

# Between Bion and Jung: A Talk with James Grotstein

By JoAnn Culbert-Koehn

James Grotstein, M.D., was interviewed in his gracious office in his home in West Los Angeles where he works and writes. He is currently Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is a Training and Supervising Analyst at the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Institute as well as the Psychoanalytic Center of California. He is the author and/or co-editor of five books, including *Splitting and Projective Identification*. (Northvale, NJ, Jason Aronson, 1981) He has authored 160 papers, which mainly focus on primitive mental states.

**Culbert-Koehn:** I want to ask you about Bion, about your development as an analyst, and about where those two things come together. I first got interested in talking to you about this at the Psychoanalytic Center of California Conference in Los Angeles in 1993. You said then that you thought Bion was close to Jung as well as to Freud. I remember being startled and glad you were saying it out loud, and I noticed that no one took it up in the discussion. There was a lot of silence. And I thought: someday, I'll get you to say more about it. Can you say some more?

**Grotstein:** I was thinking, when I made that statement, about the fact that Bion had taken Samuel Beckett, his patient, to hear Jung lecture, and that Jung's ideas about the unborn self that was frightened to be born made a powerful impression on Beckett, which helped him to become Samuel Beckett. He got power over his writer's block, and that made a powerful impression on Bion. After my analysis with Bion, I once consulted him

about a difficult patient. The patient was afraid to be born. I had stored that away apparently in the back of my mind. That's one point. A second is that Bion is the only psychoanalyst who emphasized the importance of myths, and this emphasis became the central point in his work on *Cogitations* (W. R. Bion, F. Bion, ed., London, Karnac Books, 1992)—that we need as many myths as possible. He says myths are like scientific systems; they are constant conjunctions of previous experiences. And that's clearly Jung.

Bion, however, was not a scholar who would cite other people's works. For instance, "memory and desire" is T. S. Eliot. That's just one example. I think Bion learned a great deal from Jung, and I would have been happier if he had cited it. Another place of correspondence is his concept of . . . I call it transcendence, he calls it transformations. There I think Jung and Bion were going along parallel tracks. Bion could very well have been talking about alchemy in his book about transformations, as well as about transcendence. The way that Jung saw the relationship between consciousness and unconsciousness was in terms of its complementarity, or what he more often called compensation. I read Jung again as late as today to confirm that. That's precisely what Bion means by alpha function, but he didn't cite Jung on that. Jung was certainly the first to talk on complementarity. Freud implied it, but never stated it, and always affected as if they were in conflict in opposition to being complementary. A very big difference: the thumb and forefinger are oppositional but complementary, not in conflict. Freud had a conflict theory: Primary process, secondary process. Bion got behind that to say no, they are the same thing, they are complementary. And that's the whole meaning of his grid. But Jung was the first to say it.

So I think that with Bion's notions of myths, of transcendence and transformations, and of prenatal, unborn selves, we are clearly hearing from someone who was very much influenced by Jung and/or working parallel to him without knowing it. To mention one other area, Bion is also one of the very few people in the psychoanalytic field who really respects religion, spirituality, the numinous, the ineffable. And that certainly is Jung. God has been forbidden—God forbid!—in Freudian psychoanalysis. Culbert-Koehn: Yes, that's a big difference between Freud and Bion.

Grotstein: Freud's religion was logical positivism, and within

psychoanalysis, nobody has exposed its limitations other than Bion. And so I think that Bion has transcended or rather surpassed Freud in that regard and made spirituality, I think, legitimate.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Bion's is a much vaster notion of the unconscious than Freud's.

**Grotstein:** Incredibly so. I think that's very true. I'm only now beginning to appreciate what an incredible genius he was. I'm just reading a book that's been written by Joan and Neville Symington. (*The Clinical Thinking of Wilfred Bion*. London, Routledge, 1996) Neville's a British analyst out of Australia. Joan is a Kleinian also. And it's about the works of Bion.

