck" state of minds, difficult to reach and treat within analytic treatment, which arise from the development and stubborn persistence of defensive pathological organizations.

At last, a very core-value ingrained in Klein's metapsychology should be mentioned, namely her persistence in evaluating the adequacy and significance of any position or "economic policy" of the mind based on the degree of integration that it allows and promotes. Reaching a high degree of psychic integration is a major sign of health according to Klein. Integration can be understood as a connectedness to one's mind, a "being in touch with" the contents of the "whole of [our] personality" (Klein, 1959, p. 184). Indeed, Klein (1957, p. 231) states that "*the ultimate aim of psycho-analysis is the integration of the patient's personality. Freud's conclusion that where id was, ego shall be, is a pointer in that direction*". Being in touch with one's mind means being in touch with one's self, one's internal objects and phantasy world in a way that tries to progressively re-own parts of oneself that have been split-off and projected into others in phantasy. In the long run, massive PI and splitting are detrimental to psychic integration and are as such adversaries of mental health. Klein urges that psychoanalysts should use their interpretations with the aim to make analysands re-integrate

disavowed aspects into their personality. This is pivotal for the understanding of the place of PI in Klein's clinical work, since Klein believes that the analyst should handle PI's by, eventually, making the analysand recognize himself within the PI and hence leading the analysand to re-integrate the split-off elements. Klein's underlying and fundamental thesis is that the reclaiming of even very distressing aspects of the self, despite the pain this process amounts to, is accompanied by a worthwhile sense of truth⁹ and fuller sense of personhood. Of course, this is simpler said than done and, in order to acknowledge this difficulty, Klein (1963) stresses the hardships in accepting and sustaining a state of integration, in which loving and hating attitudes towards the self and, especially, towards one's objects come together. Klein dismissed the idea of ever reaching a state of complete integration, hence leading to the view that human beings are constantly fluctuating between states of more or less disintegration, never able to fully reach themselves and be in a state of "at-one-ment" (Bion, 1965/1984) with themselves. Fully possessing, knowing and being oneself is an experience that is impossible for Klein. As a consequence, Klein (1963) comes to the view that in a certain sense, the projected, lost and not acknowledged parts of ourselves contribute in making us feel a deep sense of loneliness. Neither we ourselves nor anybody else sees us as for all that we are. However, in a sort of act of internal rebellion against this sense of loneliness, for good or for evil, we cling onto the celestial power of the internalized ideal object, which allows us to hold on to hope in our longing to be fully understood and in our yearning of fully understanding ourselves, or as Klein puts it:

Full and permanent integration is never possible for some polarity between the life and death instincts always persists and remains the deepest source of conflict. Since full integration is never achieved, complete understanding and acceptance of one's own emotions, phantasies and anxieties is not possible and this continues as an important factor in loneliness. The longing to understand oneself is also bound up with the need to be understood by the internalized good object. (Klein, 1963, p. 302)

⁹ From a mainly Bionian perspective, Bergstein (2019, p. 104) comments that the quest for truth in psychoanalysis is particular, since "[t]his is not necessarily an empirical truth, but rather a sense of truth that emerges at a moment when different views of an emotional experience are 'observed' from different vertices and conjoined in a way that feels truthful."

3. Kleinianism and the Psychoanalysis of Psychoses

3.1. A brief history of the application of Kleinian thought to the treatment of the psychoses

With *“Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms”* (1946/1952) Melanie Klein brought many new concepts into the world of psychoanalysis. An atmosphere of enthusiasm enveloped the psychoanalytic circle in London. In Segal’s words there was *“a tremendous feeling of discovery”* (see Quinodoz, 2007, p. 43). The subfield probably most affected by this increasing sense of excitement was the psychoanalysis of psychoses. Whereas, as mentioned, the Kleinian concepts of splitting and PI, both fundamental to Klein’s understanding of the PS-P, were deeply connected to a psychoanalytic understanding of psychosis, Klein herself did not work with psychotic analysands. It was her most ardent followers, Hanna Segal, Herbert Rosenfeld and a bit later also Wilfred Bion, who started to apply the theoretical project set out in Klein’s *“Notes”*, bringing the fresh analytical tools into contact with the psychoanalytic clinic (Aguayo, 2009). Indeed, Segal, Rosenfeld and Bion applied, extended and modified the Kleinian innovations as they came into contact with the field of psychosis. Segal’s (1950) *“Some Aspects of the Analysis of a Schizophrenic”*, also known as ‘the case of Edward’, can be understood as the very first application of Kleinian concepts to the analysis of a psychotic analysand (Quinodoz, 2007, p. 44). Soon, Segal followed this paper with *“A Note on Schizoid Mechanisms Underlying Phobia Formation”* (1954) and *“Depression in the Schizophrenic”* (1956). Both of these subsequent papers furthered Segal’s attempts to contribute to the emergence of a distinctively Kleinian clinic. In 1957 Segal wrote what was to become her most notorious paper, namely *“Notes on Symbol Formation”*. This predominantly theoretical paper was concerned, as we shall see, with the extension of the Kleinian concept of PI into the field of symbol formation. At the same time, Rosenfeld’s papers on psychosis were starting to be published. Rosenfeld’s papers between 1949 and 1964, which talked about psychotic and borderline conditions from a Kleinian perspective, were collected into his first book called *“Psychotic States: A Psychoanalytic Approach”* (Rosenfeld, 1965/1985). A few years after the start of Segal’s and Rosenfeld’s involvement, Bion began to publish his own contributions to the emerging field, which became known as Bion’s ‘papers on psychosis’, spanning from 1953

to 1960 (see Vermote, 2019, pp. 64-79). These latter papers constitute Bion's most undoubtedly Kleinian phase¹⁰.

Segal's case of Edward is an interesting starting point to show how Kleinians were trying to apply Klein's novel concepts to the clinical field. Indeed, the main implicit aim behind Segal's paper precisely is to demonstrate the clinical value of the concepts of PS-P, PI and splitting. This goes along with a sustained critique of the then existing treatment methods for psychosis within the field of psychoanalysis. While Segal, Rosenfeld and Bion were pioneers of analysing psychotic analysands "*with only minor deviations*" (Segal, 1950, p. 268), hence adopting at that time established forms of analytical attitude and setting (more about this later on), other psychoanalysts were already attempting to treat psychotic analysands by employing significant modifications to established technique. This involved, for example, the major utilization of reassurances, encouragements, supportive therapy techniques, educational techniques, restrictions of free association meant to structure speech, and so on. In many ways, "*Some Aspects of the Analysis of a Schizophrenic*" (1950) is a technical paper on how to remain 'analytic' in the conduction of a psychoanalysis with a psychotic analysand and how, at least for the Kleinians themselves, the new Kleinian technical framework was indeed the missing key in enabling the analyst to do so. Segal positions herself as a preserver of the analytic stance from the very start, when she writes that she "*took care not to step out of the role of the analyst who interprets, into that of an ally or an educator*" (Segal, 1950, p. 268). Later in the paper, Segal mentions two other analysts who serve as her main antagonists, namely Paul Federn and Frieda Fromm-Reichman. Both held the view that major technical modifications were necessary in order to work with psychotics. They argue that, since the ego of the psychotic is already overwhelmed by unconscious material, the analyst should not give interpretations that introduce into the patient's consciousness even more new and unconscious material. As such, interpretations that hint at something 'hidden' between the lines of the analysand's speech are to be avoided, since it was "*dangerous to call for still deeper layers and to introduce problems into the patient's mind*" (Segal, 1950, p. 277). In his

¹⁰ Although it is difficult to find a precise moment of rupture with Kleinian thought in Bion's work, it is fair to say that all of Bion's subsequent publications can be understood as an increasing move away from a Kleinian understanding of the psyche. For Vermote (2019), Bion's "*Transformations*" (1965/2013) does not yet fully break with the Kleinian tradition, his "*Attention and Interpretation*" (1970/2013), however, does.

paper “*Psychoanalysis of psychoses*” (1943/1952), Federn writes about the handling of the transference with psychotic cases:

[T]he general conditions which should be considered in every psychoanalytic treatment [with a psychotic analysand]: establishment of positive transference, treatment to be interrupted when transference becomes negative [...]. [When] [p]sychotic patients offer the positive transference to the analyst; the analysts must nourish it as something precious in order to preserve their influence [...]. Transference is helpful in the analysis of underlying conflicts of the psychosis but a positive transference itself must never be dissolved by psychoanalysis. (Federn, 1943/1952, pp. 122-140)

This paragraph was to become the antithesis to the approach advocated by Segal. Both Federn and Fromm-Reichman suggest a modified technique, in which the analyst is meant to influence the transference in such a way that it remains benevolent. The development of a negative tonality within the transference could lead to dangerous regressions, which would then overwhelm the fragile psychotic ego, causing the analysand to get even worse. The driving force of the cure is understood as a positive and supportive experience with the psychoanalyst, assisting the analysand, as much as possible, with a restoration of ego-strength. Interpretation and the uncovering of unconscious material is not only irrelevant but undesirable from the point of view of these authors. As we shall see, somewhat mirroring the same trenches involved in the ‘Controversial Discussions’ (1942-1944), Segal believes that from a Kleinian perspective this approach is completely flawed. Instead, she states that interpretation of the underlying and entirely unconscious phantasies is what drives understanding and progress also in the analysis of a psychotic. The interpretations should mainly focus onto the currently active “*greatest anxiety*” (Segal, 1950, p. 278) underlying the reported phantasies and onto the unconscious object-relations that are implied within these phantasies¹¹. For an analysis to be successful, Segal believes that analysts still need to help

¹¹ Otherwise, typically, Kleinian interpretations could also focus (i) onto how the reported phantasies could act as a resistance towards even greater anxiety situations (see, for example, Segal’s statement: “[t]he castration fear also acted partly as a blind; he forcibly drew my attention to his masculinity and the rivalry with his father and brothers to cover up his rivalry with me, the woman.”), (ii) onto the transference implications found within the reported phantasies, and (iii) onto the reaction of the analysand to previous interpretations and the type and degree of introjection of the interpretation.

psychotics in the endeavor of making the unconscious more accessible to consciousness. Segal (1950, p. 277) writes:

Schizophrenics, more than others, repress the links between different trends of thought. They often tolerate in their ego thoughts and phantasies which would probably be repressed in the neurotic, but on the other hand they repress the links between the various phantasies and between phantasy and reality and those links have to be interpreted whenever possible.

Furthermore, in relation to the handling of the transference, Segal believes that the approach of Paul Federn and Frieda Fromm-Reichman is bound to produce a deepening of the splitting tendencies already so omnipresent in the psychotic mind. Essentially, as we shall see, Segal believes that their technique systematically deepens the PS-P. She believes that in order to produce a truly analytic situation, the analyst must try to carefully gather both the positive and the negative transference and, hence, analyze and interpret both the negative and positive transference implications reported in the analysand's phantasies. That is the only viable way, for Segal, to lead the analysand to greater psychic integration and hence, in Kleinian terms, from PS-P to greater D-P. Within the case of Edward it will become clearer how Segal argues for her position.

3.2. Segal's case of Edward

Segal does not spend too many words in depicting Edward's childhood and adolescence. We do not know how many siblings Edward had. We are told that Edward reacted with jealousy and anger at the birth of his next two siblings. In other occasions, Segal mentions Edward's jealousy towards either his father or his older brother. Thus, they were four kids at least. There is also a striking paucity of information about Edward's mother and father. Segal only mentions that Edward's father used to make toys for him in his childhood. In addition to this, we are told that in his youth Edward frequently daydreamed of ideal girls, often princesses, whom he phantasized to successfully seduce despite the presence of a rival. Unsurprisingly, Segal links this phantasy to Oedipal themes and to his jealousy towards the father. All of these topics, however, take very little space within the case. They are mentioned in passing and are unrelated to Segal's main arguments within the paper.

In his childhood, Edward was a very ambitious and intellectual boy, who was particularly captivated by the subject of biology. Segal (1950, p. 268) also describes him as particularly “*diffident*” and “*oversensitive*”, a shy and narcissistically-woundable youngster with strong tendencies to withdraw and become “*obsessionally secretive*”. Unfortunately, according to Segal, Edward’s already existing emotional difficulties went completely unnoticed by the “*old-fashioned public school*” in Britain, in which he appeared “*well adapted to his surroundings*”. Possibly even exceptionally well adapted, since he won a scholarship to an important college for his brilliance in biology. A narrative of smartness and success overarchingly colours the portrayal of Edward’s childhood and adolescence, leaving little space for other spheres of being.

Edward’s life was to abruptly change scenery when he was called into the army. Shortly after turning 18, he began to serve his country far away from home in India by attending the “*Engineers’ OCTU (Officer Cadet Training Unit)*” (Segal, 1950, p. 168). There, Edward struggled to cope with his new reality and failed to attain his commission¹². Worries began to fill his mind. Should he stay at the OCTU or resign and hope for a concession, which would allow him to resume his studies? Edward’s days were more and more permeated by anxiety. He became increasingly suspicious and hypochondriac. His sense of being imprisoned and at loss of control became progressively more glaring. A mental breakdown was steadily approaching him, each day a step closer from the day before. Furthermore, Segal believes that Edward could not stand being a “*private*”¹³ and that this was partly due to Edward’s own perception that he could never “*stand a chance with girls*” against an officer. A day came in which an officer called him “*a fool*”: Edward’s previous doubts disappeared, at least for that very moment, and he resigned out of impulse.

His wish to resume his studies was not conceded. Instead, he was sent to work in a dark-room of a photographic laboratory¹⁴. There, his mental health quickly deteriorated:

It began with worry about his eyes going wrong. Then ever-growing delusions appeared, about Chinese plots to take power in India, about

¹² A commission is a document, appointing a person to higher office within the military.

¹³ A private is a soldier of the lowest rank within the British army.

¹⁴ It is left unspecified which authority is declining Edward’s appeal for a concession and instead sending him to work in the dark-room.

a biologist wanting to destroy the whole world, etc. He had his first aural hallucinations. At last he wrote a letter to his Colonel denouncing the biologist who wanted to destroy the world, and this led to his being put in a mental hospital. There he seems to have gone to pieces completely. In his memories, the six months he spent in the various military hospitals are a horrifying jumble of delusions, nightmares, hallucinations, complete loss of feeling of identity, sense of time and place or any continuity in himself or in the world. (Segal, 1950, p. 168)

After her brief biographical account of Edward, Segal proceeds to evaluate the few preserved psychiatric reports collected during his sojourn in these military hospitals. With regards to diagnosis, there was no divergence of opinion within the various doctors in classifying the case of Edward as a schizophrenia (*"hebephrenic", "paranoid schizophrenic", "rapidly deteriorating schizophrenia"* (Segal, 1950, p. 168)), a view that Segal shared. As a treatment method, the hospital chose to inject Edward with antipsychotics, which however brought *"no improvement"*. Edward's prognosis was viewed as hopelessly bleak.

It was in one of the military hospitals that Segal first encountered Edward. She first met the 20-year-old man in a short interview. Kept in bed by the medical staff for his *"aimless wandering and impulsiveness"* (Segal, 1950, p. 169), Segal conducted the talk at his bedside¹⁵. In her first impression she described Edward as *"completely withdrawn", "apathetic", "completely retarded", "with a half-placating, half-foolish smile", "out of keeping with what he spoke about"*. In a fleeting moment of psychic presence, Edward asked her whether *"London was all right"*, a question seemingly asked out of worry since he thought that *"India had become completely altered"*. Segal did not directly reply to his concern about London and instead suggested to him that *"he felt that he himself had changed and the world was changing with him"*. Edward agreed and added: *"Yes, I have been changed"*. According to Segal, Edward understood his inner changes, which followed from his breakdown, in a persecutory fashion: *"he had not changed, he had been changed"* (Segal, 1950, p. 169).

After a few sessions in the military hospital, Edward could get transferred to a private nursing home due to the involvement of his parents. It was there that his psychoanalysis, with five

¹⁵ It is unclear whether Edward was being tied to his bed.

sessions a week in a face to face setting, began. Segal underlines that her approach was determined by only minor deviations in setting but not attitude from *“strict analytical technique”*¹⁶ (Segal, 1950, p. 168). Edward was excited to see Segal. It soon became clear that Edward hoped that she could help him to escape. While emotionally detached from the contents of his speech, he told Segal about various terrifying things that were done to him by mad doctors in the various hospitals. He stated that it was a necessity for him to be *“allowed out of this prison immediately”* (Segal, 1950, p. 169). Segal answered this invocation through interpretation. Edward was visibly relieved by her very basic interpretation that he experienced the hospitals and the nursing home like a prison. Another interpretation of Segal seems to be less the product of the material of speech and more the outgrowth of her countertransference impressions: she interpreted how very *“misunderstood and cut off he felt”*, basing herself on her feeling that *“though he was talking to [her], [she] meant no more to him than a piece of furniture, so that his isolation was complete”*. Edward replied that all prisoners feel misunderstood and cut off and that he knew this since prisoners in Germany were telepathically sending him voices. Following this exchange, Segal began to realize that for Edward the distinction between *“being like something”* and *“being something”* tended to collapse. There was no major differentiation between the symbol (prison) and the thing symbolized (hospitals, nursing homes). It was also the case that Edward struggled to distinguish between himself and others (or between himself and the world/environment): when he felt destroyed, he perceived the world and others as equally destroyed. Segal (1950, p. 269) mentions a few examples for this self/object confusion:

He would say 'All prisoners hear voices,' or, speaking of shock treatment, 'The doctors were so maddened by voices that they tried to stop them by killing the poor patients.' Obviously, he felt that his own hallucinations were in everybody's mind. At times the boundary between the internal and external world seemed completely obliterated.

¹⁶ Segal implies that the use of a face-to-face setting in a high-frequency analysis is only a minor deviation of analytic setting, a deviation which was imposed onto her by several contingencies and which does not interfere with the analyst's ability to maintain an analytic attitude throughout the treatment. While elements of the setting can contingently facilitate or hinder a psychoanalytic process, the psychoanalyst's sustainment of a specific analytic attitude, which we will come to describe more carefully, is a necessary element in order to adhere to the Kleinian technical parameters.

Referring to Edward's difficulties to differentiate between the symbol and the thing symbolized, Segal mentions yet another example. One day, Edward came into the session giggling and blushing. He did not talk to her and seemed to shamefully avoid her altogether. Within that session, Segal found out that previous to the analysis, Edward went to a session of occupational therapy, in which they were doing carpentry and more specifically he made a stool. It became clear that Edward was shy of telling Segal about this event. This was due to Edward's struggle to see any difference between (i) the stool on which he was working in occupational therapy, (ii) the word "*stool*" that he would need to employ to describe his activities to Segal, and (iii) the stool as meaning faeces. Segal comments that in comparison to Dick¹⁷ (see Klein, 1930), Edward formed symbols but was unable to fully use them as symbolic representations. He could transfer his interests from an object to a substitutional object, for example, from the faeces to the canvas stool. However, somehow the canvas stool could not symbolically represent¹⁸ the faeces but instead became equivalent to them, causing him shame and embarrassment just like the actual object. This is what Segal (1957) will come to define as a "*symbolic equation*", a process which, as we shall see, she heavily links with PI. Segal comments that Edward's tendency to employ symbolic equations led to many difficulties within the analysis, since he was prone to very concretistic understandings of her interpretations. For example, Segal's interpretation that he would wish to be a baby or, in another occasion, that he would wish to be a pregnant woman, made him feel actually

¹⁷ At the beginning of his analysis Dick was a 4-year old child who nowadays would be diagnosed as autistic. He showed no signs of playing, speaking or relating with/to people in his surroundings. Indeed, he took no interest in the world around him, with the only exceptions of door handles, trains and train-stations. Klein (1930) analysed Dick's excessive sadism in relation to his mother's body, which led him to be paralyzed by anxiety, frightened by his own aggressive impulse and the possibility of the object's retaliation. In her paper Klein will come to the conclusion that, while anxiety usually leads to the development of symbols, excessive anxiety paralyzes the development of symbols and instead shuts down the creation of phantasies altogether. Klein (1930, pp. 29-30) concisely summarized her idea as follows: "*Thus what had brought symbol-formation to a standstill was the dread of what would be done to him [...] after he had penetrated into his mother's body [with sadistic attacks]. [...] [This resulted] in the cessation of phantasies and the standstill of symbol-formation. Dick's further development came to grief because he could not bring into phantasy the sadistic relationship to the mother's body.*" While Klein's paper is dated before her introduction of the concept of PI (Klein, 1946/1952), we can clearly see how the logic of PI is already fully operative in this paper.

¹⁸ Segal uses the concept of "*symbolic representation*" in a rather wide sense. The canvas stool is obviously symbolically tied to the faeces only through the multiple meanings of the English word 'stool'. Segal seems to imply, that neurotic subjects could, for example, manifestly employ canvas stools in their dreams to latently symbolize/represent a phantasy containing faeces. Still, there is a difference for the neurotic subject between the symbol (canvas stool) and the thing symbolized (faeces), between the symbolic representation and the actual object. On the other hand, psychotic subjects would have a difficult time to perceive a difference between the former and the latter. I will come to expand Segal's argument in the section dedicated to her paper "*Notes on Symbol Formation*" (Segal, 1957).

castrated, since in his mind he became *“a pregnant woman or a baby, and that implied his not being a man”* (Segal, 1950, p. 271).

Often, Segal admits, she did not understand what Edward was talking about. Neither did she understand his reactions and his behaviour. Many hours of acquaintance with Edward and his particular way of inhabiting the analytic space were needed in order to get a more vivid sense and grasp of his internal psychic reality. Within the often seemingly opaque, unintelligible and incoherent material, Segal could work out two main phantasies that Edward expressed time and again in different permutations and that were there since the start:

- (i) The phantasy of being held in prison. With regards to this phantasy, Segal also acknowledges a foundation in reality, for someone *“could hardly be more effectively imprisoned than is a mental patient in an old-fashioned military psychiatric hospital, especially if, like Edward, the patient has to suffer days or weeks of solitary confinement”* (Segal, 1950, p. 270).
- (ii) The phantasy of catastrophic change, in which Edward got afraid that either he himself, other people or the world were destroyed or are about to be destroyed.

It seems that Segal selected these two phantasies as grounding core phantasies of Edward's internal world, from which she could then study the interconnected links between these core phantasies and follow novel associations, which emerged from them.

Edward thought that his illness must have started in the dark room, which was also a prison to him. Being imprisoned meant that he was turned into a criminal or into a child. Actually both meant the same thing, since, for him, being a child meant being a criminal.

Edward thought that *“all this thinking was done by his stomach”* (Segal, 1950, p. 270). Also this was the case because he was imprisoned. He complained that in the nursing home he was being *“too much looked after”* and given *“too much to eat”*, while no one cared to give him something else to do or to think about. He was being seen as a *“huge stomach”* with an irrelevant head and useless limbs. Concurrently to these associations, Edward developed the anxiety that the world's food supplies were running out of resources since everybody just thought of eating and no one cared to plant new crops. Segal comments these associations as follows, clearly trying to create links between Edward's core phantasies:

Thus, imprisonment led to a change in him — he became a greedy child; and that, in turn, led to the world's food supply being exhausted and to the world changing. This phantasy was depressive in its contents: the baby greedily emptying the mother of food and babies and incapable of a reparative genital relation. But the feeling accompanying it was persecutory. He did not feel guilty or responsible in any way, because his greed was forced on him by those who imprisoned him. His anger, like his greed, could change and destroy the world around him. Imprisonment led to anger, and anger in turn made him into the child-criminal and led to imprisonment. The vicious circle was established. (Segal, 1950, p. 270)

Throughout the paper, Segal attempts to make an important technical point. She warns analysts to avoid the temptation of interpreting “*phantasies familiar to every analyst*” (Segal, 1950, p. 271) prematurely. It would be a mistake, according to Segal, to straightforwardly interpret Edward’s feelings, including his fear of change, his feelings of persecution, his dread of imprisonment, etc. by only referencing the materials gathered in his speech. Instead, Segal defines her analytic stance as follows:

These feelings I had to bring into the transference, connect them with his phantasies and delusions and, finally, with his past. (Segal, 1950, p. 271)

In this stance, ‘bringing’ the analysand’s feelings into the transference relationship is of pivotal importance. The transference relationship allows the analyst to reach the analysand emotionally and not only intellectually, thus allowing the analyst to make meaningful contact with the parts of the personality in question. Segal points to various defensive mechanisms, which make this task of “*gathering the transference*” (Meltzer, 1966/2018) difficult. For one, there can be a considerable resistance, on both the side of the analysand and the analyst, against bringing all of the analysand’s parts of the self into transference contact with the analyst. With regards to this difficulty, Segal mentions that Edward was vigorously trying to safeguard Segal as exclusively a “*good object*”, someone who has nothing at all in common with the bad others:

In his changing world full of fear he needed one unchanging good figure and he tried to believe that I was this figure. But, to preserve this belief, he had to use all his defences. In the first place, he had to deny that I had anything to do with his being kept in hospital. If I frustrated him, he would deny the frustration and split me into a good and a bad figure. The bad figure would be introjected as hostile voices or reprojected on to the hospital doctors. In effect he felt acutely persecuted from within and from without. (Segal, 1950, p. 271)

Safeguarding Segal as a “good object” functioned well in order to protect her from the fervour of his hatred. However, this transferenceal preservation of Segal as his good object was a frail configuration, since his loving feelings led to feelings of dependence, which in turn stirred feelings of hatred against Segal, the object of his dependence. Thus, he subsequently needed to split-off his dependency-born hatred and projectively identify it with yet another persecutor. In this instance it is evident that Segal clearly thinks within the then novel logic of splitting and PI. Furthermore, in relation to the transference, Edward experienced some extent of depressive anxieties, which however did not bring him closer to the D-P and instead led to PS-P-solutions:

He often expressed this by saying he wished I did not come to the Nursing Home where the voices would change me—I was much safer outside. The Nursing Home represented himself and I could not be safe near to his madness. He could keep me good, but my goodness was of no avail, and his isolation was complete. His narcissism was a way of saving me from madness. (Segal, 1950, p. 271)

The thought, and the guilt associated to the thought, of possibly driving Segal mad was intolerable. Thus, she should stay out of it! This paragraph is of particular interest, since it is also meant as a demonstration of narcissistic withdrawals as phenomena which are still to be understood as object-related phantasies. This is, as we have seen, a trademark of Kleinian and much of post-Kleinian theory. Freud (see, for example, Freud 1914) was sceptical of the value

of psychoanalysis in the work with the so-called '*narcissistic neuroses*'¹⁹, a somewhat antiquated diagnostic category by which mostly psychotic pathologies were meant. He believed that "[t]hey produce no transference and are, therefore, inaccessible to our efforts, not to be cured by us" (Freud, 1916, p. 374). Klein, instead, viewed narcissism as a complex phenomenon in which internal object relations still matter. Furthermore, Kleinians believe that the then novel concepts of splitting, PI, introjective identification, etc. give the analyst tools to grasp the more subtle ways in which the analysand is engaging the analyst within the transference. What appeared like a 'no-show' of transference to a Freudian, who would, roughly speaking, understand transference as the displacement of past whole-objects onto the analyst, could now, through the novel concepts and finer tools of analysis, be discerned by the Kleinians as a transferential involvement, in which the analysand is projecting into the analyst different parts of the self or internal part-objects. In the case of Edward, Segal argues throughout the entire paper that Edward was transferentially involving her in an idealized and split-off manner, projecting onto her his ideal breast and keeping her starkly separated from anything negative or hostile. Following these observations, Segal's central argument in the paper is a technical point in relation to her handling of Edward's idealized transference. Segal argues that she is not artificially trying to maintain the position of the ideal object for Edward, a stance that she will come to argue in greater depth. Instead, she interprets that Edward is afraid of involving her into his madness. She also interprets that Edward's tendencies of withdrawing into complete isolation are part of his attempts to keep her out of his madness and thus protect her. While Edward rejected a lot of Segal's interpretations, Segal was still convinced by subsequent sessions and associations that her interpretations were "*effective*" (Segal, 1950, p. 271). Furthermore, Edward's conscious access to his own fear of changing Segal to the worse through his voices was a good indicator for the fact that he was indeed tying his thoughts and feelings to Segal within the transference.

¹⁹ In Freudian terminology (see Freud, 1914), the narcissistic neuroses are constituted by the group of people who have either not invested objects with libidinal cathexes in the first place or have disinvested their objects from libidinal cathexes. In the famous amoeba metaphor, the pseudopodia emerging out of the nucleus either never developed or deteriorated. In this way, the narcissistic neuroses are related to narcissism in the Freudian sense, since libido is found only or predominantly in the form of ego libido and not object libido. Klein and Kleinian analyst's challenge the entire distinction between ego libido and object libido, since all phantasies, including phantasies leading to phenomena associated to narcissism, are understood to be object-related. It is important to note that Freud's distinction between ego libido and object libido is short-lived, since Freud (1919) will further develop his drive theory into new directions (namely by positing an opposition between a life and a death drive), implicitly (never explicitly!) abandoning the previously held distinctions.

