Psychoanalysis as education: rescuing the lost children of the personality

by Meg Harris Williams

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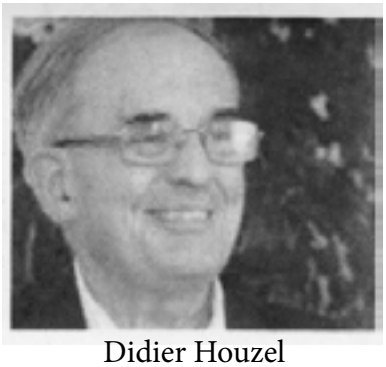
Introduction to the Meeting by Didier Houzel

Freud's discovery of a dynamic unconscious was such a violent earthquake in western thinking that a strong reaction occurred in the immediate period following Freud's death, tending to freeze the genial ideas of the founder of psychoanalysis. Bion gives us a wonderful explanation of this kind of mechanism when he wrote a chapter on 'The mystic and the group' in his book *Attention and interpretation* (1970). He shows how the new idea held by the mystic creates an intense tension in the group threating to split it up. I think that this kind of process has been at work in the psychoanalytic community, especially in France where the new idea was so difficult to accept. The result of this process was that when I start to participate to psychoanalytic meetings in the 1970s, the discussions didn't concern clinical work - not even the technique of psychoanalysis, but such-and-such a Freudian term. How must we translate in French *Verneinung* or *Verleugnung*. There were very scholarly discussions, but very boring and totally useless to help you when you are in a psychoanalytic setting with a real patient.

The first time I listened to Donald Meltzer commenting the presentation of a clinical material it was for me like a bowl of fresh air. We could see him thinking about the material. It was a living thinking which was able to extract new scenarios from the clinic, not in a deductive way from a theoretical model but in a creative one from the analytic experience of both the patient and the analyst. That day I understood that psychoanalysis was living and was a remarkable spring of creativity for the common good of humanity which deserves to be deepened.

At the end of this first meeting which took place at the Begoins' place, with the humour that characterized him, he told us that if we like we have just to whistle for him and he will come back immediately. So we did. Meltzer and his wife Martha Harris came three times a year for scientific meetings in Paris, until 1984 when Martha Harris was terribly injured in a car accident. Don carried on coming to Paris for meetings with the GERPEN until 2004, the year of his death.

I had the chance to be supervised by him monthly for four years in the 1980s. So I can say that I am from a psychoanalytical point of view a son of Meltzer. It is in this capacity that I am proud and honoured to open the GERPEN weekend commemorating the centenary of his birth.


Didier Houzel


Martha Harris


Donald Meltzer

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This talk will consider the educational principles that underlie the psychoanalytic philosophy of both Donald Meltzer and Martha Harris, especially in relation to children, and try to weave these together with the theory of aesthetic conflict, with a view to showing its usefulness as an educational concept..

The title of this talk comes from *Sexual States of Mind* (1973) in which Donald Meltzer concludes one of the chapters ('Infantile Perverse Sexuality'):

> The issue of whether psychoanalysis as a therapy is a method to help the patient investigate his unconscious or a method by which an analyst rescues the lost children of a patient's personality – or both at different times – is perhaps the great point of cleavage in the psychoanalytic movement. (*Sexual States,* p. 98)

The passage seems to suggest that in his view the primary purpose is to 'rescue the lost children of the personality', a Kleinian rather than a Freudian priority, hence the apparent 'cleavage'. It is indeed an evocative phrase. Superficially speaking, the Kleinian world is of mothers and babies, the Freudian is of scientific inquiry. *Sexual States* was Meltzer's second book, published before the major impact on him of Bion's work, in which my mother Martha Harris was instrumental, when she persuaded him to read Bion seriously in order to give the Tavistock lectures to child psychotherapists that became *The Kleinian Development* (1978). I believe that the assimilation of Bion's epistemological model into Meltzer's thinking brought out what he was already beginning to envisage – 'both at different times' rather than a cleavage in attitude. Or perhaps even, not at different times but at the same time: that the process of rescuing the lost children is actually the same thing as helping the patient to investigate his unconscious; and that the two strands taken together, constitute what is meant by psychoanalysis as education, in the Bionian sense of 'learning from experience'.

