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# The Valency Theory: The Human Bond From A New Psychoanalytic Perspective

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## Abstract

The present paper discusses some psychoanalytical conceptions concerning what links people to each other, or the human bond. Psychoanalysis, can be regarded as a science dealing basically with, although not directly, the human bond or link linking the person with his external and internal objects. The fact that this bond is in perpetual transformation, and therefore can be apprehended from different angles has led to various psychoanalytical conceptions or theories which are more complementary than contradictory. These theories deal with the human bond at different stages of its formation and transformation. They have, for instance, dealt with the established bond, the interrupted bond, and the missing one and the effect it has on the person's *psyche*. In this paper, I have first tried to rethink some of the principal psychoanalytical concepts, such as libido, fantasy, links, attachment, and valency, in terms of human bond, focusing thus on Freud's, Klein's, Bowlby's, and Bion's works. Then, finally I tried to introduce briefly my "valency theory" which is the result of my own extension of Bion's work, especially his concept of valency.

Key Words: *Bion, human bond, libido, fantasy, valency, attachment*

## Introduction

The present article deals with what has always and continue to intrigue thinkers, namely the bond linking humans to each other. The purpose here is to discuss the different attempts to shed light on this bond from a psychoanalytical perspective or vertex in Bion's terminology.

The term *bond* or *bonding* comes from the 12th century English word *band* which means something that binds, ties, or restrains. According to Meriam-Webster, this term has been applied to describe interpersonal human relationship since 1976. However, much earlier than the origin of the term, the Greek philosopher Plato, in the 4th century BC, argued that the bonds of human society are directed by love. Moreover, describing strong marriage bond, Goethe (1963), in his famous novella *Elective Affinities*, compared it to the bond between the particles of quicksilver which find a unity together through the process of chemical affinity. In other words, Goethe argued that humans passionately bound resemble reactive substances in a chemical equation. Therefore, Goethe's work *novella* was considered as a treatise on the chemistry of

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love. Those early metaphoric ideas about the chemical origin of human bond, have been further developed by contemporary thinkers to a point where we can now find such terms as, to mention only a few, "team chemistry", "human thermodynamics", "nuclear family", "interpersonal chemistry". When used in sociology, behavioral psychology, and evolutionary psychology, the latter term refers, in intimate or romantic relationships, to the spontaneous reaction of two people to each other, especially their mutual sense of attraction or understanding. In daily conversation people sometimes use also the terms of "good" and "bad chemistry" to qualify the bond, or relationship between two persons.

Other attempts to understand the human bond have led researchers to propose a number of theories about different bonds, such as, for instance, "pair bond", "maternal bond", "paternal bond", "affectional bond", "limerent bond", "erotic bond", "limbic bond", "societal bond", "capture bond" (usually referred to as Stockholm syndrome), and "human-animal bond". Hence, as shown by these numerous terms, the existence of a "human bond" invisible to our eyes, is, unconditionally and widely accepted. However, in spite of this wide acceptance of the term, up to now not a single work has been devoted exclusively to the nature and origin of human bond.

Nevertheless, the present author holds the belief that, although psychoanalysts have not dealt directly with human bond, it has always been present, hiding in the back stage of psychoanalytic theories. The purpose of the present paper is thus to search for it inside psychoanalysis, bring it to the front stage, and shed light on its nature from different psychoanalytical vertexes.

## Human Bond in Psychoanalysis

It is not an exaggeration to state that psychoanalysis deals basically with human and object relationships and the link or bond linking the person with his external and internal objects. As a matter of fact, it deals, as mentioned above, with the interrupted bond, the established bond, and the missing bond and its consequences. In the present paper, I will examine the principal psychoanalytical conceptions of the human bond, focusing on Freud's, Klein's, Bowlby's, Bion's works, and finally on my own extension of the latter's ideas as reflected in my valency theory.

### 1. Freud: Libido and The Libidinal Bond

According to Freud, human bond is essentially libidinal in its nature. That is, humans are linked to each other by what he called "libido". Freud (1915) used this concept to refer to "a quantitatively variable force which could serve as a measure of processes and transformations occurring in the field of sexual excitations" (p. 217). In another of his famous work, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud (1921) redefined the libido stating: "we call by that name the energy, regarded as a quantitative magnitude (though not at present actually

measurable), of those instincts which have to do with all that may be comprised under the world love" (p. 90). Freud conceptualized the libido concept and theory from three different perspectives: the metapsychological (including the dynamic and economic perspectives), the psycho-pathological and the developmental perspectives.

