

# A Note on Primary Spirit

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*'To the ocean of his being, the spirit of life leads the streams of action'. (Isa Upanishad, p49)*

This is an unfinished sketch of an idea which may be useful in the thinking and practice of socio-analysis. We emphasise that it is unfinished, and that is for two reasons. First, the work required to give the idea, and its relationship to primary task, more substance, remains to be done. And secondly, and more fundamentally, part of the nature of primary spirit is potentiality. It is the 'unlimiting' force in experience and thought; it is the cradle of wonder<sup>i</sup>. The first part of the Note is written mainly by Alastair Bain, and the second part, *Evolutions of O*, mainly by Joshua Bain. However the whole paper is really a joint effort and the result of much discussion.

For some years now, members of the Australian Institute of Socio-Analysis have been aware that AISA's primary task does not adequately describe what the Institute does. That task is defined as 'To increase the work capacities of individuals, groups, organisations, and institutions by providing opportunities for people to recognise and manage conscious and unconscious processes'. The reported experiences of members who have taken part in the 'Lorne' Conferences, and similar Conferences, Workshops, and Training Programmes, indicate that the transformations which may occur for individuals often go much deeper than increased work capacities, and include transformations in personal, family, social, and spiritual aspects of life. The experience, of say the 'Lorne' Conference, can touch the whole person's being.

While the gap in AISA's primary task has been experienced for some years, an attempt to reformulate it began after a Seminar led by Susan Long<sup>ii</sup> on ideas contained in a paper of David Armstrong's 'Emotions in Organisations' (Armstrong, 2000). During the Seminar, Larry Osborne mentioned the recent alignment of the planets (in 2000) as possibly being a metaphor for AISA's work. David Armstrong and Larry Osborne's thoughts led A.B. to start thinking of AISA's primary task as having to do with 'aligning being in systems'. The concept of 'being' seemed useful, as it is a unifying notion, both within systems, e.g. individual, group, and organisation, and across systems, e.g. work and family.

The notion of 'aligning being in systems'<sup>iii</sup> as part of a new primary task for AISA, was taken up within the Executive, and further explored at the AISA Members' Conference in Launceston, 22 - 25 February, 2001. During a discussion there the idea did not seem to gel as a primary task, and I [A.B.] remarked that perhaps the concept had more to do with AISA's *primary spirit*. In this I think I was wrong, as we will come to later. But the idea of primary spirit for organisations had been born.

But what is primary spirit, and how does it link to primary task? First, we will give some background to the concept of primary task.

From the time of its formulation in 1958 by Ken Rice, and in the 1960s by Eric Miller and Ken Rice the concept of primary task has been of central significance in socio-analytic thinking, consultancy, and action research. Miller and Rice write: ‘We postulate that at any given time an enterprise has a *primary task - the task that it must perform if it is to survive.*’ (Miller and Rice, 1967, p.25). Primary task is the *essential* aspect of what an organisation does, and needs to keep doing if it is going to continue to exist in its current form. An example: ‘The primary task of XYZ motor car company is to research, manufacture and sell XYZ motor cars at a given rate of return on capital’.

The original concept has spawned valuable ideas and elaborations. For example, Isabel Menzies Lyth’s concept of ‘anti task’ behaviour (Menzies Lyth, 1988, p.222); Gordon Lawrence’s extension of the concept to include three aspects of primary task: ‘normative’, ‘phenomenal’, and ‘existential’ (Lawrence, 1986, p.59 ); and Jane Chapman’s exploration of ‘hatred and corruption’ of primary task (Chapman, 1999).

Primary task was developed by Miller and Rice to assist in the analysis of ‘systems of activity’ conceptualized as an import - conversion - export process.(Miller and Rice, 1967, p.5 and p.25)). Primary task is an *activity*, and as such always has a ‘to do’ quality. It also frequently has a taken for granted quality, where the activity itself, or why people are engaged in the activity, is assumed, and not questioned. The technical process, in the absence of exploration around ‘connectedness’ and purpose, becomes the meaning of what is going on. ‘They make motor cars because that is what they do’.