**Culbert-Koehn:** They wrote a book on Bion?

**Grotstein:** It's meat-and-potatoes. "Here's what Bion said, here's what he thought." It's in common, ordinary English; it's beautiful, it's wonderful. They say something which is akin to what Meltzer has said (D. Meltzer. *The Kleinian Development*. Reading, Roland Harris Educational Trust, 1978) that I wondered about, because I thought Meltzer was exaggerating. Symington isn't one to get carried away, however; he's a very good scientist, also very good on religion. And he and Joan Symington say that in many ways Bion was a genius far more profound than Freud. I guess the question, in analytic terms, is whose genius was bigger? Because Bion wrote so very few works, very few of them have really been understood. Generally people either idealize them and memorize them like holy scripture, reciting them incantatorially, or they reject them because they can't understand them. Some of us, however, really work hard at trying to get through the works of Bion, and when you begin to get onto his very peculiar way of presenting his ideas, it's incredible. You see that he has made significant contributions.

Whereas Jung (from my limited point of view of him, since I haven't read enough to be really knowledgeable), presents such incredible erudition. How many people in this day and age know Latin and Greek and all the classics the way he did? He's a master of erudition, of the knowledge of the race. I think sometimes, however, his tendency as a writer was to get mystical—not to pursue the mystical, but to be mystifying in his presentation. Bion, too, I think, was mystifying, maybe for different reasons. I don't know, but I think they both were going in the same direction, in a kind of poetic language which indicated that

what we see and know is limited by our senses. There is a coherence beyond. I think that's one of the principal things that unites Jung with Bion, that there is something beyond, before, and in the future—what Bion called *A Memoir of the Future*. (London, Karnac Books, 1991) Respect is given in their theories for there being an intelligence or coherence. *God* is perhaps the pseudonym for this: I believe Bion, like Jung, was not so much in touch with God as with something beyond. Even God as a name diminishes the metaphor for the spirit.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Yes. Certainly one of the similarities that I've seen is that both Jung and Bion speak about intuition as a primary function in the analyst and in the analytic training.

**Grotstein:** Intuition is also common in their vocabularies. That's one of the many things I neglected in what I just said. Both Jung and Bion particularly emphasized the importance of intuition. Intuition is really looking inward. Bion always cited the work of Milton, especially *Paradise Lost*, realizing that it meant "Now that I'm blind, I must look inward."

**Culbert-Koehn:** Both Jung and Bion seem to respect that human capacity and to emphasize it as an especially important capacity in an analyst.

**Grotstein:** Yes.

**Culbert-Koehn:** There are places in Bion that I have read where he almost says that analytic training is training in intuition.

**Grotstein:** That's right. Abandoning "memory and desire" and with a disciplined sense of paying attention to what comes from within. That certainly was true of my analysis with him.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Could you say a little bit about that, how you experienced him as an analyst?

**Grotstein:** He was incredible. When he first came to town—I belonged to a study group which helped to bring him over here, I was in analysis with someone else, somebody who was at the time Fairbairnian, so I didn't rush right in to go to him. But as time wore on, I became interested in seeing him. I saw him first in supervision. I found him very inadequate: he would make these dense, off-putting statements, and he would only see me once a month.

**Culbert-Koehn:** As a supervisor.

**Grotstein:** As a supervisor—and furthermore he didn't believe in supervision. He didn't believe in it. He didn't even like the term. Because of his own experiences in World War I, he thought the supervisors back at headquarters knew less what was happen-

ing than the men there in the trenches, no matter how inexperienced. He frequently used that metaphor; he was frequently talking about World War I.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Well, he was so into the experience that being once removed as the supervisor, he probably didn't enjoy it that much.

**Grotstein:** He saw me once a month, six times or something like that, and I was very unhappy with it. At the end of the six months, I said what the hell, I'll go into analysis with him. It was a dramatic change after he was then my analyst. I'd thought he was Old Vic, the theater. He had been very mild mannered and polite and distant as a supervisor; as an analyst he was actively engaging from the get-go. And he was profoundly interpretive as an analyst. Oftentimes I was dazzled and overwhelmed, because he talked so much. I was sometimes mystified, but I would generally leave the office with a sense of tremendous clarity.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Do you think he was speaking directly from his unconscious to you?

**Grotstein:** Absolutely, that was what I thought about it: it was really on a different level than I had ever experienced.

**Culbert-Koehn:** It was dramatically different than what you had experienced before.

**Grotstein:** Quite dramatic. He was like a field commander of the unconscious—very interesting.

**Culbert-Koehn:** And did you have him as a teacher also? No? So you knew him as a supervisor and as an analyst.

**Grotstein:** Briefly as a supervisor, at which he was a total flop. I think in retrospect that he wanted to be a total flop—I think he wanted me to get analyzed. He sensed that I wasn't, even though I had gone through two analyses. I have a notion that for my own good he wanted to analyze me. So . . .

