The reason I like these two concepts and believe they are important is because they enhance the new aesthetic perspective that psychoanalysis has begun to acquire since the post-Kleinian model of the mind, by which I mean the theories of Bion and Meltzer. Both these concepts in fact have ancient roots in poetic philosophy, going back to the time of Plato and Aristotle, and since then they have often been vividly pictured in narrative and metaphor by the poets, for whom they lie at the heart of poetic inspiration. I have given some examples of these poetic metaphors in my book on The Aesthetic Development, in the chapter which has been circulated today. For very many years – indeed, since my own adolescence – I have been interested in the links between psychoanalysis and aesthetics (through both visual arts and literature); and these concepts make such links realistic without being reductive to either discipline – psychoanalysis or the arts. It is possible to see their common ground, without either trying to dominate and explain the other.

Having said that, the concepts do not demand any essential changes in psychoanalytic practice, or in our appreciation of the arts. The psychoanalytic method exists and is practiced; and so are artistic methods. It is well known that psychoanalytic theory trails behind the practice of the method (or at least, Meltzer is always emphasizing this); and similarly, artists are not very good at verbalizing what they do or even their feelings about it, and even poets are rarely interested in theories of poetry, though some of the really great poetic minds such as Keats, Coleridge, Shelley and Milton have also been great philosophers.

All the same, we do need theoretical concepts to help organise self-observation, which is key to all these disciplines – the type of “psychic distance” that (as the philosopher Susanne Langer says) “makes emotions conceivable”. As Meltzer says, theory and practice evolve in tandem: as a result of clinical observation the working model of the mind becomes more accurate and refined, and this in turn enables phenomena to become observable when they were not observable.

Il motivo per cui questi due concetti mi piacciono e per cui credo siano importanti è che essi rafforzano la nuova prospettiva estetica che la psicoanalisi ha cominciato ad acquisire partendo dal modello post-Kleiniano della mente, intendo dire delle teorie di Bion e Meltzer. Ambedue i concetti hanno radici antiche nella filosofia che si occupa di poetica, risalgono ai tempi di Platon e Aristotele, e sin da allora sono stati raffigurati intensamente nella narrativa e nelle metafore dai poeti, per i quali essi si trovano al cuore dell’ispirazione poetica. Ho mostrato alcuni casi esemplari di queste metafore poetiche nel mio libro Lo Sviluppo Estetico, nel capitolo che viene distribuito oggi. Da molti anni – in effetti, sin dalla mia adolescenza – mi sono interessata al legame tra la psicoanalisi e l’estetica (espressa sia nelle arti visive che nella letteratura); e questi concetti rendono tali legami realistici senza ridurli ad una delle discipline – alla psicoanalisi o alle arti. E’ possibile vedere il loro terreno comune senza tentare di dominare o spiegare una o l’altra.

Avendo fatto questa premessa, i concetti non richiedono alcun cambiamento essenziale nella pratica psicoanalitica, e neanche nel modo in cui apprezziamo l’arte. Il metodo psicoanalitico esiste e viene praticato, come pure i metodi artistici. Come è noto, la teoria psicoanalitica insegue la pratica del metodo (o almeno è questo che sottolinea sempre Meltzer); analogamente gli artisti non sono tanto bravi ad esprimere in parole quello che fanno e nemmeno quello che sentono riguardo alle loro opere, e perfino i poeti si interessano raramente alle teorie della poesia, sebbene alcune delle menti poetiche veramente grandi, come Keats, Coleridge, Shelley e Milton, fossero contemporaneamente grandi filosofi.