## **Primary Spirit**

When A.B. started to think about primary spirit, and to write this Note, he began with an underlying conception that primary spirit was a ‘something’, or a defined activity akin to primary task. Was it the values of an organisation? The more we thought about it the more dissatisfied we became with the equation of primary spirit with values. For us primary spirit exists before values, and it is necessary for their formation, espousal, and realization in practice<sup>iv</sup>.

As we understand it, primary spirit gives meaning to primary task. We are defining primary spirit as *that which breathes life into an organisation; the animating principle.* What is it that is absolutely fundamental to organisational existence? What is the underlying meaning of people connecting around a particular primary task?

In reply to a question during a Seminar at the Tavistock Clinic in 1978, Bion drew attention to the philosophical views of Schopenhauer, who, ‘seemed to feel that the central point was a *drive*, a sort of *central energy*, a kind of *urge to exist.*’ Bion says,

‘I think that this *is* fundamental, it is a fundamental quality, and one can from time to time see it expressed by the patient as being aware of that pressure. It takes various forms of course - it pursues various channels - but ... the basic thing, the undifferentiated thing, is the impulse to exist.’ (Transcribed from video). As we see it, the concept of primary spirit relates to this urge or impulse, which Schopenhauer called the ‘will to live’<sup>v</sup>, and this is explored in more depth later in this paper.

We want to continue to explore meanings that the concept of primary spirit evokes for us. And we do it allusively, or by glancing briefly, as part of the nature of primary spirit is that it remains *unsaturated*, i.e., there is a space to contain that which is not so far contained. The potentiality for something new to be brought into being must always be present.

When the primary task of a group, or an organisation, becomes *saturated* primary spirit can be said to be missing or disconnected from primary task. The potentiality to bring something new into being is not possible, and there is simply an activity, which people so engaged are likely to think of, after a while, as meaningless.

During a recent Executive Role Consultation, which the author [A.B.] had with a CEO, and part owner of a Company, he drew two pictures of his role within the organisation. In the first drawing he drew a radar screen with green blobs on it. The blobs were being scanned, which is how he saw his role. He said the blobs could be anything - people, systems, problems, and so on.

In the second drawing he drew himself standing close to a big piece of cheese. About to nibble away at the cheese were rats, ‘both within the Company and outside’. And above the cheese was a large red shark, which symbolized the ‘sharks’ in the outside business world, which were also after the cheese. He saw his role as to guard the cheese. I asked<sup>vi</sup> how the cheese got to be there, and he drew tiny ants, the workers in the company, transporting little bits of cheese to build the big piece.

The CEO reported that he found what he had drawn ‘revelatory’, and agreed with my observation that the second drawing ‘looked bleak’. He said however that was the way business was, and the next week he came with confirmation that it was ‘bleak’, and confirmation from accountants and bankers that that was how business was. I worked with him on the meaning of the management models that he had drawn, and how people in the organisation might feel through his operating out of the two models (i.e. first and second drawings), but there was really little need as the meaning was quite explicit, and as plain to him as it was to me.

As consultant I noticed from the time he did the second drawing that part of my mind was available to potentially hold something different - i.e. something ‘new’, for him, *who did not have that possible space*. Where the primary task of consultancy may say one is *doing* something - talking, hypothesising, drawing attention to etc.- on the other hand, maybe the spirit of what one is doing is offering a state of mind, which has the potentiality to contain that which has yet to be brought into being. And this may be through silence. It may appear on the surface that one is not doing anything. It is a mind that is partially unsaturated. From this hypothesis, if the state of mind is fully

saturated it is likely that the task, in this case Executive Role Consultation, will be carried out in a meaningless way.

