



On the Edge of Analyzability: Exploring Unrepresented and Primitive Mental States

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Not infrequently we encounter in our consulting rooms seemingly high functioning individuals with considerable intellectual capacity who nonetheless live a life split off from their emotional experience. If such a person is viewed as neurotic, the treatment never reaches the “psychotic part of the mind” that is silently exerting a stranglehold on one's capacity to be fully alive to feeling, reality, and time. Bion and Winnicott, each in his own way, led us beyond the realm of the neurotic into mental life left unmapped by Freud or Klein. It is the territory of primitive mental states, that which is not represented and cannot be repressed but nonetheless generates a diffuse anxiety. An emotional catastrophe (Bion) or unthinkable breakdown (Winnicott) has occurred. It is revealed in an individual's weakened capacity to represent and symbolize emotional experience, reliance on evacuation, erasure, and foreclosure as well as other direct forms of discharge and action (e.g. somatization, addiction) used to manage unbearable distress. Since this area of the mind is not embedded in language, it cannot be approached with our usual psychoanalytic tools. This seminar will introduce participants to psychoanalysts who show us how they reach someone residing at this edge of analyzability. Each class will be focused on a paper that either offers us a theoretical foothold or focuses on the analyst's internal setting. How do we recognize the imprint of unrepresented experience? What psychic work is required of us to enter into emotional turbulence and live an experience the patient cannot communicate in any other way? Throughout the seminar members are invited to share clinical anecdotes that come to mind. The last two classes will be an extended exploration of detailed clinical material, an opportunity for us to use the resources we have collected to explore the everyday manifestation of primitive mental states.

1. December 3, 2020: **The radical influence of Winnicott and Bion**

Learning Objective: At the conclusion of this session participants will be able to describe the revolutionary change in clinical psychoanalysis stimulated by Bion's concept of transformations in O and Winnicott's clinical-technical revision of analytic work that emphasized regression in the treatment of individuals who live with a fear of unthinkable breakdown.

Eshel, Ofra. (2017) From Extension to Revolutionary Change in Clinical Psychoanalysis: The Radical Influence of Bion and Winnicott. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 86: 753-793. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsl.org].

Recommended: **Ogden, T.** (2020) Toward a Revised Form of Analytic Thinking and Practice: The Evolution of Analytic Theory of Mind. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 89: 219-243. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsl.org].

2. December 10, 2020: **The Work of Esther Bick and Frances Tustin**

Learning Objective: At the conclusion of this session participants will be able to explain both Bick's concept of the function of skin in early object relations, including the nature of two-dimensionality, adhesive identification and second-skin formations as well as Tustin's concept of premature psychological birth, autistic shapes and objects and catastrophic anxieties such as falling, spilling and dissolving, and the black hole.

Bick, E. (1986) Further Considerations on the Function of the Skin in Early Object Relations: Findings from Infant Observation Integrated into Child and Adult Analysis. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 2:292-299. [PEP Web Link](#).

Tustin, F. (1986) Falling (chapter 11 in *Autistic Barriers in Neurotic Patients*), 183-196. London: Karnac. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsl.org].

3. December 17, 2020. **Anne Alvarez: Finding the Wavelength**

Learning Objective: At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to identify which level of analytic work might reach a particular patient: the explanatory level of offering alternative meanings; the descriptive level of ascribing meaning; or the vitalizing work of insisting on meaning.

Alvarez, A. (2012) Levels of Therapeutic Work and Levels of Pathology: The Work of Calibration (chapter 1 in *The Thinking Heart: Three Levels of psychoanalytic Therapy with Disturbed Children*), 7-25. New York, Routledge. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsl.org].

4. January 7, 2021. **The Skin-Ego: the work of Didier Anzieu and Christine Anzieu-Premmereur**

Learning Objective: At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to specify the eight functions of the skin-ego and also identify when disturbances of skin-ego formation show up in clinical encounters with non-neurotic patients.

Anzieu-Premmereur, C. (2015) The Skin-Ego: Dyadic Sensuality, Trauma in Infancy, and Adult Narcissistic issues. *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 102(5): 659-681. [PEP Web Link](#).

Recommended: **Anzieu, D.** (2016) The Wrapping of Suffering (chapter 16 in *The Skin-Ego*), 225-236. London: Karnac. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsl.org].

5. January 14, 2021. **Riccardo Lombardi: Body-Mind Dissociation in Psychoanalysis**

Learning Objective: At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to characterize Lombardi's focus on body-mind dissociation (as distinguished from a psychiatric concept of trauma-induced dissociation) and explain his analytic stance and techniques for functioning as "midwife for a dialogue between the analysand's body and mind."

Lombardi, R. (2008) The Body in the Analytic Session: Focusing on the Body-Mind Link. *IJP*, 89(1): 89-109. [PEP Web Link](#).

Recommended: **Lombardi, R.** (2018) Entering One's Own Life as an Aim of Psycho-Analysis. *JAPA*, 66(5): 883-911. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsl.org].

6. January 28, 2021. **Avner Bergstein: Expeditions in Unmapped Mental Life**

Learning Objective: At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to identify Bion's concept of O and describe the psychic work required of the analyst to live with the patient the breakdown he has not been there to experience.

Bergstein, A. (2018) The Psychotic Part of the Personality: Bion's Expeditions into Unmapped Mental Life. *JAPA* 66(2): 193-220. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsl.org].

Recommended: **Bergstein, A.** (2016) Obsessionality: Modulating the Encounter with Emotional Truth and the Aesthetic Object. *JAPA* 64(5): 959-982. [PEP Web Link](#).

7. February 4, 2021. **Rachel Peltz: What is Deep? Registering the Immediacy of What Is Taking Place Now**

Peltz, R. (2020) Activating Liveness in the Analytic Encounter: The Ground of Being in Psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 30(3): 267-282. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from library@bpsi.org].

Following a discussion of this paper, we will explore detailed clinical material from one of the members of the seminar.

8. February 18, 2021. **Thinking and feeling together about detailed clinical work at the edge of analyzability**

In this final class we will explore clinical material shared by seminar members or myself using all the resources we have collected over the course of the last three months.