Comunque sia, abbiamo bisogno di concetti teorici che ci servano ad organizzare l’auto-osservazione, che è la chiave di tutte queste discipline- una specie di “distanza psichica” che (come osserva la filosofa Susanne Langer) “rende le emozioni concepibili”. Meltzer osserva che la teoria e la pratica si sviluppano in tandem: con l’aiuto dell’osservazione clinica il modello dell’operare della mente diventa più preciso e raffinato, e questo a sua volta consente ai fenomeni precedentemente non
Psychoanalysts attempt to help people whose development has become interfered with in some way – whether by internal or external causes does not matter too much, indeed can possibly never be known. Few analysts these days have much faith in the earlier medical analogy of “cure”; instead, I believe, they would view their activity as a type of art-science that restores the kind of contact between the patient and their internal objects that releases this impediment and enables development to continue. In other words, the kind of contact that enables the patient to continue with the process of “becoming themselves”. In this process the analyst is a mediator not a physician. His efficacy depends on being in touch with his own processes of becoming, through continuing self-observation and self-development, so that a conversation becomes possible between the internal objects of analyst and patient, and mutual development takes place. This was Meltzer’s definition of psychoanalysis; and the quality of this “conversation” is the primary therapeutic factor – the link between minds in action. The content of the conversation is also important but is secondary. What is most important is to re-engage this stalled process of internal development and help the patient acquire the skills to continue, ultimately without the aid of the analyst.

In The Kleinian Development and other books, Meltzer has described how perhaps the main difference between the traditional Kleinian model and the Bionian or post-Kleinian model of the mind lies in the attitude to psychic development. Where Mrs Klein saw the child’s development as unfolding naturally like a flower, given adequate internal and environmental conditions, Bion saw the process of becoming oneself as something very difficult and complex: something that depends on acquiring a capacity to think, for it is thinking that builds the mind gradually, step by step, through a succession of “experiences”. By “experiences” of course he did not mean things that have happened to a person, but emotional events that have been digested and assimilated in a way that changes the structure of their mind: “knowing” rather than “knowing about”. Bion also considered this process to be something we understand very poorly. Not only are we not much good at thinking, we are also not good at thinking about thinking. This is where the concepts of catastrophic change and aesthetic conflict come to the fore: they help us to think about thinking, and its central role in psychic development. In order to understand and treat psychopathology
better, it is necessary to understand better the process of ‘normal’ psychic development, and to appreciate that it is a very complex phenomenon, far more complex than the various forms and degrees of psychopathology. This was the conclusion that both Bion and Meltzer reached, although they came to it in a roundabout way via severely disturbed patients – hallucinatory, schizophrenic or autistic.

I will now say a bit more about these key concepts – the concepts that for Bion and Meltzer respectively capture the essence of normal development. Catastrophic change is the basic mechanism of psychic development. It is a natural, but not an automatic process. It happens only when thinking takes place; and thinking is an uncomfortable process. My mother wrote of Bion’s view of thinking that he …regarded [it] as a human activity still in its absolute infancy. The development of a capacity to think creatively, which might harness human passions in the service of development and wisdom, appeared to him as something of a race against time. (“Bion’s conception of a psychoanalytical attitude”, 1980)

This capacity to think creatively is the same as a capacity to tolerate catastrophic change; and Bion’s message is that it is necessary to acquire it, in order to avoid catastrophe for the human race. Because of the ambiguities in the term “catastrophe”, it is sometimes assumed that Bion must mean “disaster”. In fact, as so often, he chose the word because it contains a kind of pun, whose meaning may go in different directions, depending on what is happening in a particular situation. His rather startling use alerts us to the seriousness of a situation which could go either way, to survival or extinction. “Wisdom or oblivion” as he put it at the end of the Memoir of the Future – “take your choice”.