At the end of the Executive Role Consultation the CEO again did a drawing. This time he drew himself working with his colleagues as a team, and the people in the team were smiling. The shark was still there but this time behind him, not very large, and swimming in some water. (I felt I had been given a present).

Parallel to this process in the individual we are proposing that something similar needs to happen at the level of the organisation. That beyond the performance of primary task, and the activities associated with it, there is the possibility that a ‘containing space’ can be brought into being to contain that which is not so far contained, i.e., primary spirit. Group reflection is sometimes the mode for this. Without this potentiality being present, the organisation, like the individual, is likely to carry out its primary task in a way that lacks meaning. Possibly this leads to the hatred and corruption of task Jane Chapman has drawn attention to.

Primary spirit, in the way we are describing it, is at the highest level of abstraction the same for all organisations - i.e. the potentiality to bring into being a container for a new idea. However the ‘what’ that may be brought into being will be different for different organisations. It is a function of the connectedness of the people who are there, why they are there, and the primary task.

We want to conclude this section on the exploration of the concept of primary spirit with a poem. The poem demonstrates beautifully the idea about primary spirit that the potentiality to bring something new into being must always be present. In Japan there is a form of poetry called “linked verse”. The idea is that within each short poem, which is complete in itself, there is a suggestion, or a potentiality, which is given form in the second short poem, and so on. The poem<sup>vii</sup> below contains 8 short poems of linked verse, and it was written by Sogi, a 15<sup>th</sup> century Japanese poet.

Snow capped as they are,  
The gentle slopes of the mountains  
Fade into the hazy mist  
At twilight on a spring day.

The river descends far and distant,  
Plum-fragrance filling the village.

In a soft river breeze  
Stands a single willow tree  
Fresh in spring colour.

At early dawn every push of the oar  
Is audible from a passing boat.

There must be a moon  
Dying in the morning sky  
Wrapped in a heavy fog.

The ground is covered with frost,  
The autumn is drawing to its close.  
In a sorrowful voice  
A cricket is heard singing  
Beneath the withering grass.

I paid a call to a friend of mine,  
Taking a desolate lane by the hedge.

## **Evolutions of O**

Bion's *Attention and Interpretation: A scientific approach to insight in psycho-analysis and groups* (1970) centres upon the psycho-analyst's capacity for at-one-ment with O, as the necessary matrix from which interpretation is born. The same may be said to be required of the socio-analyst in his or her capacity to interpret accurately group phenomena.

Bion writes<sup>viii</sup>:

'I shall use the sign O to denote that which is the ultimate reality represented by terms such as ultimate reality, absolute truth, the godhead, the infinite, the thing-in-itself. O does not fall into the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally; it can be 'become', but it cannot be 'known'. It is darkness and formlessness but it enters the domain K when it has evolved to a point where it can be known, through knowledge gained by experience, and formulated in terms derived from sensuous experience; its existence is conjectured phenomenologically.'

Primary spirit equates in our mind with O, in that it is unknowable, but may evolve to a point where it can be known through performance of the primary task. This is analogous to the existence of O, for Bion, being "conjectured phenomenologically." K

is equivalent to knowledge of phenomena, and thus, includes knowing the primary task. This is in contrast to O, or the noumenal substrate to phenomena, that we identify with primary spirit, and which cannot be known, save through its evolution into the domain K, or, into primary task.

As all knowledge - K - partakes in truth - O - but does not exhaust truth, so all tasks partake in primary spirit but do not exhaust primary spirit. Bion says, O “can be ‘become’, but it cannot be ‘known’”. Likewise, primary spirit can be realised in the task, but cannot be ‘known’ in the way that one can ‘know’ the primary task as it is defined. It is incapable of definition save by performance of the primary task, which means becoming one with primary spirit. The ‘evolution’ of O to K, which marks no evolution of O but in the mind’s relationship with O is, we hypothesise, effected by the will to exist. The evolution of primary spirit into primary task - being no evolution of primary spirit other than in action’s relationship with spirit - is likewise effected by the will to exist. These matters will hopefully become clearer in what follows, although we reiterate that it is an “unfinished sketch”.