**Culbert-Koehn:** He wanted that relationship with you.

**Grotstein:** He wanted that relationship with me. He got it.

**Culbert-Koehn:** The other was maybe frustrating.

**Grotstein:** Yes.

**Culbert-Koehn:** As it can be.

**Grotstein:** He didn't like to supervise. He hated to be the authority. Supervisors are lured or seduced into being an authority, and he very much resented that.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Did he ever speak to you about seeing Jung at Tavistock and hearing him there?

**Grotstein:** No, he never spoke about that. He was very, very

careful about how he handled himself; he hardly ever talked about himself. He gave the sense of consummate discipline of being an analyst, which I had never experienced before.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Could you say more about that?

**Grotstein:** So many analysts gossip. They talk. They don't interpret; they talk. I really got the sense of the difference between a Bionian interpretation—I don't know whether it was Bionian or Kleinian—and the standard kind. American analysts kibbitz. They talk, they comment. Bion never commented: he interpreted. It was very formal. He was precise, and he was formal, always trying to designate the anxiety. There was a formal presentation. It was a grammar, not a ritual. It was an intervention, like a surgical scalpel, very precise, and it had a procedure attached to it.

**Culbert-Koehn:** And very much it was attention to the most primitive anxiety.

**Grotstein:** The most presenting anxiety: not the most primitive but the most presenting. It might be primitive at the surface, but whatever is the most urgent takes the priority. It was really the structure of his interpretation, or the attempt at giving a structure to it, that I found to be so careful—so cautious, so well thought out. Like a military campaign, but for the Red Cross, you know—trying to save, rather than trying to hurt. It wasn't casual, and that was the first thing that struck me: it wasn't casual.

**Culbert-Koehn:** I don't think he saw analysis as casual in any way.

**Grotstein:** Quite serious: it was a very serious encounter. That was new for me. Everybody talks about the seriousness of analysis, but the way we address it. . . . This is one of the reasons, as you've heard in my seminars, that I'm so serious about the form of the technique of intervention. I think intervention has been underplayed. This emphasis I'm getting from Bion.

**Culbert-Koehn:** I was reading today something he said about the seriousness. He says, "The practice of psychoanalysis is a very tough job and not the sort of thing that should be chosen as an easy, comfortable way of life. Theories are easily read and talked about. Practice of psychoanalysis is another matter." (W. R. Bion. *Brazilian Lectures*. London, Karnac Books, 1990) I think that says it very well.

**Grotstein:** Absolutely. Also, Bion brought something different. It wasn't just that he was more disciplined and aware of the seriousness of analysis. As I've begun to see over the years, he

was aware that what we are trying to face and flee from is of a different order than what Freud or Klein in their wildest imagination ever conceived. Klein, who was so identified with Freud, was rooted in positivism with the uncivilized infant and the drives. Even though her drives were object related, and Freud's were discharging, and so on, the model was still mechanistic. Bion transcended that. He believed in drives—death instinct, life instinct. Yes, he bought into that, I think maybe reluctantly, because he never did free himself from his analysis with Klein. I think he was very ambivalent about her. He got a great deal from her, but I think they never got along. She maybe was envious of him, because he may have been smarter than she: she recognized the sheer genius on her hands.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Do you think he was very challenging as a patient?

**Grotstein:** Oh, God, I would love to have heard him as a patient. He probably was smarter than she. By smarter, I mean that he considered more vistas.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Bion's is a wider view of the psyche.

**Grotstein:** Right, so he thought what the patient was afraid of wasn't just greed and envy, though he talked a good Kleinian game. If you are a Kleinian reading Bion, up until 1970, you can see that he's a good Kleinian, and then after that he goes crazy. I think what he was onto was really the fear of the ineffable and inscrutable. I think Bion and Lacan and Jung constitute the three great mystics of psychoanalysis: they're dealing with the real, which is far beyond paranoid, schizoid, and the depressive anxieties. They make those into pygmies.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Certainly, one thing that Jung and Bion would have in common is that their psychoanalytic critics called both of them psychotic when they were being critical.

**Grotstein:** Exactly. Dealing with things beyond the realm of our reassuring sanity. Bion and Lacan reduced our concept of external reality to our reassuring conceptual myths about reality, which have very little to do with reality.