The concept of catastrophic change has its classical roots in Aristotle’s description of the structure of a tragedy. A “tragedy” meant a serious play, not a disaster; and the catastrophe referred to the moment of fulfillment after previous knowledge has come to be seen in a new light or “reversed”. The old way of seeing things is irrevocably changed. Although the plot of a tragedy always results in the death of the hero or heroine, this kind of death has the meaning of an achievement, in terms of self-knowledge. Death is a metaphor for a psychic step forward – “death to the existing state of mind”, as Bion puts it. This is why we feel elated or exhilarated at the end of a good play – as we would not had those events occurred literally in the course of everyday life. As Coleridge said, every idea has to take the form of a symbol in order to be known by the personality. We admire the emotional understanding

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–– the thought – that has been achieved through symbolic form. Not only do we admire it, we identify with it and it becomes part of ourselves. The symbol contains the knowledge that changes the landscape of the mind, its light and its shadow. Like the protagonists, our knowledge of the human condition has advanced. The play has analysed a universal emotional conflict for us, and in this way enabled us to know ourselves better. In fact, because our understanding has increased, we are less liable to court disaster in the literal sense of making tragic mistakes by acting out our anxieties. It is self-knowledge that saves the mind from disaster, and this entails confronting and containing intolerable feelings.

What is perhaps initially hard to grasp about Bion's view (because it certainly contradicts the Freudian pain-pleasure principle) is that all feelings are intolerable. Intolerable in the special sense of disturbing the mind's equilibrium, creating turbulence, and pushing the mind in the direction of catastrophic change. Catastrophic change occurs as a result of proximity to an idea, and is first heralded by a feeling – “the facts of feeling” as he calls it. The new idea threatens the status quo of the personality owing to its unknown quality: will it lead to a fruitful expansion or to an internal explosion? The term “catastrophic” conveys the real dangers of this intersection of the existing personality with some mysterious unknown force which may be either developmental or destructive. Hence his stress on the idea of “suffering”, which he equates etymologically with “patience” (another term for the depressive position).

The personality feels as though this new idea has arrived from outer space, with premonitory waves of warning; it has an alien quality. Actually it arrives via the internal objects, whose knowledge and awareness of emotional conflict is always in advance of the self. This is the link with Bion's formulation of “O” – not a discovery (as is sometimes said), just a formulation to help express what he had always been saying from the beginning. “O” represents the underlying reality of any situation, and the underlying reality of psychic development. Mediated through the internal objects, it is the source of all new ideas – new, that is, to this particular self or personality.

It is therefore a Platonic view of learning, a special type of remembering, going back to the source from which one's mind derives. It is not facts or solutions that need to be remembered, but this underlying poetic principle of contact with internal objects, which the poets call inspiration, and Bion calls “intersection with O”. Hence the need to develop “negative capability”, in Keats's
phrase: the capacity to refrain from the kind of premature knowing that the narcissistic self tries to put in place as a defence against learning from experience. (This is what leads to the lie-in-the-soul and other forms of emotional evasion or thought disturbance, stunting personality growth.)

According to the poets the process of inspiration, of introjection of the object’s knowledge, of intersection with O, is something that happens all the time: most of the time of course subconsciously. This constancy is an important feature of catastrophic change. A catastrophe may seem to indicate a huge or momentous life-changing event — something out of the ordinary; and sometimes that is what it refers to. But also, miniature catastrophes are happening every milli-second, as naturally as breathing, but not so automatically. Each one represents an emotional experience that may or may not have been digested, that may or may not have linked the infant self with its internal objects. Each one reflects the oscillation between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, shaking the personality. And the choice may be made, between wisdom (reliance on the object, intersection with O) and oblivion (reliance on the self and its “lies” or clever attempts to control the situation). Wisdom entails negative capability, the toleration of not-knowing; oblivion is the result of filling the mind with memory and desire, that is, with projections of the selfhood.

All these aspects are relevant to Bion’s use of the term catastrophic change. Though it sounds dramatic, it also has an everyday quality. Correspondingly, everyday life can have a terrifying quality. But once the idea has been “remembered” (which is another pun, suggesting a process of putting together and reintegration), its alien and frightening quality is detoxified. Essentially it is a reassembling (which is another pun, suggesting a process of putting together and re-integrating), its alien and frightening quality is detoxified. Essentially it is a reassembling (which is another pun, suggesting a process of putting together and re-integrating), its alien and frightening quality is detoxified. Essentially it is a reassembling (which is another pun, suggesting a process of putting together and re-integrating), its alien and frightening quality is detoxified.