This part of the Note deals firstly with the evolution of primary spirit into primary task, and how this joins with Arthur Schopenhauer’s notion of “the will to live”, that Bion speaks about as the “urge to exist”. What we here call the *will to exist*, instigates the transformation of primary spirit into primary task. This we take to be analogous with the evolution of O to K, as understood by Bion, in that primary spirit remains the ground to primary task, as O remains the ground to K. While it is improper to signify primary spirit in a temporal relation to task, as if it ‘preceded’ the task, at times - for the purposes of exposition - it may appear this way in what we have said; it would be more accurate to speak of it as the “timeless source” of action, unbound by anything in time - it thus *succeeds* and is *contemporaneous* with the task, as much as it stands alive *before* it.

Secondly, we consider the role of the socio-analyst in relation to primary spirit, and involve aspects of Bion’s thought in this connection; and, thirdly, we offer a set of formulations which introduce a sign *R* to stand for and illuminate the relation between Bion’s notions O and K<sup>ix</sup>. This last suggests a way to view the nature of the three fundamental states of mind: waking, dreaming, and dreamless deep sleep; that sees them as conditioned by the state of the will in each.

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Primary spirit generates a field of action, in which a primary task may be identified, and for which a group is organised (i.e. to carry out the task). Ideally this is to carry the spirit into its proper effect within the world; so, crudely put, a group must carry ‘in’ the primary spirit so as to carry ‘out’ the task for which it exists. The will to exist (or will to live) of Schopenhauer’s thought<sup>x</sup> is perhaps just this, for being within, i.e.

the will, to become being without, i.e. to exist. Such is the relation of primary spirit with task - we may say there is a will (spirit) to exist (in task).

It is important to note that a task, when it is formulated in words, like 'To.. such-and-such', represents a mature or evolved state of this will to exist in the mind. There may be states of this same will to exist, which are sub-formulation or 'pre-being-definable', but are nevertheless having a significant effect on the world, and the group itself. We can imagine this by thinking of 'waking up' to a reality which has in truth been present for some time. For example, AISA's formal primary task, which is now felt to give an insufficient idea of what AISA actually does. The expressed task may need to be renovated, and quite radically, to hold the new meaning emerging in AISA. It is likely, however, that AISA has always been involved in significantly more - and that is, *valuably* more - than is described in its present primary task. The newness is to do with it becoming a feature of attention for the first time. To borrow from Socrates, as he appears in Plato's dialogue, the *Theaetetus*, (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 148e and 151b, pp. 11 and 15) it may be true that AISA has been 'pregnant' with a new idea. The pain and discomfort it has often felt may compare with the pain of pregnancy, and now, perhaps, with giving birth. I [J.B] allude to something unconscious which is suffered consciously, yet has not been, in Bion's words, 'recognised for what it is'<sup>xi</sup>.

Socio-analysis is concerned, inter alia, with the development of primary spirit into task. Its task finds, or helps to find, shelter for this spirit from storms within and without a group. It may rightly be compared with Socrates' 'maieutic' capacity (Lawrence, 1986, p.57; Bion 1978, p. 97)<sup>xii</sup> - or his art of midwifery - in that a socio-analyst may help to bring on the pain of an idea's birth (or of psychological, and spiritual awakening) and assist the client or group transform it into growth of capacity<sup>xiii</sup>. 'Primary spirit' may be a useful notion in this regard, it is itself an idea which affords us 'intellectual permission' to give meaning to suffering, or, suffering a conscious shelter.

The 'shelter' provided by socio-analysis is of a particular kind depending on the needs of the group. It may be a space held 'in mind' by the analyst to contain the new thought for which the primary spirit seeks, to give fresh life to the group. This 'space' needs to remain fresh itself. It is a space that stays 'unsaturated'; one left free of the idea of a task; free of 'desire, memory, and understanding' (Bion, 1970, p.47)<sup>xiv</sup>; in short, free of anything that would obstruct the birth of an idea, or the development of primary spirit into mental clarity.