**Culbert-Koehn:** There's a willingness to be in the unknown, in their own thinking, in their own minds with patients.

**Grotstein:** With a faith that in time there will be coherence. The faith was in the coherence, and Bion I think was the first to unravel the real fear of the unconscious, which is that which is unincluded in conscious representations of reality: the chaos of

infinity, the “fearful symmetry” that Blake talked about. Bion was in touch with the epistemology of western culture when most analysts were not.

**Culbert-Koehn:** And with many different cultures. And that is a similarity with Jung also.

**Grotstein:** Yes, that is a similarity with Jung. So they both brought to the work a tremendous erudition and respect for Western culture and also Eastern culture. Both of them did. They had more databases to tap into, which transcended fly-by-night logical positivism into which Freud was born and bred.

**Culbert-Koehn:** You said earlier that you were involved with bringing Bion here. Did you have certain expectations? Had you met him? Had you been to London before?

**Grotstein:** No, I only knew him once he came here. He was portly, commanding, and looked like an advertisement for a British travel magazine. He was the very picture of a British aristocratic statesman. He had too much of a commanding presence ever to be taken for a psychoanalyst—until he opened his mouth. Then he was profound. His accent was Edwardian, in other words, an old-fashioned accent. English people don’t speak that way anymore. It was a lovely accent. I don’t think he was pretentious, but he was measured in his speech. He carried a kind of aura—in medieval times he would have had a halo—it was a certain kind of energy that surrounded him. He made a presence.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Not having seen him, but having listened to people who worked with him like yourself, I have the sense of that presence, and a sense that that presence was taken in and is so alive in those of you who had contact with him. It’s quite amazing.

**Grotstein:** It’s haunting. I also think it probably interfered with a lot of analyses. My own impression is that many people that I know had a difficult time, which they may not yet realize, in being analyzed by him, because he was so famous. He had so much presence that he was not an ordinary analyst, or even an ordinary person. You knew that you were in the presence of greatness, and there was always this sense of awe, a sense of being intimidated by how little you were getting from this great breast, and therefore it was difficult to be negative and to hate the bastard, although I managed, dutifully. So unfortunately, despite himself, it was difficult to be analyzed by him. He was just so awesome: he had stepped out of a myth.



**Culbert-Koehn:** As though he transcended various times.

**Grotstein:** Exactly. He was a most extraordinary human being, and you felt it. You couldn't deny it.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Certain people I know who worked with Jung convey that also.

**Grotstein:** They must have felt that. Whereas Freud was great, but there was also what is called in Yiddish a 'haimish' quality to him. He could be ordinary, too, and also very unanalytical. It was impossible for Bion to be unanalytical.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Bion was very disciplined.

**Grotstein:** He was the most disciplined man I've ever known.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Well, he had all that early military school, too.

**Grotstein:** He was born in an age of deprivation and of asceticism. He made the "best of a bad deal."

**Culbert-Koehn:** You could really feel that he had suffered.

**Grotstein:** That's the one thing that I didn't know that I felt until long after the analysis was over. He died on my birthday by the way.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Really?

**Grotstein:** Yes. I remember the day! I had feelings at times of being with the Dalai Lama. Having now read his autobiography in several versions, I know that I could never have been analyzed by him if I'd read those works back then, because they foreground my sense of his personal tragedy. I never knew how great he was. For a man to have surmounted so much without bitterness, or without the bitterness showing. . . . I remember reading about his having infectious hepatitis, and how Klein charged him for all his sessions for many months. Finally he brought himself to her office, and she wasn't there! I'm sure he suffered too when Klein attacked him for his beliefs in group therapy.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Really? I didn't know about that.

**Grotstein:** She was very hostile to groups.

**Culbert-Koehn:** You know, Jung was also.

**Grotstein:** That's true, yes; I recall reading that. Bion had a hard time with Klein. Not too much has been written about it, but they had a hard time with each other. I don't know the whole story, and I don't want to be a gossip when I don't know the facts.

**Culbert-Koehn:** But your impression is that it was not an easy analysis, if such a thing exists. I think I remember reading somewhere that one of the reasons he wanted to come here was

because he felt so idealized in London and the British Psychoanalytic Institute.