Ever since Bion put 'learning from experience' at the heart of the postKleinian model of the mind, the concept of 'knowledge' or different types of knowledge and ways of knowing, has come to the forefront of all mental processes and hence of personality development. At the same time, the type of intimate learning that (after Plato) he called 'becoming', was seen as inextricable from the human experience of beauty. He asks, 'Could beauty help the fumbling infancy of sensuality-based mind?' Meltzer elaborates on Bion's implication that it is the beauty of the object that stimulates growth, if the baby's ambivalent emotions can find containment – reciprocity rather than retreat. Pure sensuality ascends the Platonic ladder to spiritual beauty. The concept that he formulated of the 'aesthetic conflict', with its tensions and ambiguity, has traditional roots in poetry and philosophy going back to Plato, always associated with man's exploration of his own nature. The immediate sensuous attraction aroused by the beautiful outside of the object starts an imaginative interplay between outside and inside.

'In the beginning', says Meltzer, 'was the aesthetic object, and the aesthetic object was the breast and the breast was the world.' (*Studies in Extended Metapsychology,* pp. 244-245). That original part-object relationship, established along with the 'dazzle of the sunrise' lies at the heart of human mentality and is repeated on more sophisticated levels throughout life if the personality continues to grow. It puts the focus on the complex response to the present object, rather than the absent object. In the process Klein's original chronology is reversed – that for the baby, that the paranoid-schizoid position comes first and the depressive position afterwards.

Rather, the positive impact of the aesthetic object becomes modified by the 'shadows across the mother's face' that arouse the baby's first suspicions about her unknown intentions, the contents of her inner world. The aesthetic conflict therefore is characterised by a tension between the sensuous exterior and the unknown, enigmatic interior of the aesthetic object. Meltzer said, 'This question, *Is it beautiful inside*? is the essence of the depressive position.' The tension between the sensuous outside and the invisible inside arouses different types of curiosity and different ways of knowing: from intrusive and controlling (paranoid-schizoid), to imaginative (depressive). They represent what Meltzer calls the 'two great categories of knowledge': 'knowledge directed towards understanding the world, and knowledge directed towards controlling the world'. The motive to understand the external world is the same as the motive to understand the inner world – and both contrast with the motive to control the objects of either the external world or the internal world (initially the mother).

In Bion's formulation of LHK (Love, Hate, Knowledge), developmental curiosity – the psychic life-force – is born from the passionate link of the emotions of love and hate experienced simultaneously. These contrary emotions stimulate the desire to understand the complex nature of the object, and to imagine the object's intentions towards the baby-self, and thus to begin learning from experience. As Susanne Langer, the philosopher of aesthetics often referred to by Meltzer, put it:

> 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 life-long habit of speech. (*Philosophy in a New Key,* 1942, p. 110)

Symbols in this philosophical tradition differ from signs; they are containers for emotional experience and become the building blocks of the mind, through which the individual comes to understand themselves and their emotional condition. This is what Bion means by 'thinking'. Insofar as the goal of psychoanalysis is self-knowledge, its role is to help the individual with their symbol formation when it has become impoverished or stuck. One might say that Klein's vision of personality growth is governed by a maternal object (or combined maternal-paternal); Bion's by a thinking object; and Meltzer's by an aesthetic object. Each is a refinement of the previous one.

Psychic education in the Meltzer-Harris view involves re-linking the lost child within the personality with the internal thinking object, by means of symbol formation. There are many situations which may enable this re-linking; indeed in 'normal' development it is repeated continually, during the oscillation between paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. Psychoanalysis is just one of the methods. How do we help the inner adult or combined parental object to find and e-ducate - lead out - the lost child within the personality? This is the 'parental ethic' in both the family, the outside world of learning, and the internal world:

> The parental ethic of work and responsibility for the world and its children, human, animal or vegetable, is [the] central preoccupation [of the combined maternal-paternal object] and the source of its joy. Its capacity for loving companionship in sexuality generates the family, while its capacity for friendly co-operation makes the work-group (Bion) possible. It begins to form early in childhood. (*Educational Role,* 2013, p. 29)

The parental ethic belongs to the type of family Meltzer calls the 'couple family', a model for internalising qualities that form an individual's personal 'combined object'. As with the various types of learning, there are various types of family with their distinctive value systems:

they may be one-sidedly matriarchal or patriarchal, or perversely 'reversed'. All families, like all individuals, fluctuate in their ethical orientation; and perhaps this is also true for the analyst, who according to Bion is constantly under the pressure of memory and desire – to cure or explain his patient, taking refuge in ready-made theories.