After three months of analytic work at the nursing home, Edward could go home, which in his case was the house of his parents. The sessions were continued from there. In the first session at home Edward was despaired and angry with his parents, whom he experienced as cruel and cold. Segal entertained within herself the hypothesis that Edward was projecting his anger and despair onto his parents, while he was actually despaired by the fact that he could not leave his illness in the hospital. Since being imprisoned and being in hospital were equated with his illness, the latter being previously understood by him as the direct consequence of his imprisonment, he was in despair that he could not leave his hallucinations and delusions behind. In this reasoning the operations of PI become once again apparent: unbearable feelings are projected outwards and then either turn into objects or latch onto objects that consequently are experienced as persecutory (see Stein, 1990). Within this new constellation, Edward exerts renewed pressure onto Segal to become an “ally” (Segal, 1950, p. 271): he demands of Segal various forms of reassurance, essentially implying that his parents or the hospital were indeed guilty of his problems. Once again, Segal does not give in to these demands, she does not reassure Edward, but instead interprets that he is demanding this reassurance because he is afraid of being mad beyond repair. Importantly, this interpretation neither confirms nor denies the connection that has been drawn by Edward. This seems essential, since Edward is surely not completely mistaken with his accusations. Further, since Segal remained the only obvious connection to the hospital, she adds to her interpretation that he also wants to make sure that she is good and not also secretly part of the enemy, the bad doctors. Here, Segal aims at the uncovering of an unconscious equation between her and the doctors, which could be anxiety evoking for Edward. To this Segal adds the following:

In a way, we were alone with madness: [for him] it was either in him or in me. If anyone was driving him mad it could only be I. I had to bring this situation into consciousness, to substitute a conscious suspicion of me for blind acting out. Had I not done so the unconscious identification of myself with the hospital might have led him to break off the treatment. Though he did not agree with my interpretations he did not reject them altogether. (Segal, 1950, p. 272)

In this context, the cruel and cold parents could have been yet another way for Edward, to establish a stark split between good and bad and to safeguard Segal from any of his suspicions,

which could have put her into the dangerous position of the enemy. If the parents were the problem he would at least be relieved of his doubt and uncertainty whether, after all, the attacker could have been Segal all along. Segal comes back to the aforementioned technical problem, *“about which there is considerable controversy”* (Segal, 1950, p. 272). This problem has to do with the transference handling of Edward’s attempts at keeping Segal as a purely good internal object. Would she have reassured Edward in moments of crisis, she would have acted in such a way that would have ensured her position as a safe ally and warm internal object. Segal believes that this would have been a great mistake. But why? Why should analysts avoid sympathy and avoid to *“reassure a very ill patient at a moment of crisis and when the patient is craving reassurance”* (Segal, 1950, p. 272)?

Segal’s argument against (excessive?) reassurance or sympathy can be divided into five greatly interconnected sub-arguments:

- (i) Reassurances and sympathy promote the defense of splitting in the PS-P:

Whenever analysts (overly?) reassure or sympathize they are making sure, whether consciously or unconsciously and also whether voluntarily or involuntarily, to remain a good object for the analysand. Segal believes that, while this might feel good to the analyst and the analysand and while it might relieve the analytic couple from much heat and plenty of difficulties, it comes *“at the cost of furthering the split between good and bad objects and reinforcing the patient’s pathological defences”* (Segal, 1950, p. 272). In this logic, through the idealization of the analyst, the good distances even more from the bad which reinforces the PS-P. As such, according to Segal, hostile phantasies and the spoiling of the analyst should by no means be interfered, since, while they can lead to confusion and turbulence, they eventually lead the analysand to greater integration of his psychic reality. Put differently, the gradual bringing together of the loving and hating trends towards the analyst, leads the analysand increasingly into the D-P. Since the analyst *‘gathered the transference’* and hence is being invested with the leading phantasies of the whole personality of the analysand, this move into the D-P is not only to be understood as isolated to the transference situation, but instead suffuses into all areas of the analysand’s liveworld, facilitating integration overall. In this way, as transference object, the analyst functions as the condensation point for the analysand’s psychic truth. If the analyst, however, gives in to (excessive?) sympathizing

and reassuring, s/he will be kept in the position of the ideal object and the task of integrating phantasies of love and hatred through the analysis and through the transference fails. The same split is re-established over and over again within the transference. If the analyst gives in to this temptation, then, at best, some form of “*chicken-noodle-soup-analysis*”²⁰ (Steiner, 2009, p. 52) is possible, in which the analyst’s main role is to be a soothing and warm companion in the analysand’s life.

(ii) Reassurances and sympathy promote a half-hearted analysis:

Assuming that the analyst is not only willing to stay in an exclusively warm and positive light, but is also able to do so, then the analysis would need to limit the scope of its exploration of the analysand’s aggressive, hostile and bad phantasies to exclusively extra-transferential past and present situations. This analytic positioning, however, tendentially leads to intellectualized engagements with one’s aggressive self-parts, while the affective force of our wrath remains largely split-off and/or repressed. Put differently, our hostility would constantly stay at a safe distance and never actualize itself within the analytic situation, so much so, that we would never quite need to face it. Consequently, since for Kleinians the subject is an outgrowth of both love and hate alike, the analysis remains half-hearted.

(iii) Reassurances and sympathy can lead to acting out:

Hostile phantasies that are not brought into the transference and hence remain overly split-off and/or repressed, can lead the analysand to ‘act out’ within or without the analytic session. Instead of repeating and remembering these aggressive phantasies within and through the transference, the analysand, driven by transferentially unacknowledged unconscious hostile phantasies, may be inclined to impulsively act “*relatively out of harmony with [hir] usual motivational patterns*” (Laplanche et al., 2018, pp. 4-6). Indeed, it would seem that the analyst’s will to stay in the position of the ideal object could contribute to the fundamental refusal of the subject to acknowledge hostility within the transference.

²⁰ Riccardo Steiner (in Steiner, 2009, p. 52) uses this comical expression in order to characterize an analyst whose main goal is to soothe an analysand within the sessions, just like a chicken soup is commonly (at least in many Western cultures) employed “*in the family [if anyone] starts crying or complaining for whatever minor illness.*” According to Steiner this is an especially common stereotype for Jewish mothers.

(iv) Reassurances and sympathy can lead to explosive reversals:

Hostile phantasies, which have not been '*gathered*' into the transference within the analytic process, and hence remain overly split-off and/or repressed, can lead to explosive reversals, in which the analysand suddenly develops an unmanageable negative transference. Segal believes that the previously adhered idealization of the analyst, greatly increases the danger of this shift into a very explosive and stubborn negative transference. Once the volcano has exploded, very commonly there is no way back for the analytic couple.

(v) Reassurances and sympathy can lead the analysand to play out his hostile phantasies with someone else:

Segal argues, that whenever the analyst is artificially kept good, the hostility of the internal objects and self-aspects is likely to be projected into and directed at someone else. Analysts can observe this when during an analysis "*someone else is chosen by the patient as the persecutor*" (Segal, 1950, p. 272). In the analysis of Edward, Segal thought that this was the case when Edward believed his parents to be cold and heartless. Segal argues that this situation is highly undesirable, since these external people are much less equipped to cope with the emergent hostility of the analysand in comparison to the analyst within the analytic setting. In this way, the '*gathering of the transference*' can also be understood as a strategic technique of the analyst to become the most central object within the analysand's psychic economy, an object to which all reported phantasies of the analysand within the session relate. We could say that the Kleinian analyst situates himself at the epicenter of the analysand's discourse. The analyst implants and situates himself into the position of the primary object from which all nets of signifiers emerge²¹.

Segal believes that the aforementioned arguments justify her position of not giving into the demands for gratification and sympathy. Hence, she stresses that the analyst should retain an analytic attitude regardless, "*even without the co-operation*" (Segal, 1950, p. 272) of the

²¹ This positioning, namely the situating of the analyst at the epicentre of the analysand's discourse, is common also for analysts beyond the Kleinian tradition. However, while this might be true in its generalized form, different psychoanalytic traditions have specifically different understandings of what it means to situate oneself at the centre of the analysand's speech. Lacanian analysts, for example, have a radically different understanding of the analyst's position in relation to the analysand's transference and speech in comparison to their Kleinian colleagues.

analysand. This 'analytic attitude' implies that it is proper to talk about the gratification and the refusal, thus trying to understand the analysand's thoughts and feelings involved, and improper to directly gratify or refuse the analysand's requests and demands. Segal writes:

To [establish an analytical situation] I had, first of all, to make him accept interpretations instead of the various gratifications he wanted, and to do it without appearing needlessly rude or cruel. I tried to show him in every interpretation that I understood what he wanted from me, why he wanted it at any particular moment, and why he wanted it so desperately. And I followed most interpretations of that kind with an interpretation of what my refusal had meant to him. (Segal, 1950, p. 272)

It can further be noticed that Segal's aforementioned arguments against sympathizing and reassuring seem to be permeated through and through by the logic of splitting and PI. I believe that the emerging technical view described by Segal is distinctively Kleinian, centring around an understanding of transference, in which the analyst is effectively sucking all associations of the analysand into the sphere of relation to himself. As such, the analyst ends up in a position in which s/he is fully immersed into and implicated in all associations. This Kleinian position becomes clear in Steiner's (2008) ideas about a specific transferential configuration, in which the analysand seemingly does not relate at all to the analyst within his associations and instead situates the analyst as an "*excluded observer*". According to Steiner, even in this apparently excluded position, the analyst is still being as fully transferentially implicated as ever. In this sense there is no escape from the transference as a "*total situation*" (Klein, 1952; Joseph, 1985). There is no such thing as '*no transference*', there are only not yet recognized transferences. The "*total situation*" indicates that, for Kleinians, the analysand has no position outside of the transference and, hence, that s/he cannot fail to involve the analyst into the complex totality of his inner world, his past and present experiences. As such, as mentioned, also the "*excluded observer*" is a transferential position. Steiner writes about this transferential constellation as following:

In this kind of transference the analyst finds himself in an observing position and is no longer the primary object to whom love and hate are directed. Instead he is put in a position of an excluded figure who

can easily enact rather than understand the role he has been put in. In this situation he may try to regain the position as the patient's primary object in the transference or avoid the transference altogether and make extra-transference interpretations and in this way enact the role of a judgemental and critical super-ego. (Steiner, 2008, p. 39)

Importantly, for Steiner, both of the analyst's temptations, namely (i) to forcefully re-establish himself into the position of primary object, and (ii) to enact the role of external observer attributed to him, are problematic. Steiner suggests that the analyst should aim at putting to language what is going on between the analytic couple in the here and now, aiming at bringing the transferential situation into the analysand's and the analyst's awareness.

While Segal is not precisely known within the Kleinian tradition for a focus on the '*here and now*' or an emphasis on the immediate transferential impact of the analyst upon the analysand²², I believe that Segal already demonstrates a core affinity to these technical developments in her handling of Edward overall. This is especially evident when Segal stresses that she followed many of her interpretations with an additional interpretation entailing an understanding of "*what my refusal had meant to him*" (Segal, 1950, p. 272).

After this technical excursion, let us return to Edward himself. After three months of analysis at his parent's home, he was ready to hold further sessions in Segal's office. This marked the last change of environment for Edward and Segal: they met in the military hospital, proceeded to the nursing home, then moved on to Edward's parental home and finally ended up in Segal's office. On the first day in Segal's office, Edward was anxious, distrusting and investigative. Segal alluded to the presence of these feelings and Edward did not deny. He even added that he is anxious that Segal could imprison him again, that the bottle on Segal's table could contain poison and that the little ivory skulls on Segal's coat could be skulls of patients that she had killed. He, however, also added that he knew well that all of this was not the case in reality. It was only a phantasy. Segal comments that this was the first time within the treatment of Edward that he actively distinguished between delusion and reality.

²² Especially Betty Joseph will later come to be known for such an emphasis, namely a focus on the '*here and now*' of the immediate transferential and countertransferential situation. As we will see, Joseph doesn't only analyse the transferential acting out of the analysand, but she also analyses the analysand's unconscious attempts, through PI, to "*induce the analyst to join in the acting out*" (Feldman & Spillius, 2003, p. 2).

After a few sessions in Segal's office she introduced the couch to him. He was anxious about it, became quite rigid, but sustained his cooperation. On the couch, he associated about being kept in bed at the hospital, about his childhood in which he was being punished with going to bed, about his fears that these feelings might be re-awakened by laying on the couch in analysis. At no point however, according to Segal, Edward's fears about the reappearance of an unbearable mental state, such as the experience of being imprisoned, merged into a reality for him. These associations remained in the realm of anxious phantasies, far removed from actualized perceptions. It is at this point that Segal believes that most of her difficulties in Edward's analysis disappeared. Put differently, Segal believes that with the gradual subsiding of symbolic equations, Edward became much more able to inhabit the analytic situation. She writes:

In the sixth month of treatment the formal analytical situation was finally established. The patient lay on the couch, associated and, at least consciously, expected nothing from me beyond analysis. From that time on my problems were the same as those of the analysis of a neurotic, i.e. the analysis of the patient's system of phantasies and defences. (Segal, 1950, p. 273)

Of course, the analysis got preoccupied with new difficulties, which however appeared more manageable to Segal. For example, Edward started to deliberately hide his delusions and hallucinations from her. In this phase, Edward started to consistently reject all interpretations and to deny the presence of "*nearly every phantasy*" (Segal, 1950, p. 273). These rigidities, which might have been provoked by the typical regressive tendencies precipitated by the employment of the couch, subsequently loosened and Edward could begin to tolerate the discussion of phantasies and conflict once again. Interestingly, while Segal problematizes Edward's hiding of his delusional parts, she also considers this shift as a sign of progress, since Edward was more capable of distinguishing between what was only in his mind and what was shared knowledge by everybody. In this regard, it seems that Segal suggests that Edward's progress could be understood as a progress in adaptation to outer society: how not to appear mad in public and thus protect oneself from all sorts of discriminations?

After one year of analysis, five times a week, Edward's initial psychic condition seemed to be greatly improved according to Segal: all conscious delusions disappeared, he seemed more in

touch with reality, "*leading an apparently normal life*" (Segal, 1950, p. 273), he began to take courses at university and later on worked on "*some minor inventions*", which aroused great interest within his field of forestry²³.

Despite the acknowledged improvements, Segal remains partly suspicious of Edward's progress. She mentions at least two grounds for her suspicion, both representing relative residues of schizophrenic mechanisms still operating in Edward's fantasies. Thus, to be more precise, both examples rest on Edward's continued employment of splitting and PI during a phase of his treatment in which he was not manifestly psychotic anymore. As such, since Segal's emphasis changed onto psychotic residues within Edward's personality, this part of her paper is seemingly meant as a demonstration of the usefulness of Klein's theories beyond cases that are evidently and manifestly psychotic. Furthermore, Segal describes the modifications that were made possible by analysis in both cases:

(i) Edward's troubles with intimacy and his unsatisfactory sex life:

Segal remarks that Edward's sex life was still unsatisfactory²⁴. Edward's first sexual encounter happened during the analysis. He was relieved that he was indeed potent and before long "*[h]e became a great flirt, trying always to have many girls*" (Segal, 1950, p. 273). More and more, Edward engaged in flirting, but avoided to develop too many feelings for the women in question and hence expose himself to feelings of dependence. Sex was possible only with prostitutes. Segal came to believe that Edward was splitting his perception of women into three categories with differing functions, namely (i) prostitutes for sex, (ii) women from his social environment to flirt, and (iii) an ideal woman whom he would be able to marry one day.

²³ Reading the list of included improvements makes one wonder about the normativity behind desirable aims in psychoanalysis and how these stand within a social and historical context.

²⁴ I wonder to which extent one's sex life, and exactly which kind of ideal sex life, has been and is being employed as a genuine marker of mental health within the field of psychoanalysis and to which extent this is a marker we want to retain as justified. What are we measuring the subjects against? What do they need to live up to in order to be experienced and qualified as healthy? Should psychoanalysts even have evaluative standards of mental health? Obviously, these are normative questions. While Segal's paper itself should be contextualized within British culture in the 1950s (and, as such, the conservatism displayed within her work is not too surprising), these questions remain relevant for the psychoanalytic enterprise today, since it would not be unfair to claim that all kinds of phobic ghosts have intruded the field of psychoanalysis in this regard (e.g. transphobia, homophobia, queer-phobia, etc.).

Segal reports a dream of Edward, connecting it with his difficulties in the realm of intimacy and sexuality:

[H]e dreamed that he was imprisoned by the Russians and a young woman helped him to escape. He travelled with her on many trains — they had to change trains frequently because if they stayed too long on any single train they would be caught. He immediately associated the young woman with myself, and the Russians with any kind of persecution. I was helping him to escape from it. But when he spoke of Russia it became clear that the Russians also represented myself.
(Segal, 1950, p. 276)

The dream is reminiscent of major trends within the analysis, namely Edward's recurrent and sustained perception of Segal as a liberator from persecutory figures. Once again, Segal believes that what reaches Edward's conscious thought is the connection of her with this good and saving object. What does not reach his conscious thought as much are the aspects related to his aggression and suspicion towards Segal, in which she would represent the Russians within the dream. Again, Segal's argument seems based on her belief that Edward employed splitting in order to endow her merely with idealized feelings. On the other hand, he escaped from linking Segal with aggression and persecution, hence employing PI into phantasized other objects (e.g. Russians, doctors, parents, etc.) in order to talk about anything hostile. As a result, Edward's internal object world was still mostly configured in a PS-P fashion, in which internal objects are connotated with a rather pure emotionality, either good or bad, allies or enemies. Segal, furthermore, believes that the dream was also "*directly connected with his current sexual problems*" (Segal, 1950, p. 276). She suggests that the train ride represents sexual intercourse in Edward's phantasy. Intercourse that, on the one hand, he would wish to have with his ideal object represented by Segal but, on the other hand, found intolerable to have with her. He was too afraid of losing her as an ideal object in order to "*go the whole way*" with her, he was too afraid that "*the longed-for vagina would turn into the dangerous and persecuting one*" if he rode with the same train to destination. As such, he split off his sexuality from his ideal object and could allow himself only "*to sleep with prostitutes, changing trains often lest they become dangerous*" (Segal, 1950, p. 276).

Segal believes that D-P fantasies were deeply tragic for Edward. Similarly to one of her later papers (Segal, 1956), Segal argues that depressive anxieties were greatly intolerable for Edward, or at least for the psychotic residues of Edward's personality. As an effect, he needed to employ splitting and PI to get rid of depressive feelings. Segal writes:

This recurring situation in which the very best object turns out to be the most injured one and the worst persecutor was the deepest tragedy in his internal world. Throughout his life he had to 'change trains quickly', never to go deep into things or relationships, to remain superficial, cold and detached, lest the tragic situation should become conscious. Here, again, we see the long history behind the narcissistic withdrawal. (Segal, 1950, p. 276)

Hence, Segal implies that Edward's withdrawing tendencies as well as his frugal and wasteful 'use' of women were both associated to his fear of integration within a more sustained D-P, especially his fear of making loving and hating tendencies join together within a whole object. Importantly, according to Segal, the analysis of these splitting tendencies was able to bring along a gradual integration. In one instance, describing a session with relatively increased depressive tonality, she writes:

On the following session Edward was sad. He thought it might be because he was losing the ideal picture of the woman. [...] He told me that an old servant was leaving on the same day. She had been kind to him when he was a child and he was sorry to lose her, and sorry that he had not always been good to her. Towards the end of the hour, he brought up the first happy memory of his childhood which he ever produced in analysis. At the age of two he had been transferred from the wash-basin to a real bath, and he had been thrilled by the experience. These associations showed that after the analysis of the splitting, the idealization and the persecution, he had become free to accept a real good object, a real good experience and real hope of growing out of babyhood. (Segal, 1950, p. 277)

It is interesting that Segal did not wonder about the possibility that the 'train-dream' expressed Edward's genuine gratitude towards her and their 'train ride' with many changes (from the military hospital to Segal's office). Edward might genuinely feel that Segal helped him to get out from his 'imprisonment' in the hospital and from his inner state plagued by persecutory hallucinations. Maybe she did not free him as literally as he demanded at first, but still at last, by helping him to think about himself and his emotional experiences. I think that Segal's own interpretation, which focused on the splitting tendencies, keeping her as ideal object far removed from the hostile objects, could be the product of a countertransferential feeling, in which, for example, an atmospheric hostility within the sessions remained persistently unacknowledged in the transference. Put differently, Segal could believe that Edward is back at splitting and idealizing, since, while the dream might express gratitude towards her, in the sessions she felt that he was expressing some form of hostility. It seems important to mention this, since the countertransferential reactions of Segal are mostly omitted from the case report and can only be somewhat inferred between the lines. Indeed, Segal points out that once Edward "*became freer to admit that in his phantasies I appeared in various persecutory figures*" (Segal, 1950, p. 277), their relationship became much more genuine, intimate and warm. In this sense, it seems obvious that Segal makes a major differentiation between, on the one hand, the 'warmth' born out of idealization as a result of splitting and, on the other, the warmth that can emerge in relationships despite their ambivalent character, despite the presence of both love and hate, the good and the bad, and not purely the idealized. Interestingly, in this second sense, Segal even describes their relationship as one in which Edward "*found in [her] a friend, and if that is so, this is the first intimate relationship that he has ever experienced in his conscious memory*" (Segal, 1950, p. 277). This seems interesting, because Segal is, as such, not only stating that the analyst should never encourage the emergence of a positive transference and work against the establishment of a negative transference, but she is also stating that the relationship to the analyst will only then be experienced as truly warm and intimate if both positive and negative transference are allowed and activated²⁵.

(ii) The buzz in Edward's left ear:

²⁵ Here, we can see the stark contrast between the approach advocated by Federn and Fromm-Reichman on the one hand and the Kleinian technique promoted by Segal on the other.

As a second example for Edward's continued employment of splitting and PI, Segal mentions his symptom of a *"buzz in the left ear"* (Segal, 1950, p. 273). Segal believes that this symptom was the result of a splitting-off and *"encapsulating"* of his psychotic self-parts into an apparently *"insignificant little buzz"*. This would help him to magically deny his persisting difficulties and view himself already as fully functioning and uncompromised by any illness.

Segal reports a specific sequence, which led the buzz to become louder, more articulate and intrusive for Edward. This sequence commences with the deaths, in quick succession, of two family members, both men and both related to his mother. Edward was rather attached to them, but did not feel any *"strong feelings"* (Segal, 1950, p. 274) associated with their passing. Indeed, Edward asserted that one of the men, his uncle, was a very upbeat character, who would have disdained to be mourned. The other man had a particularly *"kind death"*, a way of departing that Edward would wish for himself, too. Segal mentions that Edward was showing signs of identification with both of them in past sessions and also in present associations. He especially showed evidence of being identified with his uncle in the past, but, once he died, Edward omitted to tell Segal that the relative in question was that particular uncle and he appeared to have cut-off all conscious awareness of his prior identifications.

Segal theorizes that beneath Edward's conscious detachment there was still a sticky identification at work. Following this hypothesis, Segal consequently imposes an oedipal narrative onto this sequence. According to her exposition, Edward was in competition with both family members, both being *"rivals in relation to his mother"* (Segal, 1950, p. 274), and, thus, their death was murderously experienced by him as a *"proof of his own omnipotence: that is, a proof that at any moment now his foremost rival — the father — might die"*. According to this explanation, Edward would unconsciously experience feelings of guilt, associated with his omnipotent murder of the two family members, ultimately leading to fears of retaliation. None of this was consciously accessible to him and purely within the realms of unconscious phantasy. What was conscious to him, was the defensive crust, namely his feelings of detachment towards the entire situation. Interestingly, Segal goes on to imply that Edward was defending himself both against persecutory phantasies of retaliation, in which the dead would angrily try to get their vengeance, as well as against persecutory phantasies with depressive tonalities, in which the dead would persecute him with *"regrets"*

and mourning” (Segal, 1950, p. 274). Apathy and detachment towards their deaths protected him from both.

Life went on for Edward and social events followed in which he felt confident and impressive. Segal interprets that Edward experienced himself as triumphant, “*young, strong and potent, while the fathers were old and dead*” (Segal, 1950, p. 274). It was in the following session that the buzz became louder and more articulate. By then, a week had passed from the death of his uncle. Edward informed Segal that on the previous day he was doing eye exercises, a process that entailed a ritual of counting. While he was counting during his exercises, he heard voices again. The voices acted like an echo, counting together with him, however in a mocking tone. At this point Segal interpreted:

I reminded him of the death of his two relatives, of his identification with them, his refusal to mourn them, and the triumph over them during the week-end. I suggested that, in performing eye exercises, he was watching the intercourse between his parents — he was killing the father or both parents, represented by the two relatives, by magic looking and magic counting; finally he introjected the dead and triumphed over them. But, apparently, they were not defeated; they came back to life inside him and mocked him, mocked, particularly, his magic looking and counting — the means by which, he thought, he had secured his triumph. This interpretation he rejected. (Segal, 1950, p. 275)

In the following session, Edward reported to Segal that the buzz had not gone, on the contrary, it had intensified and now said “*dreams, dreams*” (Segal, 1950, p. 275). Segal suggested to him that the mocking echo was now becoming herself, nagging at him, asking him for dreams. Edward’s internal sense of persecution could latch onto Segal in the transference, making Segal’s voice appear in his hallucinations. Segal invites this transformation, since she repeats that, “[c]analyzed into the transference situation, the process became accessible to analysis” (Segal, 1950, p. 276). Edward replied to Segal’s suggestion by reporting the following dream and subsequent associations:

He dreamed that he saw four people playing a very fast game of which he did not know the rules—something halfway between tennis and squash. Then he saw in the distance two men advancing, one black and one white. As they came nearer, the white man became more and more brown and he grew a stubble on his face. Edward's first association was that he could not play squash. But what intrigued him most was the white man turning brown. It made him think of two things: (1) that in a film he saw a white man was looking brown because of the way he had been photographed, and (2) of India, being brown with the sun and not shaving. (Segal, 1950, p. 275)

Segal gives various interpretations to this dream. I will not report them in any depth. In this phase of Kleinian theory the discussion of phantasies of (re)-introjection and (re)-projection and their underlying corporeality could lead to pretty confusing and overcomplicated interpretations²⁶. In one of her interpretations, Segal tries to link the dream to the previous sessions and to the transference:

[...] [T]he dream gave us a link with the transference. As he tried to watch me in intercourse, while doing eye exercises, he swallowed me up in anger with his eyes and changed me into faeces. (He watches; they turn brown.) Then as the internal voice, I started persecuting him from the inside: "dreams, dreams". But reprojection occurs almost simultaneously. By looking, Edward also filled me with faeces; then, in retaliation, my looking both swallowed him up and changed him into faeces (by introjection) and filled him with faeces (by projection) so that, by looking at each other, we put excrements - illness and death - into each other. (Segal, 1950, p. 275)

On the following day, Edward reported that the buzz had disappeared and that he felt very well. His self-perception stood in opposition to how he perceived Segal, who he thought was extremely anxious, for he came to the session with a swollen face, stung by a bee. In

²⁶ The untranslatable German word "*verkopft*" truly applies to these interpretations. Slunecko (personal communication, January 3, 2023) suggested a further very fitting but similarly untranslatable German word, linked to Heidegger, namely the word "*verstiegen*".

accordance to Segal's transference understanding of the previously reported dream, she interpreted again that Edward fantasized of having projected his excrements, his bad anxieties, into her through PI, so that in his fantasy he was now freed of the buzz and it was her instead that was filled with tremendous anxieties about him and his wellbeing.

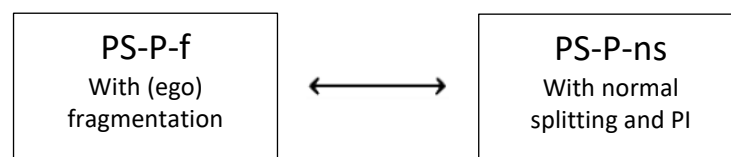
Segal's attempt to precisely describe the subsequent processes of introjection, projection, re-introjection and re-projection are rather confusing and frustrating to read. It seems to me that the application of the logic of splitting and PI, in conjunction with the oedipal-myth-template, led Kleinians to overly mechanistic and simplified interpretations of psychic reality. Meltzer (1978, p. 300) expressed similar reservations about Bion's papers on schizophrenia, his undoubtedly most Kleinian contributions, by commenting that "*concepts such as primal scene, splitting of the ego, projective identification and verbal thought were stretched to the breaking point*". Could the very attempt to meticulously dissect the precise psychic sequence of these processes be understood as a dead end in the history of psychoanalysis? Perhaps a dead end founded upon the psychoanalyst's own disavowed sense of omnipotence?

It is my sense that "*Some aspects of the analysis of a schizophrenic*" (1950) focuses mainly on demonstrating Kleinian concepts. This, arguably, comes to the expense of a deeper understanding of who Edward is, where he is coming from and where he is going towards, which seems completely secondary to the task of application of Kleinian terminology to a clinical case. Edward is part of the story told by Segal, but in some major ways he seems to be lost between the lines. It is in this sense that I believe that the concepts of splitting, PI, PS-P, D-P, which are so implicitly omnipresent in Segal's exposition, are both the blessing and the curse of the paper. I believe that these concepts helped Segal to see some elements in Edward's story in a new and helpful light. At other times, however, the concepts appear to me as obstacles. Could it be that these concepts saturated Segal's hearing too much? Could it be that she could hear nothing beyond what she expected to hear?