**Grotstein:** And therefore unappreciated.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Not felt to be real.

**Grotstein:** Yes. He wasn't real, and he didn't know how to make himself real in the ordinary sense, because, I think, he was a very shy, self-conscious person who was inadequately mothered and fathered, exiled to the trenches, in a day when people were not close to each other. He struggled with his sanity and so many obstacles. I respect him more than ever, having read his autobiography and learning what he had gone through to reach the conclusions he'd come to. I think he understood something that few people understand. His ultimate tragedy was living in a virtual "concentration camp," which is beyond the imaginary or symbolic, beyond the paranoid/schizoid or depressive position. Those were mockeries to him. He saw the real, and I think he never forgot it. It made a lasting impression on him. He probably dropped out for many years after World War I: this man who was one of the great geniuses of the twentieth century didn't even get honors at Oxford. In other words, he was shell-shocked, with what we call today post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Culbert-Koehn:** It took a long time to integrate that tragedy, if one can even speak of integrating it.

**Grotstein:** He got something out of it that turned out to be very constructive. He made the best of a bad deal and used his raw, feeling self as a healing instrument. That was his genius or, I should say, his transcendence, and his introduction, I think, to the spiritual, to the ineffable, not in a sentimental way: he was never sentimental about it. Here was a scientist of the ineffable, rather than a dogmatic propounder of it. His mysticism was really a way of saying there is something beyond what we take for granted, that there is something new, in a frightening sense, where our relationship to ourselves and our loved ones is concerned. In proportion as we give love and accept love and can do so safely, we can then adventure or transcend to what I call the transcendent position.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Can you say something about the concept of O?

**Grotstein:** Yes. I used to be intimidated by it. Bion was fond of using symbols—unsaturated symbols, so that people could assign other meanings to them. O is zero, which is one of the great discoveries of Western civilization. With zero, mathematics

could do things unheralded before; so the concept of zero opened things up. Zero implied the concept of no-thing, a very important, landmark notion of Bion's which was certainly borrowed from Klein. It is the understanding that when mother leaves and there is an empty space, that space of nothingness appears only in the depressive position. In the depressive position, the toleration of absence can be represented or symbolized. Thus tolerated, it is therefore internalized. Bion mathematized Klein, saying that the primitive infant sees the absent breast as a positive no-thing, O, which is a bad breast. Eventually the no-thing becomes a nothing. These are my terms, having to do with the space where a breast was, should be, is not now, and hopefully will be again. It was there in the beginning of *A Memoir of the Future*: the breast that was will be again. As Hemingway says, "The sun also rises." In that sense, it's the beginning of faith, that the no-thing can become a nothing, which will then become a breast. Analytically, I think that was a very important construction on Bion's part, out of the Kleinian beginning to the concept of O, seeing O as zero, as the capacity to tolerate zero through a symbolic integer representing nothing. An absence: once you can tolerate an absence, you are then free to contemplate the negative thoughts about it, which you cannot tolerate if saturated by the no-thing. That saturation is the persecutory object: the good mother absent is the bad mother present. So by using the mathematical vertex, an algebraic vertex, he was able to decipher the experience and tolerate it. That was the discovery of zero, or O. O then became the center of the Cartesian coordinates in his grid, mathematizing the inner experience of mind. The horizontal axes are thoughts and their development and the use to which they are put; the vertical axis is the development of the mind which thinks the thoughts.

Then eventually O became a sense of the possibility of transformation. It represented nothing and everything. The point of the Cartesian coordinates, if you use the concept of syncretism, is that everything radiates from O or comes towards it, so it *is* a nothing, an infinitesimal point which represents infinity mathematically. Now this is my deduction, which has never been confirmed, but I think it came to represent for Bion a convenient way to talk about that which was everything and nothing to us, that is, the ineffable—the inscrutable concept of the ineffable—the inscrutable, ultimate reality which we can

never know and never realize. We can become it or evolve into it only by surrendering our desire to know. By surrendering our desire to know, we get comfortable with not knowing, with having patience. We achieve what I call, though Bion never used this word, serenity. At the same time, and he does hint at this, not knowing is the quintessence of terror.