All of it - values, task, mission statements, the memories and desires of the organisation - must be wiped from some portion of the mind, like a cloud of breath from a mirror, for the undreamt, unthought known<sup>xv</sup> to shine back. In such a way, the analyst might share in mind the primary spirit of an organisation, while having quite a separate primary task. This 'space' may be something (apparently) more tangible, like in Harold Bridger's invention at Northfield of the Gap, or the Club. We might call it *a field for an echo; the right echo* - meaning that something non-sensuous is reflected

and psychologically sensed or felt, and recognised as one's own; possibly, for the first time.

Within this capacity of the analyst to provide, as it were, a 'container' for the organisation to begin to learn, and hopefully, to grow, is the idea of 'potentiality'. Somehow, within this 'gap' - be it in mind, physical world, or both - is the possibility of a 'jump', as if 'into' the space or absence. (This would seem to connect with Bion's idea of the birth of thought in the baby being effected by the absence of its mother's breast.) One may think also here of an analogy with the idea of Black Holes - a feature of contemporary astronomy with which Bion appeared taken. He spoke of a psycho-analytic theory - possibly his own - which suggested that, by the 'interference' noticed between analyst and patient (material 'supposed' to have no meaning, or, which appears to interfere with intended communication) may be signalled the 'place where' a once bright star in the personality had been; and this in a similar way to the discovery of black body radiation, which happened by listening to, and wondering about, the constant interference heard between radio signals. (Bion, 1974, p.61 et. al.)<sup>xvi</sup>

Shifting the vertex a little, we may remember another theory which concerns what may happen 'through' a Black Hole, as if 'on the other side', postulating another Universe there parallel but different in many respects to our own. The space provided by the socio-analytic consultant may make possible (i.e. provide or locate the potential for) a transition, a jump, into a new way of working, thinking, and 'being'. Indeed, it is conceivable that the space may serve to pull parts of the mind 'through' this 'Black Hole'. It may be imagined that something akin to a field of infinite gravity exists, which is *already* affecting the organisation before the analyst arrives, and to which attention must - safely - be drawn. Here, the socio-analyst may help provide the necessary conditions for the group to hold in mind the Universe of its organisation, and the potential for a jump into a new way of being organized together, without everybody going (or continuing to go) mad.

Such change - borrowing Bion's word - may be felt to be 'catastrophic'. The presence of a socio-analyst, and his/her attempt to draw attention to the present working of an organisation, is often greeted with hostility - and this may be connected with what Bion wrote of the mystic and the group, i.e. that something akin to the messianic idea arouses anxiety of 'catastrophic change'.<sup>xvii</sup> The 'space' which the socio-analyst brings, or makes recognisable, may be hated *as if* it were a Black Hole, which emits no 'light', and actively deprives the group of the light of its ordinary understanding.

It may equally reflect a group that is out of touch with its emotions. Simone Weil observed that:

'When the necessity which brings people together has nothing to do with the emotions, when it is simply due to circumstances, hostility often makes its appearance from the start.' (Quoted by Panichas, 1977, p.346).

Her sentence might well describe a group that is not willing (or able) to attend to its needs of primary spirit, or of having a meaningful reason to be together. Weil's image

is one of decay, and of the pain born of necessity. Yet, if this necessity 'which brings people together' is treated as one of primary spirit, then there may be awakened the potential for growth, and even the *joy* born of necessity.

The 'catastrophic change' that is feared, for which the analyst may in some sense be a catalyst, is of being one, or becoming one, with reality, in Bion's terms, O. If the *necessity* of this change can be recognised to be inevitable within oneself - that is, if it can be *felt* - then the terror of this union may give way to delight, as if the sublime were 'halved' for good<sup>xviii</sup>, or the mind rested forever in God.