4. A Further Subdivision in the Paranoid-Schizoid Position: the PS-P-f

4.1. Introduction

John Steiner (1987, 1990, 1993, 2011) argues that the PS-P can be further divided into two sub-positions. This chapter demonstrates Steiner's differentiation and attempts to refine and develop it further. In the first sub-position, the PS-P-ns²⁷, normal splitting is operative, meaning that the previously mentioned, 'classically Kleinian', dualistic schizoid processes of splitting of the self and objects into purely good and bad apply. In the second sub-position, the PS-P-f²⁸, on the other hand, ego fragmentation, a more intense and splintering process compared to normal splitting, is in force. These two sub-positions differ in their personality functioning and in the phenomenology of their first-person experience (Grotstein, 1985).



Steiner argues that both sub-positions can be understood as a spectrum or a “*continuum of mental states*” and not as a static and singular set of phantasies (Steiner, 1993, p. 25). Understanding a sub-position as a spectrum implies that there is a broad yet continuously related set of latent dynamics governing the elements, qualities and functions of phantasies within one and the same sub-position. Specific intra-positional sub-dynamics could then potentially be located or classified in terms of their location closer or further away from one respective end of the given spectrum²⁹. We must understand each spectrum as standing in a perpetual interplay and “*dynamic equilibrium*” with the neighbouring spectra (Steiner, 1993, p. 25). There is a psychic continuity within and between the sub-positions. As a consequence, any fixed description of the PS-P-f or PS-P-ns, such as a description of the predominant phantasies or phantasy functions within the PS-P-f or the PS-P-ns, can only deliver a particular snapshot of phantasy configurations and functions, lying somewhere on the spectrum of the

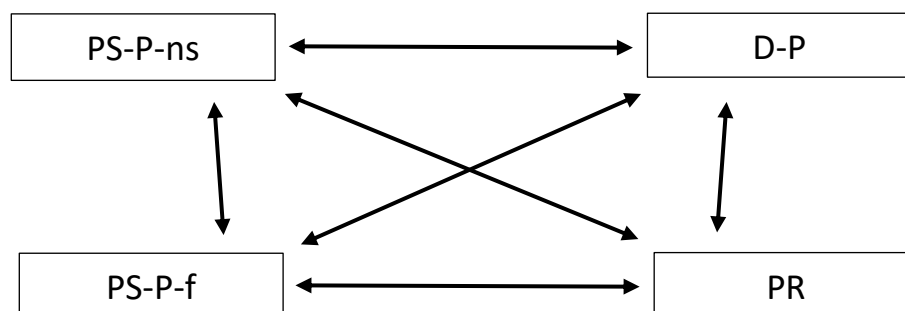
²⁷ Henceforth, PS-P-ns shall stand for the paranoid schizoid position with normal splitting.

²⁸ Henceforth, PS-P-f shall stand for the paranoid schizoid position with (ego) fragmentation.

²⁹ As we shall see, we can speak of phantasies within the PS-P-ns more closely familiar and leaning towards the D-P and phantasies within the PS-P-ns that are more congruent with and shifting towards the PS-P-f. Thus, within the PS-P-ns there are phantasies that lean closer to one or another end of the PS-P-ns-spectrum.

sub-position. I am describing the problem that any given characterisation of these sub-positions is necessarily a simplification. This simplification comes with the risk of underestimating the wideness of related mental states within a sub-position and overestimating the break between the sub-positions. Nevertheless, although the psychic continuum between the PS-P-f and the PS-P-ns has to be emphasised, this chapter will also argue for a qualitative caesura separating the PS-P-f from the PS-P-ns, thus justifying the conceptual differentiation between them. Ultimately, similarly yet distinct to Steiner (1993), I will argue for a structure involving four primary spectra, all standing in a perpetual interplay and dynamic equilibrium with one another, namely the (i) the PS-P-f, (ii) the PS-P-ns, (iii) the D-P, and (iv) a broad understanding of psychic retreats (PR).

From a mainly post-Kleinian perspective, I will first outline an intrapersonal view on the differences between the PS-P-ns and PS-P-f. Then, using a post-Bionian outlook, I will return to describe the PS-P-f and its interaction with its neighbouring spectra from an intersubjective perspective.



4.2. Post-Kleinian outlines of an intrapersonal distinction between the PS-P-ns and PS-P-f

(i) The PS-P-ns³⁰

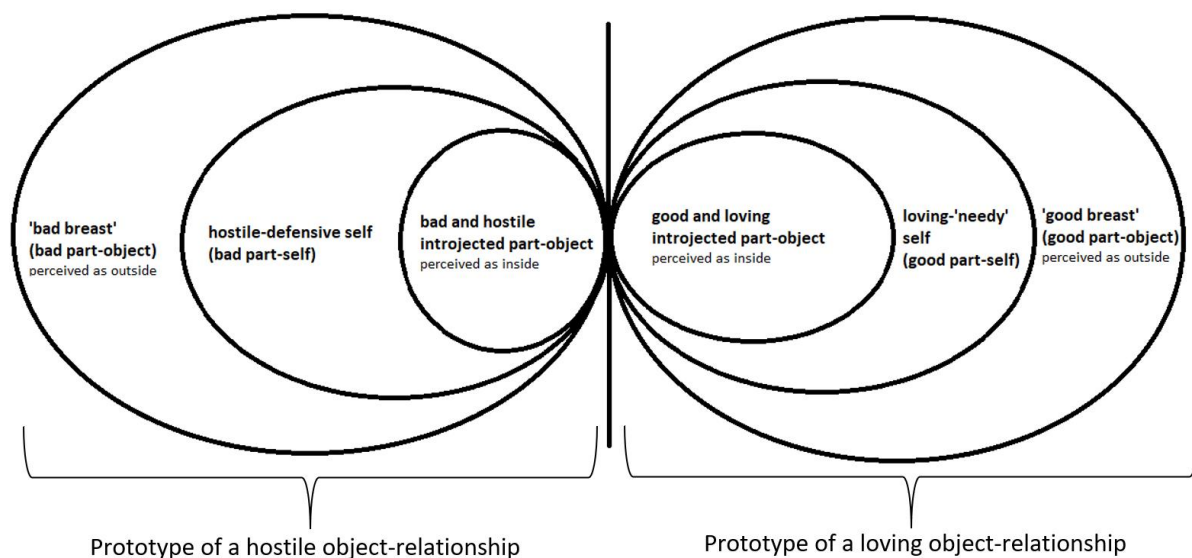
The hallmark of the PS-P-ns consists of (i) rigid, dual splitting, (ii) PI, in which something good or bad is projectively identified into an object, and (iii) introjective identification, in which something good or bad is introjected from an object and then eventually assimilated (Heimann, 1942/2005) into the self. I will refer to these as ‘normal splitting’, ‘normal PI’ and ‘normal II’³¹. ‘Normal splitting’ enables and upholds the phantasy construction of part-selves and part-objects with clear boundaries and opposing polarities, namely a good and loving pole as well as a bad and destructive pole. ‘Normal PI’ primarily generates and sustains good and bad part-objects by directing and identifying either badness as well as destructive feelings into bad part-objects or goodness as well as loving feelings into good part-objects. Lastly, ‘normal II’ allows for the phantasy of taking in and eventually assimilating goodness as well as badness from part-objectual experiences, which enriches the theatre of phantasy with internal characters. Thus, a specific psychic geography is established in phantasy from the concurrent and interconnected psychic work of splitting, PI and II. The prototype of a hostile object-relationship is represented by the relation of the hostile-defensive self to the bad breast and to the bad and hostile introjects³². Accordingly, the prototype of a loving object-relationship is described by the relation of the loving-‘needy’ self to the good breast and the good and loving introjects. Following the logic of PI in the PS-P-ns, the prototypically hostile object-relationship entails that the subject will not only hate the bad breast but also fear the hatred of the bad breast, and the prototypically loving object-relationship encompasses that the subject will not only love the good breast but also anticipate and trust that the good breast will love oneself back. As mentioned, not only is the object split and experienced as good or bad, but also the self is split and experienced similarly. We can thus speak of a hostile-

³⁰ This section contains certain condensed repetitions from previous chapters. This will be done in a compressed fashion and serves the purpose of highlighting the differences between the PS-P-ns and the PS-P-f within this subchapter.

³¹ The reference to ‘normality’ serves only as an allusion to splitting and PI as ‘classically’ understood within a Kleinian framework of the PS-P-ns. However, as we shall see, within the Kleinian tradition already Rosenfeld (1947/1965, p. 33) argued that there can be “*varying degrees of splitting [as well as fragmentation] and projection of the ego*”.

³² There is an object-relationship both with part-objects that are perceived as external and with those part-objects that have been introjected and are perceived to be inside oneself.

defensive self, which expresses the prototype for aggressive and specific defensive self-functions³³, and a loving-needy self, which represents the prototype for loving, needy/dependent and protective self-functions. Both the object-relational and self-functional prototypes can be understood as inchoate forms of psychic integration. Indeed, while the PS-P-n is a subject position, in which loving and hating types of self- and object-relationships are kept as far apart as possible, implying a still insufficient personality integration (Steiner, 1993, p. 26), the personality is also in the process of integrating around two different poles. Put differently, despite the massive vertical split separating good from bad, the personality increasingly integrates around one respective pole, relatively undisturbed from the integration happening on the other pole.



When handling concepts such as splitting, PI and II, it is essential to remember that the ontological relation of outside/outer reality to the inside/inner reality is kept rather vague and profoundly inter-entangled within a Kleinian framework³⁴. A complication in the relation

³³ Already Rosenfeld (1971, p. 171) recognized this prototypical development when he stated that “[a] [p]art of the death instinct is projected into the external object which hereby becomes a persecutor, while that part of the death instinct, which is retained in the ego, turns its aggression against the persecutory object.”

³⁴ Indeed, one typical impression of the Kleinian theoretical framework on the reader is that the relation between inside/outside and perception/phantasy is too opaque or lends itself to too many misunderstandings. On the other hand, there might be some productive value in a philosophically vague theory that lends itself to multiple interpretations and does not clearly fixate the given theory into a specific ontological perspective.

between inside/outside and perception/phantasy is achieved through the emphasising of PI. A PI into the object, stemming from bad self-aspects or elements of destructiveness derived from a yet unthinkable source of frustration or turbulence within the self³⁵ or, alternatively, from the death drive³⁶, creates or sustains the creation of a bad breast and, with it, the prototype for a hostile object-relationship. By the same token, a PI into the object, derived from good self-aspects, elements of experienced satisfaction or from the life drive, creates or sustains the creation of a good breast and, with it, the prototype for a loving object-relationship (Steiner, 1993, p. 26). Some readings of the PS-P-n's particularly emphasise this perspective, in which, within the PS-P-n's, objects would not at first appear in phantasy to represent our environmental reality but, instead, to give form to emotions in need of representation. While concerning the importance and role of external stimuli one can find more or less deflationary readings of the PS-P-n's³⁷, Steiner (1993, p. 27) reminds us that in the PS-P-n's, as classically understood, *"there is no memory of a good object when it is lost"*, but rather a bad object will make its appearance in phantasy, thus representing the feeling of loss through the presence of something bad instead of the absence of something good³⁸.

Clearly, an emphasis of the PS-P-n's is that good and bad shall not mix. Indeed, the PS-P-n's is defined by a sense of rigid order and clarity, based on the organising principles of clear subjective borders between 'good' and 'bad' as well as 'in'/'out' and 'me'/'you'³⁹. Splitting

³⁵ For example, the presence of hunger as frustration or the presence of unthinkable rage as turbulence.

³⁶ For those who still want to make use of this concept.

³⁷ I think that while Kleinian theory has tended to be vague about the issue of internal/external and phantasy/perception, the ordinary and mainstream reading of the theory deflated the impact of external reality in favour of a biologicistic reading of the drives and, as a consequence, the role of trauma in the genesis of subjectivity and psychopathology was deflated as well. Except for some prior pioneering works, it was only recently, e.g. through works like Heinz Weiss' *"Trauma, Guilt and Reparation: The Path from Impasse to Development"* that there has been a robust corrective to this underemphasis on trauma and externality within the Kleinian tradition.

³⁸ This typical Kleinian idea can be understood as a precursor of what Ferro (2009) means by "casting". Understanding the appearance and disappearance of specific characters in the analysand's speech during the analytic hour as "casting" means hearing these characters as representing narrative derivatives of proto-emotions in need of representation (Ferro, 2009). This element of post-Bionian field theory is somewhat similar to ordinary Kleinianism since good and bad part-objects are born within the subject's phantasy as "carriers" (Ferro, 2007, p. 42) of good or bad feelings and then cast into the session depending on the emotional tonalities in need of expression. A defining distinction to the typically Kleinian understanding, however, is given by the fact that the proto-emotions in need of representation are not to be understood as purely intra-psychic, e.g. as drive-derivates, but, more broadly, as proto-emotions generated within the intersubjective field constituted in the here and now of the analytic session by the analytic couple and the "groupality" that they embody (Civitaresse, 2021). In this sense, post-Bionian field theory tends to retain the orthodoxly Kleinian emphasis on phantasy over perception while simultaneously emphasising intersubjectivity and externality over pure internality.

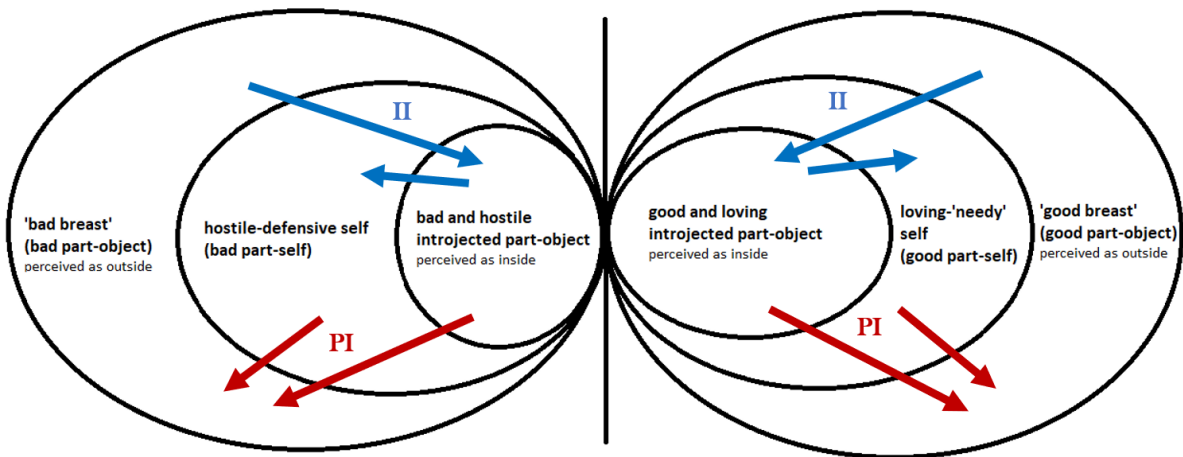
³⁹ It could be argued that in the PS-P-n's 'in' and 'me' are coextensive. The same argument would apply to 'out' and 'you'. A separation of 'in'/'out' on the one hand, and 'me'/'you' on the other, suggests that there could exist

separates 'good' from 'bad', while PI and introjective identification regulate a sense of 'in'/'out' and 'me'/'you'. Hence, splitting, introjective identification and PI function as powerful tools to split off and identify self-aspects within the object or split off and identify objectual aspects within the self. It might seem paradoxical to define such an apparently confused state of affairs as one with defined borders. However, while the personality is massively getting rid of its own mental contents and appropriating part-objectual traits as one's own, thus formally appearing as if highly intertwined and confused with its objects, all the borders are clearly defined from the perspective of the subject within the PS-P-n's itself. The phantasy spectrum of the PS-P-n's is not a place that allows for much confusion. The only amount of subjectively felt confusion that may come into the picture for the person comes through the guise of persecutory anxieties, in which the '*return of the projected*'⁴⁰ is feared. Thus, persecutory anxieties can be potentially experienced as intrusive anxieties of collapsing borders⁴¹.

a phantasy construction of something 'outside that is me' and something 'inside that is you'. The argument of coextensiveness would state that such phantasies are too sophisticated for the PS-P-n's and that only in the D-P a mental operation differentiating something of 'you inside' and 'me outside' would be possible. Since I believe the PS-P-n's to be a spectrum, which on some points is more and at some points less resemblant to the D-P, I do not see 'in'/'out' and 'me'/'you' as coextensive within the PS-P-n's. Indeed, I would suggest that typical persecutory anxieties of the PS-P-n's, e.g. the anxiety of being robbed of one's insides or the anxiety of being infiltrated by an evil other, are based on such sub-operations.

⁴⁰ Sodr  (2016, p. 2) refers to the "*return of the split-off*" in a similar fashion, alluding to the "*return of the repressed*" (Freud, 1915). There is an agreement among Kleinian authors that splitting is a more 'primitive process' in comparison to repression, implying that the "*return of the repressed*" refers to a more neurotic, whole-objectual return of unconscious material. Bion's (1965/1984) distinction between "*rigid motion transformations*" and "*projective transformations*" furthers and reflects a similar distinction (see Bergstein, 2019, pp. 6-7). As Bergstein (2019, pp. 6-7) points out, rigid motion transformations, which are non-psychotic transformations, are analogous to "*transference as described by Freud, where past feelings and ideas are transferred from significant figures in the patient's life onto the analyst, or vice versa*", while projective transformations, which are inherent to psychotic functioning from a Kleinian perspective, transform an "*emotional experience in a manner that requires a bigger effort by the analyst, [...] [since the] shape will be distorted and will not look much like the original shape, but it does follow a formula*". With regards to this 'formula', Bergstein (2019, p. 7-8) stresses that "*if there is information about the point of reference (distance, angle), the original shape and dimensions of the projected image can be calculated. The analyst needs flexibility of mind in order to hear and decipher the unconscious phantasy in its transformed and distorted shape. Moreover, it is not simply transferred onto the person of the analyst but into him, entailing much confusion between patient and analyst. The patient's transformation of the emotional experience now takes up the whole analytic space so that the transference now occupies the total situation (Klein, 1952; Joseph, 1985).*"

⁴¹ Something that was split off and projected into the other and hence became alien to the self is feared to make its premature return into a self that is not ready for re-introjection yet. Under such circumstances, when the '*return of the projected*' becomes especially loud, the personality might suffer under a confusion of self- and object-boundaries. Who is doing what to whom? In a by-now infamous dream of one of Rosenfeld's (1949/1965, p. 49) analysands, a renowned surgeon meticulously operated on a patient, who watched in awe as the surgeon's intense focus was evident. But then, unexpectedly, the surgeon stumbled and fell deep inside the patient's body, entangling himself within the patient's body tissues and struggling to break free. The surgeon's desperate gasps for air nearly resulted in his suffocation, but then he could find and administer an oxygen apparatus to himself,



Importantly, in Kleinian theory, it is stressed that 'normal splitting', 'normal II' and 'normal PI' are all constitutive parts of healthy development (Steiner, 1993, p. 29). As it will become clear, it is especially the development and expression of needy and dependent 'good' self-parts that ensures healthy development within the PS-P-n. Not only do the phantasy-creation-tools of splitting, introjective identification and PI allow to organise chaotic experiences into a simple and clear order, but they also set a process into motion in which the goodness provided by the isolated, purified ideal part-object can provide emotional nutrition and shelter for the self to introject, assimilate and strengthen itself⁴². Once the self has sufficiently introjected the goodness and built itself up around a purified ideal object, the overall personality steadily

which ultimately saved his life. This haunting dream concisely brings to light deep anxieties of collapsing borders, becoming too closely intertwined with the other, being penetrated by premature insight, losing oneself in the encounter with the other to the point that a potential psychic death for both could be approaching, etc. Sodr  (2014, p. 46) will point out, commenting upon Rosenfeld's paper (1949/1965), that in this dream, "*not only affects and parts of the personality are projected, but also [the] modes of functioning [themselves]*". For Sodr , the surgeon's intense focus, which turns into stumbling and hence intruding into the patient, is not only to be understood as the feared 'return of the projected' after the PI of the analysand's own curiosity and greediness towards Rosenfeld but also as the feared 'return of the projected' after a PI of a mode of functioning. At first, the surgeon/analyst is phantasized as operating in the PS-P-n too, employing splitting metaphorically through surgery and PI metaphorically by stumbling, falling and literally projecting himself into the patient. However, at the end of the analysand's dream, the surgeon is able to recover by administering to himself an oxygen apparatus, which might metaphorically reveal that the analysand could conceive of Rosenfeld as being able to successfully re-establish his own mental apparatus and his analytic function with a separate identity and intact capacities (Sodr , 2014, p. 47). In this sense, the dream does not end with the collapse of borders and the psychic death of both surgeon and patient, indicating that the analysand might have re-integrated a view of Rosenfeld as less intrusive and hopelessly entangled with himself.

⁴² In order to avoid confusion, I want to clarify why in the illustration above two blue arrows (in II) are pointing outwards instead of inwards, or more specifically from an introjected part-object to a part-self. This is the case, because introjection first leads to introjected part-objects and only in a deeper and subsequent elaboration to the assimilation into the self as a self-aspect proper. As such, the assimilation into the self is the furthest and final elaboration of introjective mechanisms.

increases its ability to “*tolerate ambivalence, and the split can be lessened to usher in the depressive position*” (Steiner, 1993, p. 29)⁴³. The metaphor of psychic growth through consistent introjective identifications with a ‘good breast’ points to the importance of feelings of hunger and the desire to take nutrition inside. If we never felt hungry, we could easily become malnourished and make mistakes in managing our energy intake and expenditure. The experience of hunger protects us from such unfortunate outcomes. In the realm of the psychic, by employing Kleinian terminology, the experience of hunger can be translated into the experience of the self as needy and dependent⁴⁴. Indeed, in Kleinian thought, the needy and dependent aspects of the self are understood as essential, if not defining⁴⁵, elements of the ‘good self’. The needy and dependent self-aspects are the relational counterpart to an unquestionably trustworthy ‘good breast’. Together, they form a kind of heavenly duo. This blissful dyad sets up the conditions for consistent and nutritious meals and, as such, the conditions for psychic growth. When this functioning pair breaks down, for example due to unbearable hypochondriac, persecutory, or claustrophobic anxieties, it can signal the onset of trouble for psychic growth and lead to moments of arrested psychic development. This breakdown may occur when there is a lack of trust in the source of nourishment or when hunger is not present over a longer period. The work of Betty Joseph (see Joseph, 1989 as well as Hargreaves & Varchevker, 2004) has been especially illuminating about the

⁴³ While it is a standard Kleinian parameter that the ‘good breast’ was in the first place created in phantasy by the subject and not found in the external world, the ‘good breast’ is nevertheless experienced as ‘you outside’, which is then, through nutrition or some other form of introjection, steadily absorbed into a ‘you inside’ (a good and loving introject) in order to eventually be digested and assimilated into a ‘me inside’ (good part-self). The last step is the moment of growth, the moment when the self has built itself up around the introjected object. Furthermore, I would suggest that the metaphor of a breast is already forging the theoretical framing of introjective identification. I wonder how we would speak of the growth process involved in introjective identification if we used a different metaphor, such as a uterus metaphor. We would understand growth instead as a building-up inside the good object (through the metaphor of the foetus) and not as a building-up around a swallowed good object (through an introjective metaphor of nutrition). It could be argued that the metaphor of a good and bad uterus could account more deeply for how all-surrounding, all-encompassing and timeless the encounter with goodness and badness is theorised in the PS-P-n. On the other hand, the metaphor of the uterus fails to carry the clear and stark self-object distinction and boundaries that the PS-P-n tries to uphold. I will return to the uterus metaphor when discussing the PS-P-f.

⁴⁴ It should be stated that the dependence of the self onto the good breast is lived and felt but not yet acknowledged in the PS-P-n. Only in the D-P, or in the transitional spectrum towards the D-P, can an acknowledgement of dependency on a whole object occur.

⁴⁵ How intimately linked the needy and dependent aspects are for a definition of the ‘good’ part-self can be inferred from Joseph’s (1989, p. 23) statement: “[...] *[P]atients split the self, splitting off the dependent and needy parts, including necessarily much that is good as well as the envious and hating parts, and project them into their object; but at the same moment, the object is split into a persecuting part which, as I have just described, contains the bad and unwanted parts of the self, and an idealized part.*”

importance of the needy and dependent self. Joseph's (1975) highly influential paper, *"The Patient Who Is Difficult to Reach"*, stresses how certain analysands only appear to be in a meaningful therapeutic alliance, while their needy and dependent self-parts are not activated but rather split-off and projectively identified into the analyst or some other character in their narrative⁴⁶. This process can be seen as a form of self-mutilation, which installs an analysis that seems to progress while nothing is allowed to really change. The task of the analyst to reach the analysand and make contact with his needy and dependent self-aspects is impaired, setting up an analysis that is prone to produce forms of knowledge and understanding, say some historical reconstructions of the analysand's childhood and how it might connect to today, which are however experienced as rather lifeless. A form of mental gymnastics in which the analysand gets some self-knowledge and understanding but never feels touched or truly understood by the analyst or, indeed, by himself⁴⁷. This idea became a refrain within Joseph's work and beyond⁴⁸ and highly contributed to the understanding and functions of psychic retreats (Steiner, 1993). Through this development, the PS-P-n is disrupted since a defining feature of it has collapsed or is being perverted, and a rigid order of a different kind, the 'psychic retreat' (Steiner, 1993), becomes inaugurated. Thus, the PS-P-n must be understood as a special rigidification. More precisely, I argue that the PS-P-n is the only rigidification, which is not to be understood as a psychic retreat. Further, it is a special rigidification insofar it offers a direct developmental path into the D-P. This is because the structural properties of the PS-P-n safeguard the growth-promoting relationship between the loving-needy self and the good breast. Since her earliest papers, Joseph (1959/1989) depicted how analysands habitually split off their own needy and dependent self-aspects and projectively identify these into the analyst or other characters. Joseph (1959/1989) presents an analysand, who

⁴⁶ Joseph (1975/1989, p. 74) writes that there are "[...] *patients who seem apparently highly co-operative and adult — but in whom this cooperation is a pseudo-cooperation aimed at keeping the analyst away from the really unknown and more needy infantile parts of the self [...]*".

⁴⁷ Joseph (1975/1989, p. 77) states: "*In considering this type of problem I am stressing how often the pseudo-cooperative part of the patient prevents the really needy part from getting into contact with the analyst, and that if we are taken in by this we cannot effect a change in our patients because we do not make contact with the part that needs the experience of being understood, as opposed to 'getting' understanding. The transference situation gives us the opportunity to see these different conflicting parts of the personality in action.*"

⁴⁸ Indeed, much of Neo-Kleinian psychoanalysis is concerned with so-called pathological organisations of the personality, in which the typical PS-P-n dyad of needy-self and unquestionably trustworthy good-breast is breaking down or is being perverted in one way or another. The work of Rosenfeld (1964, 1971) on libidinal and destructive narcissism, of Meltzer (1966, 2018) on pseudo-maturity and claustrophobia, of Riesenbergs Malcolm (1990/1999) on the as-if phenomenon are all examples of comparable or complementary Neo-Kleinian developments around this very core idea.

described her life as one in which everyone routinely needed her help while she did not need anyone. Indeed, if someone happened to enter her life, she certainly would not need his help. A curious way of presenting oneself in the office of an analyst. In the transference, only mild feelings and nothing too positive or negative were to emerge in her relationship with Joseph⁴⁹. Throughout her work, Joseph explored the mechanisms of splitting and PI that led analysands to part ways with their needy and dependent self-aspects. She became known for examining how the analyst can be seduced to collude with the highly defended personality organisation, which radiates the before-mentioned appearance of cooperation while actually having deadened the needy and dependent self-aspects⁵⁰. By carefully listening to the here-and-now transference-countertransference situation of the complex moment-to-moment interactions within a session, Joseph attempts to locate how analysands are unconsciously luring the analyst to join their psychic equilibrium and “act in” or “re-enact”⁵¹ (Joseph, 1989, p. 46; Feldman, 1994, p. 439), thus essentially attempting to seduce the analyst not to rock their psychic boat too heavily. Joseph (1975/1989, pp. 80-81) depicts this process well in the following case vignette:

⁴⁹ The exception to this transference situation was given by the analysand's wish to be seen as different from other analysands, namely as incredibly insightful and accommodating (Feldman & Spillius, 1989, p. 11).