In a sense, therefore, catastrophic change is a way of elaborating on the concept of introjection. But it alerts us to the emotional complexity that underlies introjection when it is a true linkage between minds, or between parts of the mind, founded on a turbulent Ps<–>D oscillation. I say “true linkage” in order to differentiate it from the false type of introjection (different from projective identification) which is essentially a takeover bid, a possessive seizure of the object’s knowledge in order to starve the other internal babies. (There are good and bad types of greed, just as there are hot and cold types of envy.)

“la capacità negativa”: la capacità di sottrarsi al tipo prematuro di conoscenza che il Sé narcisistico tende a erigere come difesa contro l’apprendimento dall’esperienza. (Questo conduce alla menzogna nell’anima e ad altre forme di fuga emotiva o disturbo del pensiero che poi arrestano, impediscono la crescita della personalità.)

I poeti dicono che il processo d’ispirazione, di introiezione della conoscenza dell’oggetto, di incrocio con “O” sono cose che accadono di continuo: la maggior parte nel subconsenso, ovviamente. Tale costanza è un aspetto importante del cambiamento catastrofico. Una catastrofe sembrerebbe indicare un evento enorme, di grande rilievo che muta la vita — qualcosa fuori del comune; e a volte si riferisce proprio a questo. Ma vi sono altre minuscole catastrofi che avvengono ogni milli-secondo con la naturalezza del respiro, anche se non in modo così automatico. Ognuna di queste catastrofi rappresenta una esperienza emozionale che può essere stata digerita oppure no, che può aver collegato il Sé infantile ai suoi oggetti interni oppure no. Ciascuna di esse riflette l’oscillazione tra gli stati paranoido-schizoidi e depressivi che scuotono la personalità. E la scelta può essere tra la saggezza (fiducia nell’oggetto, incrocio con O) e l’oblio (fiducia nel Sé e le sue menzogne, o  abili tentativi di controllare la situazione). La saggezza implica la capacità negativa, il tollerare la non-conoscenza; l’oblio è il risultato del riempire la mente di memorie e desiderio, e cioè di proiezioni dell’immagine di sé.

Tutti questi aspetti si riferiscono all’uso che fa Bion dell’espressione “cambiamento catastrofico”. Anche se suona drammatica, essa possiede comunque una qualità quotidiana. Viceversa, la vita quotidiana può avere una qualità terrificante. Ma una volta che l’idea viene “ricordata” (che è un’ altra battuta, che implica il processo di assemblare e re-integrare), la sua qualità aliena e spaventosa viene eliminata. Si tratta essenzialmente di una ricongiunzione della madre interna col bambino - donde il legame col concetto di contenitore-contenuto. Questo è il processo del “divenire”, che non termina mai, poiché ogni stato della mente è solo la base per un altro che lo soppianta.

In a certo senso, quindi, il cambiamento catastrofico è un modo per elaborare il concetto di introiezione. Ma esso richiama la nostra attenzione sulla complessità emozionale che soggiace all’introiezione quando questa costituisce un vero legame tra menti, o tra parti della mente, fondato su una turbolenta oscillazione Ps<–>D. L’espressione “vero legame” per distinguerglielo dal falso tipo di introiezione (diversa dall’identificazione proiettiva), che in fondo è un’offerta di controllo, un’OPA, un tentativo di acquisizione possessiva della conoscenza dell’oggetto che ha il fine di affamare altri bambini interni. (Come esiste un’invidia calda e una fredda, così esiste anche un’avidità buona e una cattiva.)
We must not forget that the moments of contact which enable catastrophic change and “becoming” are not purely pleasurable but also painful; and this is what leads us to the aesthetic conflict, a concept which denotes the emotional drama that initiates the process of catastrophic change, and sheds new light on this concept by making clear how the imminence of a new idea and the catastrophe that it brings, is associated with the apprehension of beauty. Meltzer sees this idea of the impact of beauty as implicit in the total picture of Bion's thinking; he writes:

