

**IN SESSION, ON THE THREAD
OF AFFECT AND EMOTION**
Contemporary Approaches

Edited by

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Introduction

Béatrice Ithier

Contemporary psychoanalytical thought has revolutionised twentieth-century psychoanalysis by placing emotion at the heart of the analytic process. It is the unfolding of this revolution that this book would like to witness, with contributions from authors from different countries (France, Italy, Portugal, Brazil, United States, United Kingdom) particularly representative of this new metapsychology of links. The transformations of contemporary psychoanalysis are indeed considerable; they result in particular from this articulation of the drives with the links of which Wilfred R. Bion speaks to us, and which considerably reduce the economic hegemony of the drives of Freudian metapsychology. The taking into account of the originary is not without importance in this revolution which continues in particular with the post-Bionian field. We wished, around this work on affect and emotion, to question this new metapsychology, to unfold its different articulations while being accompanied by clinical immersion.

Our initial question concerns Freudian metapsychology: René Roussillon recalls the main “lineaments” of the theory of emotion and affect, specifying the different destinies of the latter. If sensoriality is composed, according to Sigmund Freud, of motor sensations and sensations from the senses, affect, whose somatic source he affirmed,

only finds its form in the encounter with the object. However, André Green (1973) reminded us that, for Freud, affect is an integral part of a system of phylogenetic memory traces, but that it is distributed in primary individual particularities. Under these conditions, the first emotional expressions of psychic life constitute sensory impressions already produced under the action of the object, even in life in utero.

Still according to this model, the perceptual cannot be referred to as the simple passive recording of a sensory content but results from a work in connection with the drive and the affect that leads it to the representation, either of things of a non-verbal nature, generally visual, associated with the things in question or their traces, or of words, which designates its taking up by the language apparatus. Freud, in fact, opposes affect to representation, but he does not neglect its possible link to trauma, because of its articulation to the object. César Botella and Sára Botella (1995) considered that Freud referred unconscious psychic activity to the modalities of animal thought, according to which representation, perception, and motricity are not differentiated: their presence is always active in the session. The formal regression that they theorised in the 1990s allows access to this deep world through an identity of perception in which the sharing of affect constitutes the main data. Deploying the different transformations of affect, André Green has characterised, for example, the emotions in affect as perceptions of internal movements and sensations of pleasure/unpleasure which give them their specificity.

To conclude this reminder, in Chapter VI of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud gave the affect of the dream the same importance as the affect experienced in the waking state. He added that it is much more by its content of affect than by its content of representation that “the dream can claim to be welcomed among the true experiences of our soul” (Freud, 1900a, p. 509). In France, this remark seems to have found little echo for many years, Freudian metapsychology remaining closely linked to the role played by the drives, the motors of their relational consequences.

Insisting against the postulated pseudo-equivalence between affect, sensoriality, feelings, and sentiments, Bion underlined the inadequacy of verbal description, as Howard B. Levine reminds us, by defining a metapsychology where O—thing-in-itself or noumenon—is not unknown but unknowable. It can only be subsumed and we only know its derivatives. Emotion, under these conditions, could be defined as a definitive form of the derivatives of affect rooted in the body, and affect

then, perhaps still non-psychic, would be the starting point of a transformational development that ends with the creation of an emotion or feeling.

We know that contemporary psychoanalysis has considerably developed a bare aspect of affect in the confrontation with the unrepresentable, in the instrument of the analyst's reverie, extended into the hallucinatory which can house, in particular, in my opinion, the chimera. This change of vertex presupposes an apprehension of the Bionian model that it seems important to me to make explicit, characterised by a refusal of conscious declarative memory in favour of an implicit memory, this model being crossed by different caesuras and leading, in the name of the emotional invariant of the analytic couple, to the statement of the Bionian metatheory qualifiable in the ontology of the emotion.

This opens up two avenues. The first is that of the aesthetics of validation in the analytical field, which associates truth with the aesthetic dimension of psychoanalysis. This conception, particularly representative of the South American Bionian approaches of Bion and Meltzer, was presented by Roosevelt Cassorla and then deepened by Ruggero Levy. The second is that of intersubjectivity, that "world of us" of which Sara Boffito and Giuseppe Civitarese speak. Here we see the elements of a shared lexicon, woven into the characters of the post-Bionian field—as thought by Antonino Ferro and Roberto Basile (2009) and then by Antonino Ferro and Giuseppe Civitarese (2015)—in which the modification of the shared medium rather than the direct investment in the other brings an expansion of the classical Bionian paradigms that our authors report.

It is not possible to omit the defensive issues of either protagonist of the analytic couple. After pointing out that Melanie Klein, when she speaks of "memories in feelings", translates the impact of preverbal emotions and fantasies related to archaic mortifying experiences in the analytic situation, Maria Teresa Flores questions the value of the container for these most primitive anxieties, emotions, and fantasies. This approach is developed in Lesley Caldwell's questioning of the analyst's strong somatic and emotional response to the patient. The patient may confront the analyst with a function of language articulated to emotional states—a real challenge for the analyst—in which, for example, words may also become vectors of discharge and action, of "enactment", a kind of external marker of an act of figurability through which what is not represented may acquire an ideational form.

Bion (1970, p. 118) considered that: “What takes place in the consulting room is an affective situation.” Mauro Manica and Maria Grazia Oldoini, in their deployment of O, note the shift that took place with Melanie Klein—from the management of the economy of drives to the understanding of emotions and anxieties, confirmed by Bion in his theory of early bonds through an interrelational approach of the two members of the analytic couple. We can see how Bion operated a radical transformation of Freudian metapsychology, the mind becoming a living fabric making the emotional the expressive support for the emergence of affect, which unfolds in “unison” or “at-one-ment”. This concept designates a state of union between the two members of the analytic couple, which one of Bion’s meanings of O will transmute into the emotional truth of the couple in session. These different approaches provide a constellation of instruments for dreaming or thinking.

It is interesting to see the approaches of these contemporary foreign authors confront each other. However, if they approach affect and emotion according to their own cultural specificities and creativity, they all emphasise not only the shared affect but also the emotional presence between the two protagonists, even its transcendent impact, giving access in one way or another to the deepest affective sediments.

Translated from French by Andrew Weller

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