⁵⁰ To summarise Joseph's unique clinical and theoretical focus, Feldman and Spillius (1989, p. 2) write: “*There are three or four major themes in Joseph's work, so intertwined and closely related that it is difficult to describe them separately. The first is [an] emphasis on the patient's need to maintain his psychic equilibrium. The second is psychic change and the factors that militate against it and those that foster it. The third is Joseph's particular way of focusing on transference and countertransference, on patients' acting out in the transference, and on their attempts, usually unconscious, to induce the analyst to join in the acting out. And the fourth is her avoidance of what one might call 'knowledge about' in favour of 'experience in'.*”

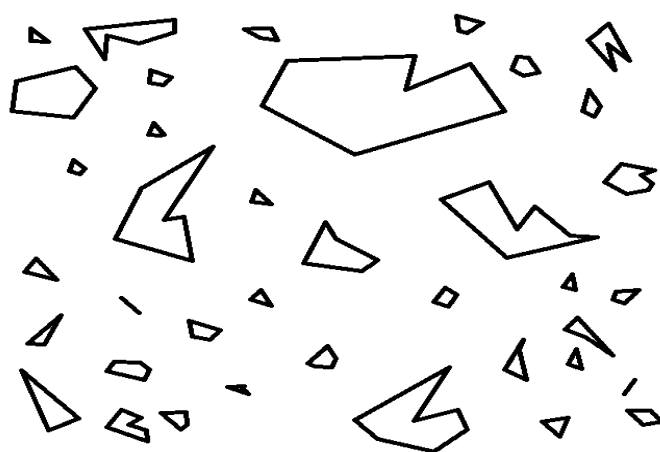
⁵¹ ‘Acting out’, ‘acting in’ and ‘(re-)enactments’ are three distinct yet related concepts. ‘Acting out’ and ‘acting in’ typically refer to an action, e.g. appearing drunk in a session (acting in) or risking overdosing on drugs at the weekend before the Monday session (acting out), that can potentially be carried out by both the analyst or the analysand. The concept of ‘re-enactment’ is less focused on one particular action emerging in or outside the sessions and, instead, emphasises the unconscious co-creation of a series of actions or interactional patterns between analyst and analysand. This co-creation occurs when the analysand unconsciously pressures the analyst into an enactment. As Civitarese (2022, p. 873) points out, “[enactment] *theorizes the unconscious involvement of the analyst in the staging of a pattern of relations that has its origin in a split-off aspect of the patient's personality*”. The concept of ‘acting out’ has a negative connotation and is typically discussed in terms of therapeutic mistakes or negative therapeutic reactions. The concept of ‘acting in’ is an extension of ‘acting out’ in the sense that it includes actions that happen inside the analytic session itself. Both ‘acting in’ and ‘acting out’ have a less co-created and relational dimension in comparison to the concept of enactment. Civitarese (2022, p. 873) also describes how enactment cannot be understood as a fully intersubjective field concept, since the use of the concept implies that “[t]ransference neurosis temporarily becomes, as it were, a transference neurosis for two; even when it is admitted that an analyst's split part of the personality may be implied in the process, in the end enactment is seen in causal connection to childhood neurosis and the patient's traumatic history.”

"I have frequently watched this kind of process going on in a very passive patient with a rubber fetish, whom I shall call C. In him I began to see the continual retreat to a kind of balance that he established, in which a weakly pseudo-cooperative self talked to me, but the emotional part remained unavailable. [...] [Later, in my countertransference] I felt that he would be able to move and to make contact and use his insight if only I would take the initiative. However, this is exactly the major part of his problem—that is, his hatred of really making contact with the loving, concerned, and very needy part of the self and bringing it into relation to anyone enough to move physically or emotionally towards them from inside himself, If I push him—however analytically discreetly—he has won, and lost. By my pushing I would confirm that no object is good or desirable enough to attract him sufficiently for him to seek it out and involve himself with it, and therefore that part of the self that can take initiative remains unreachable."

Suppose we identify that Mr. C was inhabiting a 'psychic retreat' (Steiner, 1993). In that case, it becomes clear that the PS-P-n's can sometimes become a destination yet to be consistently reached and not only a position to be abandoned. I will come back to an in-depth description of these matters in the next chapter, in which 'psychic retreats' (Steiner, 1993) and the 'claustrum' (Meltzer, 1992) will be further elucidated. For the moment, it suffices to emphasise that what makes the PS-P-n's a special kind of rigidification is precisely the specific kind of rigid order that it installs, in which a fundamental, growth-promoting proto-relationship between the needy/dependent self and the unquestionably good part-object is allowed to emerge. This order and specific psychic equilibrium can be broken down or perverted into rigidifications that can be understood as psychic retreats or claustra if this loving proto-relationship collapses. As seen under yet other circumstances, the PS-P-n's can also decompose into the PS-P-f.

(ii) The PS-P-f

The PS-P-f can be understood as a fragmentation spectrum beyond 'normal splitting' and 'normal PI'. Indeed, ego fragmentation implies an intensification of schizoid mechanisms, in which split-off parts are further shattered into more minute fragments, thus unable to organise themselves around the structuring principles characteristic of dual splitting. The conventionally Kleinian part-selves and part-objects, with their differentiating clear-cuts between 'good' and 'bad', 'inside' and 'outside', as well as 'me' and 'you', break down. Put differently, under more minutely fragmented conditions, the 'parts' or shatters lose their discriminating potential and, instead, disperse and blend in a confusing manner. The psychic apparatus is left disoriented and increasingly incapable of using the resulting fragments for differentiating thought processes. John Steiner (1989, p. 612) called this state of confusion, initially advanced by Rosenfeld (1950/1965)⁵², in which normal splitting breaks down and a state of undifferentiation between good and bad objects and between loving and hating self-parts and impulses arises, a state of "*primal confusion*". Indeed, this type of confusion is the result of a breakdown of normal splitting and has to be conceptually distinguished from another type of confusion resulting from projective identification, in which a split-off part of the self is projectively identified into the object and can thus be described to formally result in a self-object-confusion.

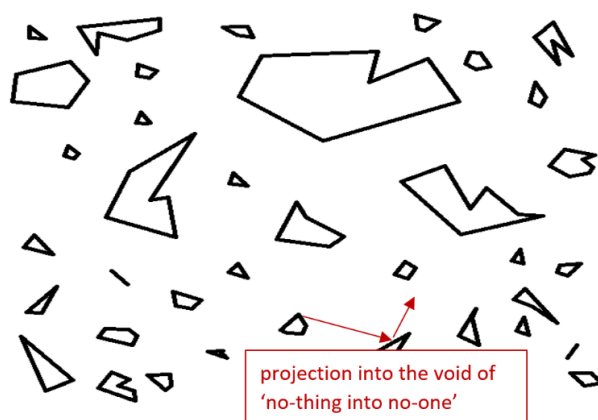


⁵² In a paper on confusional states, Rosenfeld (1950/1965, p. 53) mentioned that "*under certain internal and external conditions when aggressive impulses temporarily predominate, states may arise in which love and hate impulses and good and bad objects cannot be kept apart and are thus felt to be mixed up or confused*".

The idea behind ego fragmentation, in contrast to dual splitting, can be visualised by the image of glass ever more minutely decomposed, ranging from glass shattered into shards to different-sized aggregations of gravel, then the state of finely ground sand particles until, at the very end, every compound has decomposed to its constituent elements. It is remarkable how this visualisation immediately confronts us with the striking simplicity, or indeed oversimplification, of the classically Kleinian conception of rigid and dual splits in the PS-P-ns, evidencing that the PS-P-ns is an already relatively integrated state of mind, which is, however, concealed by the massive vertical splits of 'good'/'bad', 'in'/'out', 'me'/'you'. The visual metaphor of a 'decomposition reaction', in which a compound breaks further and further down into multiple simpler forms until full deterioration to its constitutive elements, allows us to preliminarily formulate the idea of an increasing disruption of psychic part-objectual- and part-self-experiencing. Since fragmentation leads to the minute shattering of 'parts' into progressively more unrecognisably pulverised pieces, the psychic apparatus can ever less experience itself and its objects as partial yet coherent 'some-things'. The experience of 'some-thing' is breaking down more and more to a 'no-thing' since the elements inhabiting the mind are becoming so minuscule and unrecognizable for the psychic apparatus. Thus, moving further and further down the spectrum of the PS-P-f coincides with a continuous and increasing disintegration and disappearance of part-objects and part-selves into either nobjects⁵³ or shatters of objects/selves on the verge of attaining nobjectual properties. As a consequence of the breakdown of 'normal splitting' in the PS-P-f, the functioning of 'normal PI' is also impaired. Since the mind is increasingly unable to form part-self- and part-objectual-experiences, it could be stated that fragments of 'no-thing' are projected into 'no-one'. As we shall see in greater depth, this projection into the void, of 'no-thing into no-one', is quite different compared to the phantasy of PI of 'some-thing into some-one'. In a visualised form, this could be portrayed by a minuscule shatter moving from one point within infinite space to another, causing potential bumps and turbulence through its motion. However, this re-positioning of a shatter seems pointless amidst the larger chaos as everything remains largely as it was before. As a consequence of the breakdown of these capacities, the personality

⁵³ I purposefully use the term 'nobject', conceived by Macho (1993) and furtherly developed by Sloterdijk (1998), to describe pre-subjective presences of surrounding co-givens, which are neither attributable to objects nor to the subject. I will elaborate on this topic in the next sub-chapter.

cannot differentiate between 'good'/'bad', 'in'/'out', and 'me'/'you', which distinctively differentiates the PS-P-f from the PS-P-ns.



We can employ the case of Mildred (Rosenfeld, 1947⁵⁴/1965) as a fertile starting ground in order to exemplify the theoretical development, which eventually led to the differentiation of the PS-P-f from the PS-P-ns⁵⁵. In 1944, Rosenfeld started an analysis with a 29-year-old woman whom he called Mildred⁵⁶. She was born shortly after the dawn of the First World

⁵⁴ Both J. Steiner (2009, p. 60) and R. Steiner (2009, p. 43) document that Rosenfeld told several of his colleagues that Klein, with whom he was in analysis at the time, did not allow him to publish his observations on Mildred until she had published her own 1946 paper "*On some schizoid mechanisms*".

⁵⁵ Indeed, Herbert Rosenfeld's early work, mainly documented in his "*Psychotic States*" (Rosenfeld, 1965), lays a considerable foundation for Steiner's (1987, 1992, 1993, 2011) further differentiation within the PS-P. It has to be noted that Mildred should not be understood to inhabit the PS-P-f permanently and exclusively. On the contrary, there are elements of PS-P-ns, PS-P-f, D-P and psychic retreat in the case of Mildred. However, the case of Mildred is still remarkably suited to portray some features of the PS-P-f.

⁵⁶ This analysis, which also functioned as a training case for Rosenfeld, gained him considerable attention in Britain and beyond, since he appeared to have been sufficiently successful in treating a psychotic case by using only interpretations. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this was remarkable since the psychoanalytic community did not believe this was possible until then. I will not further elucidate the controversy around treating psychotic analysands through purely psychoanalytic techniques since this was sufficiently elucidated in Chapter 3. Indeed, while I chose the case of Edward in the previous chapter to provide the reader with a practice-oriented sense of Kleinian psychoanalysis, mainly as applied to psychotic or borderline conditions, I could just as well have selected the case of Mildred by Rosenfeld. I mainly decided in favour of an in-depth description of Edward over Mildred because the latter is nowadays believed to be a borderline case and not a genuinely psychotic case like Edward (Watt, 2017, Quindeaux, 2007, p. 42). The use of the word 'borderline' has also to be defined shortly since it is not meant in the sense of Kernberg's Borderline Personality Organisation (BPO) (Kernberg, 1967). BPO is a further development in the field of psychoanalysis, which was greatly influenced by Kleinian theory and became very influential in general psychiatry from the 1980s onwards. The word 'borderline' as employed here, instead, is a simple descriptor for cases that were diagnostically speaking not clearly neurotic nor psychotic according to psychoanalytical conventions but shared traits of both. While there are overlaps between BPO and the more generic descriptor 'borderline' as understood here, they are not identical. Diagnosing Mildred as a borderline case throughout the treatment is also mildly controversial and seems to be solely based on the fact that she never developed active hallucinations like Edward, who had aural hallucinations.

War in 1915 and was the oldest of three siblings⁵⁷. Mildred was told that, as a response to the birth of her brother and the loss of a nurse to whom she was quite attached⁵⁸, she developed an increasingly more silent and withdrawn relationship with her mother⁵⁹. At seventeen, Mildred had her first major breakdown, in which she was bedridden, withdrawn, and went through a “*period of uncontrollable crying*”⁶⁰ (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 16). In 1940, eight years after her first major breakdown and four years before the start of her analysis with Rosenfeld, her brother died in a flying accident. At the start of the analysis, Mildred claimed that this left her feeling nothing at all. Mildred’s second major breakdown happened that same year during her duty in the Auxiliary Territorial Service during the Second World War. Since then, Mildred never fully recovered, falling ill with one physical disturbance after the other, leading to her eventual complete invalidation from the Service and her return to the family home⁶¹. In 1944, Mildred started her analysis, complaining of invalidating psychosomatic issues and severe feelings of depersonalisation. Given her two major breakdowns in the past, she was acutely afraid of her mind deteriorating even further. She wanted to avoid reaching a state of complete depersonalisation in which she would not speak at all. As a result of her mental difficulties, she was once again frequently bedridden and felt detached from the world and cut off from herself. She felt sleepy, giddy, fainty, dead, absent, dim-minded, half-conscious, and had difficulties to keep awake. She described these feelings herself as “*deadlock feelings*” (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 17). It was as if “*a blanket [was] separating her from the world*” (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 17). She repeatedly expressed her fear that if she were to “*join up with herself she might force her mind completely out of joint*” (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 18). In the analysis, she had a difficult time with the task of

⁵⁷ Her brother Jack, born 19 months after her, was described as attractive, intelligent, and adored by everyone. Mildred consciously recalled attempting to adopt Jack’s personality and interests but failing. Her sister Ruth, six years younger than her, was an anxious and “*very neurotic*” (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 14) child. Mildred felt motherly towards Ruth, which presumably enabled her to bear her jealous feelings more successfully than in her previous experience with Jack. However, while Ruth eventually grew into a less anxious and more self-confident teenager, Mildred had her first significant breakdown at seventeen, developing severe psychosomatic difficulties.

⁵⁸ All subsequent nurses were described as rude and abusive to Mildred.

⁵⁹ Potentially a form of selective mutism.

⁶⁰ Mildred’s first breakdown seemed connected to painfully unfavourable comparisons with her best school friend at the time, who she felt did better than her.

⁶¹ At home, she expected her mother to take care of her and show interest in what she was doing. The mother was forbidden, however, from displaying any signs of criticism, to which Mildred reacted very sensitively. Furthermore, suggestions, questions or unasked comments from her mother were discouraged by Mildred. If her mother was to comment on a specific activity of Mildred, the latter would immediately lose “*any desire to continue what she was doing, and would withdraw into herself*” (Rosenfeld, 1947/195, p. 16).

associating freely, often struggling to find her words, and thus she spent many sessions in complete silence or saying only very little. To Rosenfeld, she also appeared to be mostly withdrawn and in denial of her feelings⁶². Importantly, for our purposes, Rosenfeld links Mildred's symptoms of depersonalisation with ego fragmentation, which he describes as a form of splitting that goes beyond the split between good and bad. It was as if "*the destructive forces inside her [...] divided practically anything and everything*", going well beyond a dualistic split "*between good and bad impulses and objects, or between what occurred inside her and in outer reality*" and instead fragmented Mildred to the point in which "*it seemed as if all thought-processes, actions and impulses were split into innumerable parts, isolated from one another and kept in a state of division*" (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 27). Mildred's mind appeared to be shattered at certain moments into "*thousand pieces, as if one were to take a hammer and hit a drop of quick-silver*" (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 29). This latter metaphor, similar to the visual metaphor of a 'decomposition reaction' expounded above, carries a picture well distinct from the image of a world well-ordered into 'good' and 'bad' or 'in' | 'out' and 'me' | 'you'. Rosenfeld observed that Mildred's ego was fragmenting to such an extent that "*the very structure of [her] ego*" was affected in a pervasive manner (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 33). In effect, Rosenfeld rudimentarily yet precisely introduces the further differentiation between the PS-P-ns and the PS-P-f, which will be argued for in this chapter, with the respective distinction between dual splitting on the one hand and ego fragmentation on the other⁶³. In describing these processes, Rosenfeld seems deeply connected to Freud's challenge, who argued for the impossibility of treating psychotic conditions⁶⁴. As mentioned,

⁶² In the transference, Mildred oscillated between passive and withdrawn states of relating, a profound feeling of hopelessness about an eventual recovery, moments of intense paranoid suspicions towards Rosenfeld, bouts of despair in which she expressed her fear of going more insane and falling into pieces, and feelings of love and dependency mostly displaced onto other persons in her life. When Rosenfeld attempted to interpret both the positive and the negative transference, Mildred often responded by retreating into prolonged silences and detachment. This reaction was most marked in the interpretation of the positive transference. In subsequent sessions or, at times, even within the same session, Mildred appeared to have no recollection of what had been said between them. Due to the severity of Mildred's schizoid reactions, Rosenfeld felt that he was required to interpret with great caution and parsimony.

⁶³ In a typical Kleinian fashion, Rosenfeld argues that these schizoid processes are not only a part of infantile development but that they are also likely to be employed at "*comparatively late stages of development*" (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 33) since especially in psychotic and borderline conditions there can be both an intensified fixation and a regression to these early object-relational positions. Anticipating his emphasis on trauma in his late works (see Rosenfeld, 1987/2003), Rosenfeld already suggests within the case of Mildred that the PS-P-f can be reached through reinforcement of schizoid processes after a traumatic blow, "*threatening the whole organization*" of the ego (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 25).

⁶⁴ This 'Freudian challenge' remained a central preoccupation throughout Rosenfeld's work.

Freud (1914, 1924) claimed that *“persons suffering from the narcissistic neuroses have no capacity for transference, or only insufficient remnants of it”*, thus turning to *“the physician not in hostility but in indifference”* (Rosenfeld, 1965, pp. 9-10). From a Neo-Kleinian perspective, Freud’s descriptions apply less to an analysand inhabiting the PS-P-n and more to an analysand predominantly in the PS-P-f or, as we shall see, in a ‘psychic retreat’ (Steiner, 1993) or ‘claustrum’ (Meltzer, 1992). In Rosenfeld’s (1947/1965, p. 23) countertransference to Mildred, he felt that *“it appeared as if [he was] talking to a blank wall”*. This description strikingly parallels Freud’s remarks. On some days, Mildred spoke in a *“monotonous form”*, and on others, she displayed a *“complete inability to speak”*, accompanied by *“drowsiness or other [...] disturbances of thinking and acting”* (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 26). For example, Mildred’s *“sense of time was very confused”* (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 22), and she often came late to her sessions because she divided the action of going to analysis *“into many isolated part-actions[,] [in which] [g]etting up, dressing, having breakfast, the bus-ride to the analysis and the analytical session itself were all acts which did not seem to her to have anything to do with one another”* (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 27). On top of that, once she arrived into the session *“at times [she] could not connect up enough to think or even talk”* (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 22), and yet at other times *“[t]he action of talking to me had become split off, and there was no desire to talk”* (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 27). Rosenfeld (1947/1965) described on multiple occasions the states of lack of desire, apathy, and emptiness that he encountered in Mildred, which, he believed, resulted from the violence of ego fragmentation. Indeed, he describes a condition in which a vicious and escalating cycle of fragmentary processes threatens to annihilate the vitality of the psyche, as fragmentation gets even employed in a desperate attempt to shatter and get rid of the nascent confusion itself, the inchoate confusion that was born from the breaking down of rigid splits. This fragmentary spiral, pulverising more and more of the psychic apparatus, results in complete apathy and a residual anxiety or *‘nameless dread’* due to the chaos generated (R. Steiner, 2008, p. 47). Indeed, as I will expand on below, the Bionian (1959/2019, p. 116) anxiety concept of *‘nameless dread’* can be seen as the consequence of ego fragmentation in the PS-P-f⁶⁵. Let us gather some concepts, adjectives and other descriptions in the following

⁶⁵ The conceptual equivalent in the PS-P-n would be persecutory anxieties due to dualistic splitting and PI.

visualisation in order to get a first impression and taste of the phenomenology and dynamics that are inherent or related to the PS-P-f⁶⁶.



In attempting to explain why a “catastrophic implosion” (R. Steiner, 2008, p. 46) into states of fragmentation, disorientation, depersonalisation, and emptiness could ensue, in which “primal confusion” (J. Steiner, 1989, p. 612) comes to the foreground, Rosenfeld (1947/1965, 1950/1965) already offers several ideas. In the case of Mildred, Rosenfeld argues that the fall into the PS-P-f can be explained by (i) a defence against the perception of her feelings or, more generally speaking, a defence against vitality⁶⁷, and (ii) the expression of a predominant destructiveness turning against her libidinal impulses and her self⁶⁸. Put even more concisely,

⁶⁶ Some of these concepts are yet to be fully introduced in the upcoming parts of the chapter. The idea behind bringing this incomplete hodgepodge of concepts and descriptions together is not to claim that they are all expressing one and the same idea. They are not. Instead, the hope is that together they deliver a sort of Gestalt that quickly communicates an impression of what the PS-P-f is about to persons acquainted with the terminology.

⁶⁷ I took some liberties in simplifying Rosenfeld’s jargon. Literally, Rosenfeld speaks of a “defence against feelings of guilt, depression and persecution” (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 18). However, within a Kleinian framework, this is essentially a global description of all kinds of feelings, both in the PS-P-n and in the transition into the D-P. In this sense, since all kinds of feelings arising in the PS-P-n or in the transition into the D-P are defended against, we could also say that the emptiness experienced in the PS-P-f acts as a force of hatred against life, vitality, feelings and the perception of internal reality in toto. We can speak of the flattening or deadening of hate and love, which are so vividly experienced in the PS-P-n, into apathy. Interestingly, at certain lucid moments of her treatment, Mildred seemed to be aware of her aversions to vitality since she stated “that she had realized that she could not stand coming for a treatment which made her aware of herself and the hopeless condition she felt herself to be in” (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 23). Furthermore, Rosenfeld comments that “whenever [Mildred] had occasion to feel envy or frustration, some of the symptoms of depersonalization or ego-disintegration” came to the foreground, thus acting as a defence against the perception of such feelings (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 26). My simplification of Rosenfeld’s jargon is influenced by Bion’s statement that “feelings of hatred are thereupon directed against all emotions including hate itself, and against external reality which stimulates them. It is a short step from hatred of the emotions to hatred of life itself” (Bion, 1959/2018, 106–107).

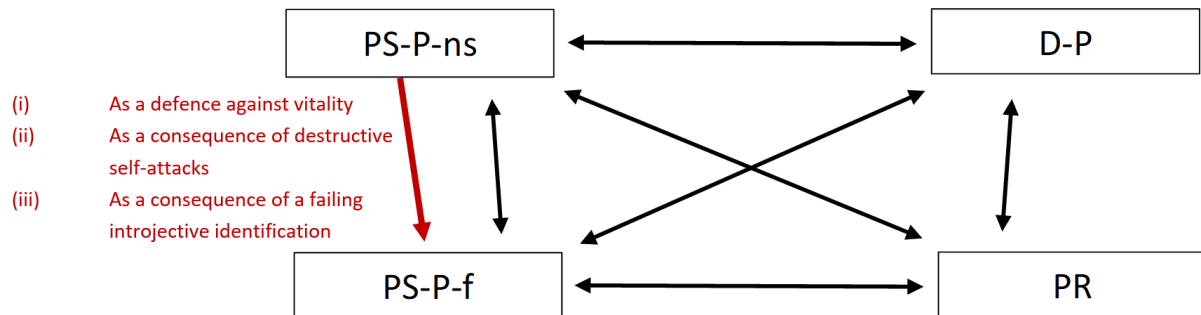
⁶⁸ Rosenfeld speaks of an expression of destructiveness “turned against [one’s] own libidinal impulses, causing a lack of desire and feeling, as well as against [one’s] ego, producing varying degrees of splitting and thus

according to Rosenfeld, Mildred's fragmentation is either a defence against uncomfortable feelings, which are hard to bear, or an active, yet unconscious, attack on herself. Rosenfeld adds further comments to this picture by addressing Mildred's difficulties with introjection. In the process of introjection, which should gradually but eventually lead the subject from the PS-P-n's into the D-P⁶⁹, Rosenfeld suggests that Mildred struggled at the very foundation of the task itself, namely at the consistent and progressive introjection of loving and blissful experiences. Rosenfeld gives several accounts of Mildred's difficulties with introjection. For example, he reports an episode in which Mildred requested her mother to bring her breakfast to bed, hoping that "*with her breakfast inside her she would be able to get up*" (Rosenfeld, 1947/1967, p. 20) and come to the analysis. Mildred got her breakfast but, much to her despair, still failed to find the strength to get up. Rosenfeld links this episode with Mildred's difficulties of "*introjecting and maintaining a good inner object as represented by the breakfast*" (Rosenfeld, 1947/1967, p. 20), suggesting that while Mildred wished to find a crutch-object onto which to build-up around, she struggled to get a grip onto this object once it was offered to her, perennially feeling that nothing nutritious could stay within her and, ultimately, no introjected good object truly helps her to get up. Indeed, an implicit argument running through Rosenfeld's (1947/1965) paper is that not only the move from the PS-P-n's to the D-P is bound to fail under conditions of unsuccessful introjection but also that the PS-P-n's is under a constant threat of crumbling into the PS-P-f since no good object can be located

disturbances in the function of [the] ego" (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 26). In a later paper, Rosenfeld (1950/1965) adds to this argument by suggesting that especially if hatred/badness prevails over love/goodness in the PS-P-n's, an overwhelming destructiveness predominates, flooding the mind and leading to a process in which the mental apparatus is de facto attacking itself and its ability to make sense of itself and its surroundings. In this sense, the ensuing apathy and emptiness can be understood as the subjective experience of an altered and fragmented self-structure after self-destructive attacks.

⁶⁹ As mentioned, the ideal/good object within the PS-P-n's acts as a gravitational point around which the self develops. Only through consistent and progressive introjections of loving and blissful experiences, which act as experiential realisations of the phantasy of an ideal/good object, the self is gradually able to integrate and let go of rigid splitting, thus increasingly moving from the PS-P-n's to the D-P. This move can be understood as a 'letting go' and mourning of the split or, from another observational vertex, as a gradual, unconscious realisation of one's implications in the phantasmatic construction of an ideal/good object due to the gains experienced by the splitting of the object into purely good and evil. Regardless of the reason for the disappearance, the ideal object has left the picture in the D-P. Since, however, the ideal/good object has functioned as a crutch-object from whom one's self has been built up, the subject now experiences its very crutching foundation to be lost. This can be understood as a primary or fundamental loss in life. This primary loss is a watershed moment, the handling of which differentiates neurosis, psychosis and perversion in Lacanian structural diagnosis. In the neurotic solution, this primary loss is accepted, leading to a hollowing of the subject. Put differently, there is no object at the centre of the subject but a void. Since this void is hard to come to terms with, consequently, in the D-P we see different degrees in which this primary loss has been worked through. Some rem(a)inder of the object is bound to fill the void still, acting as an unmournable, thus strictly speaking melancholic, residual substance.

and felt, leading to an increasing unmitigated predominance and proliferation of destructiveness inside. Without the mitigatory counterforce of good, blissful, and satisfying experiences, the destructive pole of the PS-P-ns swells up and 'normal splitting' is bound to break down, leaving the personality overwhelmed with unresolvable anxiety and an excess of destructiveness, which then initiates the downfall into the PS-P-f (Steiner, 1993, p. 30).



A further idea about the reasons for the downfall into the PS-P-f, which Rosenfeld (1950/1965) expressed in a later paper, is connected to the experience of confusional states. Rosenfeld describes a type of 'disintegrative confusion'⁷⁰ located on the equilibrium between PS-P-ns ↔ D-P. Under favourable conditions, the personality is only shortly bewildered and confused by an integrative motion resulting from the softening or breakdown of a rigid split. Indeed, under favourable conditions, the personality is sufficiently equipped to deal with the confusion and the aroused anxiety by the dissolved split that a further split is not necessary, and, as such, the integrative motion is sustained, bringing the personality overall closer to the equilibrium-pole of the D-P⁷¹. Rosenfeld (1950/1965), however, addressed a confusional state

⁷⁰ I use the expression 'disintegrative confusion' to refer to confusional states that end up with a shift towards disintegration of the personality. The term 'integrative confusion' is accordingly used to refer to confusional states resulting in an integrative personality shift. Therefore, the difference between 'disintegrative confusion' and 'integrative confusion' consists of the state's outcome on the variable of personality integration.