This is an 'absolute' way of putting something which might also be expressed in the terms of primary spirit and task. Using these notions the emphasis in thought can be shifted to recognise the assumed 'relative' container we usually begin from (for example: of *relative* needs, and concerns; and our being *in relationships*). Roughly, we wonder if it is feared that the spirit will somehow 'engulf' the task, even obliterate it, leaving group members lost with respect to their purpose, or the meaning of being together. The 'end' of a particular understanding of what the group does and, or, what its task is meant to be, is felt to be absolute; when it might be more accurate to think of it as relative to the needs of primary spirit. The issue is one of translation in mind. That is, from something absolute - primary spirit - into something relative - primary task.

Borrowing Bion's sign for ultimate reality, O; and that for knowledge, or knowable elements, K<sup>xix</sup>; the following formulations may be illuminating:

OR - an absolute will to exist in a relative container - waking reality - where *R* stands for the relative condition of reality in which we find each other<sup>xx</sup>.

*R* is the condition of the mind in relation to O, it is thus the condition for evolutions of O into the K domain.

(*R* is like a distorted shadow of O, as the italic even suggests.)

Dreaming may be formulated in the reverse, as RO - a relative will to exist in an absolute container<sup>xxi</sup>.

So, perhaps, KRO suits the movement of mind into dream, and eventually to deep sleep; while ORK suits the reversal. Social dreaming reveals the *R* link, which is necessarily social; or rather, to put it more strongly, it is *the condition for the social* at all. Dreams appear private only in K, i.e. when they have been translated into the K domain after waking. K represents the absolute denial of the *R* link, in this it may be considered 'private' like the 'knowledge' of a dream. In reality dreams are 'social' in as much as they involve the *R* function which *is* the relation of mind to Being, or mind and O. The essence of the social is relationship, and this is the *primary* relationship, conditioning all others. Socio-analysis is therefore concerned with *R*; as is psycho-analysis, albeit with the model of the individual, and its value, as its basic assumption. (*R* is the condition for transference, and its interpretation.) In the socio-analytic theory presented here, a socio-analyst is the analyst concerned with the relationship

O R K in a group, which is symbolic of the evolution of primary spirit into primary task.

Dreamless deep sleep is the closest approximation of the three states (waking, dreaming, and deep sleep) to O itself. But the 'fourth state' called *turiya* - in which the gnani - or 'knower of reality' abides - is reserved for O's realisation *now*<sup>xxii</sup>. The reality of dreamless deep sleep offers some inkling of what dreamlessness may come, and our contentment upon waking is a sure sign of our bliss. Pure being, casting no shadow, when the will and container are one, and bliss is become. The state from which we fall unknowable but real. Eden. That state you are in now without knowing it.

*Be That It May Be. AMEN.*

CAPTAIN BION: RMen!

MASTER BAIN:... eh? What was that?

MR. BAIN: What?

MASTER BAIN: I thought I heard something.

MAN: OH! You mean Bion. Yes, he's 'only' making one of his jokes. Mad like *A Memoir of the Future*, you know. He's so mad he's *dead*.

MASTER BAIN: Aah.... HA!

MR BAIN: Aah... HA!

The pain and fear of existence may be to do with the eternal agony of separation felt between spirit and task. Again, if this pain can be shown to be relative to *this* time - i.e. not eternal, not absolute - perhaps a better understanding may flow that puts people in better spirits in the face of change. The change may then be managed from within, rather than the pain of *being* changed from without, as if you were a thing acted upon<sup>xxiii</sup>, instead of a thing that can act. Ideally, the convergence of spirit and task will be realised in the present, and this will result in the dissolution of these very categories 'primary spirit' and 'primary task', and of time itself, perceived as the root of suffering. We wonder if by paying attention to primary spirit as it emerges now, a group may be wise enough to uproot the primitive fear attached to the absolute - and an ensuing *catastrophe* - in favour of a deeper understanding of their being related to each other. Such may bring a *pure* awakening to the absolute in its everpresence, a candle lit to glow through future relationships.