For the journey towards self-knowledge, or personality development, is fraught with pitfalls, as has been vividly described throughout history in literary and religious narratives. The child, the part of the self that wishes to grow, may be betrayed by internal sabotage. The enemy to this, since Bion, is now seen in terms of 'lies', self-destroying poison of the mind, rather than the old psychoanalytic concept of 'defences'. In the educational model that Meltzer devised in conjunction with Martha Harris ('The child-in-the-family-in-the-community') he writes:

> All the so-called mechanisms of defence are lies, known to be false but adopted as the basis of values, attitudes, judgements and actions in a manner essentially cynical… In the unconscious their most primitive form is the acceptance of false symbols to represent the emotional situation; but more sophisticated forms of lying distort history (memory), introduce false logic, semantic ambiguities, spurious generalisations, counterfeit emotions. (*Educational Role,* 2013, p. 37)

'Good' and 'bad' emotions – love and hate – are all valuable, and the personality is enriched by their integration. But lies – fake emotions – have no developmental value; they are minus LHK, and even their defensive potential is illusory, hence the ultimate 'death' of the personality. There can be no compromise between truth and lies; they cannot be integrated. This means that instead of the death instinct, the negative anti-life position (which not a force or instinct) can be seen in terms of retreat from aesthetic conflict. According to Meltzer, this covers all types of psychopathology, from the sensitivities of autism to the tyrannical projections of the claustrum.

In the theatre of unconscious phantasy, 'lies' are aborted emotional proto-thoughts. Internal babies, or thoughts, may grow through imagining the enigmatic interior of the aesthetic object and introjecting its qualities; or they may be stifled, frozen, or destroyed, by the infantile desire to control and possess those qualities in such a way that the creative freedom of the object is restricted and this ultimately shuts off the flow of the milk of knowledge. They may be seen as the lost children of the personality, the dead babies of the internal mother that will never be born or symbolised. For Meltzer, this graphic or concrete world of phantasy regarding the nature of mother-and-baby linking lay at the heart of Melanie Klein's vision:

> The 'adult' mental structure is defined by its 'aspirational' identification with teachers and mentors: 'identification with the combined object being a precondition for creative mental functioning' (*Educational Role,* 2013, p. 29)

This complex aspirational identification, the foundation for learning from experience, began with the first feed along with the establishment of maternal reverie, the feeding-thinking process that detoxifies intolerable feelings and rescues the lost children of the personality.

The fundamental picture of psychoanalytic education was the same for both Meltzer and Harris – owing to what he would call a 'congruence in internal objects'. Their writing styles were different however, and in the case of Meltzer especially, differed from their styles of teaching in person.[1] *It may help to bear this in mind when reading their works*.

1 Meltzer wrote of Mattie's way of speaking which could sometimes appear hesitant, almost a stutter, yet which in fact derived from ` a complicated process of accommodation between the complexity of her thought and the minute responses of her audience' (preface to *Collected Papers*).

Martha Harris's papers on education

In the 1960s Martha Harris was asked to organise a series of books for ordinary parents on child development; she was involved with all of them and personally wrote the three volumes on adolescents (reprinted as *Your Teenager,* 2007). It gave her the opportunity to write in her distinctive teaching style, expressing complex ideas in an elegant, precise and deep way. She disliked all psychoanalytic jargon, and none was allowed to infiltrate these 'little books' as she called them. Yet they are imbued with a vision/philosophy of psychic education that is essentially psychoanalytic, and that also illuminates for child analysts their parental work-ethic. While Meltzer liked to categorise – almost visually – she liked to make fine distinctions in a Jane Austen manner, designed to enable parents to separate their received values (of class or ethnic group) from the real values which arise from 'thinking about' the interaction between themselves and the individual child.