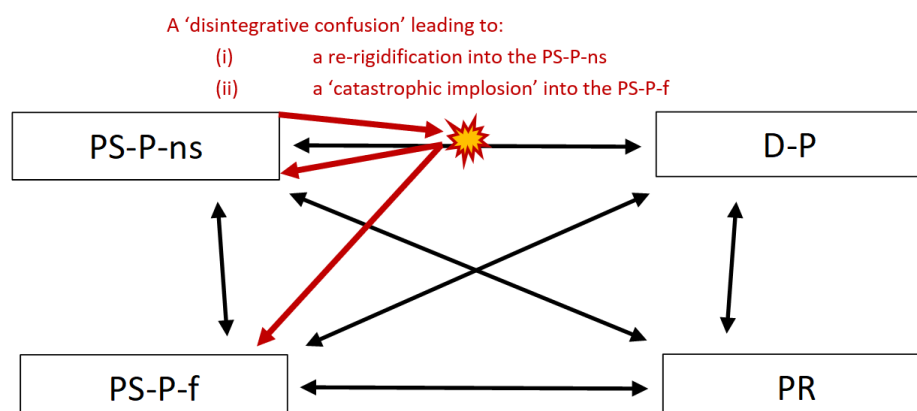
⁷¹ Thereafter, novel anxieties ordinarily approach the personality in this integrative shift. For example, the fear of losing the ideal object and being unable to bear the resulting ambivalence and frustration in relation to a more whole object emerge as novel difficulties. As such, it seems likely that a confusional state, born on the equilibrium PS-P-ns ↔ D-P, has to deal both with the confusion aroused by the dissolution of a rigid split of the PS-P-ns and the confusion aroused by novel anxieties typical of the D-P. This evidences that confusional states are complex and that a confusional state, emerging on the equilibrium of PS-P-ns ↔ D-P, is very different to a confusional state, emerging on the equilibrium of PS-P-f ↔ PS-P-ns. Furthermore, as it was perhaps implicitly noticed, I distinguish between confusion and ambivalence. According to this distinction, as I will come to argue, confusion is connected with a yet uncontained breakdown of rigid splits and a blurring of what is 'good' | 'bad', 'inside' | 'outside' or 'me' | 'you', and ambivalence, in contrast, is to be understood as a contained breakdown of such rigid splits.

that is faced under less favourable circumstances on the equilibrium between PS-P-ns ↔ D-P. He talks of a confusional state that overwhelms the personality after the lessening of a rigid split in the process of an integrative attempt. The personality is insufficiently equipped to deal with the confusion and anxiety aroused by the dissolved split. Thus, depending on the ferocity and the amount of excessive and untameable anxiety, the personality suffers either from a backfall into the PS-P-ns or, worse, from an implosive collapse into the PS-P-f. In the former case, a rigid split is reinstalled or reinforced and PI is once again employed to remove the yet unbearable psychic parts from the self by identifying these parts with the objects available for what Ferro (2009, p. 90) calls a 'carrier' function. In the latter case, more massive ego fragmentation gets activated, and confusional states that converge towards 'complete primal confusion'⁷² ensue. Depending on how far the downfall into the PS-P-f advances, the emerging confusional states might then be fragmented themselves and replaced by feelings of emptiness and apathy. Needless to say, in this more unfavourable case, the integrative motion is not sustained. Dual splits are only fleetingly dissolved, and even though the process of dual splitting lessens, bringing the partial 'some-things' closer together, this does not lead to a sustained shift towards the D-P and, as such, an integration of the self-parts and part-objects does not result. On the contrary, the confusional state and the complementary anxiety lead to a disintegrative motion overall, which may result in a re-rigidification leading to the PS-P-ns or in a 'catastrophic implosion' (R. Steiner, 2008, p. 46) leading to the PS-P-f. Bion (1953/2019) stressed that an integrative movement could cause extreme pain and anxiety for some analysands. He also noted that schizophrenic patients are often particularly vulnerable to new psychotic episodes precisely when they seem to be close to relinquishing their delusions (Vermote, 2019, p. 69). Rosenfeld expressed the idea of this paragraph in his assertion that "*following [a] confusional state there [is] either an improvement or a deterioration in the condition [of the analysand]*" (Rosenfeld, 1950/1965, p. 52). The claim that a confusional state can be understood both as a potential for integration and as a threat of disintegration, depending on the favourableness of conditions⁷³, emphasises that an

⁷² We can abstractly postulate a conceptual area of 'complete primal confusion', a radical point constituted of pure, undifferentiated chaos and, therefore, the complete dissolution of any rigid splits and any order. However, the experiencing of confusional states is ordinarily associated with a more local dissolution of a particular split and a state of 'complete primal confusion' remains only an abstract possibility.

⁷³ Roughly, it could be stated that the fate of a confusional state might be determined by (i) the mental resources available to the personality at the time, (ii) the extra-personal and environmental support available, and (iii) the quantum and ferocity of the confusional state to be dealt with.

analyst has the task to attune to the complex potential outcomes of confusional states in hir analysands⁷⁴.



Thus far, I have briefly described the PS-P-f from a Neo-Kleinian point of view and given a number of preliminary factors that might contribute to the downfall into the PS-P-f. Now, I want to shift our attention to a first investigation of how the personality⁷⁵ can emerge from the PS-P-f after it has succumbed to it.

Since the PS-P-f should be understood as a continuum, fragments are accordingly more or less shattered and disorganised. The experiencing of partial 'some-things' fades only gradually until it gives way to the sole presence of 'no-thing'⁷⁶. While we can, therefore, entertain the idea of a certain continuity between the two different poles of the equilibrium $PS-P-f \leftrightarrow PS-P-ns$, a fall into the PS-P-f is also understood as an escalating cycle, in which fragmentary, decomposing processes warrant that the minute fragments are ever more distant from resembling a rigid split between two parts. Such an escalating cycle constitutes a proper psychic breakdown and is difficult to disrupt and emerge from. As stated, even the experience of confusion itself, which at first is particularly strongly felt in the PS-P-f, gives way to the

⁷⁴ I wonder whether the potentialities for psychic growth, emerging from a confusional state, are sometimes underestimated by psychotherapists and psychoanalysts.

⁷⁵ More accurately, I should state "*parts of the personality*" since I believe the personality is never entirely expressed within one phantasy spectrum. Instead, as Bion (1957) states, there can be a neurotic and a more psychotic part within one and the same personality. I extend this argument by stating that different parts of the personality can be at once in the PS-P-f, PS-P-ns, in a psychic retreat or claustrum and, yet others, in the D-P. As a matter of fact, I believe that it is highly implausible for a person to be, say, in the PS-P-f or in a claustrum altogether, that is, with hir whole being.

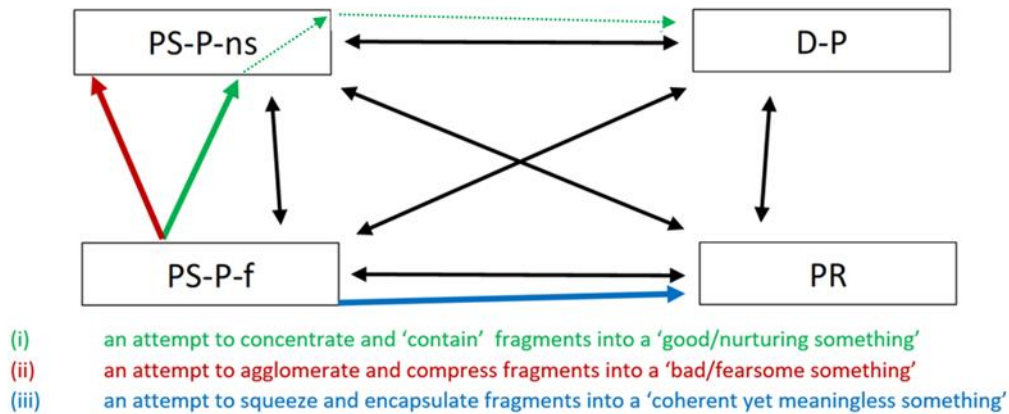
⁷⁶ It seems likely that a total state of PS-P-f, in which all has turned to 'no-thing', is actually rather unreachable. Maybe that is the case because our mind has an inherent tendency to synthesise experiences, to put pieces back together, to attempt a process of defragmentation, meaning to re-establish contiguous, howsoever partial, perceptions of self and objects.

nothingness in states of emptiness and apathy. From then on, it is during attempts of the psychic apparatus to defragment, re-organise and piece itself or its objects back together that states of confusion are allowed to emerge again⁷⁷. Indeed, it would seem that under the dire circumstances of escalating fragmentary cycles, feeling and thinking about one's experiences in an attempt to make any sense of them and thus defragment becomes an increasingly challenging and painful task, somewhat plausibly bound up with a massive experience of confusion. So much so that the worst-case outcome of this attempt is not difficult to guess, namely the outcome in which the amount and quality of confusion become so unbearable that the mental apparatus re-fragments and re-annihilates its own awareness of the confusion itself, sending the mind back into states of emptiness, apathy and a residual state of 'nameless dread'.

I want to postulate the existence of three countermeasures, three attempts of the personality to surface from the drowning of the PS-P-f breakdown, which I will further refine throughout this chapter: (i) an attempt to concentrate and 'contain'⁷⁸ fragments into a 'good/nurturing something', (ii) an attempt to agglomerate and compress fragments into a 'bad/fearsome something', and (iii) an attempt to squeeze and encapsulate fragments into a 'coherent yet meaningless something'. It can be already noticed that (i) and (ii) aim to re-establish the PS-P-ns by reinstalling a densified polarity of 'bad' or 'good'. On the other hand, as we shall see, (iii) is associated with 'psychic retreats' (Steiner, 1993), 'the claustrum' (Meltzer, 1992) and the 'as-if personality' (Riesenberg-Malcolm, 1990/1999).

⁷⁷ Once again, this confusional state potentially indicates an attempt at psychic growth.

⁷⁸ I purposefully use the word 'containment' to hint towards the Bionian container/contained model, which will be more exhaustively described below.

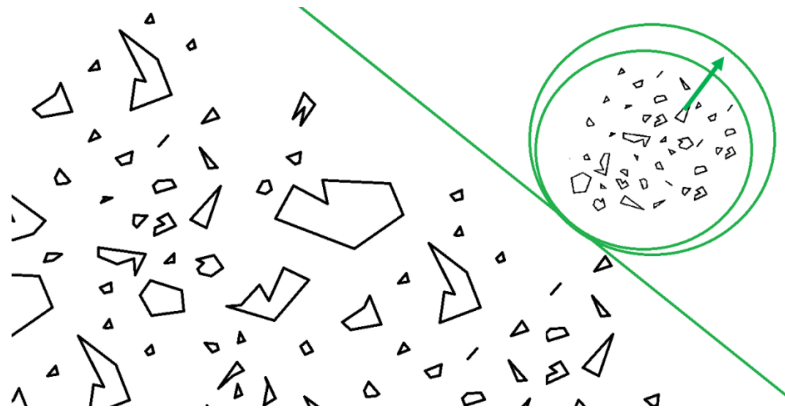


A. Preliminary comments about the attempt to concentrate and 'contain' fragments into a 'good/nurturing something':

Rosenfeld (1950/1965, p. 55) writes of several cases in which a sudden and massive employment of dual splitting and PI can be understood as a grand attempt of the mind to emerge from the PS-P-f and re-establish a primary sense of order between good and bad and between self and other, a first differentiation in a mass of confusing and meaningless plenitude. In such cases, he suggests that splitting and PI are, first and foremost, attempting to re-establish a perception of an inner and outer world with some luminous good in it again, something to trust and lean against. In this sense, splitting and PI can be understood as saving manoeuvres against the more tortuous states of fragmentation and confusion⁷⁹. For example, Rosenfeld (1950/1965) writes of a schizophrenic painter who suffered from a breakdown with intense feelings of confusion, which emerged following a negative therapeutic reaction to a previous psychoanalytic treatment with a different analyst. The analysand blamed his past analyst for spoiling his artistic activities by allegedly linking his dark paintings to a preoccupation with the smearing of faeces. This interpretation, which the analysand heard in a superegoical and punishing fashion, hurt and confused the analysand so profoundly that he

⁷⁹ According to Rosenfeld (1950/1965), a highly fragmented psychotic analysand often attempts to project what little bits of a good breast that s/he can piece together from the shatters available to his mind. In Rosenfeld's logic of the psyche, which can be understood as a Kleinian attempt at preserving the Freudian notion of 'psychic economy', this implies that the person risks staying identified with the remaining bad and poisonous experiences, as Rosenfeld (1950/1965, p. 55) states: "For example, as a result of the confusion between the good and bad breasts, the fantasy of the good breast may be projected outside and the fantasied bad persecuting breast, identified with bad faeces, may be kept entirely within the patient. This mechanism was used by my patient to escape from a confusional state [...]."

gave up painting altogether. Something good, a central passion in his life, suddenly became inseparable from something bad in the eyes of the analysand. Good and bad blended together, and his psyche deteriorated further by the day. By noticing that the analysand's speech seemed to abound also with potential metaphors for good faeces, e.g. fertilisers in gardening, Rosenfeld re-interpreted the analysand's preoccupation with faeces as associated with cultivation and growth, which compelled the analysand to start painting again. Apparently, the act of painting became digestible and pleasurable again. Effectively, the logic behind this interpretation was to actively assist the analysand in re-establishing a clear-cut split between good and bad, thus especially allowing something good to grow within the analysand's personality in relative separation from destructive forces. The dark and earthy paintings needed to have nothing to do with the smearing of faeces in order to be created and enjoyed by the analysand. Rosenfeld (1950/1965) argues that while 'normal splitting' may deny the ambivalence of an act or a thought, making something neatly and clearly into something purely 'good', it is often necessary to maintain a primary sense of order and hold feelings of confusion at bay. Furthermore, it can be noticed that Rosenfeld's interpretation still aims at creating a link between an activity and the analysands alleged internal phantasy. However, actions and thoughts are arguably linked in a less persecuting fashion compared to the interpretation involving the smearing of faeces, thus potentially allowing the analysand to at least play with the idea that his paintings might express an internal phantasy and, in this case, specifically a wish to cultivate and grow. The interpretation encourages creativity and playfulness with one's thoughts instead of hindering these capacities. In essence, this process can be visualised as a gathering of shatters in order to form a preliminary bundle of goodness. Then, a clear split between this preliminary goodness and the chaos beyond it is established. At last, there is an effort to establish the foundations for the emergence of part-self and part-objectual experiencing through the activation of PI as a mechanism. This allows for the rudimentary creation of a good part-object and a good part-self and thus serves a distinction between 'in' | 'out' and 'me' | 'you'.



B. Preliminary comments about the attempt to agglomerate and compress fragments into a 'bad/fearsome something':

In a grand attempt to restore 'normal splitting' and 'normal PI', analysands may not only attempt to restore the experience of a split-off goodness. At times, the analysand may attempt to move out of the PS-P-f by agglomerating all perceived badness into a concentrated psychic location. This concentration promotes a shift from 'nameless dread' towards the fear and hatred of something more specifically definable. In an analysis, this transformation might be expressed in the development of a hostile 'transference psychosis' (see Rosenfeld, 1965/2000, p. 10). In such cases, the figure of the analysand becomes a carrier for badness and therefore helps the analysand to re-establish a functioning PS-P-ns, in which 'good' and 'bad' and 'doer and done to' (see Benjamin, 2014) are again clearly separated. We can come back to the case of Mildred (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965) in order to exemplify this dynamic. At some point during the treatment, Rosenfeld noticed that Mildred displayed clear signs of employment of PI. Mildred experienced feelings/fears of intrusion, persecution, fears of robbery and spoiling of something good by the other, fears of being controlled by Rosenfeld, and other 'typical consequences' of PI, which any Kleinian author would readily and happily point out⁸⁰. In this sense, we can understand the demonisation of Rosenfeld as an attempt to

⁸⁰ Rosenfeld (1947/1965, p. 22) gives the following detailed and vivid description: "Occasionally she could admit her feelings of persecution and explained that she didn't tell me anything which mattered to her because either I would make it bad or take it away from her, or would cause her feelings about it to disappear. She was trying to sort things out in her mind. I was muddling it all up. Whenever and whatever I interpreted she firmly believed and felt that I was telling her to stop thinking about what she had in her mind and trying to make her think of something else. Her greatest suspicion was that I was making her think entirely in my way, so that she no longer knew what she had thought of before, and that thus she would lose her own self. Acute fears appeared that when she met people she might one day find herself talking in a strange voice or accent. This voice would have talked,

move from the PS-P-f to the PS-P-ns through a moment of 'massive PI'. According to this idea, a 'massive PI' can be understood as a "shower of multiple splinters" (Steiner, 2008, p. 42), splinters of agglomerated and condensed badness, aiming not anymore into the void but at entering Rosenfeld⁸¹. A PS-P-f-projection of 'no-thing into no-one' transforms into a PS-P-ns-PI of 'some-thing into some-one'. Consequently, this 'massive PI' can be understood to 'balfabetize' (Ferro, 2007, p. 33) the PS-P-f into the PS-P-ns, thus re-establishing an operative part-objectual and part-self functioning. Mildred started forming phantasies of suspicion against Rosenfeld. He was trying to intrude into her, making her just like him. She began to feel that he was the one who actually muddled things up and who made things unnecessarily confusing for her. She started to think that she could be more productive in sorting things out on her own, in the privacy of her mind. Rosenfeld started to become her problem. Overall, this process can be visualised by an agglomeration of fragments, which are compressed into a bundle of badness. Then, a split is established, which separates the compressed badness from the chaotic fragments beyond it. Finally, a PI is used in order to create and sustain a bad part-object as well as a hostile-defensive part-self, which promotes a rudimentary distinction between 'in' and 'out' as well as 'me' and 'you'.



I am certain, with the analyst's voice and accent, but the patient could not admit this connexion consciously. [...] [T]he central anxiety was a fantasy of the persecuting analyst forcing himself into her to control her and rob her, not only of her inner possessions, for instance, her babies and her feelings, but her very self." While I find this paragraph very insightful in demonstrating Mildred's transference psychosis, I cannot help but wonder whether Mildred's complaint of feeling like she was being converted into Rosenfeld is not also to be understood as a valuable communication about Mildred's dissatisfaction with Rosenfeld's style of interpreting and inhabiting the analytic room. In this sense, the case study of Mildred by Rosenfeld appears blind towards self-reflective critique. This is definitely a 'wild' (see Freud, 1910) idea since we only have very limited insight into this analytic couple. However, I dare anyone not to at least flirt with this idea while reading the original paper. Discarding the possibility of this wild idea seems to underestimate the at least somewhat authoritarian stance that analysts could portray in the 1940s and 1950s.

⁸¹ In Rosenfeld's countertransference, this 'massive PI' is perceived just as monumentally, namely as if Mildred projected not only parts of her ego but her "whole ego" into him (Steiner, 2009, p. 49).

For now, I will leave the reader in suspense about a preliminary commentary on (iii): the attempt to squeeze and encapsulate fragments into a ‘coherent yet meaningless something’. I will come back to this topic later⁸².

Regardless of how marvellous or demonised the part-object might become, the main mark of the PS-P-ns is that the part-object indeed matters again and that, indeed, every phantasy gets imprinted with an object-relatedness. In addition, it seems clear that the strategies mentioned above can co-exist sequentially or in parallel. Talking of processes of PI tightly interlinked with processes of introjective identification, Rosenfeld (1949/1965, p. 47) discusses impediments to the process of taking in the good, nourishing object or, within the analytic situation, a good interpretation⁸³. Rosenfeld picks up a familiar theme from the analysis with Mildred when describing another analysand⁸⁴, a homosexual man who became more withdrawn and confused as the analysis proceeded. This man experienced chronic periods of latent psychosis, followed by acute psychotic episodes with suicidal ideations and a “*hypochondriacal kind of paranoia*” (Rosenfeld, 1949/1965, p. 45). In one reported session, the analysand complained that Rosenfeld’s interpretations were bad and caused indigestion inside of him. At that moment, the analysand employs Rosenfeld as a bad part-object in a PS-P-ns manner. At a later moment in the session, the analysand retracted his previous judgement about the quality of Rosenfeld’s interpretations and instead claimed that the interpretations were very good but that “*he had been too intent on taking in every one of [Rosenfeld’s] words*” (Rosenfeld, 1949/1965, p. 47). Soon after Rosenfeld’s interpretational reply⁸⁵, the analysand reacted, in turn, with a feeling of pain in his stomach, a fear of going mad and of being ‘homosexually attacked’ by Rosenfeld (Rosenfeld, 1949/1965, p. 47). As this short sequence suggests, the analysand alternated between employing Rosenfeld as a good

⁸² For now, it will suffice to mention that Rosenfeld already hinted at something essential of this third strategy with the following statement about Mildred: “[At times] [s]he gave one the impression of being withdrawn into an omnipotent world of her own, where she was quite oblivious of external reality, where time and the passing of time did not matter, where she felt comfortable and not at all anxious about her serious mental condition.” (Rosenfeld, 1947/1965, p. 23)

⁸³ In the context of the analytical situation, Kleinians understand interpretations as ideally striving to become good, nourishing objects. The underlying assumption is not that interpretations are always good and nourishing objects but that they can be. Thus, Kleinians proceed to formulate difficulties in the process of introjection as impediments in taking in the good interpretation, metaphorically standing for difficulties of introjecting the nourishing milk.

⁸⁴ The clinical material discussed here stems from Rosenfeld’s (1949/1965, pp. 44-50) discussion of ‘case C’.

⁸⁵ Rosenfeld interpreted that the analysand was so greedily trying to concretely keep all words interpreted inside of him that he destroyed the interpretation in its synthetic meaning and was left with mere disconnected words, which then turned bad inside of him.

and bad part-object within the transference situation. While these quick shifts in emotional investment will be recognised as typical of the PS-P-ns, I am pointing out how the (i) and (ii) countermeasures against the PS-P-f can operate sequentially, if not in parallel. In order to surface from the PS-P-f and float into the PS-P-ns, the analysand invested Rosenfeld with both a hostile and an idealised transference. In this sense, the transferential relationship becomes a magnet immersed into the personality of the analysand, able to attract and repel dispersed personality fragments to its poles and thus agglomerate them back into a dual split.

4.3. Towards container/contained, intersubjective fields and interpenetrative immersions

In the coming pages, I will delve deeper into Bion's terminology and conceptualisation of the PS-P-f. I will attempt to demonstrate how Bion's thought allows us to shift our attention from a mainly intrapsychic perspective to a focus on intersubjectivity. To emphasise the radically intersubjective potential of Bion's thought, I will finally turn to Post-Bionian-Field-Theory (PBFT⁸⁶), which is currently the most thoroughly intersubjective interpretation of Bion's work to my knowledge⁸⁷.

A first shift from the Kleinian (over-)emphasis on intrapsychic phantasies towards a more bi-personal focus occurs with Bion's re-interpretation of PI as a *"primitive, or rather primal, method of communication and not only as an omnipotent phantasy and a psychotic defence"* (Bergstein, 2018, p. 103). This small but significant reinterpretation of PI still causes confusion in psychoanalysis. Roughly speaking, Bion's re-interpretation divided the field between (i) analysts who still predominantly use PI to refer to an intrapsychic phantasy, in which no actual object needs to be identifying with the contents of the projection and, rather, it is the projector that is identifying the contents of the projection into an object in phantasy, (ii) analysts who understand PI as a form of unconscious communication between two actual people⁸⁸, most notably infant and caregiver or analysand and analyst⁸⁹, and (iii) analysts who more or less explicitly make use of both conceptual understandings. Several papers, books and theses have been written, attempting to differentiate, unify, criticise, discard, retain, etc., the multiple meanings PI has acquired until now (see Conolly (2018, pp. 32-97) for an overview). I will not get into this discussion because enough has been written about it. What matters to me is that Bion's re-interpretation of PI slowly developed into his theory of container/contained, which sets the stage for our intersubjective turn. This development happens gradually. In the first papers of 'Second Thoughts' (1967/2019), Bion stresses that

⁸⁶ Sometimes also just referred to as "Bion-Field Theory (BFT)" (e.g. see Mazzacane, 2022).

⁸⁷ For Ferro and Civitarese (2015, p. 1) "[t]he field metaphor transforms Kleinian [and Bionian] relational theory into a radically intersubjective theory."

⁸⁸ Attempting to prevent confusion, Grotstein (2005) tried to rename the Bionian usage of PI with '*projective transidentification*'. This new convention, however, did not stick.

⁸⁹ Some analysts have recognised and warned against an infantilising potential implicit in the metaphoric parallel between infant-caregiver and analysand-analyst (see Slochower (2014) for a critique and an attempt at re-interpretation of the said metaphor).

psychotic thinking is the outgrowth of “*an interaction between (i) the environment, and (ii) the personality*”. Nevertheless, he then proceeds in “[ignoring] *the environment and focus[ing] [his] attention on four essential features of schizophrenic personality*” (Bion, 1956/2019, p. 37). The importance of already constituted or inherent personality factors still outweighed the significance of environmental influences⁹⁰. The attention then shifts in his last three papers of ‘Second Thoughts’ (Bergstein, 2018, p. 103). In “*On Arrogance*” (1957), “*Attacks on Linking*” (1959) and “*A Theory of Thinking*” (1962), Bion lays the seeds for his later theory of container/contained. This shift involved redefining PI as communicative and emphasising the analyst's responsibility for what occurs in the analytic room. By stating that PI is a phenomenon involving real effects beyond mere phantasy, Bion claims that something psychic is indeed transferred from one person to another. As Bion (1957/2018, p. 92) concisely puts it, PI involves “*experiences such as, to mention two, the ability to put bad feelings [into the analyst] and leave them there long enough for them to be modified by their sojourn in [hir] psyche, and the ability to put good parts of [the analysand] into [the analyst], thereby feeling that [s/he] was dealing with an ideal object as a result*”. Indeed, not only is PI interpsychic, but it is also foundational, since it constitutes the basis of normal communication between infant and its caregivers. Put differently, the basic “*link between patient and analyst, or infant and breast, is the mechanism of projective identification*” (Bion, 1959/2018, p. 105). Bion believes that PI sets in motion a primal form of shared psychic digestion between two persons, in which the caregiver/analyst processes the infant's/analysand's projections by use of hir “*reverie*”⁹¹ to then give digested experiences back to the infant/analysand (Vermote, 2019, p. 72). Reverie refers to the caregiver's capacity to “*develop a psychological receptor organ capable of metabolising the baby's [or*

⁹⁰ It has to be noted that many of Bion's ideas during the 1950s were still cast in a Kleinian language. To avoid unnecessary repetitions, I will attempt to avoid the most unambiguously Kleinian expressions within Bion's thought. As an example of Kleinianism within Bion (1957/2013, p. 44), we can refer to the following notorious enumeration of characteristics about the psychotic part of the personality: “*There is the environment, which I shall not discuss at this time, and the personality, which must display four essential features [...]: a preponderance of destructive impulses so great that even the impulse to love is suffused by them and turned to sadism; a hatred of reality, internal and external, which is extended to all that makes for awareness of it; a dread of imminent annihilation and, finally, a premature and precipitate formation of object relations, foremost amongst which is the transference, whose thinness is in marked contrast with the tenacity with which they are maintained. The prematurity, thinness and tenacity are pathognomonic and have an important derivation, in the conflict, never decided in the schizophrenic, between the life and death instincts.*”

⁹¹ Grotstein (2009, p. 337) defines reverie as follows: “*Reverie designates mother's—and the analyst's—sleepy wakefulness in which their minds are uncluttered with memory or desire and their alpha-function can optimally function to absorb and process the infant's or analysand's emotional projections.*”

analysand's] [...] [β -elements] *and transform [them] into α -elements, which are in turn necessary to develop α -function [...] and a thinking apparatus. 'Reverie', says Bion, 'is a factor of the mother's alpha-function' ... her love is expressed by reverie*"⁹² (Lopez-Corvo, 2005, pp. 167-168). This digestive function can be introjected and adopted by the infant/analysand over time, much like the good/ideal breast is introjected over time in a Kleinian framework⁹³.

In essence, Bion's focus slowly shifts to the infant's link towards his caregiver and, indeed, the latter's contributions to the proliferation and manifestation of the infant's psychotic parts of the personality. In all three of the papers mentioned above, Bion (1957, 1959, 1962) reiterates a straightforward core idea that we could put as follows: if PI is indeed not only to be understood as an omnipotent phantasy but rather as a communication about still intolerable proto-emotional experiences, then the infant's or analysand's PI can either be welcomed, taken seriously and processed within the mind of the caregiver/analyst or, if this fails to take place, the infant or analysand will be left alone to bear a for them intolerable experience. They are left alone and unequipped to deal with an accelerating outrage of fragmentation. Put concisely, Bion (1957, 1959, 1962) was interested in the dynamics that led to and followed from a caregiver or analyst behaving as an 'obstructive object', the name that Bion (1959/2019, p. 92) gave to a 'projective-identification-rejecting object', the contrary of a 'projective-identification-welcoming object' (Vermote, 2019, p. 74).

In "On Arrogance" (1957), Bion describes an analytic couple that perceptively seems out-of-synch with each other⁹⁴. While, superficially speaking, they are talking to each other, on another level, the analyst, who indeed was Bion, demands a degree of verbal communication and symbolisation that the analysand does not match. Consequently, the analyst behaves in a particular manner that is functioning as a hindrance to actual communication. Indeed, Bion emphasises that, upon reflection, he could neither welcome nor tolerate the analysand's way

⁹² I will come to define and describe β -elements, α -elements and α -function more in depth below. About reverie, Reiner (2022, p. x) concisely foreshadows the further developments in Bion's thought that are linked to the concept: "[Bion's] early idea of maternal 'reverie' is one simple example of precursor to O in that it reflects the importance of the mother's capacity for a state of at-one-ment with her infant, the mother's mind as a sort of metaphysical extension of the infant's mind. [...] [W]e might say that in this state of at-one-ment, both reverie and alpha function are factors of O that are necessary precursors."

⁹³ As Eaton (2005) describes, over time, the reverie-function of the analyst or caregiver is internalized by the analysand or child and becomes part of their own 'projective identification-welcoming object world'.

⁹⁴ With out-of-synch I mean precisely the negative or contrary of what Civitarese (2016) calls "unison" and "at-one-ment".

of communicating. He became an obstructive force⁹⁵. Thus, Bion believes that the analysand experienced him as curious, as thirsty to “*find out the truth at no matter what price*”⁹⁶, but unable to function as a receptacle for the analysand’s projections, which the analysand so desperately needed⁹⁷. Bion already emphasises how this denial by the object of being used as a container for projective identification destroys an essential link that is formative for the nascent mind. The obstruction of this communication precipitates the subject into more chaos and disaster and leads to the formation of a primitive, non-understanding superego. Bion’s genius further manifested itself through the bold but plausible claim that “[a] *clue to this disaster is provided [to the analyst] by the emergence of widely separated references to curiosity, arrogance, and stupidity*” (Bion, 1957/2018), p. 92) within the analysand’s speech.