Seen from a developmental perspective, the libido theory postulates four different libidinal stages, corresponding to developmental phases of childhood: the oral, anal, phallic, and genital stages. Each libidinal stage is characterized, according to Freud (1905), by one erotogenic zone and an object, partial or whole. The erotogenic zone corresponds to the body part where excitation is centered and around which the child's fusion phantasies are built. As regards the object, it refers to the one (whole or partial) -- phantasized as forming a whole, or interacting with the self -- onto which libido is cathected by the subject (infant, child or adult). Excitation of the erotogenic zone and libidinal object-cathexes will result in a given object-relation or bond, and each libidinal stage is thus characterized by a specific type of object-relation. Hence, libido can be viewed as an energy binding (sexually, in a Freudian meaning) a subject to his object. Precising further this idea, Freud explains, however, that it is the libido when inhibited in its aim that makes lasting ties between men possible.

Freud (1921) examined also his conception of the nature of human bond within the group from another perspective, namely the dynamical point of view. To discuss the dynamics of the bond linking group members to each other and each to the leader, he completed the concept of libido, adding another concept, namely, the process of identification which he thought was involved in any libidinal bond. He argued that identification was the earliest means to get a libidinal tie with an object, or a person. As a result of a regressive retreat, it may even become a substitute for libidinal ties. Identification allows the person, wishing to be like another person, to introject the latter into his/her ego. It was first put forward by Ferenczi (1916), one of Freud's earliest collaborators, who postulated that the infant was inclined to make pleasant experiences part of his own self by introjection, and get rid of those unpleasant and painful ones using projection. This idea was further applied by Freud who conclude that the common bond in a group is the result of this kind of "introjective" identification with the leader by each member. Using the case of the Church as an example to illustrate his idea, Freud explains that each Christian takes Christ into himself as his ideal and identifies himself with him. According to Freud (1923), the ego comprises two different parts: the ego, and the *ego ideal* which he later replaced, in *The Ego and the Id*, by the concept of *super-ego*. In the process of identification, the object (Christ, for instance) is thus introjected into the ego ideal, either adding to it or replacing it. In the Army, for instance, each soldier identifies with his Commander-in-Chief and replaces his ego ideal with the leader. Whereas in the example of two person in love, the ego can become either enriched (through introjection), or impoverished as a result of the ego surrendering itself completely to the object.

It is noteworthy that Freud (1921) used the concept of libido and identification in order to understand group behavior, but this does not mean that his ideas are specific to the group. For Freud believes that what he said about the group applies also to the human tie or bond in general. For him, the relationship between a child and his father, for instance, resembles the one between the group leader and his subordinates, and the one between the primal father and his sons described in his *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1912).

## 2. Klein: Phantasy as a Bond

Melanie Klein is widely known as one of the most famous theorists who have (although unintentionally) distanced themselves from Freud's ideas especially those deeply related to the so-called *drive model* or theory. Klein's emphasis on the child's early (oral) interaction with and experiences of the object, has led her from the instinct to the infant-object relation, and consequently to object relations theory. Although Klein did not directly and specifically address the problem of human bond, most of her works suggest that what binds the infant to his objects (whole and partial), and later, adults to each other, is *phantasy*.

According to the *Vocabulary of Psychoanalysis* (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967), phantasy corresponds to an:

imaginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfilment of a wish (in the last analysis, an unconscious wish) in a manner that is distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes. Phantasy has a number of different modes: conscious phantasies or daydreams, unconscious phantasies like those uncovered by analysis as the structures underlying a manifest content, and primal phantasies (p. 314)

Based on this definition, identification (and all other defense processes) as defined by Freud is an exemplary phantasy. For the wish to be like a given object and introject it into one's ego is not a conscious wish and can hardly be fulfilled in reality. The introjected objects do not correspond also, obviously, to real concrete objects, but to figures distorted by the child's own projections.