Unlike most such 'how to do it' books therefore, the *Teenager* books do not consist of practical instruction, but aim to encourage parents to learn to develop in tandem with their children, suggesting how to detect and tolerate the emotional turbulence that is aroused in themselves and to employ it constructively. Harris' focus is always on self-scrutiny (as in the modern view of the analytic countertransference) and the activation of the child within the parent. Adolescence, she says, is `a time when our sons and daughters may cause us to think furiously for ourselves and about ourselves'; and 'we can only expect to educate [our teenager] by re-educating ourselves' (*Your Teenager,* p. 155). Psychic life for the parent, as for the child analyst, is a continual process of self re-education, in which the 'children' may appear on the verge of being 'lost' or alternatively, may engage the parents and pull them forward. When parents are faced with the reality of the growing child, they have a choice of retreating into a safe rigidity of some kind, or of questioning their own values and assumptions and coming to terms with their own hidden and feelings. We all have our drugs to 'sweeten reality', mental as well as chemical, and it is better to acknowledge this:

> Forms range from smoking and alcohol to daydreams, flattery and reassurance. The harmfulness of the drug depends on the degree to which we rely on it, and on how much it is used as a substitute for self-awareness. (*Your Teenager,* 2007, p. 226)

Thus it is motivation, rather than quantity, that clarifies the nature of a drug's meaning for the individual; the degree of psychic harm is measured by its 'substitute for self-awareness'. Adults, she writes, may tend to be `guilty about their pleasures'; and this is associated with more infantile states of mind. But the adult state of mind requires no drugs, and is measured qualitatively not quantitatively – in spiritual realms you cannot have too much of a good thing.

Through an increase in self-awareness parents can help their child to engage that part of himself (for it is only ever a part) that desires to grow and develop. `By keeping ourselves alive as parents we help also to keep our children's interests growing' (*Your Teenager,* p. 88). The means of doing this is to focus on the observed minutiae of the child's situation, to relinquish judgement and ambition and instead to `acquire a capacity to delay, or rather to refrain from asking for, immediate satisfaction from the patient [or child] himself'. This is Keatsian `negative capability' or `living in the question' as she paraphrases it ('The Tavistock training and philosophy', p. 9).

On the verge of their teenager's `leap into adulthood' the parent may be tempted to lapse into feelings of obsolescence and redundancy; but if we can learn to make certain `realistic' distinctions this reciprocal turbulence in ourselves can be channelled towards the rejuvenation of our own life and relationships. Then, most importantly, these may in turn reflect back onto

the teenager: for the evidence of our continuing emotional growth is critical to the teenager's own quest for identity. The most valuable gift we can offer is to model the process that Yeats described as `remaking oneself'. Only if the parental model does not `depend on the children for its vitality' can the children `use it as a basis from which to develop their own'. This means, the model provided in psychological reality by the parental figures – not just their creed. For `to have given up learning as so many of us adults have is not an inspiring example to the young learner, and to have so much knowledge that we never use except to pass it on to our children is equally dispiriting' (*Your Teenager,* p. 165).

This is the same as the post-Kleinian emphasis on how in a genuine analysis (that is not simply a look-alike), the analyst must be developing alongside the patient. It entails acknowledgement of separation between child and parent, rather than a false or imitative intimacy (as when parents start dressing like their children etc). This parallel movement is the only way to offer the child or patient a model of introjection of the process of thinking itself – what Bion calls (after Plato) 'becoming' not simply 'being'. It is 'analytic talk' rather than 'talking about', and involves the analyst or parent overcoming feelings of surprise, disapproval or confusion, without seeking refuge in a substitute set of fashionable values. The key to this is 'interest', which is also what promotes tolerance of aesthetic conflict – love and hate of the object of interest, the aesthetic object, forces the personality forwards towards self-knowledge. There is a need to respect his `spark of uniqueness that was in him from the day of his birth, and that sets him apart as a separate human being' (*Your Teenager,* p. 26), as in Keats's formulation in the 'vale of soulmaking' of the 'spark of intelligence' that comes from God and needs to be shaped by circumstances in order to acquire identity.

For in the intimate area of emotional growth, learning takes place `through identification' (`with parents, friends and teachers'), not through precept, reward or punishment. Once the concept of identification is established, it becomes clear, she says, why `do as I say not as I do' does not work. Teenagers will be affected by what we mean, rather than what we say; and `We may hold broad and generous views meanly, and stern opinions with tolerance' (*Your Teenager,* p. 154).