In “Attacks on Linking” (1959), Bion follows and expands his idea of an ‘obstructive object’⁹⁸. Again, he reflects on the consequences of the analyst’s refusal to welcome and participate in the analysand’s specific method of communication, which involves PI to communicate yet intolerable psychic experiences. Bion notes how, following his non-receptiveness, the analysand’s attempts at communication became ever more aggressive. Hence, Bion (1959/2019, p. 104) writes:

“[The analysand] *felt [...] my refusal to accept parts of his personality. Consequently he strove to force them into me with increased desperation and violence. His behaviour, isolated from the context of*

⁹⁵ Bion (1957/2018, p. 91) puts it as follows: “*What it was that [I] could not stand became clearer in some sessions where it appeared that in so far as I, as analyst, was insisting on verbal communication as a method of making the patient’s problems explicit, I was felt to be directly attacking the patient’s methods of communication. From this it became clear that when I was identified with the obstructive force, what I could not stand was the patient’s methods of communication. In this phase my employment of verbal communication was felt by the patient to be a mutilating attack on his methods of communication.*”

⁹⁶ Civitarese (2021) comments that Bion’s (1957) paper is about the limits of an epistemological psychoanalysis (Ogden, 2019) that is too concerned with insights and tends to focus on the intrapsychic dimension of a subject conceived as isolated. Civitarese (2021) thus understands Bion’s paper as a warning or a hope about a type of ontological psychoanalysis (Ogden, 2019) that orients itself towards becoming, intersubjectivity and affectivity.

⁹⁷ Bion (1957/2018, p. 92) speculates that the analysand’s catastrophic implosion to states far down the PS-P-f stemmed from his incapacity to receive the analysand’s PIs: “*From his feelings about me when I was identified with the obstructive object, I was able to deduce that the obstructive object was curious about him, but could not stand being the receptacle for parts of his personality and accordingly made destructive and mutilating attacks, largely through varieties of stupidity, upon his capacity for projective identification. I, therefore, concluded that the catastrophe stemmed from the mutilating attacks made upon this extremely primitive species of link between the patient and analyst.*”

⁹⁸ Bergstein (2019, pp. 107.108), furthermore, tellingly discusses an obstructive link, since “[t]he significant issue at hand is not to identify the obstructive object, but rather the obstructive link relived by the analytic couple, whose realization is facilitated by both parties.”

the analysis, might have appeared to be an expression of primary aggression. [...] [B]ut I quote this series because it shows the patient in a different light, his violence a reaction to what he felt was my hostile defensiveness."

From this perspective, the analysand's emerging aggressiveness is seen first and foremost as an outgrowth of the analyst's defensiveness and inability to receive the analysand's communication and not merely as an acquired or inherent characteristic of the analysand's constituted personality. This is an essential message in Bion's paper: when analysands attack links, meaning *"not only [an] attack [on] the creative link with the analyst, in analogy with the attack on the breast and the creative couple as described by Klein, but also [an] attack [on] verbal thought itself, [leading] to dreamless nights, blank spaces, convulsive attacks and feeling murdered"* (Vermote, 2019, p. 73), we should not forget that the *"destructive attacks upon this link originate in a source external to the patient or infant, namely the analyst or breast"* (Bion, 1959/2019, p. 105). Furthermore, over time, the analysand introjects this obstructive object in the form of a cruel, non-understanding and meaning-devouring super-ego, which attacks links, now from within the constituted personality. Together with the explosiveness of undigested agglomerated fragments, the experience of the actual object and his emotional presence and quality of receptiveness, or lack thereof, originates the introjection of a primitive and unemphatic superego. This leads Bion to the observation that psychotic subjects experience both a catastrophe from the past and an ongoing catastrophe reenacting itself in the present (Vermote, 2019, p. 73). A considerable part of Bion's paper is dedicated to speculations about the past actual object of his analysand, more specifically, his mother. Bion believed that the persistence with which the analysand employed PI within the sessions was a sign that PI *"was a mechanism of which he had never been able sufficiently to avail himself"* (Bion, 1959/2019, p. 103). While the infant or analysand needed to repose the contents of a PI within the caregiver or analyst long enough so that *"they would undergo modification by [the caregiver's or analyst's] psyche and could then be safely reintrojected"* (Bion, 1959/2019, p. 103), this process could be failed by the analyst or caregiver if the contents were either denied entry or anxiously received and then given back to the analysand in a premature and still largely undigested manner. Anticipating his theory of containment, Bion comes to the formulation that *"[a]n understanding mother is able to experience the*

*feeling of dread, that this baby was striving to deal with by projective identification, and yet retain a balanced outlook*⁹⁹ (Bion, 1959/2019, p. 104). For Bion, the mother enters a state of reverie and hence proceeds to take in and digest the projected unbearable aspects of her infant's unprocessed experience. For this interpersonal metabolic function to occur, the mother must be able to tolerate and live through the affective impact of these projections on her body and mind for as long as necessary to grasp the communication. The mother's reached understanding is then a transformation of the original unprocessed and raw message. Finally, *"having thus transformed her baby's experiences in her own mind, she must gradually return them to the infant in detoxified and digestible form"* (Mitrani, 2001, p. 1091). The caregiver is furthermore retaining a balanced outlook throughout this process, meaning that while s/he is indeed undergoing the emotional experience s/he is, however, not getting overrun and overwhelmed by the infant's feelings of dread. Mitrani (2001, p. 1091) summarises the function of a containing object well in the following paragraph:

"As one can readily see, the ability to 'contain' assumes a mother who has boundaries and sufficient internal space to accommodate her own anxieties as well as those acquired in relation to her infant; a mother who has a well-developed capacity to bear pain, to contemplate, to think and to convey what she thinks in a way that is meaningful to her infant. A mother who is herself separate, intact, receptive, capable of reverie and appropriately giving is thus suitable for introjection as a 'containing' object, and, little by little, over time, the infant's identification with and assimilation of such an object leads to increasing mental space, the development of a capacity to make meaning (what Bion called alpha-function), and the ongoing evolution of a mind that can think for itself. Should such a description seem

⁹⁹ Bion (1959/2019, p. 105) adds that even when the caregiver is able to be very receptive and still retain a balanced outlook there could be difficulties emerging, since the caregiver's receptiveness and balanced outlook could be a source of envy: *"The seriousness of these attacks [on linking] is enhanced if the mother displays the kind of unreceptiveness which I have described, and is diminished, but not abolished, if the mother can introject the infant's feelings and remain balanced; the seriousness remains because the psychotic infant is overwhelmed with hatred and envy of the mother's ability to retain a comfortable state of mind although experiencing the infant's feelings."*

idealised, I would suggest that it corresponds to Winnicott's (1960) ordinary devoted mother in his model of mental health."

An obstructive object is the opposite of a containing object (Vermote, 2019, p. 74). The container of the former is more or less impenetrable and stiff, whereas the latter's container is characterised by receptiveness and malleability. The already mentioned concept of 'nameless dread' finds its specific meaning embedded in this specific theoretical model. As Spillius (2011, p. 423) points out, 'nameless dread' is a concept meant to describe the loose, meaningless anxiety and terror that follows from the obstructiveness of the caregiver concerning the infant's communicative attempts. By being a 'projective identification-rejecting-object' the caregiver is felt to denude and hollow the potential meanings emanating from the infant's experience, so much so that the infant *"therefore reintrojects, not a fear of dying made tolerable, but a nameless dread"* (Bion, 1962/2018, p. 116). As stated, given time, the repeated occurrence of obstructiveness, misunderstanding and defensiveness of the caregiver is introjected and a parasitic *"internal object that strips meaning[s] [and] gives rise to a superego that issues hateful and meaningless injunctions about behaviour"* (Spillius, 2011, p. 423) is generated, leaving the subject in the ever-more fragmentary, voided and meaningless lifeworld of the PS-P-f. In a sense, the introjected internal object continues the attacks on linking¹⁰⁰, on the *"impulse to be curious on which all learning depends"* (Bion, 1959/2018, p. 107) and, more broadly, on α -function¹⁰¹ that the external object initiated. This leads to the apparent paradox that Bergstein (2019, p. 14) points out, namely *"that these attacks on the awareness of [internal and external] reality are aimed at avoiding the encounter with the overwhelming pain accompanying excessive emotionality. Thus, paradoxically, the individual attacks the very function that might make it possible for him to bear the emotional experience."*

Talking about the qualities of a containing object as defined by Mitrani (2001) we can build a bridge towards Bion's paper "A Theory of Thinking" (1962a) and his subsequent book "Learning from Experience" (1962b). Broadly speaking, in these works Bion postulates a

¹⁰⁰ Connecting this idea with K and -K links, Bergstein (2019, p. 102) writes: *"Just as the link between container and contained in an experience of K – that is, a state of a fertile and emotionally growth-promoting relationship – may tell a story of the internalization of a fruitful relationship between mother and infant, so may a destructive relationship, as in an experience of -K, tell of the internalization of a destructive, projective-identification-rejecting relationship between an infant and its primary object [...]."*

¹⁰¹ This term will be elucidated shortly below.

specific theory of thinking, in which the capacity for thinking or digesting and dreaming about one's experiences is an interpersonal process, in which a nascent psyche and subjectivity has to lean on the α -function of a more mature psyche in order to grow. Bion postulates that *"thinking is a development forced on the psyche by the pressure of thoughts [and proto-thoughts] and not the other way round"*¹⁰² (Bion, 1962a/2018, p. 111). With this statement, Bion differentiates the function of thinking, which he abbreviates with ' α -function' or yet at another point synonymously with 'dream-work- α ' (Ferro, 2002), and the elements, which are the contents of thinking and make up thoughts, comprised of α -elements, and proto-thoughts, comprised of β -elements.

Bion gives various descriptions of β -elements¹⁰³. They are neither entirely physical nor fully mental, but rather *"at the interface between soma and [psychic] reality"* (Ferro & Civitarese, 2022, p. 39) and can be seen as elements of a 'proto-mental system', *"reminiscent of the ambiguous status of the drives in Freud"* (Ferro & Civitarese, 2015, p. 4). They can be seen as consisting of raw sensoriality, proto-emotions and very rudimentary proto-thoughts (without a thinker). These elements *"are not amenable to use in dream thoughts"* (Bion, 1962b, p. 6) or any other form of experiencing, feeling or thinking. They are purely fit for evacuation¹⁰⁴ or transformation by α -function. Bion (1962b, p. 7) states that β -elements cannot be stored as memories but only as concrete *"undigested facts"*¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰² I will not address here Bion's ideas surrounding pre-conceptions, conceptions, concepts, realisations and negative realisations. Although these ideas are of importance, I have struggled to make use of them in my own thinking fruitfully. Here, I only want to emphasize that the tolerance of frustration of an infant or analysand, which is a necessary condition for the development of thoughts (the meeting of a pre-conception with a negative realisation), is interdependent with the capacity of the caregiver or analyst to be a receptive and containing object. This interdependence underlines that the process of containment is essentially a meaning-making process, a process of signification.

¹⁰³ Bion attempted to express his concepts also in Kantian language, as can be seen from the following statement: *"I shall call them beta-elements. In contrast with the alpha-elements the beta-elements are not felt to be phenomena, but things in themselves"* (Bion, 1962b, p. 6). I will not emphasize this Kantian reading in my brief summary.

¹⁰⁴ Bion (1962b, p. 13) writes: *"These beta-elements are dealt with by an evacuator procedure similar to the movements of musculature, changes of mien, etc. which Freud described as intended to disencumber the personality of accretions of stimuli and not to effect changes in the environment; a muscular movement, for example, a smile, must have a different interpretation from the smile of the non-psychotic personality"*. At a later point, Bion emphasizes again, how certain behaviours are in reality the result of β -elements-evacuation and have to be differentiated from actions that have gone through α -function: *"Actions that appear to be compulsive are in reality beta-elements confined to the domain of action and thus insulated against thoughts"* (Bion, 1970/2007, p. 121).

¹⁰⁵ Ferro (2004, p. 39) summarizes the destiny of β -elements very concisely: *"Any β elements that, for whatever reason, are not transformed into α , into visual images of the 'film' of thought, may meet with a variety of fates: they may be evacuated in the form of psychosomatic illness, thoughtless behaviour (characteropathic acting out)*

Bion (1962a, p. 115) states that he coined the concept of α -function to account for the process that unconsciously transforms β -elements into α -elements, which are the building blocks for further dream thoughts. Bion emphasizes that α -elements are not the end-result of α -function but rather the first transformation needed to think further about one's experiences. They are the *"most genetically primitive elements [suitable for the creation] of thought[s]"* (Bion 1970/2007, p. 10) and the most basic fully psychic elements at disposal for our mind, which distinguishes them from β -elements, since the latter can neither be furtherly employed as building-blocks for thinking nor are they to be understood as fully mental elements. Importantly, thoughts do not correspond to a single α -element, but rather to a concatenation of α -elements. As such, one single α -element could still be understood as a proto-thought. A successful α -function is a "de-sense-fying" function (Sandler, 2010, p. 26), in which materiality, sensoriality, proto-emotionality are transformed into the *"building blocks that can [then] be used to think and to dream work; to build dream thoughts; also to store in the form of memories"* (Sandler, 2010, p. 305). This α -function is a *"continuous process that takes place in waking life as well as in sleep"* (Ferro, 2002, p. 597), meaning that for Bion dreaming is not only an activity of the night but, on the contrary, it extends throughout the day by the continuous functioning of a *"waking dream thought"* (Ferro, 2002, p. 599). Consciousness, in the sense of being self-reflectively conscious to oneself, and repressed unconsciousness, in the sense of being able to repress mental contents into yet another layer of the psyche unavailable to conscious access, are both a byproduct of α -function. In this sense, consciousness and the repressed unconscious are developmental achievements, fruits of a sufficient work of α -function. Bion (1962b, p. 17) postulates that a so-called "contact-barrier" is established between conscious and unconscious, comprised of a chain of α -elements. Bion (1962b, p. 17) puts it as follows:

"In conformity with this my statement that the man has to 'dream' a current emotional experience whether it occurs in sleep or in waking life is re-formulated thus: The man's alpha-function whether in sleeping or waking transforms the sense-impressions related to an emotional experience, into alpha-elements, which cohere as they

or hallucinations, or they may be preserved as 'undigested facts' (Bion 1962); it is precisely these 'undigested facts' in analysis that press for reception and transformation."

proliferate to form the contact-barrier. This contact-barrier, thus continuously in process of formation, marks the point of contact and separation between conscious and unconscious elements and originates the distinction between them. The nature of the contact-barrier will depend on the nature of the supply of alpha-elements and on the manner of their relationship to each other."

In this sense, the contact-barrier is a development of α -function that allows the mind to divide itself into conscious-preconscious-unconscious topographically. Without α -function, there would be no mind that can hence organize itself in this manner. As Ferro (2004, p. 34) points out, the primary function of the contact barrier, once formed, is to protect the mind "from inundation by α , β and γ -elements", to create a locus of relative harmony and balance within consciousness. This means that through the contact-barrier α -elements can be repressed, thus rendering α -elements building blocks that can have a different status within memory. For example, they can be stored, remembered and also consciously forgotten but unconsciously remembered. The more sophisticated one's own mental container (Ψ ¹⁰⁷) and α -function is, however, the more porous and permeable one's contact barrier can become between conscious and unconscious contents of the mind. Indeed, one goal of analysis is to make the contact barrier between the systems of unconscious and conscious more permeable, without feeling terrified or invaded by our own alterity that inhabits us. Essentially, the contact barrier modulates how much we allow to be disturbed within consciousness by ourselves and our own unconscious thinking. The more containing our inner container (Ψ), the more permeable the contact-barrier can be, also resulting in a heightened capacity to be concerned with one's unconscious dream thought. Bion (1957/2018) suggests that the personality comprises both a psychotic part and a non-psychotic part that function simultaneously¹⁰⁸. While the non-psychotic part is concerned with 'thinking' or 'dreaming' emotional experiences, the psychotic part is incapable of such and operates entirely by means

¹⁰⁶ This term will be elucidated shortly below.

¹⁰⁷ This is the symbol employed by Bion to express a container. The symbol σ is employed to express a contained.

¹⁰⁸ This thought does not strike us as particularly novel, yet it emphasises the contemporality of parts of the mind inhabiting different phantasy positions. While one part of our personality might operate within the D-P, another part might be stuck and lost in the PS-P-f.

of fragmentation and evacuation¹⁰⁹ (Vermote, 2019, p. 30). Thus, the psychotic part of the personality is “*substantially mindless [and consists] of events not available for memory and thought*” (Meltzer, 1975, p. 225). The analysand is left voided due to minute fragmentation and the subsequent evacuation. While Bion made the distinction between the psychotic and the non-psychotic parts of the personality before he introduced concepts like α -function, α -elements, β -elements, containment, container (φ) and contained (σ), we can clearly see how these concepts are related to the prior distinction¹¹⁰. Bion (1957/2018) thought that in the psychotic part of the personality particles from the perception-apparatus and from the ego can be fragmented and expelled outside to then continue existing in the lifeworld as hallucinations, encapsulated in external objects. Indeed, he thinks that in hallucinatory experiences particles can be expelled and subsequently agglomerated, compressed and engulfed by external objects to then form what Bion calls ‘*bizarre objects*’¹¹¹ (Vermote, 2019, p. 70). Indeed, in this case, the ejected particles continue to exercise their functions outside of the personality. It is as if their expulsion only multiplied their number and provoked their hostility towards the projector, who now feels persecuted by a swarm of hostile particles.

As Bion (1957/2018, p. 39) states, “[i]n consequence the patient feels himself to be surrounded by bizarre objects [...]”. Bion (1962b, p. 25) states within ‘Learning from Experience’ that “[t]he beta-element differs from the bizarre object in that the bizarre object is beta-element plus ego and superego traces”, thus connecting his former thoughts on bizarre objects with his novel

¹⁰⁹ Bion (1957/2013, p. 43) referred to fragmentation also as “*minute splitting*”. His use of the term “*minute splitting*” strikes me as analogous to Rosenfeld’s (1947/1965) use of the term “*ego fragmentation*” within the case of Mildred. On the other hand, the idea of evacuation is analogous to what I referred to as a ‘projection of no-thing into no-one’.

¹¹⁰ Roughly speaking, the fact that the psychotic-part of the personality, or PS-P-f, is filled with elements that are inaccessible to thought, stresses the closeness of the PS-P-f with the Bionian β -element. Thus, we could say that the psychotic part of the personality is largely overwhelmed with an excess of β -elements which cannot be contained by the α -function of the subject itself. At best, an auxiliary container (φ) of the caregiver or analyst, helps the subject to contain these β -elements and introject more and more capacity for α -function. The non-psychotic part of the personality is a part that has already sufficient ability for reverie, containment and α -function.

¹¹¹ Grotstein (2009, pp. 328-329) defines ‘bizarre objects’ as follows: “*The psychotic is so terrified of emotions that he projects not only them into objects, but also his mind that thinks the thought. Thus, he becomes mindless and haunted by a strangely different object, a bizarre one, characterized by a[n] eerie malformation in which the object swells up because it has no boundaries—since the patient had withdrawn from his own ego boundaries and thus projected his mind without ego boundaries into the object. The object also swells because it now contains the unprocessed beta-elements the patient could not bear. Beta-elements are infinite in nature until they are processed [...]*.” For more thorough and also differently-nuanced definitions see Lopez-Corvo (2005, pp. 48-49) and Sandler (2010, pp. 87-91).

concept of β -elements. In a sense, a bizarre object is comprised of an agglomeration¹¹² of unprocessed β -elements and elements of the personality that have gone through a process that Bion called “reversal of alpha-function”¹¹³ (or ‘ α -function-in-reverse’) (Bion, 1962b, p. 25). The concept of ‘ α -function-in-reverse’ implies that parts of a chain of α -elements, which were already formative of some parts of non-psychotic personality, are attacked, by which the α -elements are turned into α -elements “*divested of all characteristics that separate them from beta-elements and are then projected, thus forming the beta-screen*” (Meltzer, 2018, p. 529). On the other hand, the beta-screen can be understood as the outcome of a deterioration of the previously mentioned contact-barrier. The formation of a beta-screen cuts off the permeability and communication between the systems of conscious and unconscious. The impenetrability of the beta-screen leads to a suffocation of meanings within conscious thought, since the unconscious dreaming process cannot inform the conscious stream anymore. Conscious thought becomes flat, non-resonating of emotionality and meaning. The beta-screen can be composed of β -elements and divested α -elements. The increasing agglomeration of these elements promotes again the need for evacuation instead of dreaming. This is why the creation of a beta-screen can be seen as a “*bombardment directed both against the alpha-functioning of the patient himself and against any external object susceptible to arousing meaningful feelings*” (Segal, 1991, p. 39). Segal (1991, p. 40) described the beta-screen from a clinical point of view as a verbal and non-verbal process in which “*words [are] used as missiles, and the experience for the analyst [is] not of receiving a relevant communication but of being under real bombardment*”¹¹⁴. Indeed, bizarre objects and the beta-screen are both descriptive of clinical phenomena that portray the explosiveness of β -elements without, strictly speaking, consisting purely of β -elements.

Through α -function there can be a categorial leap from sensory to mental. The sensorial paves the path to reality, but reality needs to be fictionalised to be humanly accessible. It is

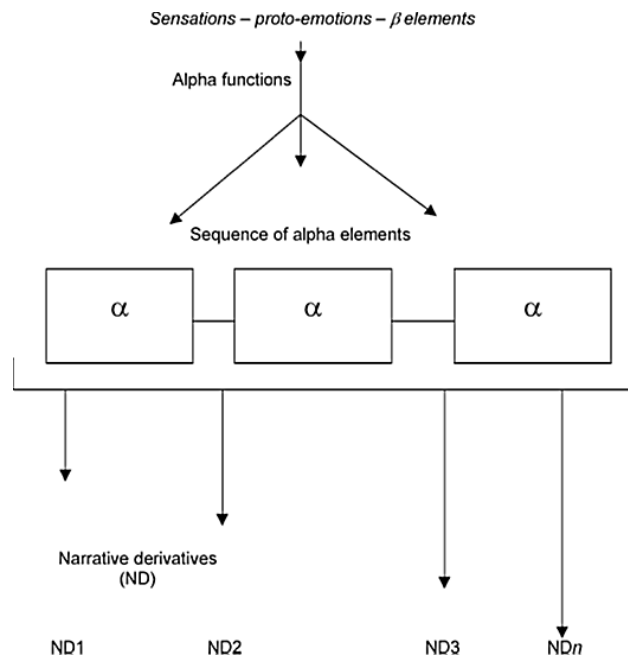
¹¹² For Bion, β -elements cannot be integrated but only agglomerated. This has to do with the fact that β -elements are saturated, concrete facts that cannot be used for thinking, unless transformed by α -function.

¹¹³ Bion (1962b, p. 25) writes: “*Reversal of alpha-function means the dispersal of the contact-barrier and is quite compatible with the establishment of objects with the characteristics I once ascribed to bizarre objects.*”

¹¹⁴ Bion seems to see the beta-screen as a last attempt to evoke reverie in the analyst through forceful means. This can be inferred from statements of Bion like the following: “*Thanks to the beta-screen the psychotic patient has a capacity for evoking emotions in the analyst; his associations are the elements of the beta-screen intended to evoke interpretations or other responses which are less related to his need for psycho-analytic interpretation than to his need to produce an emotional involvement.*” (Bion, 1962b, p. 24)

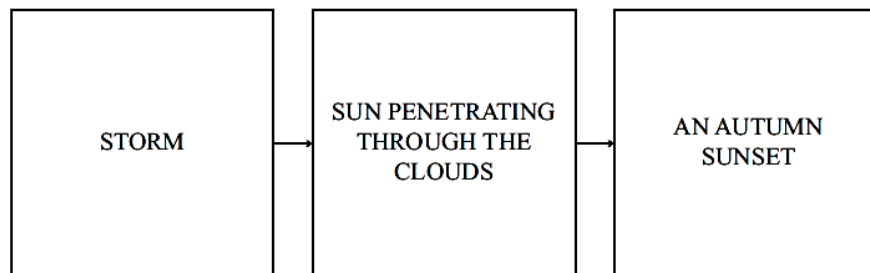
commonly believed that the psychotic part of a person's personality is disconnected from reality. However, from a Bionian perspective, this statement needs to be dissected further since it can also be claimed that the psychotic part is actually engaged in a *"hypersensitive contact with reality"* (Bergstein, 2019, p. 17) or *"hyper-perception"* (Ferro, 2004, p. 37). The psychotic part of the personality, then, constitutes that part of the mind that is confronted with a pure, unfiltered and unmediated reality, the things in themselves, pure β -elements. The non-psychotic part of the personality, thus, has the task to 'dream' and digest these excessive quanta of proto-sensoriality, which is, however, understood as a fictionalisation of life, a move away from brute β -elements through the operation of α -function. As a consequence, the task and art of the analyst within the Bionian tradition shifts from interpreting already constituted phantasies that have gone through either repression or splitting and PI to intervening through speech in a way that helps the analysand in *"Dreaming Undreamt Dreams and Interrupted Cries"* (see Ogden, 2005). The emphasis lies on 'undreamt' and/or 'interrupted', and thus on areas of the mind that have gone through insufficient α -function. The analyst does not bring to light what is already there but helps in the 'dreaming' and creation of what could become. Put differently, the analyst attempts to facilitate a process that goes from mindlessness to mind-creation, from *"explosive sensoriality to the ability to think"* (Ferro, 2009, p. 24). Bergstein (2019, pp. 12-13) has noted that Bion's emphasis lies in finding factors that promote or obstruct the *"mind's ability to tolerate the growth in complexity, sophistication, and level of abstraction"* when thinking of emotional experiences and not in finding causal explanations for certain psychic developments, since *"causality is unknowable and hence is rendered irrelevant"*.

Ferro (2013, p. 163) has systematised the process described above with the following illuminating illustration:



In this illustration, the β -elements of proto-sensoriality, proto-emotionality and proto-thought that pervade us are being “taken in, contained and then transformed” (Ferro, 2013, p. 162) by a mind with sufficient α -function, may it be the mind of the subject itself or an auxiliary mind. Through α -function, β -elements are metabolised and “*gradually transformed into meaningful pictograms (α elements)*” (Ferro, 2013, p. 162). Ferro adds to the concept of the pictogram, which could be understood as an unconscious, very basic pictographic rendering of a chain of α -elements, the idea that there are also auditograms and olfactograms, etc., namely basic unconscious renderings of α -elements in terms of auditory, olfactory, etc. processing. Moreover, Ferro understands the chaining of α -elements as ‘emotional pictograms’, which remain unconscious and tend to become conscious only in a derivative form through what Ferro calls “*narrative derivatives*”. As Ogden (in Ferro, 2004, p. x) points out, Ferro understands α -function as a multilayered process, in which additionally “*to the work of α function and the creation of pictograms (α elements) from raw emotional impressions (β elements), there is a ‘second level’, ‘an α meta-function’ [...] that makes use of available α elements for the creation of ‘narrative derivatives’ [which are] ‘a syncretic narrative mosaic of emotionally salient facts’*”. The continuous production of pictograms through α -function leads to an unconscious sequence of images, which constitutes the

“waking dream thought” or “dream thought of the waking state” (Ferro & Civitarese, 2015, p. 14). To understand what Ferro means by ‘emotional pictograms’, which are not knowable in-themselves, he makes an example of a transformation of mostly undigested “*proto-emotional stages rage → relief → longing*” into a possible “*sequence of pictograms*” as evidenced by the following illustration (Ferro & Civitarese, 2015, p. 14):



Ferro and Civitarese (2015, pp. 14-15) underline that the specific construction of an ‘emotional pictogram’ is highly subjective and dependent on the particular creative and artistic touch of the α -function that performs the transformation. While the “*mind’s first locus of creativity*” is precisely this transformation of β -elements into α -elements and, hence, ‘emotional pictograms’, the “*second locus of creativity in the mind*” is the highly subjective transformation of ‘emotional pictograms’ into words and narrations (Ferro & Civitarese, 2015, p. 14). The resulting stories, which depending on the narrating subject could be the result of an “*infinite number of narrative genres*”, are the ‘narrative derivatives’ of the unconscious underlying sequence of ‘emotional pictograms’, meaning that they are stories “*characterised by one constant—namely, [in our example] the succession rage–relief–longing*” (Ferro & Civitarese, 2015, p. 14)¹¹⁵. Through reverie, in which the analyst attempts to get into unison¹¹⁶ with the analysand, his ability to be receptive might enable him to gain some access to the analysand’s ‘emotional pictograms’ through the emotional resonance of the analysand’s

¹¹⁵ If “*once processed, proto-emotions and proto-sensations become, as it were, clothed in thought*” (Ferro & Civitarese, 2022, p. 39), the analyst has both the task to help knitting clothes for different weather conditions and also the task to grasp the nakedness of the analysand without making him feel intruded or judged by a superego.

¹¹⁶ Unison or at-one-ment describe the ability of the analyst or the analytic couple to find a moment of meeting of minds that leads to a dyadic expansion of selfhood (Civitarese, 2017). It can be seen as a momentary intersubjective encounter with each other, in which the emotional truth of the present moment is experienced, and a transformational expansion of both minds is rendered possible. Being in unison or at-one with the emotional truth of a session is not the same thing as ‘knowing’ what is currently going on within session.

waking dream within the analyst's waking dream. Bionian analysts, thus, tend to put a great emphasis on countertransferential flashes of images during the session, countertransference dreams, etc. The main assumption is that, given a "*tolerance of approximations*" (Bergstein, 2019, p. 8), the analyst is able to "*catch the drift of the patient's unconscious with his own unconscious*" (Freud, 1923, p. 239) by intuitively tuning into the analysand's unconscious 'emotional pictograms' and being attuned to the stream of stories and other self-experiences that s/he is producing himself within the session¹¹⁷. Indeed, this process of countertransferential experiencing is postulated as ever more important since the analyst has to go through a significant and often painful¹¹⁸ experience herself before attempting to form an experience-near interpretation that has a chance at being able to promote psychic transformation (Bergstein, 2019, p. 24).