**Culbert-Koehn:** To the ego.

**Grotstein:** To the immature ego. To the transcendent ego that can accept it, not knowing is serene. When one, you might say, cannot stand not knowing, then one is haunted by what one projects into what one doesn't know. So I think what Bion has clarified is something that has been oversimplified by every psychoanalytic school. Perhaps not the Jungians, but the Freudians certainly and the Kleinians too. What is a Kleinian patient afraid of, according to Klein? The patient is afraid of hostility, destructiveness, greed, envy, which are all precipitated by the absence of the object and/or the persecuting presence of the object which reminds of the absence. Similarly, the Freudian patient is terrified of his drives. Bion's contribution is to tell us we are all frightened about the unknown taken in a deeper sense: we're really frightened about our sense of being nothing. We're frightened to be in the presence of a thing itself without the disguises of our fantasies, of our imagination, and of our conceptualizations—our sensory way of viewing our realities. In other words, everything we do in the history of Western culture involves transitional objects which reassure us. *Everything* we take for granted: everything is a fiction which we call reality. Even the unconscious is our fictional way of talking about what we know we are afraid of. I'm afraid of my sexuality; I'm afraid of my incest; I'm afraid of destroying mother; and so on. I remember Bion told me this many times in analysis: we can work forever, for years, to trace the origin of your anxiety, we'll never find it, but we must never stop tracing it. I think he meant, we'll never find out what it is, because it is not to be found.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Yes. When Bion talks about how in analysis the concept of cure is really irrelevant, certainly that would be a Jungian notion, too.

**Grotstein:** Absolutely.

**Culbert-Koehn:** That lovely way Bion says that, in an analysis, you're going to get a view where you know more about your unconscious. You get pieces of it, from my understanding. But

you will also be left at the end with a view of what is never going to be knowable. Even though you know more than when you started about your unconscious, the paradox is that the proportion of unknown will be much more clear to you.

**Grotstein:** Precisely. Bion told me over and over: The more you know, the more you know what it is that you don't know, and the proportion gets more and more to your disadvantage.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Yes. A problem in aging.

**Grotstein:** Right. Exactly. And it leads to a very interesting paradox. Bion was the propounder of truth being the necessary element for the human being. The truth is what we need in order to survive, yet contradictorily or paradoxically he also said we can never know the truth. We can become it, but we can never know it. So we must always look for the truth knowing we can't find it. It's what C. S. Lewis said about God—one must worship a god who doesn't exist as an object to be worshipped because we need the illusion to justify our need to worship. But see, to Lewis, God is still the object. Bion was getting at something that was talked about by religious mystics over the centuries, that God is the *subject*, not the object and therefore you cannot worship or contemplate God or the truth. But that doesn't mean we should give up looking. We must just look for the object that doesn't exist.

**Culbert-Koehn:** For the Jungian patient some of the process of the analysis would be forming a relationship between the ego and what Jung refers to as Self, which has some of the same qualities of Bion's description of O, in that you can only know its emanations. The Self is vast. We can talk about it, but it is unknowable.

**Grotstein:** I think Jung did say that, and I think the common ancestry of that is the Gnostics and later Meister Eckhart. I've been reading Eckhart.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Jung quotes Eckhart a great deal.

**Grotstein:** Yes. And I think the early mystics understood, and the Gnostics understood, something which the early Church divided off and decided to ban, the concept of the God within, because, lo and behold, I think we're beginning to understand, thanks to Jung and to Bion, and maybe indirectly to Lacan, that the concept of the unconscious is as close to God as we get.

**Culbert-Koehn:** That certainly is Jung's view.

**Grotstein:** Yes. In that sense the unconscious *is* God. It is not to be taught as drive-saturated or as envy-saturated. It's not to

be desecrated and trashed the way Kleinian and Freudian and other positivist theories deal with it. The unconscious is not only primitive, it is creative.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Certainly that was Jung's view, that the unconscious was potentially creative. When Jung talks about the prospective function of dreams, do you think that's similar to when Bion talks about analysts using the language of achievement?

**Grotstein:** For Bion, I think the language of achievement had to do with Keats's notion of negative capability, of the person who can tolerate doubting. (Hyder Edward Rollins, ed. *Letters of John Keats*, 2 vols. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1958)

**Culbert-Koehn:** It's very specific.

**Grotstein:** It's the very quintessence of patience, the person who can wait, who doesn't have to reassure himself with preinterpretations. That's achievement. Regarding the idea of predicting the future, which I think is something you said, I don't know how Bion would feel about that. *A Memoir of the Future* certainly speaks of that, but I think it has much more to do with waiting for the unknown.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Yes. I don't think Jung meant predictive in a literal sense, as much as being able to see potential moving forward, like energy moving forward.