Parents, like therapists, need to beware of all `impediments to accurate observation'. When are we really treating the child as an attribute of ourselves, `to do us credit in the eyes of others'? Martha Harris asks. When, believing we are protecting or encouraging him, are we really protecting ourselves from our own fears of failure, or sexual furtiveness?

> The child does not wish to be caught in a commercial transaction in which if he delivers the goods (success) he will be loved, but if he does not deliver, he will be despised' (p. 101); though this is to be distinguished from glossing over failure, which is equally unhelpful. Moreover, older teenagers who sense their parents have constricted their own lives - supposedly on their behalf - may develop `a grudge towards inward parents, leading in turn to an inner expectation of being deprived of fulfilment themselves. (*Your Teenager,* p. 44).

Rather, the goal is to ally with the more realistic adult part of the child that wants `to be understood and to relate to the world and themselves truthfully' – to become educated.

The main function of a parent, according to the *Educational Role,* is to share and thereby to modulate the child's developmental pains:

> The essence of service is the sharing of someone else's pain with a view to lowering it within the bounds of their toleration, while going beyond this limit produces indulgence and overprotection… *containment* of mental pain is the central concept for examining the educational functions of the family under this model. (*Educational Role,* p. 45)

– where `pain' is the negative-capability cloud of uncertainty, not-knowing. The parent can usefully `take on the worrying part of the excitement' of any new challenge (such as that of starting secondary school – marking as it does, in formal terms, the `end of childhood' – but in such a way as not to deprive the child of the `real experience' of the challenge by demeaning it. So another of the distinctions we need to keep in view, in order to make turbulence profitable, is that between self-indulgent and `useful' or `creative' worry. Worrying usefully is a parent's `work and pleasure' (*Your Teenager,* p. 3). By clarifying what is meant by `useful' worry we can learn to distinguish between persecutory anxiety and that belonging to the joys and pains of development – the vitality of living in the question. Similarly our own justifiable anger and irritation becomes more containable when we realise that `the qualities that irritate us most strongly are likely to be qualities in ourselves that we don't like' (p. 26), or that `children like adults have an aggressive component to their nature which helps them to survive and to create' (p. 118). This is to be distinguished from the type of aggression which is really `timorousness' and which is generally directed against those who seem different (in class, sex or ethnic group). The principle is to try to harness the child's innate vitality usefully into facing the challenge of life, rather than to deny the natural role of competitiveness and aggression (including towards ourselves), in a way which will only lead to rebellion and the idealisation of `freedom' or far-away places later on.

By way of illustrating the child's growing pains, Martha Harris describes the young teenager climbing a cliff: he begins as a child, but `when he gets to the top it is as a man, and it is the sort of climb which, in one form or another, all our children have to make' (II, 97). The climb of forward development entails `seriously tasting a little of the flavour of death', without the `safety net of fantasy' of a younger child. We cannot empathise with the struggles of development without recognising its real dangers; growing up is a serious business. Our role as parents is to distinguish between necessary and unnecessary dangers, avoiding both the `indifference which will result in foolhardiness' and the `overprotection which will result in rebellion against our clinging refusal to let them grow up'. Nonetheless, self-scrutiny is not an infallible tool, and (in the interests of realism) it is acknowledged that, just as life may hold tragic circumstances which we cannot foresee or forestall, a situation can arise where the most helpful thing a parent can do for their child is to tolerate the pain of watching them make serious mistakes – even though the easier option would be to disown or abandon them emotionally. Correspondingly there can be a situation where a child wishes for `safer parents than his own' and finds ways of engineering this. The cliff-climbing aspect of the child is his adult self, the escapism (drugs, opting out etc) his infantile self.

At the heart of the child's adult self is the model of the couple family described in the *Educational Role*. This needs to be internalised, and increasingly separated from the actual parents or the actual analyst, who all become more realistic people as transference is withdrawn. The ethos of a `couple family', says Meltzer, requires` the growth of all members' (p. 69); where there are scapegoats there can be no sense of security, and the family slips into shades of gang mentality. Martha Harris cites the old dictum of `to each according to his needs, from each according to his abilities' (*Your Teenager,* p. 115); while reminding us that `an appropriate share may not mean an exactly similar shape' (p. 27). A genuine ethic of justice and fairness begins in family life and is related to awareness of the 'other babies' inside the world-mother, and their need. The individual child, paradoxically, whether or not he has actual siblings, cannot develop his uniqueness without the unconscious recognition of being just one of many children, born or unborn, who populate the world-mother as a whole. After the 'feed' the child or patient becomes aware of the needs of others – starting with the concept of the arrival of a new baby, as described by both Martha Harris and Donald Meltzer in the weaning process towards the end

of an analysis. Aesthetic conflict, love and hate, is intensified; but a new horizon opens for the individual.