If we follow Bion’s thought closely, we see that the new idea presents itself as an emotional experience of the beauty of the world and its wondrous organization. (The Apprehension of Beauty, 1988, p. 20)

The apprehension of beauty lies at the heart of human mentality, growth, symbol formation and thinking. As Langer has written:

Aesthetic attraction, mysterious fear, are probably the first manifestations of that mental function which in many becomes a peculiar tendency to see reality symbolically, and which issues in the power of conception, and the lifelong habit of speech. (Philosophy in a New Key, 1942, p. 110).

Aesthetic conflict owing to the emotional tension of fear and attraction, hate and love, leads to symbol-formation which is a peculiar characteristic of the human reaction to reality and the world. It is not a new idea philosophically. In psychoanalytic terms, at the core of aesthetic conflict is the mother’s (object)’s ambiguity and the baby’s desire to know the contents of her mind, in order to know himself. The nexus of contrary emotions derives from the contrast between the immediate impact of visible beauty, and the unknowability of the mother’s interior. This stimulates a temptation to false forms of knowledge – intrusive, possessive, tyrannical. From this the baby is rescued by aesthetic reciprocity – the operation of container-contained in terms of the mother’s intuitive response. Without this reciprocity, the process of “becoming” is indeed felt as liable to be catastrophic.

Yet in line with the many implications of catastrophic change, it is clear that the solution is not simply for the mother to be a comforting container. Unalleviated safety and comfort stifle development. As aesthetic object the mother is also a transformer – a medium for catastrophic change with all its dangers and ambiguities. If aesthetic conflict is evaded, the container-contained relationship becomes degraded, and the need for catastrophic change is not felt on the pulses; container-contained becomes “parasitic” as Bion would put it, rather than “symbiotic”.

Non dobbiamo dimenticare che i momenti di contatto che permettono il cambiamento catastrofico e il “divenire” non sono solo piacevoli, ma anche dolorosi; questo ci porta al conflitto estetico, un concetto che denota il dramma emotivo che mette in atto il processo del cambiamento catastrofico, e lo spiega chiarendo come l’imminenza della nuova idea e la conseguente catastrofe, sia legata alla comprensione della bellezza. Per Meltzer questa idea dell’impatto della bellezza è implicita in tutto il pensiero di Bion; egli scrive:

Se seguiamo il pensiero di Bion attentamente, ci accorgiamo che la nuova idea si manifesta come esperienza emotionale della bellezza del mondo e della sua organizzazione meravigliosa. (The Apprehension of Beauty, 1988, p. 20).

La comprensione della bellezza sta al cuore della mentalità, della crescita, della formazione dei simboli e del pensiero dell’uomo. Come aveva notato Langer:

L’attrazione estetica, il timore misterioso, sono probabilmente le prime manifestazioni di quella funzione mentale che in molti diventa una peculiare tendenza a vedere la realtà simbolicamente, e che conduce alla capacità di formare concetti e all’uso del linguaggio per tutta la vita. (Philosophy in a New Key, 1942, p.110).

Il conflitto estetico con la tensione emotionale tra timore e attrazione, odio e amore, conduce alla formazione dei simboli che è una caratteristica specifica della reazione umana alla realtà e al mondo. In filosofia non è una nuova idea. In psicoanalisi, al centro del conflitto estetico sta l’ambiguità della madre (dell’oggetto) e il desiderio del bambino di conoscere i contenuti della sua mente per conoscere se stesso. Il nesso delle emozioni opposte deriva dal contrasto tra l’impatto immediato della bellezza visibile e la non-conoscibilità dell’interno della madre. Questo stimola la tentazione a elaborare falsi tipi di conoscenza intrusiva, possessiva, tirannica. Il bambino si salva con l’aiuto della reciprocità estetica – l’operazione del contenitore-contenuto in termini della risposta intuitiva materna. In mancanza di tale reciprocità, il processo del “divenire” non può che essere percepito come tendenzialmente catastrofico.