Klein (1946, 1955) developed further Freud's ideas on phantasy and (introjective and projective) identification, given them more weight in the early relationship of the infant with its objects. Segal (1974) in her *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*, states that the "analysis of early projective and introjective object relationships revealed phantasies of objects introjected into the ego from earliest infancy, starting with the introjection of the ideal and the persecutory breasts...the penis; then the whole objects like the mother, the father, and the parental couple" (p.19-20). According to Klein, the infant experiences in the oral stage two

different phases or "positions", each characterized by specific phantasies, interaction, and bond with the oral object.

The earliest one is the "paranoid-schizoid position" which is experienced by the infant during the first six months following the birth. During this period, the infant is exposed to persecutory anxiety and fears stirred up by the conflict between the inborn life and death instincts. The infant resorts therefore to phantasy as a defense against this anxiety. It resorts to splitting of ego-parts experienced as containing the death instinct, and their projection outwards into the sole immediately available object, the breast. The latter is fantasized by the infant as containing those persecuting part-objects, and therefore as a bad and threatening object. Thus, the initial fear of the inborn death instinct becomes a fear of a persecutory breast (Segal, 1974). Since the death instinct can not be completely projected, the remaining part of it will be converted by the infant's ego into aggression and used to attack the persecutory breast.

Of course, this is only one aspect of the infant's relationship to its early object. The infant is also capable of and obliged to establish simultaneously another, more favourable, kind of relationship with a better breast for its survival. This relationship is made possible by the ego's projection of a part of its libido on the breast to create fantasmatically an ideal object and establish a libidinal relationship with it. Hence, at this stage of its development the infant has a relationship with two separate and different objects: one bad, threatening, and one ideal. The bond to these two objects is thus the result of the infant fantasmatic activity as expressed through the defense processes of splitting, projection, especially projective identification. Segal (1974) explained that the latter allows the ego to split-off some of its parts and project them "into the external object, which then becomes possessed by, controlled and identified with the projected parts" (p.27). Although the concept of projective identification was developed by Klein, the latter has "acknowledged Freud as the source of her ideas and did not mention Ferenczi in this context" (De Board, 1978; p. 28). In Klein et al. (1955), she states that Freud "was aware of identification by projection, although he did not differentiate it by means of a special term" (p.313, footnote). Similarly, Jaques (1970), a Kleinian analyst, supports this acknowledgment, concluding: "Indeed it is in that book [*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*] that the process later called 'projective identification' by Melanie Klein is first described" (p.217).

Klein (1955) called this developmental phase "paranoid-schizoid position", because it involves a fantasmatic and paranoid relationship, or bond with a persecutory object, feeling of persecutory anxiety (paranoid), and splitting of the ego (schizoid). According to Klein, this early bond with the bad and ideal object is a normal step in the infant's normal psychic development. It persists through adult life and determines our later way of relating to internal and external objects and our interpersonal relationships in general.

The following position is called the "depressive position" and commences in about the second half of the first year after birth. It is "depressive", because the infant experiences feelings of

depression, despair, and guilt towards the mother. The infant begins to recognize his mother, and experiences her as a whole object (person), integrating thus the two opposit aspects: the bad and the good and ideal one. The infant is no more faced with two opposit breasts, one frustating and the other gratifying, but with a whole person who can be bad, frustrating, and good, gratifying at the same time. This leads the infant to integrate also his own feeling towards the mother. The infant's love and hate impulses are thus directed towards the same object. Depending on her response to its needs, the latter will either hate or love her, and it is this ambivalence towards her that stirs its depressive anxiety. The infant's integration of its ego-parts, and consequently the recognition of the object's wholeness generates in the infant depressive feelings and belief of having, as a result of its sadistic impulses, destroyed and damaged the mother now perceived as the source of one's life. This is followed thus by feelings of despair, guilt, and consequently a desire to repair (reparation mechanism) the mother. It goes without saying that these feelings and desire are the products of the infant's fantasmatic activity. In other words, they constitute phantasies whose function is, as mentioned above, to bind the infant to its mother.

Like the paranoid-schizoid, the depressive position also is a normal phase in the infant's development and attempt to establish a bond with its early and adult objects. According to Klein, these early positions and their characteristic phantasies underlying the infant's bond with its objects, are peculiar to early developmental stages only but can serve also to explain adult behaviour and interpersonal relationships or bonds.