And even on parting with a child or patient who has 'grown up' it is important for the parent or analyst, as well asl the child, to continue learning from their experience of that particular individual. This is something internalised, whether or not it involves continued contact. Containment of mental pain continues even with absence. As parents, teachers or analysts, our constructive experience of aesthetic conflict is linked to our own development and its independence from that of children or patients. We have a duty to our adolescent children to enjoy the work-play of our own lives, so that they can climb the cliff of their adulthood, transforming love and hate into the search for knowledge and supported by internal objects in `the privacy which in the end, can exist only in the mind'. They can become educated in the self-knowledge that makes all other forms of knowledge meaningful.

The Tavistock course

Many of these educational principles, or perhaps, the primary principle of encouraging the unique identity of each individual to reveal itself and operate usefully in the world, underlie the structure of Martha Harris' development of the Tavistock Child Psychotherapy course. Esther Bick entrusted Martha Harris with taking over the Tavistock child psychotherapy training in 1960, founded upon her method of infant observation. Meltzer said she regarded the course at that point as itself a kind of baby which she had to either establish in the institutional world or let die, and she expanded many elements of the course. Infant observation became a longer Psychoanalytic Observational Studies course, open to workers in other related fields, for she always sought for routes to export psychoanalytic knowledge beyond the consulting room. To this she added modules on Young Child Observation, Personality Development, Child Development, and Psychoanalytic Theory, together with a cross-disciplinary Work Discussion seminar; and at the same time, with her husband Roland Harris (a teacher and educational consultant) she conducted a pilot study in a large comprehensive school which became the Tavistock Schools' Counselling Course. Donald Meltzer has described how in structuring the new, expanded Course, my mother relied not just on her psychoanalytic environment (and her own previous teaching experience), but on my father's administrative talents, and the result was to 'frame a radical pedagogical method':

> Many of the central ideas came from Roland, who was at that time deputy headmaster of a large comprehensive school in London, prior to his going to the Ministry of Education and later to Brunel University. The central conviction, later hallowed in Bion's concept of 'learning from experience', was that the kind of learning which transformed a person into a professional worker had to be rooted in the intimate relations with inspired teachers, living and dead, present and in books. (D. Meltzer, 'Martha Harris and the Tavistock Course', 2011)

One of the teachers from that school, and one of the first trained counsellors (Jack Whitehead) has described the character of her work in the school, an observing presence like a 'fish in the water, silent and alert':

> I am fascinated to realise how carefully and discretely Roland and Mattie carried out their analysis of the school, looking at it from so many different directions, and how carefully they developed what was to become the Tavistock Counselling Course. As I read Mattie's words a new picture of the school emerges. So far as I knew Mattie

> came in to see me interview my problem children. This was extremely helpful to me but at the same time she was quietly talking to other people and other children in other settings. Nobody knew about the other work she was doing and there was no discussion between us. … Mattie was like a fish in the water, ever present, silent and alert. The resulting writing is like no picture of any school I have ever read. It is nearer to a piece of atmospheric music –a Nocturne of some sort. Themes come and go, return in another key and new themes appear seamlessly. (J. Whitehead, 'The genesis of the Tavistock schools' counselling course', 2012)

Through this subaqueous presence, 'silent and alert', he says, Mattie identified 'typical problems common to all large schools and so created the Counselling Course round familiar themes'.