Eppure, sempre in linea con le molte implicazioni del cambiamento catastrofico, è chiaro che la soluzione non può essere semplicemente che la madre diventi un contenitore confortante. Sicurezza e consolazione continua soffocano lo sviluppo. In quanto oggetto estetico la madre è anche una trasformatrice – un veicolo del cambiamento catastrofico con tutti i suoi rischi e tutte le sue ambiguità. Se si sfugge al conflitto estetico, la relazione contenitore-contenuto si degrada, e la necessità del cambiamento catastrofico non viene percepita visceralmente; come direbbe Bion, il contenitore-contenuto diventa “parassitario”, invece che “simbiotico”.

www.artlit.info - writings and artwork © Meg Harris Williams/ Aesthetic conflict and catastrophic change
Bion always stresses the tension between the emotional links or vertices, not the emotion or the vertex itself. These are the links that become visible and comprehensible when we go back to the mother-baby prototype, and to the natural human awe and apprehension that derives from the impact of the beauty of the world. This is possibly the most universal theme in all poetic narratives. The tension between Love and Hate constitutes the spur towards knowledge and exploration, as for example when Milton writes about the “hateful siege of contraries” that is aroused in Satan on his first sight of the beauty of God’s new world, the Garden of Eden and its inhabitants; he describes how this is a spur to self-knowledge, but also how the tension becomes intolerable without support from the object (God), and how Satan ultimately cannot sustain the internal conflict. But without the emotional conflict, there is no epistemophilic instinct, no Oedipus vertex, no L, H, K – so no thought. Both the conflict and the reciprocity are necessary to the fulfilment of catastrophic change and the process of symbol-formation and thinking.

Yet as in psychoanalysis, it is not really the mother or indeed the analyst who is the aesthetic object: it is the process of development itself. The real-life mother is vital but also dispensable; and babies have survived mentally even without a mother, or by means of constructing an internal mother using a variety of environmental experiences. Hence the formulation of O – the underlying principle of mystery and unknowability which is the key to the situation. The mother-baby conjunction is both a reality of early life, and a prototype of an internal relationship that continues throughout life, and is reactivated at every point of catastrophic change, by each new thought that impinges on the existing structure of the personality. What becomes known is not O but an intersection with sensuous reality; but this has no meaning unless it is related to awareness of the unknown. The acquisition of meaning constitutes “transformations in O”, namely thinking. The self gains understanding only via this “depressive” orientation.

Like catastrophic change, aesthetic conflict occurs all the time, at each point of contact between self and object, or each intersection with O. Moments of inspiration may be spectacular and memorable; or equally they may pass unnoticed by all but the heightened perceiving eye, such as that which is (or should be) employed by the psychoanalyst, mother, or indeed anyone in a role where observation of the human condition is important. In such situations, what is important to remember is that it is not “bad” or nasty emotions, but the absence of emotionality, that thwarts development and is liable to turn catastrophic change into catastrophe. Learning to tolerate the aesthetic conflict should be) employed by the psychoanalyst, mother, or indeed anyone in a role in which observation of the human condition is important. In such situations, what is important to remember is that it is not “bad” or nasty emotions, but the absence of emotionality, that thwarts development and is liable to turn catastrophic change into catastrophe. Learning to tolerate the aesthetic conflict untenable without support from the object (God), and how Satan ultimately cannot sustain the internal conflict. But without the emotional conflict, there is no epistemophilic instinct, no Oedipus vertex, no L, H, K – so no thought. Both the conflict and the reciprocity are necessary to the fulfilment of catastrophic change and the process of symbol-formation and thinking.