**Grotstein:** A trend. Yes. I don't know that Bion talked about that. He might have without knowing it; he could have. I think that trend does get into the unconscious, which is never past or future. It is forever present; it is never not. It can, however, use different time zones, and therefore you can sense a force which is developing or has developed which has a future.

**Culbert-Koehn:** One of the similarities I see between Jung and Bion is the struggle to hold together a visionary part of the personality with a scientific, observing part.

**Grotstein:** *Visionary* is the word I've been looking for. Thank you. I'm going to write that down. I think that's exactly right.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Both Jung and Bion really struggled.

**Grotstein:** Because the two capacities are often incompatible.

**Culbert-Koehn:** But both Jung and Bion respected both of those capacities.

**Grotstein:** Both men were visionaries and scientists who believed at the same time in the scientific method and in visible or sensual proof, but in putting it on the back burner because they intuited that there was something vaster. That's one of the reasons why

Jung got into myths and Bion into aesthetics and both of them into the religious that was within the whole pattern, a pattern there which you only get glimpses of.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Do you think there's any correspondence or similarity in Jung's notion of archetype and Bion's focus on preconception?

**Grotstein:** I think quite a bit. In fact, I think it's the same thing. Preconceptions, like archetypes, intuit, anticipate their future. Bion speaks of preconceptions, in *A Memoir of the Future*, as thoughts without a thinker looking for their counterpart in reality.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Something prenatal that's going to unfold.

**Grotstein:** They both got that from Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality."

**Culbert-Koehn:** And Kant?

**Grotstein:** It is in Kant, but also in Wordsworth, who envisions the unborn baby looking for asylum.

**Culbert-Koehn:** There you go. Looking for home.

**Grotstein:** Looking to be adopted by parents. There is another area, by the way, in which Jung and Bion are similar. In the theory of transcendence, Jung talks about the union of opposites. Jung was much more clearly aware of the dialectical. Bion knew about it, but he never mentioned it. Dialectical is a word he never used; he talked about constant conjunctions. I think Jung was much more specific by speaking of a conjunction of opposites, which leads the way to the world of transcendence. Ultimately, transcendence implies the ability to tolerate the opposites. In Klein, of course, that would be the depressive position, where opposites come together. Bion talked about being able to wait for the appearance of constant conjunctions, noting the pattern which reveals a trend in that direction. Now for Bion the patterns did not necessarily have to be opposites, just parts which you bring together. So Jung and Bion are each talking about something similar and yet different. Jung emphasized opposites; Bion emphasized being able to tolerate things which are different.

**Culbert-Koehn:** And bringing them together in your mind.

**Grotstein:** That to me is depressive position, bringing things together. Having brought them together, however, to be able to be at peace with it—that to me is beyond depressive position, and why I think there is a transcendent position. The depressive position is working with the conflict; the transcendent position

is resolution of the conflict. Though opposite, and seemingly incompatible, both truths exist. That may be the beginning of the understanding of transcendence, that there are two truths. What unites the two truths, if not overarching truth, which is more mystical—something which is paradoxical, something that you really can't work out? Winnicott, who understood this, was truly mystic, now that I think of it. Jung, Bion, Lacan and Winnicott were really the four great mystics of psychoanalysis, because they all knew paradox was necessary to psychoanalysis.

**Culbert-Koehn:** And also creativity.

**Grotstein:** And creativity. I think, by and large, that what handicaps psychoanalytic training is really our own unconscious addiction to clarity.

**Culbert-Koehn:** I would agree with you. And not being able to tolerate unknowns. Certainly the history of psychoanalytic institutes is not that they welcome the unknown.

**Grotstein:** The truth of the matter, though, is that the unknown may be unknown to us, but it's not unknown to itself. And therefore I think maybe one of the hubs of our dilemma is that we're all reduced to a state of envy toward something which is true and known to itself but unknown to us. This I think is the source of all envy, the existence of a truth which is enigmatic, paradoxical, and not to be revealed to us.

**Culbert-Koehn:** That we can't possess.

**Grotstein:** Yes. That we cannot possess with our knowledge. We can't know it all!

**Culbert-Koehn:** That it's beyond us.

**Grotstein:** Yes, but that doesn't mean there is no truth. There is truth, and the truth that is there knows itself. It's we who can never know it. It's like the breast.