Coming back to PI, Ogden's (1979) influential paper "On Projective Identification" convincingly elaborated how PI should not only be understood as an intrapsychic but indeed a relational and interpersonal process¹¹⁹. Ogden puts an emphasis "*not an imaginary pressure [...] [but a] real pressure exerted by means of a multitude of interactions between the projector and the recipient*" (Ogden, 1979, p. 359), thus stressing an actual interpersonal pressure that the projector unconsciously puts onto a receptor in order to compel the containment of psychic contents by another. The active component of containment and thus the agency and receptivity of the container makes the analyst a more "*fully participating [person] in the*

¹¹⁷ Grotstein (2007, p. 291) has depicted this process in a more complete light as follows: "*As the mother does for her infant, so the analyst absorbs the analysand's pain by partial or total identification ('becoming') and allows it to become part of himself. In his reverie he then allows his own repertoire of conscious and unconscious personal experiences to be summoned, so that some of them may be symmetrical to or match up with the analysand's still unfathomable projections (8-elements, O). Eventually, the analyst sees a pattern in the material – that is, the pattern becomes the selected fact that allows the analyst to interpret it (create a permanent constant conjunction of the elements).*"

¹¹⁸ Bergstein (2019, pp. 43-44) tellingly writes that "[i]n order to encounter the psychotic part of the personality in the patient, our thinking too is required to be looser, so as to make contact with that part of the patient's mind. However, experience then becomes threatening. We may feel in our flesh that associative looseness, the danger of disintegration, and collapse of the contact barrier – and the tendency to get hold of some anchor strengthens. It is precisely then, when experience becomes persecutory, when one fears that thought might turn into action, that it is essential to remain in the caesura, in the synapse, in the present, despite the temptation to leave the immediate situation in the room, for example, by resorting to psychogenetic, experience-remote interpretations."

¹¹⁹ Ogden (1979, p. 358) summarizes this as follows: "*In a schematic way, one can think of projective identification as a process involving the following sequence: first, there is the fantasy of projecting a part of oneself into another person and of that part taking over the person from within; then there is pressure exerted via the interpersonal interaction such that the 'recipient' of the projection experiences pressure to think, feel, and behave in a manner congruent with the projection; finally, the projected feelings, after being 'psychologically processed' by the recipient, are reinternalized by the projector.*"

analytic interaction” (Langs, 1979, p. 555). While Post-Bionian-Field-Theory (PBFT) ultimately radicalises this thought by stating that a continuous overlapping interplay of relational PIs generates a vast underlying and unconscious field that embeds the analytic pair, making the process described by Ogden (1979) less episodic and singular and more extended and all-encompassing, the Bionian concept of container/contained ($\sigma\varnothing$) could already be described as a radicalisation or extension. Ferro and Civitarese (2022, p. 38) point out how the concept of $\sigma\varnothing$ is the successor of PI in addition of Winnicott’s concept of ‘holding’. Bion stressed that $\sigma\varnothing$ relationships are manifold, reciprocal and multi-layered. He believed that “*mouth/nipple, vagina/penis, group/individual, mother/baby, etc.*” (Ferro & Civitarese, 2022, p. 38) are all examples of $\sigma\varnothing$, also evidencing the multiple layers since some of these concern a micro-relationship and others a macro-relationship. The most essential characteristic, however, in each $\sigma\varnothing$ relationship is neither the container nor the contained itself but rather the connection formed between these two. Indeed, Ferro (2004, pp. 31-33) mentions relationships that are an expression of a hyper-container activity ($\varnothing\varnothing$), in which harmony and peace reigns but tumultuousness remains split-off and unaddressed, or of a hyper-content activity ($\sigma\sigma$), in which contents are competing for dominance without ability to listen and understanding leading to turbulences that overwhelm the relationship. At best, the $\sigma\varnothing$ relationship creates a coupling that promotes the psychic growth and creativity of a container-function while processing and ever-more-sophisticatedly elaborating the elements contained. This continuously transforms the contained aspects in the relationship, changing their characteristics in the process of containment – much like a frozen piece of meat changes textures throughout the cooking process¹²⁰. This means that one container, initially equipped to handle certain contents, which hence become contained, might become already useless after a first transformation. If the transformed contents are left in the same hardened container, which is unable to grow or adapt to the new textures of the contents, the contents risk becoming devitalized, much like pieces of meat that have been overcooked to the point of unpalatability. Only the best chefs and their brigades then know how to revive these pieces of meat. This evidences that failures of containment lead to “*all kinds of suffering both for the individual (within his or her internal group) and for the group*” (Ferro & Civitarese, 2022, p.

¹²⁰ I am using a cooking metaphor as a tribute to Ferro’s habitual but exquisite use of cooking metaphors.

42). Ferro and Civitarese ask themselves what containment precisely is and how much of it is needed in order to cook but not overcook the contained. They come to the following idea, which I believe is essential:

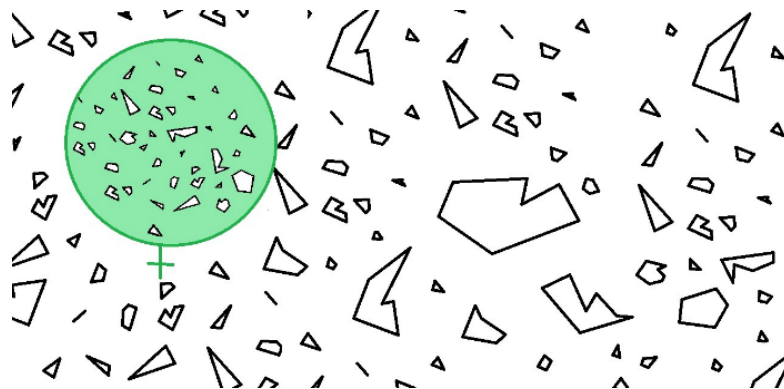
“What needs to be contained is the surplus that would otherwise shatter the container. An acceptable definition of the activity of thinking could be something like: ‘The act of taking away from the [explosiveness of] emotions anything that exceeds the individual’s capacity to use them’.” (Ferro & Civitarese, 2022, p. 53)

In this sense, containment is a process of understanding and digestion to the end of taking a certain edge off from raw emotions. After containment, the contained should still grab a punch, but only to the point of the individual’s capacity to bear the blow. Abstractly, containment and the container/contained relationship can be understood as factors of α -function (Brown, 2013, p. 8), in which β -elements get transformed into α -elements to then form the membrane of the contact barrier¹²¹. In less abstract terms, containment is about *“making sense of experience – full, poetic, somato-psychic sense, human sense [...] – and not just broadening the self-awareness that is an expression of thought at its most abstract”* (Ferro & Civitarese, 2022, p. 55).

Let me now return to my previous investigation of the three countermeasures to surface from the PS-P-f. Previously, I have referred to these as: (i) an attempt to concentrate and ‘contain’ fragments into a ‘good/nurturing something’, (ii) an attempt to agglomerate and compress fragments into a ‘bad/fearsome something’, and (iii) an attempt to squeeze and encapsulate fragments into a ‘coherent yet meaningless something’. So far, I have pointed out that from a Neo-Kleinian perspective (i) and (ii) aim at the re-establishment of the PS-P-n by re-organizing a specific polarity of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ within the personality. At the same time, I mentioned that (iii) was associated to ‘psychic retreats’ (Steiner, 1993), ‘the claustrum’ (Meltzer, 1992) and the ‘as-if personality’ (Riesenberg-Malcolm, 1990/1999). Now I will attempt to expand and modify my previous statements in the light of a more Bionian

¹²¹ Ferro and Civitarese (2022, p. 53) write that “[i]f each alpha element corresponds to a micro-experience of the passage from beta to alpha, we can clearly see that the alpha screen [= contact barrier] is the screen that is constructed in the wake of an infinite series of moments during which we had a positive (unison) experience with the object, moments in which the object helped us make sense of what was happening to us, consciously and unconsciously. Ultimately it is a screen made up of human meaning – or in other words language.”

orientation. I make a basic assumption of equivalence between the Bionian ‘psychotic part of the personality’ and the PS-P-f. Indeed, whenever Bion speaks of the paranoid-schizoid position, it seems clear to me that he means the PS-P-f and not the PS-P-n. Almost all references to ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and vertical splits are absent in Bion’s conceptualisations, meaning that the PS-P-n generally is not acknowledged as a relevant position within Bionian thought. It is at best marginal. Indeed, Bion’s famous ‘PS $\leftrightarrow$ D’¹²² has much to do with fragmentation and chaos on the one side versus meaning-formation and closure on the other side, which explains why it is so vital that these two are in a perpetual dialectical exchange in order to promote psychic growth. With too much meaning and closure no new idea can form, with too much fragmentation and chaos one gets lost. Thus, the oscillation between the two is the key for creativity. I want to make the point that the (i) attempt to concentrate and ‘contain’ fragments into a ‘good/nurturing something’, can be understood as a conglomeration of β -elements and/or balfa-fragments¹²³, which undergo sufficient α -function in order to form a growth-promoting container/contained relationship, leading to a sustained alphabetization of β -elements into α -elements and, over time, to an integration of the dream-work- α into the personality and thus to a shift from PS-P-f into the D-P.



Whether the container is provided by a person external to the subject in question depends on the case and by the resources beyond the PS-P-f that the subject has at his disposal¹²⁴. Predominantly psychotic subjects are unequipped to provide themselves with α -function and

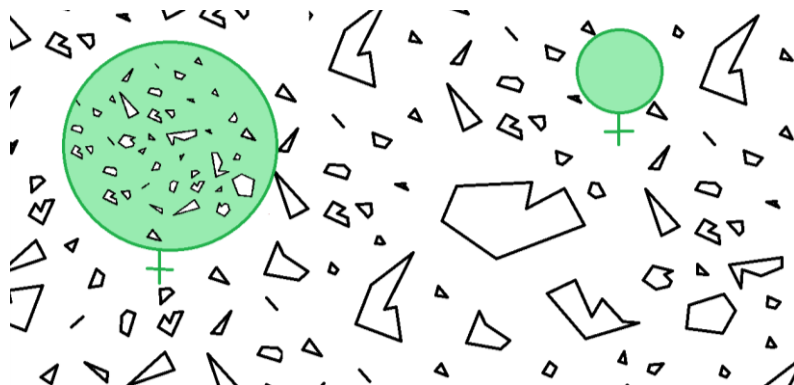
¹²² This equilibrium was introduced briefly in the first chapter of this thesis.

¹²³ Fragments that are, so to speak, “bigger” and ever-slightly less “raw” than β -elements but that do not classify as α -elements yet. Ferro (2004, p. 33) symbolizes a balfa-element as ‘ $\beta\alpha\alpha$ -elements’.

¹²⁴ As stated, one and the same person can “live” with one part of the personality within the PS-P-f and with another part in the D-P. In this case the capacity for dream-work- α of the latter personality part can create a container/contained relationship with certain contents of his PS-P-f part of the personality.

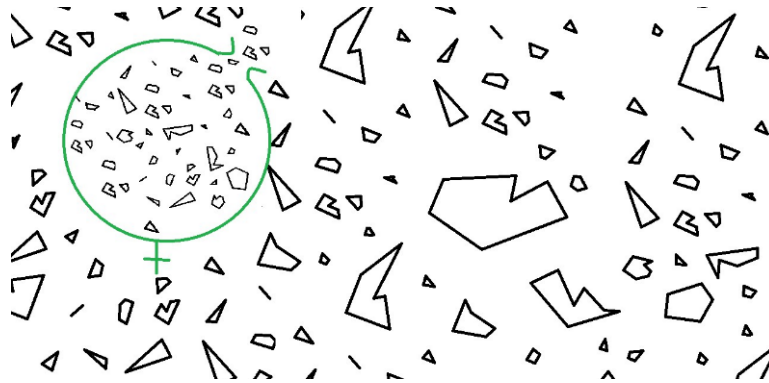
a container-function, since these were never successfully introjected. Psychotics are therefore trapped in a void and ever-increasing fragmentation, “[...] *lost in the immensity of mental space, [...] overwhelmed by undigested and indigestible sense impressions [...], which carry almost no symbolic meaning*” (Bergstein, 2019, p. 14). Thus, it is often necessary that an auxiliary external person provides them with supplementary α -function and a container-function, by which we can then already see how these illustrations become deeply relational and not anymore purely intrapersonal.

In the following two illustrations, I want to depict two among multiple other possible cases of a “*container inadequacy*” (see Ferro, 2004, p. 23-34). The first illustration refers to a container (on the right) that is unable to deal and contain the turbulence of the proto-emotionality or proto-sensoriality that surrounds it. It is too small, rigid and unreceptive for any of the though fragments to enter its field of containment. Thus, violent proto-emotionality remains uncontained and potentially threatening. We can compare this situation with what I previously described as ‘integrative confusion’, since there is an attempt at integration, which is however undermined by yet insufficient container-capacities.



The second “*container inadequacy*” refers to the case of container-fragmentation. The container is at first able to contain a certain amount of β -elements and/or balfa-fragments and nourish them with α -function. However, subsequently, either in reaction to the first transformations of β -elements into α -elements or balfa-elements or in reaction to the intake of further surrounding fragments, the container membrane, which itself is constituted by α -elements, much like the contact barrier, bursts open. By bursting open, a type of

disintegrative confusion ensues and a local catastrophic implosion ensues again. In Bionian terms, we can speak of α -function-in-reverse, since elements that have undergone a certain α -function are now divested of their α -characteristics and return to become fragments, in this case balfa-fragments. The container does not survive the inner or outer turbulences. When it comes to inner turbulence, Ferro (2004, p. 35) has pointed out that certain 'killer-contained' have the virulence to destroy the holding capacity of their container.

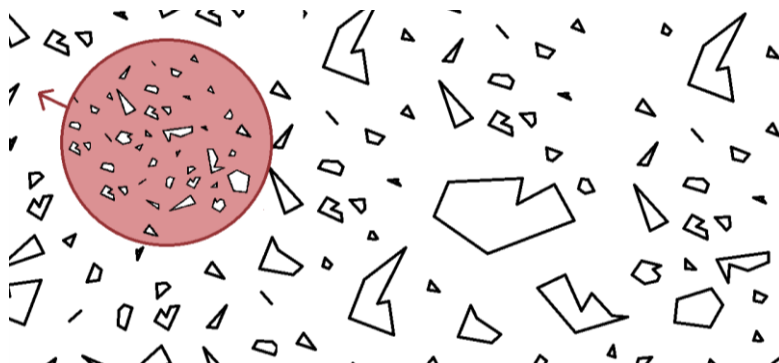


Moving to the (ii) attempt to agglomerate and compress fragments into a 'bad/fearsome something', from a Bionian perspective we could point out how fragments can conglomerate in order to form a sort of bizarre object that then forms a 'hyper-contained' (Ferro, 2004, p. 35). This formed conglomerate tends to shift the PS-P-f to the PS-P-ns, since a major enemy is being constructed and nameless dread shifts into fear of persecution. In a particularly illuminating paragraph, Grotstein (2007, p. 323) writes:

"The psychotic attempts both to retreat into zero subjectivity—that is, zero awareness of experience—and to nullify the objects of experience by throwing them away, along with the mind that can know them. These latter [can] transform into numinous bizarre objects. [...] The psychotic tries to create zero—to be in zero [in the absolute PS-P-f]—and, having fled from meaning, finds only painful bizarre Meaning. The psychotic may experience emptiness or deadness or nothingness, all of them a final common pathway of retreats from meaning and significance. Nothingness, meaninglessness, is at first the goal of the

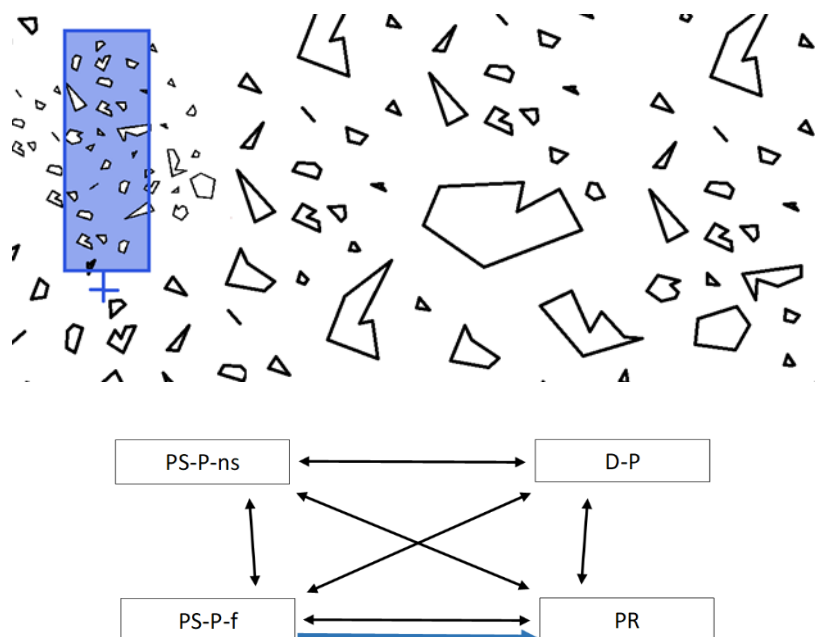
psychotic to escape from painful experience, but it becomes, instead, a “living”, external hell of insufferable [...] but painfully endurable elements of nothingness. The nothingness of psychosis is the experience of randomness, entropy, meaninglessness, unpredictability, the first recourse against which is paranoia [in the PS-P-ns].”

Grotstein’s reminder that bizarre objects form a sense of persecution that gives a first recourse against the nothingness of the PS-P-f is helpful. We can illustrate this process with a ‘hyper-contained’ that consists of a cloud of agglomerated but unintegrated β -elements and $\beta\alpha\alpha$ -elements (balfa-elements)¹²⁵. As the membrane of the above $\sigma\varphi$ relationships was formed out of the contact-barrier, we can state that the membrane of this hyper-contained is formed of the beta-screen, since “[t]he concept of a beta-screen [...] tries to capture the experience of an agglomeration of unbound, unconstrained, diffused stimuli, dispersed in space, unable to be integrated” (Bergstein, 2019, p. 19).



¹²⁵ With regards to this agglomeration of β -elements Bergstein (2019, p. 19) has written: “[E]ven though these beta-elements [...] carry hardly any mental meaning, they do often accumulate and come together in a seemingly ordered, ostensibly meaningful visual image. Hence, they acquire hallucinatory meaning that may appear indistinguishable from a dream or a dreamable narrative. This accumulation of beta-elements, referred to by Bion as a beta-screen, may be illustrated pictorially if one imagines a mass of flies that, from afar, seem like a black curtain, but with the wave of one’s hand they are scattered, leaving no trace. This differs from a dream made up of alpha-elements that connect to each other through a network of associations, forming a “curtain of illusion” (Bion, 1965, p. 147; Grotstein, 2009), a narrative that can be stored in the mind, communicated, and made use of as a transitional object. The beta-screen may thus be disguised as a dream, deluding the analyst who is determined to seek order where disorder reigns. The analyst may then be in danger of missing the fact that the patient cannot ‘dream’ and is functioning in a more primitive dimension of the mind.”

Lastly, there is the (iii) attempt to squeeze and encapsulate fragments into a ‘coherent yet meaningless something’. We can understand this process as a conglomeration of fragments that get encapsulated by a wall of ‘auto-sensuous autistic protections’ (Tustin, 1992), which deaden the proto-emotional force of β -elements within the walls of the encapsulation. This is a transitory stage, sheltering the subject from the downward voidification of the PS-P-f, and creating a preliminary, yet at first very insular (non-global), protection from pain. As this insular protection becomes more and more habitual and global, the personality then shifts from the PS-P-f to a psychic retreat. The ‘auto-sensuous autistic protection’ (Tustin, 1992) can also be described as a ‘claustrum’ (Meltzer, 1992), which essentially is a type of extremely tough-walled, inelastic and almost two-dimensionally thin container that compresses the contained elements into a very thin thinking space, so much so that they can be coherently dealt with on a hyper-rational level but are deprived of emotional depth (Ferro, 2007, p. 47)¹²⁶. The claustrum, hence, provides some form of insular emotional shelter that can over time rigidify into the habit of sheltering into a ‘psychic retreat’ (Steiner, 1993).



¹²⁶ Ferro (2004, p. 25) gives the following short description: “Andrea [a child] had narrated his drama immediately: inside him were emotions that were so primitive and violent (the dinosaurs) that the only way he could deal with them was to shut them, or perhaps himself, up in a rigid container – what Meltzer (1992) would call a claustrum (the tortois). However, these contents, being so compressed inside the claustrum [...] periodically caused the claustrum itself to explode (the outbursts of anger and despair) [...]. The pressurized, unshareable emotions were segregated; they needed to be surrounded by armour, or else they were split off and expelled, while Andrea took refuge in the claustrum.”

I will provide a brief excursion on the topic of psychic retreats. Like other positions, the psychic retreat can be *“thought of as a grouping of anxieties, defences, and object relations, but its structure is marked by the rigidity conferred through the pathological organizations of the personality”* (Steiner, 1993, p. 28). Steiner argues that the psychic retreat adds a third position to the basic equilibrium diagram of $PS \leftrightarrow D$. Following the shifts between PS (or even PS-P-n and PS-P-f), D-P and the psychic retreat allows for a better description of what goes on during a clinical session in comparison to $PS \leftrightarrow D$ alone. Although the PR is distinct from the two basic positions, it functions *“in relation to them as if it were itself a position”* (Steiner, 1993, p. 28). People unconsciously turn into a psychic retreat, *“if the anxieties in either of the two basic positions became excessive”* (Steiner, 1993, p. 28). One of the downsides of the psychic-retreat is that it is characterized by stagnation and stuckness. Indeed, once an analysand becomes stuck in a retreat, it becomes very hard to shake this rigidification up and make the analysand face the anxieties that await him in the PS-P-f, PS-P-n and/or D-P. The theory of a ‘psychic retreat’ was born out of the *“problem of stuck states and of patients being out of contact”* (Steiner, 1993, p. 41), several decades of psychoanalytic literature on ‘pathological organization of personality’, as well as the ‘as-if personality’ (Riesenberg-Malcolm, 1990/1999), and the Bionian notion of ‘-K’ (Bion, 1962b), which I will not elaborate here¹²⁷. Riesenberg-Malcolm (1990/1999) describes a pathological organization of narcissistic defences which aim to keep a certain harmony between analyst and analysand while at the same time deadening any potential of growth of the analytic relationship. The analysand does as-if s/he wants to be understood and happily accepts almost all interpretations. However, the analyst soon notices that the interpretations are being used and heard in a very different manner from how they were intended, fully adapted for the personality of the analysand, ineffective of stimulating any changes. This leads to analyses, in which - instead of using analysis as an emotional learning experience - the analysand is investing all his energies into keeping things in a static condition. Riesenberg-Malcolm (1990/1999, p. 137) writes that *“[t]he as-if patients experience the awareness of their internal world as a menace to their sanity. They feel that they have (and had historically) only one of two ways of coping with this situation. Either they disintegrate completely, or they remain ‘as-if’.”* This evidences how the ‘as-if’ personality is primarily a defence against the PS-P-f and fragmentary states. Riesenberg-

¹²⁷ Very briefly put, ‘K’ is not knowing but rather a link that promotes getting-to-know, while ‘-K’ is a sense-of-knowing that then evades any newness and is an active obstacle in the quest of learning from experience.

Malcolm argues that an underlying disintegration is feared to the point that mental contents have to be *“contained in a precarious enclosure”* (see claustrum illustrated above), leading to the situation that analysands are highly afraid of affectively *“facing this situation [and, instead, they are preoccupied with] preventing further disintegration”* (Riesenberg-Malcolm, 1990/1999, p. 137). One of Riesenberg-Malcolm (1990/1999) brightest contributions, in my opinion, is her introduction of the concept of ‘slicing’¹²⁸. Slicing could be understood as a form of splitting, in which the cognitive content of, say, an interpretation is maintained, while the emotional content is fully sliced away so that no change is possible and the full meaning of the interpretation is denuded. Indeed, slicing can be understood as the very specific form of splitting of the psychic retreat, as fragmentation or ‘minute splitting’ was the very specific form of splitting of the PS-P-f and dual, binary splitting the specific form of splitting of the PS-P-ns. Through slicing, analysands are essentially able to *“achieve an arrest of further disintegrative processes”*, however, with the price that they therefore need to ensure *“the continuous existence of a useless analysis”* (Risenberg-Malcolm, 1990/1999, p. 137). The concept of the psychic retreat is related and similar. Indeed, I understand the concept of psychic retreat as an umbrella term for various ‘pathological organizations of the personality’. It resembles the PS-P-ns in terms of rigidity and order. Object-experiencing is greatly determined by the structural properties of the specific retreat. Exceeding qualities of the object that do not fit into the properties of the PR, which is greatly determined by several slices and a net of PIs, are ignored, leading to very specific part-object formations that do not resemble the part-object-experiencing found in the PS-P-ns. In his countertransference, the analyst is prone to feel controlled or persuaded to enact the role required (Steiner, 1993, p. 42). Steiner argues that the psychic retreat is sought in order to protect against panic and a breakdown so immense that it is unbearable (Steiner, 1993, p. 25). As such, the psychic retreat is first and foremost a protection and pseudo-solution against the pit of the PS-P-f. It can offer an almost immediate shelter, leading to the observation that *“[i]n extremely disturbed patients most of the movement is between the retreat and states of pathological*

¹²⁸ Riesenberg-Malcolm (1990/1999, pp. 130-131) got the idea for the concept of ‘slicing’ *“[...] from a dream of a patient, C, which took place when [the analyst] was trying to get some cooperation from her [...]. In the dream a woman was insisting that the patient should go to a patisserie. The patient, though liking sweets, did not particularly want to go, because she knew that the woman would force her to buy a cream bun, which she does like, but did not want to get because, for some reason, she knew that it was the woman who would enjoy the cream. Suddenly she saw in the shop that there was on display a beautifully, symmetrically cut cake, each slice so thin that no cream was noticeable.”*

fragmentation" (Steiner, 1993, p. 39). While the main function of the psychic retreat is to offer shelter from PS-P-f anxieties, the psychic retreat is conceived as a position that offers more or less temporary refuge from anxieties of all positions, thus also the PS-P-n's and the DP (Steiner, 1993, p. 25). The psychic retreat is an organization with the main task of relieving anxiety and giving the personality an equilibrium, which it does, however, in an often arbitrary, out-of-touch and cruel manner. This can be observed in certain "delusional systems" of especially psychotic psychic retreats, in which 'all is known' and the analysand often complies with extreme demands of a cruel internal 'mafia gang' (see Rosenfeld, 1971)¹²⁹. We can conceive a psychic retreat as a retreat from full aliveness, a defensive organization that tries to salvage the personality from overwhelming chaos, an attempt to "render a dynamic situation static as a way to avoid the pain inherent in the experience of change, transience, uncertainty, doubt, and complexity" (Bergstein, 2019, p. 10). While, theoretically speaking, this retreat can be expressed in plural ways, e.g. through 'pseudo-independence' and 'second-skin formations' (Bick, 1968), through an autistoid handling of the overwhelming over-exposure to disintegration of the PS-P-f (see the concept of 'autistic-contiguous position' by Ogden (1989)), through a shift of the personality towards -K, through 'as-if-ness' (Riesenberg-Malcolm) and so on, I believe that all these descriptions share enough common ground in order to be subsumed by the umbrella term of psychic retreat.

Concluding this brief excursion on psychic retreats, I want to end this chapter by turning our attention more sharply to developments of Post-Bionian-Field-Theory (PBFT or sometimes also referred as BFT and 'Pavia school'¹³⁰). Importantly, in PBFT the concept of PI gets widened¹³¹ into a concept of radical intersubjectivity, through an intermediary step provided

¹²⁹ Steiner (1993) has tellingly commented on the paradoxical observation that pathological organizations seem to give some major relieve to the analysand. Steiner stated that "[t]hose with experience of general psychiatry will recognize a striking example of this in the case of some patients who are admitted to hospital in a pre-psychotic state. It is possible to observe patients in a 'delusional mood', in which extreme anxiety is accompanied by depersonalization and feelings of ill-defined dread, who may actually appear relieved as the diffuse dread gives way to fixed systematized delusions. Some patients, in fact, visibly calm down and cheer up, as the anxiety and persecution become restricted to the area of the delusional system under the control of a psychotic organization" (Steiner, 1993, p. 30).

¹³⁰ Some of the main contributors to PBFT (as expressed by the 'Pavia School') have been Antonino Ferro, Giuseppe Civitarese, Elena Molinari, Pierluigi Politi, Giovanni Foresti, Mauro Manica, Maurizio Collová, Fulvio Mazzacane, Roberto Basile, and Claudio Neri.