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and to rely on the inscrutable but beautiful internal combined object is the true containing attitude that allows thoughts to find a home in the mind and expand it without destroying it.

Finally, Miriam [Botbol] has asked me if I might be able to say more about these concepts in relation specifically to the making of art, and to consider what are the similarities and differences with psychoanalysis. In truth I don’t think there is any essential difference because we are talking here about universal human mentality and the developmental process. So in the making of art, as in the making of the analytic situation, the artist has to learn to listen intuitively to the voice of internal objects, with all the usual frustrations, hindrances and mistakes that this entails. Inspiration, as the poets have supremely described, is not a free flow of spontaneity, but a struggle of aesthetic conflict. Probably the psychoanalyst’s familiar interpretation is the equivalent of the artist’s pre-conceived idea of how a work should turn out. Familiarity, and standard technique, is a useful beginning, so long as it is not used to constrict observation and experimentation. It is a way in, not a solution. The solution – or inspiration – is unexpected, and comes from the internal object. In art, many works are not successful, and people often complain that those that have taken most effort turn out worst. But this is to ignore the sense in which a series of works are really a series of experiments, each playing some part in trying to mirror the O of a particular image. Finally a work may achieve visual harmony. Just as the poets see their linguistic improvements in terms of hearing better the Muse’s words. The Muse was speaking, but they couldn’t hear properly. On revising the poem, they hear the precise words, not some vague approximation, and write them down accordingly. I think something analogous must apply in the psychoanalytic situation. It is the perpetual oscillation of Ps<–>D, working towards assimilating the idea of the moment until the point at which, as Bion says, “a pattern emerges” and the idea becomes clear. In other words, just working.

Per concludere, Miriam [Botbol] mi ha chiesto se potevo dire qualcosa a proposito di questi concetti in relazione specifica con la creazione artistica, considerando le somiglianze e le differenze con la psicoanalisi. In verità, non credo che ci sia alcuna differenza essenziale perché qui trattiamo dell’universale mentalità umana e del processo di sviluppo. Come nella creazione artistica, anche nella creazione della situazione analitica, l’artista deve intuitivamente imparare a ascoltare la voce degli oggetti interni, con le solite frustrazioni, i soliti ostacoli e errori impliciti. L’ispirazione, come è stata supremamente descritta dai poeti, non è un libero flusso di spontaneità ma la lotta con il conflitto estetico. Probabilmente l’interpretazione consueta dello psicoanalista è l’equivalente dell’idea preconceita che l’artista si fa su cosa deve diventare la sua opera. La consuetudine e la tecnica standard possono servire all’inizio, a patto che non vengano adoperate per limitare l’osservazione e la sperimentazione. E’ una via d’accesso, non la soluzione. La soluzione – oppure l’ispirazione – è improvvisa e viene dall’oggetto interno. Molte opere artistiche non riescono, e la gente spesso si lamenta del fatto che chi più si sforza raggiunge i peggiori risultati. Ma questo non prende in considerazione il senso in cui molte opere in realtà sono una serie di esperimenti, ognuno dei quali cerca di rispecchiare la “O” di una specifica immagine. Un’opera può alla fine raggiungere l’armonia visiva, come i poeti che descrivono il loro perfezionamento linguistico in termini di limpido ascolto delle parole della Musa. La Musa parlava, ma loro non riuscivano a sentirla nitidamente. Dopo aver riesaminato la poesia, sentono le parole precise, non qualche vaga idea approssimativa, e le scrivono accuratamente. Credo che una cosa analoga debba applicarsi alla situazione psicoanalitica. E’ l’oscillazione perpetua dello Ps<–>D, che tende ad assimilare l’idea del momento fino al punto in cui, come dice Bion, “emerge un disegno (pattern)” e l’idea diventa nitida. In altre parole, semplicemente funziona.