**Culbert-Koehn:** That's what I was thinking.

**Grotstein:** Even the owner of the breast doesn't know the breast.

**Culbert-Koehn:** It's beyond her, too.

**Grotstein:** Absolutely.

**Culbert-Koehn:** It's she and not she.

**Grotstein:** That's exactly right. Or him and not him. And we are all agents for the inscrutable, even when we are not as inscrutable as what we are the agents of.

**Culbert-Koehn:** How did you get interested in Jung?

**Grotstein:** Oh, because he was so arcane. Everybody hated him. He was considered anti-Semitic, all the nasty rumors around him;



so I thought that he couldn't be all that bad. A lot of people across the years had also brought him to my mind. One person who aroused my interest in him was John Fowles. I was so fascinated with *The Magus* that I wrote Fowles a letter, sent it to John Fowles, Dorset, England. And it got to him! He wrote me back and told me that he was in a Jungian analysis at the time; so I got interested, and I read a few things here and there. It's only in recent years, as I've gotten more conscious and needed to know more about certain things that Freudian and Kleinian literature were too logical positivistic about, that I realized that Jung was talking my language. Except for one thing—I wasn't used to talking in Latin and Greek, which was often his language.

**Culbert-Koehn:** You have to keep the dictionaries right with you.

**Grotstein:** People with such erudition I can only admire and envy.

**Culbert-Koehn:** It does stir it up.

**Grotstein:** But he was in touch with so much erudition and so much knowledge. I figured somebody who had that kind of purview must know something. Jung was far more educated than Freud. I mean, you could tell: Freud didn't speak Latin, couldn't speak Greek. And he didn't have touch with all the myths that Jung did. Jung reeks with erudition.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Although Freud certainly had a feeling for the ancient.

**Grotstein:** He had a feeling, but he didn't have a hands-on knowledge of all the myths. I have a feeling that Jung could quote all the ancient Greek myths by heart. Whereas Freud was trained to be a doctor and had a tremendous disrespect for philosophy, even though he was indebted to philosophers. For instance, he dismissed Hegel and Kant, the great backbones of psychoanalysis.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Yes, they are.

**Grotstein:** And Nietzsche. Where was Freud with Nietzsche? So that was his limitation.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Now I'd like to ask you about some of your writing. You have a new book on Fairbairn, and I was surprised to hear that he may have had a Jungian analysis.

**Grotstein:** Yes. He didn't have a Jungian analysis. He had an analysis with a man who had a Jungian background. I forget his name. That was the only analysis that Fairbairn ever had.

Fairbairn never spoke kindly of Jung. I think he always only wanted to be a Freudian.

**Culbert-Koehn:** What was Fairbairn's main contribution?

**Grotstein:** I think it was his concentration on the introspective and schizoid personality types.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Fairbairn's idea, that he uses clinically, that the baby or young child will choose always or often to blame himself and be bad and not tolerate the idea of a bad mommy is interesting to me. The Kleinians refer to this same phenomenon as splitting.

**Grotstein:** Or projection.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Fairbairn's idea of self blame is written about very clearly in the early Jungian literature.

**Grotstein:** That's very interesting. May I know where that is?

**Culbert-Koehn:** Sure. Erich Neumann (*The Child: Structure and Dynamics of the Nascent Personality*. New York, Harper and Row, 1976, pp. 86-87).

**Grotstein:** Can you get me that? I did not know that. That's very important. I did know this, though. Jung did say, as I mentioned to you before, that it's the purpose of good mothering to discredit the projection of bad archetypes.

**Culbert-Koehn:** Isn't that nice?

**Grotstein:** Very. And he said it long before Klein. Jung suffered a great deal of neglect from unpopularity. I think that Jung is like the Gnostics in their relationship to the Christians after St. Paul, where Freud is St. Paul. And Freud did a hatchet job, and I think he needs to be held responsible for attempted assassination.

**Culbert-Koehn:** I think that the break was very painful for both Jung and Freud. It was an incredibly painful break.

**Grotstein:** And so unnecessary, because ideas don't belong to one person. This is one of the things that Bion saw, that ideas don't belong to their originators.

**Culbert-Koehn:** My observation of most psychoanalytic meetings is that there's still a lot of difficulty with that idea.

**Grotstein:** Oh yes.

**Culbert-Koehn:** I mean a very painful difficulty that does not promote dialogue.

**Grotstein:** Yes, there is narcissism.