¹³¹ Stolorow, Atwood & Orange (1998, pp. 720-721) point out that one of the major weaknesses of projective identification is that it portrays "a unidirectional influence system in which it is the patient, primarily, who creates the analyst's experience [...], [which] does violence to the nature of the analytic relationship as a dynamic

by the idea of an 'analytic third' (Ogden, 1994, 1999, 2004) and the ideas of 'bi-personal fields' and 'bastions' (Baranger & Baranger, 1983, 2008). Ogden and the Barangers already substantially conceptualised the co-creation of material by the analytic couple, which the field metaphor then extends and broadens.

I want us to change our perspective on what is happening in the above illustrations. Are these intrapsychic illustrations? I already pointed out that the concept of container/contained introduces an interpersonal understanding into the illustrations. But what, if we think of these illustrations as intersubjective fields? What would that entail? Overall, I want to articulate the argument that they can be seen as both: illustrations of what happens structurally within a single psyche and illustrations of what happens between subjects, on an intersubjective plane. A dual perspective emerges, in which one perspective can be emphasized, then shifted, integrated with the other, all according to what the specific clinical situation demands of our imagination.

Before returning to this argument, let me first introduce the notion of intersubjective fields. The figure of the analyst and his involvement in the creation of the relationship with the analysand are tendentially becoming more and more important within psychoanalytic theorising (Ferreira, Almeida & Civitarese, 2021, pp. 12-13). First, Freud focused on interpretations meant to uncover the analysand's unconscious. Shortly after, Freud recognized that an approach in which an interpretation was meant to pass down the mere information about one's alleged unconscious motivation was not enough and that, indeed, such an approach could be experienced as alienating and evocatory of resistances. Hence, Freud started to stress the importance of transference to the analyst and the idea of cure by means of working through of the transference neurosis. As Freud (1912, p. 108) famously stated, "[f]or when all is said and done, it is impossible to destroy anyone in absentia or in effigie", meaning that a re-actualization of the experience is necessary in the here-and-now of the transference in order to aspire at a cure. Whereas with Freud the transference was still seen mainly as a whole-object transference of past to present, Klein's splitting, PI and introjective identification were then introduced as new concepts that helped the analyst to illuminate the transference in its more particular and partial elements. With Heimann (1950)

system." PBFT comes into play as a remedy to this weakness, since it gets rid both of the unidirectionality as well as of the logic of 'doer and done to' (Benjamin, 2014).

the countertransference of the analyst to the analysand started to play a major role, which started to integrate Kleinian concepts also within a more interpersonal perspective, meaning that the analyst's emotional responses were seen as a crucial part of the analyst's access to the analysand's projections. With Bion (1959, 1962a, 1962b) this tendency caught on and accelerated, since PI started to become more and more conceptualised as communicative, emphasising the analyst's need to be receptive instead of obstructive of these communications and leading to his theory of container/contained. Then we have Winnicott, who said that "[t]here is no such thing as a baby [without a caregiver]. [...] A baby cannot exist alone, but is essentially part of a relationship" (Winnicott, 1964, p. 88). This statement is profound. It does not only affirm that infants are vitally dependent upon their caregivers but, moreover, implies that the couple of baby-caregiver forms an inseparable unity, indeed, one could say an intersubjective field. More recently, the concept of 'enactment' (Jacobs, 1986) has become influential, in which the analyst essentially acknowledges that s/he has not only countertransference emotional reactions to the analysand but that, indeed, s/he is being unconsciously persuaded to play along, as if s/he were "*trapped in a game*" with the analysand, "*the meaning of which [s/he] will discover eventually, if and when [s/he] 'wakes up' from it*" (Ferreira, Almeida & Civitarese, 2021, p. 13). 'Waking up', then, is conceptualised as a sudden realization of the analyst or the analytic couple of what they were actually doing all along and how this, ultimately, reflects onto the analysand's history and life. In this manner, the enactment is used in order to reconstruct the analysand's past: "[i]t is like a time machine [, in which the analyst has] *unconsciously acted in a play that was written by the [analysand, being] just an actor in the rehearsal of an episode from someone else's past life*" (Ferreira, Almeida & Civitarese, 2021, p. 13). There is much literature on enactments and this concept is not used in one and the same manner by all theoreticians, but conventionally the theory of enactment links to reconstruction of relational dynamics of the analysand's past. Following our red thread through psychoanalytic theorising, then, there was a proliferation of concepts related to thirdness. The Barangers (1983, 2006) conceptualised a 'bipersonal analytic field', in which the analyst and analysand jointly form a new psychic structure that then nudges them to play out a certain role. Most notoriously, the Barangers (1983) invented the concept of 'bastions' which are to be understood as jointly created blind zones that have to be recognized and interpreted by the analyst in order to avoid a commonly created impasse and, instead, progress in the analysis. With this concept of 'bastions' the theory of psychic

retreats shifts into an intersubjective realm, since ‘bastions’ are understood to form an impasse and withdrawals from aliveness and growth by means of co-creation of analyst and analysand. Thus, the chronic blind spots and the impasse are a sort of “*resistance à deux*” (Foresti, 2017, p. 103) and not merely the outcome of a pathological organization of the analysand’s personality¹³². Ogden (1994/2013, 1999, 2004) developed the concept of the ‘analytic third’, which refers to an intersubjective unconscious area, jointly generated by the analytic pair. This area, which represents a third area of potential experience within a session next to the experience of the analyst and analysand respectively, is conceptualised as unconscious, but can be brought into consciousness by the work of the analytic couple. Benjamin (2014) develops Ogden’s ‘analytic third’ in her conceptualizations of thirdness. Influenced by Winnicott but also feminism, Hegel and critical theory, she continues to see thirdness as a co-created intersubjective space, but links the concept more strongly to a dialectic interplay of ‘mutual recognition’ between two subjectivities. There have been multiple other developments surrounding the idea of thirdness. Ultimately, PBFT is a theory and praxis, which radicalises the mentioned theories and extends them in space and time¹³³. According to PBFT, there is always a field that unconsciously embeds subjects that are in proximity with one another (or as Civitarese (2019, p. 771) states: “*c’è sempre campo*” – there is always field). PBFT gives up on the interpretative quest of distinguishing what belongs to which participant in the analytic setting and understands everything that happens within an analytic session as the outgrowth of the field itself. This essentially changes technique in fundamental aspects. The field creates novel emergent properties, a type of “dynamic

¹³² Mazzacane (2017, p. 240) comments that according to the Barangers “[t]he extreme form of the bastion is the pathology of the field, which comes to resemble parasitism. The analyst feels inhabited by the analysand, his anguish extends beyond the session, creating potentially lethal micro-psychoses of the analytic field. According to the Barangers, not all analytic fields reach these pathological extremes, but they all tend to create bastions. It is a concept they regard as similar to the transference neurosis, albeit within a bi-personal perspective; it is a pathology of the field and not of the patient. At any rate, it is a phenomenon connected to the repetition compulsion and the death drive.”

¹³³ Civitarese (2020, p. 28) argues that PBFT can be understood as more radically intersubjective than previous theories and technical concepts, since: “[it] does not limit the plane on which an event can be seen as intersubjective, symmetrical, co-generated or co-constructed to a circumscribed sphere of the relationship – outside of which, in the session, a (naively) realistic view of things continues to exist. Instead, as a postulate, it rigorously considers that virtually anything can be interpreted from the perspective of an unconscious event in the field, and not only that which is attributable to a split-off aspect of the patient’s personality [as in theories that highlight the communicative aspects of PI]. [...] [For] example: a patient tells me about a traumatic episode from his childhood, and this already tells me a lot about him and his personality. But, by adding on another lens, I parenthesize this information, as it were (or put in the background), and treat it as if it were a dream narrative that we are having together in real time. Why do I do this? Because then it is easier for me to intuit the emotional experience that the story expresses and go on to bring it back into the analytic field.”

Gestalt”, an unconscious layer of intersubjectivity that pre-reflectively envelops the participants and *“cannot be reduced to the elements that are part of it if taken individually”* (Civitarese, 2021, p. 876). PBFT theorises that the analytic couple is already a group, a group of two actual persons but with dozens of characters (see Civitarese’s, 2021b). This affluence of characters is not simply the aggregation of the analyst’s and the analysand’s internal objects. When two persons meet, they form a group-area, in which plenty of characters can be born within the narrative of their encounter and hence form the characters of their specific group. PBFT assumes that the characters that emerge during a session neither have to represent an internal character of the analyst nor of the analysand but are jointly created characters of the field. For example, this concretely means that the overbearing, older cousin that suddenly makes an appearance in the session’s narrative could reflect the turbulences experienced together in the here-and-now of the field, e.g., when the analyst interpreted in a possibly too authoritarian manner. It is clear from this example that the cousin is not simply conceptualised as an internal character of the analysand nor as the real cousin, but rather as the outgrowth of the previous interaction of the analytic couple. More specifically, according to Ferro’s theory of ‘casting’¹³⁴ (see Ferro, 2009), whenever a character makes an appearance in a session, this is a moment of utmost importance since there is a *“constant process of casting”* in which a character makes an entry into the session in order *“to say something that is urgent in the current relationship or in the field”* (Ferro, 2017, 140). The session is understood as a dream jointly dreamt by the analyst and analysand. Building on the analogy of dreamwork and movies, we could say that within a session the entire script (narrative derivatives of the session), the actors (characters that are being ‘casted’), the locations (moods and atmospheres of the session), etc. are jointly created, regardless of who introduces the elements. Everything is potentially informative of an underlying, unconscious intersubjective area¹³⁵, making the analysis an interpenetrative and “immersive” experience (see Civitarese, 2008). Ferro (2017, p. 118) compares the emerging theory and praxis with other typically

¹³⁴ For Ferro (2009, p. 90) casting is *“the ongoing activity of the state of waking dream thought (on the part of both analyst and patient) involving the finding of characters, [...] allowing them to be embodied on the emotional level [...]”*.

¹³⁵ Civitarese (2021, p. 864) gives a visual image that can serve as a metaphor for this underlying intersubjective layer or area. He writes: *“A useful image that might help us understand the nature of this “substrate” or “unity” is that of communicating vessels. The common channel that forms their base would stand for intersubjectivity, the parts that detach themselves from it would stand as separate elements for the subjects. It would be clear that there is no break between the various elements”* (Civitarese, 2021, p. 864).

psychoanalytic endeavours, namely models that primarily attempt to reconstruct the past and models that primarily attempt to illuminate the analysand's internal psychic reality:

"By giving a central role to [an intersubjective understanding of] 'waking dream thought' we can embrace the concept of 'analytic field', understood as that space-time in which all the narrative derivatives we referred to come to life and develop. Whereas in the reconstructionist model characters are regarded as historical and real, and in the model that examines the inside world the characters – internal objects – encapsulate and summarize the patient's emotional story and his relations with his caregivers and their qualities or failings, in this model the characters are 'affective holograms of the functioning of the couple'; in other words, what comes out after the characters have been deconstructed, deconcretized and re-dreamed."
(Ferro, 2017, p. 118)

The casting of characters in the field follows the logic of representing an affective hologram of the analytic couple's functioning. At its most radical, post-Bionian field theory postulates that everything that happens within a session is a co-created dream, no matter who says, does or feels what. This dream can be interpreted in a group-frame-of-mind, thus addressing what 'we' are doing or what is happening between 'us', which is a way to go beyond the subject-object distinction and doer-and-done-to mindset¹³⁶. Technical concepts like countertransference, PI, and enactment are seen as obsolete, insofar they fail to fully take into account for this groupality and radical intersubjectivity.

¹³⁶ Civitarese (2021b, p. 1089) puts it as follows: "[Acknowledging] the common (intersubjective or third) unconscious, I move beyond the split between you and I. I trust what you-and-I (together) feel because it is what we feel, I take it to be true for us, as it is already the result of an intersubjective negotiation within the couple. I consider it as the best we have been able to do as authors, actors and dramatists in the improvised drama that each time is a session." In yet another paper, Civitarese (2021, pp. 876-877) puts it a bit differently: "Over time I have grown more and more convinced that what is so easy to observe in groups, that is, their functioning as a whole or a mass driven by a shared, pervasive emotional state becomes difficult — who knows why? — for us to observe in a group of two. [...] [T]he first step would be for the analyst to postulate not that 'A. is afraid' or 'I am afraid', so much as the impersonal 'there is fear'. In this way, using a device for psychoanalytic observation in groups, the analyst runs less risk of falling back into an objective perspective and using predetermined causal theories."

In his paper *“Intersubjectivity and Analytic Field Theory”*, Civitarese (2021) tries to give a more philosophical foundation to PBFT, which otherwise has a strongly clinical connotation. Connecting his theory with Husserl’s and Merleau-Ponty’s ideas, Civitarese (2021) states that there is no binary opposition between subjectivity and intersubjectivity but, rather, a dialectical relationship, *“a relationship of co-extensiveness and codetermination [in which their] intertwining cannot be undone”* (Civitarese, 2021, p. 861). There is a dialectical interdependence between subject and intersubjectivity or context, between self/ego and other/Other. There is a very primary layer of intersubjectivity and intercorporeality, out of which subjects develop from, without ever fully cutting off their dialectic tension to and embeddedness within this layer of being. Strictly speaking, however, it would be wrong to state that the subject emerges from an intersubjective primary layer, because *“[...] there can be no intersubjectivity without subjects, so there can be no pre-intersubjectivity without pre-subjects”* (Civitarese, 2021, p. 862). Instead, the *“transcendental intersubjectivity lies precisely in this ‘interweaving’ or ‘reversibility’ of the ego and o/Other, a latent us”* (Civitarese, 2021, p. 863)¹³⁷. Civitarese (2021) argues that this pre-reflective and pre-personal intersubjective layer provides a form of intersensoriality and intercorporeality, in which subject and object are not yet differentiated from each other¹³⁸. There is a layer of intercorporeality and intersubjectivity in which subject and object are so enmeshed and in synchrony that they appear as one system. Civitarese (2021, p. 860) uses a placental metaphor in order to visualize this intersubjective area:

“The ‘inter-ness’ of the word ‘intersubjectivity’ is spontaneously understood as an empty space. We do not picture it as a whole or space ‘filled’ with what Merleau-Ponty (1964) calls the ‘flesh’. [...] Like

¹³⁷ In a sense, as we will see, I argue for exactly the same dialectical tension, when I will argue to read the above illustrations both as illustrative of a subject as well as of an intersubjective field.

¹³⁸ Civitarese (2021) leans heavily on Merleau-Ponty in his argumentation. Civitarese (2021, p. 865) states: *“Merleau-Ponty took research on the subject of intersubjectivity to its extreme consequences. To outline the same ‘thing,’ the being-situated or incarnation of the subject in a field or perceptual system already always endowed with meaning and directionality, he interprets the Husserlian concept of Ineinandersein, the relationship of co-implication between subjects (being the one-inside-the-other) as the indispensable intersubjective folding of subjectivity. [...] [H]e coins the terms ‘transcendental field,’ ‘system self-others-world’ (Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. 69), ‘intersensory system’ (p. 137), and ‘intersensory world’ (p. 261). In Signs (Merleau-Ponty 1960), then, he significantly asserts that every perception is but a ‘co-perception’ (p. 72). Later, in The Visible and the Invisible (1964), he speaks of ‘intercorporeity’ and ‘interanimality’ (p. 172), ‘chiasm,’ ‘intertwining’ (p. 117), and ‘intersubjective diacritical system which is the spoken tongue (la langue) in the present’ (p. 175).”* I will not review the philosophical foundations of PBFT in any debt.

powerful magnets, the two or more subjects involved in the word 'intersubjectivity' attract the prefix 'inter' to themselves and obliterate it in its meaning of 'third' or, perhaps more correctly, 'medium'. Perhaps only a metaphor can make this invisible area conceptually 'visible' to us. For example, compare it with the placenta, especially the part called the 'intervillous space.' The concrete interface that connects mother and fetus before birth is a true area of indistinction. The image tells us that the mobile elements are one thing and the fixed channels through which they pass are another; yet depending on how we change our perspective, they appear to us as one thing or two separate things. Then at birth another and much less 'visible' placenta will take over, this time made up of rhythms and sensations. Later, like a nested Russian doll, it is itself destined to welcome the 'placenta' of language. What the metaphor of the placenta does not say is that this latter is a living device that simultaneously connects all the members of a community."

Given the use of a placental metaphor and the emphasis on 'medium', it is not difficult to find a connection between Civitarese's (2021) conceptualization and Thomas Macho's (1993) work on nobjects as well as Peter Sloterdijk's (1998, 1999, 2004) elaboration of this concept in his 'Spheres trilogy'¹³⁹. The concept of 'nobject' was proposed by Macho (1993) as a corrective to fundamentally misguided psychoanalytic theorisations of the earliest infant-mother-relationship, which postulate a subject-object differentiation from the start (Slunecko, 2012). We encountered such theorisations in this thesis. Indeed, some of British object-relation theory and indeed also Kleinian theory, falls within Macho's field of critique¹⁴⁰. These theories, which were actually born out of the psychoanalytic encounter with severe psychosis as well as with infants and children, seem to deeply misrecognize the very modes of experience which are inherent to infancy or, indeed, severe psychosis. Sloterdijk (2011, p. 291) extends Macho's critique of psychoanalytic theorising and states that psychoanalysis "*stopped halfway in its penetration of the intersubjective world of closeness, both in its*

¹³⁹ Especially, the first book "Sphären, Band 1: Blasen" (Sloterdijk, 1998) is a relevant elaboration of the concept of nobject.

¹⁴⁰ Even though the critique is explicitly directed to a more classical, Freudian psychoanalysis.

therapeutic arrangement and its conceptual instruments". For Sloterdijk, Macho was able to radically critique psychoanalysis in its *"fundamental construction error [...] with reference to archaic and prenatal mother-child relationships"* (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 292), which led to a deformation in terms of a *"fixation on thinking in object relationships [which] is responsible for the almost grotesque misunderstanding of [foetal] and infantile modes of reality"* (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 293). Sloterdijk sees some hope for future psychoanalytic theorising, as he states that an *"elaborated theory of psychosomatic mediality could, one day, be capable of representing the intimate webs of the earliest dyads in a correspondingly finely woven language of reciprocal solubility and suspension in a bipolar ether of relationships"* (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 293). Hence, the argument goes, medial analyses and medial formulations could have a chance at portraying the modes of experience and being inherent to pre-natality, early infancy and severe psychosis¹⁴¹. Sloterdijk (2011, p. 294) introduces the concept of 'nobjects' by Macho as a potential candidate within a language cautious towards medial formulations. Here, Sloterdijk also uses a placental metaphor and describes the blood, which flows 'between' mother/foetus, as a nobject¹⁴². Sloterdijk (2011, p. 294) puts it as follows:

"A foretaste of what will later be called reality presents itself in the form of an intermediate fluidal realm that lies embedded in a dark, spheric spatial factor softly cushioned within firmer boundaries. If there were already early 'objects' in this field, their state could only ever be that of object shadows or things of emergence [...]. Possible candidates for such object shadows are primarily the umbilical cord – which may be sensed by touch early on – and the placenta, which, like a nurturing primal companion to the [foetus], has an early diffuse presence as the harbinger of a first counterpart. [...] Objects that, like those we have named, are not objects because they have no subject-like counterpart, are referred to by Macho as 'nobjects': they are spherically surrounding mini-conditions¹⁴³ envisaged by a non-facing

¹⁴¹ I have to admit that it remains unclear to me what these medial analyses and formulations could look like.

¹⁴² Sloterdijk (2011) mentions other example that can paradigmatically be seen as nobjective: the sound that envelops us, our breath, etc.

¹⁴³ In German it reads *"Mit-Gegebenheiten"* (Sloterdijk, 1998, p. 300). I point this out since Wieland Hoban's translation into English as *"mini-conditions"* seems unconventional. More literally, it translates as *"spherically surrounding co-givens [or with-givens and together-givens]"*.

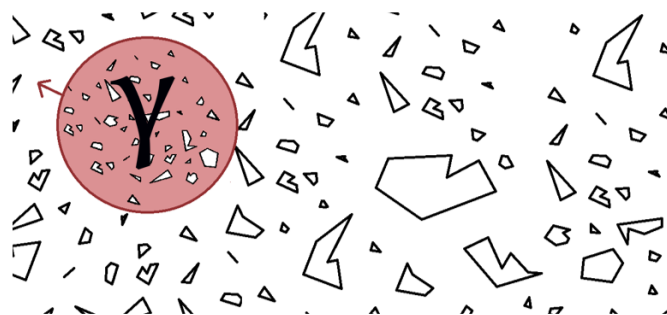
self, namely the [foetal] pre-subject, in the mode of non-confrontational presence as original creatures of closeness in the literal sense. Their being-close-to-here (which is precisely not yet a demonstrable being-there) communicates itself to the child most of all with its first gift, the placental blood."

Placental blood can be regarded as the very first nobject. The foetus lives in a "*modus vivendi* [that] *can be described as a fluidal communion in the medium of blood*" (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 295). With the example of placental blood, it is clear that a subject-object differentiation, exemplified by the question 'whose blood is it?', makes no sense. As time goes on, nobjects are not anymore only the placental blood. Sloterdijk talks of nobjective envelopes like 'being-in-music' within the 'uterine sound world' (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 296) and, even later, once air is introduced to the newborn child, which inaugurates the start of the 'respiratory phase' of life, a 'breathing-in-air' (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 297). Nobjects are all these 'things', which are somewhat borderless and seemingly dimensionless and yet they envelop, carry, hold, nourish, and sustain. Much like the air around us, nobjects embed us and yet they never really become objects for our perception¹⁴⁴. Thus, nobject is a concept that could be used to describe elements within Civitarese's (2021) intersubjective third area, an area in which subject and object are not yet differentiated and indeed in which the analyst encounters the analysand not in terms of an opposing subjectivity but in terms of a 'surrounding-enveloping being' and a 'being-with' (see Slunecko, 2012). There is an interpenetrative immersion, in which the generated field acquires a mediality of its own. From this mediality, which could be described in terms of a joint mood, an atmosphere, a background presence, etc., co-created thoughts have to emerge, thoughts that cannot claim singular authorship.

Let me now return to my previous argument that the above illustrations can represent intersubjective fields. Corrao (1981) was the first to propose a γ -function (gamma-function) in order to account for a jointly-created- α -function of an analytic group. He believed that group thinking cannot be reduced to the contributions of agglomerated, singular α -functions. Hence, he coined γ -function as the group-analogue of the individual's α -function. Ferro and

¹⁴⁴ Sloterdijk (2011, p. 298) writes: "*The air, as experienced in the child's first encounter with it, possesses unmistakable nobject properties, as it affords the incipient subject a first chance at self-activity in respiratory autonomy, but without ever appearing as a thing with which to have a relationship.*"

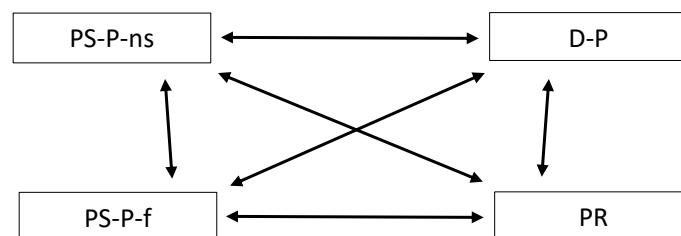
Civitarese (2022, pp. 7-8) refer to γ -function as a more appropriate concept to refer to the thinking capacity of the analytic couple, to co-construct dreams, narrations, metaphors and myths. In this sense, as hinted in a previous subchapter, we can understand the β -elements and $\beta\alpha\alpha$ -elements, which proliferate especially in the PS-P-f, as nobjects that are elements of a common, archaic intersubjective field. These β -elements and $\beta\alpha\alpha$ -elements are nobjects both because, as argued in a previous subchapter, they are too 'small' or too fragmented to be even perceptible as partial 'some-things' but also, indeed, because they are neither of the subject nor of the object, they are archaic intersubjective thirds. From this point of view, our perspective on the illustrations of the PS-P-f, including the 'attempts' to exit the PS-P-f, changes. Whereas before we spoke of α -function and container/contained function as attempts of the analysand's personality or the analyst's auxiliary capacities, we can now suggest that there is a γ -function of the field, which attempts to create sufficient containment in order to exit the PS-P-f, which could also be described as an atmosphere of complete non-sensical dread within a session. This applies also to failures of γ -function, as the illustration of a hyper-contained (Ferro, 2004, p. 35) can now be extended to the creation of a field-*'betaloma'* (Ferro, 1993). As Mazzacane (2017, p. 241) states, the concept of *betaloma* corresponds to a "[...] conglomerate of beta elements that take shape in the field, formed from the conjunction of aspects that arise from what each of the two parties in the analytic couple introduce unprocessed into the analytic field [...]".



While in this case, we would need to say that it is the insufficient or absent γ -function, which is not able to contain the storms of β -elements and $\beta\alpha\alpha$ -elements and thus is responsible for the creation of a *'betaloma'* within the field, most other illustrated structures are determined

by the presence of γ -function and thus the creation of a specific intersubjective container/contained constellation.

We can apply this field-interplay logic not only to the attempts at exiting the PS-P-f but also to the interplay of positions (PS-P-f, PS-P-ns, PR, D-P) in general. The PS-P-f is a field that is on the brink of unthinkability and is enveloped in a sense of dread. The 'psychic retreat', similar to the concept of 'bastion' by the Barangers, is thus conceptualized as a common stuck-ness, an impasse of the field (see also Ferro, 2002). The PS-P-ns would be a field with strong polarities, a field that operates on creating strong feelings of hatred and love. The D-P would be a field that allows for the experience of loss, longing, desiring and hope.



I will not comment on all the various field-interplays that can be generated from this new perspective. That is a potential task for the future. For the moment, I just want to emphasize the idea that adopting a perspective on field-interplays does not substitute another perspective, in which we understand the above illustration as phantasy-interplays within a personality. I believe that the former and the latter perspectives can stand in a dialectical tension and that they can be mutually enriching.

Finally, I want to conclude this thesis by giving a quick overview of what was accomplished within it. The thesis begins with an in-depth review of Klein's ideas on projective identification and, to a lesser degree, splitting. I review Melanie Klein's major writings concerning these concepts. In so doing, I emphasised her later works and how the concepts relate to her work on the paranoid-schizoid position (PS-P) and the depressive position (D-P). I discuss (i) how projective identification is not solely associated with the PS-P but also to the D-P within Klein's writings, (ii) how projective identification can also be understood as an acquisitive process, and (iii) how it, and its counterpart of introjective identification, can be seen as intimately linked to envy and greed. Thus, I show how these concepts are embedded within Klein's very

distinct metapsychology. I also review Klein's peculiar stance towards the clinical concept of countertransference, a stance that did not age particularly well within the (Post-)Kleinian tradition. In Chapter 3, I review Hanna Segal's seminal paper on the analysis of a schizophrenic (Edward) and how it demonstrated the mechanisms of splitting and projective identification that are central to Kleinian theory. I emphasize the groundbreaking nature of Kleinian work when it comes to the psychoanalyses of psychotic analysands. Many of Segal's ideas, which are mentioned in her clinical case of Edward, are relevant to this day (even though they should be critically questioned). For example, Segal's arguments on why the analyst should never attempt to reassure the analysand and remain at all times in an interpretative position are still an interesting read. I would claim that these arguments are still routinely encountered by training candidates and are thus still of utmost relevance for current discussion. I also acknowledge my impression that Segal's paper has some disturbing elements. This is the case, especially towards the end of that paper, namely in Segal's odd attempts (in my impression) to give a detailed reconstruction of why she believes that Edward developed a buzz in his ear.

I then broadened my focus beyond splitting and projective identification to a Post-Kleinian model of positional interplays. Based on John Steiner's work, I propose an equilibrium model with four poles. This model helps elucidate the interplay between different positions or structures of experience within a personality. A structure of experience can be understood as the creation of phantasy webs within a personality that function according to specific principles. Two poles of the model (namely the PS-P-ns and PS-P-f) are then finely described, along with their interactions with the other poles on the equilibrium model (namely the D-P and psychic retreats). A central argument of this thesis is that the PS-P is not to be understood as one position but instead as two. There is a clear conceptual difference between the PS-P-ns, which is based on dual, vertical splits, and the PS-P-f, which is based on more minute fragmentary processes. I argue that Bion's usage of the term PS is co-extensive with the PS-P-f and that it does not coincide with what most Kleinians refer to as PS. Therefore, introducing the terms 'PS-P-ns' and 'PS-P-f' as separate structures of experience helps us avoid conceptual confusion. I outline the main differences between the PS-P-ns and the PS-P-f by integrating significant chunks of Post-Kleinian and Bionian literature.

Lastly, I discuss shifts within psychoanalysis that were inaugurated by Bion and later further developed by Post-Bionian-Field-Theory. I address Bion's interpersonal understanding of

projective identification and his intersubjective understanding of the container/contained relation. I review (Post-)Bionian ideas on the concept of intersubjectivity and suggest that the equilibrium model mentioned in the previous subchapter can also be used to portray structural and functional aspects of the analyst-analysand relationship. This means that the equilibrium model lends itself to describe both intrasubjective interplays between structures of experience within a personality and intersubjective interplays between different modes of relating of the analyst-analysand couple. I argue that both perspectives can be fruitfully adopted according to the situational needs of a given clinician, supervisor or theoretician. Overall, the flow of the thesis reflects a red thread that runs through the history of psychoanalytic thought, namely, a thread that goes from a one-person psychology to an increasingly more intersubjective outlook of the analytic situation.

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