Martha Harris wrote herself of the Tavistock course that she regarded it as part of a wider journey (she was herself trained as a historian and took the longer view):

> The Tavistock course is one which is inevitably known as the Kleinian course in child psychotherapy. Yet it seems a disservice to both the pioneer spirit of Freud and to Melanie Klein herself to label it such. As the years have gone by, many of us who have been intimately involved in the work have come to feel increasingly that the future of psychoanalysis depends not on the learning and propagation of even the most valuable or 'respectably' documented theories, but on attention to the conditions in which observations may be made. These allow each student of human nature to realise, and to note in others and in himself, the phenomena on which theories have been based. The furtherance of the work of Freud, of Melanie Klein and of other inspired contributors to the science or art of psychoanalysis, depends on each student living through in his own way that path of discovery – of the interaction between the internal and the external world, the influence of the unconscious upon conscious activities. ('The Tavistock training and philosophy', 1977, p. 15)

One of her prime concerns with the course was how to protect her teaching methods and students within the clinic and general professional environment, from the usual envy and hostility – that was a political problem. She hated politics but realised it was impossible to avoid. Another more interesting concern was, how is it possible for the individual to develop within a group, without falling prey to basic assumption mentality. This was also often a key topic of the annual Bion talks that she organised, after Bion had left for America (he had been my mother's supervisor, and also my father's analyst.) 'There is no group solution for work which is essentially individual', she said (1977). When it came to the 'Individual in the Group' (1978), many of the 'family' principles came into action, in particular the need for students to recognise they are not the 'only child', to tolerate the painful turbulence of 'living in the question' and to develop the inner strength associated with the mysterious operation of introjective identification with aspirational figures; whilst being on guard against becoming the 'pale imitation' of secretly envied teachers that comes from projective identification.

Conclusion

It is the thinking process, not just the more teachable content of the 'thought', that needs to become internalised. 'Introjection is a mysterious process about which we have almost everything to learn' ('Towards learning from experience', p. 196). The capacity of the internal object is expanded, at the same time as ingesting the content of the thought.

Those who wish to rescue other 'lost children' need to be firmly in touch with the internal objects who are trying to rescue their own personality. Martha Harris always emphasises that

growing has to be done in two's: not just the child but the parental figure must both be increasing in self-knowledge as they work together: the kind of self-knowledge that derives from internal objects who are also becoming stronger and more distinctive in their values. It is as true for the teachers or analysts as it is for the child, that if this learning mode can predominate, they can then take their place in what she calls 'the great social class of the truly educated people, the people who are still learning' (*Your Teenager,* p. 156).

Education, in both a narrow and a wide sense of the term, is that which links the condition of childhood with that of adulthood, and the inner world with the outer – internal self-development with external usefulness to society. The problem or task is for the community, represented by parents, teachers and therapists, to engage with the child's own innate 'thrust for development'– a natural phenomenon which exists (as Martha Harris has said) 'in all those who live'. As Meltzer wrote:

> 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 organisation, descriptively closer to the noumenon, to Hamlet's 'heart of mystery'. (*The Apprehension of Beauty*, p. 20)

The new idea, the thrust for development, is there if we can but tolerate the impact of the aesthetic conflict, the beauty and the ugliness together.

For as Martha Harris wrote many years ago: despite our apparent helplessness, there is an intimate connection between our sensitivity to the anxieties of childhood, and our capacity to responsibly manage the world which is necessary for our own survival:

> Man's cleverness in manipulating his external resources so far exceeds his capacity to know and to manage his own nature and internal resources, as an individual and as a member of society, that he is in imminent peril of destroying that world which so far as we know is necessary for his survival. However well adjusted, well appointed and successful we may be, we do live under threat of catastrophe; and in a world where one does not have to look far to see that thousands or millions elsewhere are in catastrophe at this moment, in ways that few of us are able to help significantly. To be constantly aware – or to refrain from ignoring totally – the precarious backdrop against which we all live our lives can help us to be closer to the basic anxieties which infants and young children have inevitably to encounter as a condition of living. ('Towards learning from experience', 1978, p. 192)

It will be noted this was written in the 1970s, long before catastrophes came closer to home once again half a century later. Educating the lost children of the personality applies as much to adults as to children. We ignore our infantile selves at our peril, she says; yet we may learn from trying to help actual children 'to help themselves a little better, to grow up strengthened by some experience of themselves – of their own emotions as well as of the world around them. Therefore, they would have a better chance of becoming self-determined individuals who are in turn able to contribute a little to the climate of their society' (*ibid.,* p. 192)

At the heart of a healthy social climate lies the emotional and psychic, not just the academic education, of our children.

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