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*Endnotes*

<sup>i</sup> In a recent Honours thesis, J.B. suggests that wonder is the ‘unlimiting quality’ inherent in experience; while thought is the ‘limiting’. (Bion mentions ‘limiting quality’ in *Attention and Interpretation* (1970), pp. 10-11.)

<sup>ii</sup> For members of the Socio-Analytic Fellowship Programme on July 26, 2000

<sup>iii</sup> ‘Aligning Being in Systems’ was also the theme for AISA’s National ‘Lorne’ Conference in 2001.

<sup>iv</sup> A helpful analogy here may be drawn between primary spirit and gold: values may be like gold ornaments, while primary spirit is the gold *itself*, from which, or in which, such ornaments are (at least partly) fashioned. In any case, values should not be thought to represent the extent of the primary spiritual dimension, any more than, say, gold watches, exhaust the possibilities, or the potential for our understanding, of gold. The analysis of primary spirit must go deeper, in principle, than the aspects of it revealed in an organisation’s values, although these may prove valuable windows upon the presence and recognition within an organisation of primary spirit. There is likely an essential relationship to be observed between values and primary spirit, but a proper analysis of this would require a good deal more reflection and socio-analytic experience, with primary spirit in mind - and this is not what we are attempting here.

<sup>v</sup> We expect this is the concept of Schopenhauer’s to which Bion was referring; it is at least one very closely related to it, especially given the later emphasis Bion places on this being an ‘*absolute* urge to exist’. The concept of the ‘will to live’ finds detailed expression in Schopenhauer’s main work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* [*The World as Will and Representation*] as well as in his *Parerga and Paralipomena*. In Volume One of the latter, see ‘Transcendent Speculation on the Apparent Deliberateness in the Fate of the Individual’ - this essay provides a brief, but useful illustration of the concept, and the quite radical parameters Schopenhauer accorded it in terms of its sphere of influence. He writes there (p. 214): ‘In those deep, blind, primary forces of nature, from whose interplay the planetary system results, the will-to-live that subsequently appears in the most perfect phenomena of the world is already the inner operating and guiding principle.’

<sup>vi</sup> A.B. asked...

<sup>vii</sup> *Minase Sogin* (first 8 Poems) as quoted in the Introduction to *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Matsuo Basho, Penguin Classics, Middlesex, 1966, p.13. Translator and Editor: Nobuyuki Yuasa.

<sup>viii</sup> *Attention and Interpretation* (1970), p. 26.

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<sup>ix</sup> *R* is not to be confused with W. Gordon Lawrence's symbol for "thinking-to-be-in-touch-with-reality", 'R+', nor its variations. (see later discussion and endnote). Neither is it intended to relate to Bion's *R*, which appears in *Elements of Psychoanalysis* (1963), and relates to 'reason'.

<sup>x</sup> As it is introduced by Bion in the Tavistock Clinic 1978 Seminar - called, variously: 'a drive', 'a central energy', 'a kind of urge to exist', 'an *absolute* urge to exist', 'the energy to exist'. 'Will to exist' is the neatest expression of the idea we would like to convey re: primary spirit. Whether Schopenhauer ever used it or the German equivalent himself, we don't know, but hope that what we say is in keeping with his spirit and intentions, as well as Bion's. 'Will-to-live' is the closest approximation we have found in our limited research of Schopenhauer's writing, and, as we understand it, expresses much the same idea. For the relationship we want to express here between two levels of being - i.e., the inner spirit, and the outer task - 'will to exist' is the ideal formulation.

