

Unrepresented States in Psychoanalysis: Working with Psychic voids, Non-thought and Non-representation

Carina Grossmark, Ph.D

NYU Postdoc Course Outline

In this class we will be engaging with patients who struggle to have access to their own internal worlds due to a blocking of their thought processes and an inhibition of the functions of representation. These are difficult-to-reach-patients who often seem unable to connect with themselves and their own treatment. They can appear as deeply dependent, depressed and in despair, sometimes terrified or so anxious that they cannot think.

In our effort to understand and work with these patients and states we will turn to psychoanalytic writers who have addressed problems in the development of symbolic function, the capacity to represent and access experience, and the effects of an external object that was overly traumatic or overly absent. We will explore Andre Green's concept of "The Negative," Bion's "Primordial Mind," Levine's "Unrepresented States" and the Botellas' idea of "Figurability" and the loss of representation, among others.

Acknowledging that these concepts can appear abstract and dense, the class will strive to introduce them in a manner that will render them clear, intelligible, and above all, useful for work with these hard-to-reach patients. With this in mind, each class will involve a summary of the readings and a discussion of clinical material that illustrates the theoretical ideas. The analysts's own internal process will be taken into account, illuminating the inter-psychic work that facilitates the transformation of the inchoate, primordial and dead into a developing function of representation.

WEEK 1: Symbolization and Non-Symbolization in Psychoanalysis

Freud, S. (1915). The Unconscious. S.E. 14, Sections I, II, III, V and VI (pp, 166-179; pp, 187-204).

Bion, W.R. (1959). Attacks on Linking. In: *Second Thoughts: Selected Papers on Psycho-Analysis*. London: Heinemann, 1967.

Optional Recommended Readings:

Grotstein J.S. (1967). Preface. In: *Second Thoughts: Selected Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (pp. xi-xxi). London: Heinemann, 1967.

Freud, S. (1924 [1923]). *Neurosis And Psychosis*. S.E. 19, pp. 147-153.

Segal, H. (1957) Notes on symbol formation. In: H. Segal (1981) *The Work of Hanna Segal*, Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

WEEK 2: The Presence of Absence: Unrepresented and Weakly Represented Mental States

Levine, H.B. (2012) The colorless canvas: representation, therapeutic action, and the creation of mind. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 93: 606-629

Reed. G.S. (2009) An empty mirror: Reflections on non-representation, *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. 78, 1:1-26

Freud, S. (1923). The Ego and The Id, Chapters I and II. S.E. 19, pp. 13-27

Optional Recommended Readings:

Green, A. (1986). The Analyst, Symbolization and Absence in the Analytic Setting. In: *On Private Madness* (pp.30-59). London: Hogarth.

WEEK 3: Andre Green: The Work of the Negative: Disobjectalization and blank psychosis

Green A. (1998). The primordial mind and the work of the negative. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 79: 649-665. Karnac: London, 1997.

Modell, A.H. (1999). The dead mother syndrome and the reconstruction of Trauma. In: *The Dead Mother* (76-86). Gregorio Kohon Ed., Routledge: London.

Optional Recommended Readings:

Bach, S. (2011). On Being Forgotten and Forgetting One's Self. In: *Chimeras and Other Writings: Selected Papers of Sheldon Bach*. (pp. 23-40). International Psychoanalytic Books: NY, 1916.

Green, A. (1999). The Death Drive, Negative Narcissism and the Disobjectalising Function. In: *The Work of the Negative* (pp. 81-88). Free Association Books: London.

WEEK 4: Non-represented States and Figurability: The Work of the Botellas and Civitarese

Botella C. and Botella S. (2005) Figurability and the work of figurability (pp.45-49). In: *The Work of Psychic Figurability*. Brunner-Routledge: Hove and New York.

Civitarese, G. (1913). The inaccessible unconscious and reverie as a path of figurability. In: *Unrepresented States and the Construction of Meaning: Clinical and Theoretical Contributions*. London: Karnac Books.

Optional Recommended Readings:

Botella C. and Botella S. (2005) Non-Representation (pp.29-38). In: *The Work of Psychic Figurability*. Brunner-Routledge: Hove and New York.

WEEK 5: A Comparison of Howard Levine's "Unrepresented States" and Donnel Stern's "Unformulated Experience:" A Distinction between a Freudian Developmental Model of Psychic Structure and a Relational/Dissociation Model.

Levine, H.B. (In Press). The fundamental epistemological situation. Psychic reality and the limitations of classical theory.

Stern D. (2003). Unformulated experience: An introduction (pp. 33-49). In: *Unformulated Experience: From Dissociation to Imagination in Psychoanalysis*. Psychology Press: New York-London.

Optional Recommended Readings:

Bolognini, S. (2011). The intrapsychic and the interpsychic. (pp. 57-80). In: *Secret Passages: The Theory and Technique of Interpsychic Relations*. Routledge: London and New York.

Green, A. (2000). The intrapsychic and intersubjective in psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 69(1): 1-39.

WEEK 6: The Unrepresented Unconscious: On Timeless-ness and Spaceless-ness.

Bach, S. (1907). On Digital Consciousness and Psychic Death. (pp. 41-73). In: *Chimeras and Other Writings: Selected Papers of Sheldon Bach*. International Psychoanalytic Books: NY, 1916.

Lombardi, R (2016). Time in primitive mental states (pp.151-175). In: *Formless Infinity: Clinical Explorations of Matte Blanco and Bion*. Routledge: London and New York.

Optional Recommended Readings:

Lombardi, R. (2016). Introduction (pp. 1-18). In: *Formless Infinity: Clinical Explorations of Matte Blanco and Bion*. Routledge: London and New York.

Williams, P. (2007). Making time: killing time. In: *Time and Memory* (pp.47-63). London: Karnac

Scarfone, D. (2006). A matter of time: Actual time and the production of the past. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 75:807-834.

WEEK 7: Primitive States – Annihilation Anxiety, Disintegration and Unintegration: Bion and Winnicott.

Winnicott, D.W. (1974). Fear of breakdown. *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 1: 103-107.

Bion, W. R. (1962b). A Theory of Thinking. In: *Second Thoughts: Selected Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (pp. 110-119). London: Heinemann, 1967.

Optional Recommended Readings:

Winnicott, D.W. (1945). Primitive emotional development. In D.W. Winnicott (Ed.). *Collected papers: Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis* (pp. 145-156). New York, NY: Basic Books.

WEEK 8: Failures of Representation, Differentiation and the Body:

Aisenstein, M. (2006). The indissociable unity of psyche and soma: A view from the Paris Psychosomatic School. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 87: 667-680.

Anzieu, D. Functions of the Skin Ego (pp. 477-495). In: *Reading French Psychoanalysis*. Birksted-Breen, Flanders and and Gibeault Eds. Routledge: London.

Optional Recommended Readings:

Bach, S. (In Press). The inner world, the gut and the sense of reality.

Haag, G. (2015). Further reflections on the construction of the body- ego (pp.54-68). In: *Francis Tustin Today*. Mitrani and Mitrani Eds. Routledge: NY.