<sup>xi</sup> In the 1978 Seminar, Bion says: ' [...] I think that there is this *absolute* urge to exist. But it will manifest itself 'negatively' just as well as 'positively'. But ... the important thing is that whether it is manifesting itself negatively or positively, it should still be recognised for what it is, and therefore one should not be too misled by the fact that it is manifested 'negatively'.'

<sup>xii</sup> W. Gordon Lawrence conceived of 'A Maieutic Method' for organisational consultancy, see *When the Twain Meet* (1986), p. 57. He writes: 'Consultancy is akin to midwifery in that it encourages the discovery of repressed, unconscious meanings and allows for these to be born into the world of the conscious.' Bion also speaks of Socratic midwifery in *Bion in New York and Sao Paolo* (1978), p.97.

<sup>xiii</sup> In the *Theaetetus* [151a] while explaining his art of midwifery, Socrates tells Theaetetus: 'There's another experience which the people who associate with me have in common with women in childbirth: they feel pain, and they're full of difficulties, night and day - far more so than the women. And my art can bring on that pain, and end it.', p. 14., *ibid.*

The full discussion of Socrates' art of midwifery spans 148d-151d.

<sup>xiv</sup> Bion writes in *Attention and Interpretation*: 'Memory and desire are 'illuminations' that destroy the value of the analyst's capacity for observation as a leakage of light into a camera might destroy the value of the film being exposed.' (p.69).

<sup>xv</sup> Christopher Bollas coined the term 'the unthought known'; in addition to it here, is the other side of the coin, 'the undreamt known'. Roughly defined, it is *that which the practice of social dreaming seeks to illumine, in company with the unthought. A realisation that is essentially undreamable, as may only occur in the conscious company of others experienced in 'waking' life.*

<sup>xvi</sup> At least this is the implication we draw from the small amount Bion says on the "black hole" theory.

<sup>xvii</sup> The messianic idea, and the group's hostility to the analyst are also discussed by Bion in *Experiences and Groups* (1961).

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<sup>xviii</sup> The sublime has often been described in an oxymoron like ‘delightful horror’. Kant, famously, considered the delightful part to be ‘reason’ still standing, and brightly reaffirming itself after a frightful vision of something which seemed beyond its comprehension. So, perhaps, by ‘as if the sublime were halved for good’ I (J.B.) mean *as if* there were a thrill akin to this delightful-horror, but with the frightful vision - in this case the ‘catastrophic change’ - somehow merged *into* oneself, and experienced as infinite, incomprehensible delight.

<sup>xix</sup> See *Attention and Interpretation* (1970), esp. ch. 3, *Reality Sensuous and Psychic*.

<sup>xx</sup> The meaning of this sign *R* is not intended to bear any relation to W. Gordon Lawrence’s ‘R+’ which he has used to symbolise ‘thinking to be in touch with reality’; nor its variations. We do, however, wish to acknowledge Gordon Lawrence’s idea, and recognise that it may indeed have an important relationship with, and help to elucidate, some of the issues approached in this paper.). W. G. Lawrence, ‘Centering of the Sphinx for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organisations’, *Socio-Analysis*. Vol. 1, No. 2, pp 99 – 122.

<sup>xxi</sup> Sathya Sai Baba is reported to have said, in conversation with John Hislop: ‘The dream state is unreality in truth; the waking state is truth in unreality; and the transcendent state is truth in truth.’ It appears to relate well to the above formulations. J.S. Hislop, *Conversations with Sathya Sai Baba*, Birth Day Publishing Company, San Diego, California, 1978, p.81.

<sup>xxii</sup> For illumination on the nature of the gnani, and by virtue of this, *turiya*, see the various published talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, and/or Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See Simone Weil’s essay ‘The *Iliad*, Poem of Might’. ‘Might is that which makes a thing of anybody who comes under its sway. When exercised to the full it makes a thing of man in the most literal sense, for it makes him a corpse.’, in *The Simone Weil Reader*, pp. 153 - 154. George A. Panichas (ed), Moyer Bell, Rhode Island, 1977.