It goes without saying that I have confined myself to a brief description of only the two positions, but this does not imply that the fantasy's binding function is limited to these positions. For Klein's ideas about later stages and phases (pre-oedipal, anal, phallic and oedipal) suggest also that fantasy tends to serve as an interpersonal bond through all human life.

### 3. Bowlby: Attachment Theory and Internal Working Model

The term of "attachment" is generally used to refer to the special nature of intimate relationship especially the child-parent relationship. In other words, it designates the strong emotional bond that develops between the infant and its care-giver, and which consequently provides the infant with a feeling of security. There are many theories which have attempted to explain the salient characteristics and intensity of the attachment relationships. Early theories are of various nature: behavioristic, ethological, and psychoanalytic. What is common to these theories is the fact that the child's attachment, or bond to its caregiver, is secondary to the child's need for nutrition and protection. In other words, attachment is not a basic need; it is a function of feeding.

Of course, John Bowlby whose name is associated with attachment, probably knew about

these early theories, but he was not influenced by them. He rather turned to ethology for reference. Ethology's concern is about the adaptive or survival value of animal behavior and its evolution (Hinde, 1989). It was during the 1960s that findings of ethologists -- especially the works of the famous zoologists Lorenz and Tinbergen (Dewsbury, 1992) -- were first applied to human children. The most well known work of Lorenz and Tinbergen is the one on *imprinting*. This concept refers to the early following behavior of certain baby birds that ensures that the young will stay close to the mother, be fed, and protected from danger. According to ethologists, human infants bear resemblance with their primate ancestors, and are biologically predisposed to contribute actively to establish a bond with their care-givers, which promotes the chances for their individual genes to survive. Since, ethologists believe that the infant's behavior can be best understood in terms of its adaptive value, they attempt to understand the whole organism-environment system with its physical, social and cultural aspects, without neglecting the role played by learning and its effect on individual behavior.

It was Bowlby (1969) who, inspired by many sources (biology, evolution theory, psychoanalysis, etc.), especially Lorenz's (1952) studies on imprinting, first applied the idea to the infant-care-giver bond, and with his Canadian student Mary Ainsworth, put forwards an "ethological" theory, often referred to as "attachment theory". Bowlby believed that the human infant is, like the animal infant, equipped with a set of an innate attachment system including a number of signalling behaviors such as crying, calling, babbling, smiling, clinging, non-nutritional sucking, and motoric behaviours such as approaching, following and seeking objects.

All these behaviors are displayed to increase proximity between the infant and significant others, attract others attention, and therefore increase the chances that the infant will be protected from any eventual danger by its attachment figures. In the case of repeated favourable responses from the care-giver, an early true emotional bond develops, and is later supported and strengthened by new cognitive and emotional capacities as well as by the care-givers' (or attachment figures) consistent, sensitive, and responsive care. This experience has for consequence the establishment of an enduring emotional bond with the care-givers, through which the infant is thus provided by its caregivers, with a secure base. From this base, the infant will be able to safely explore its environment, and return to it in case a given danger or a need is felt.

Bowlby (1969) argued that this early infant-caregivers bond is thus internalized by the infant as a part of its personality, and develops later into an "internal working model", or a set of expectations about the availability of attachment figures and the likelihood of receiving support from them. This working model will become also a basis for understanding and establishing all future intimate interpersonal relationships during infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adult life.

Stated differently, for Bowlby and his colleagues, it is thus this internal working model that makes possible, determines the quality, and assures the future of our interpersonal relationships.

In a few words, it constitutes a bonding means for human relationships. Bowlby initially met with strong resistance to his ideas, both from psychoanalysts, and other professionals. His view were considered as chauvinistic and continued to be object of controversy even after his death.

#### 4. Bion: The Bond From Different Vertexes

Although Wilfred Bion has not devoted any complete work to human bond, many of the theories and concepts attributed to him show clearly that he has tried to shed light on it from different vertexes. Bion's attempts to understand human bond can be grouped under four vertexes, namely 1) the bond's means, 2) the bond's quality, 3) the bond's key, and 4) the bond's chemistry.

The bond's Means: As a Kleinian, Bion (1962, 1970) held that any object relationship or bond can be conceived in terms a "container" containing a content or "contained", referring to them respectively with the symbols  $\hat{C}$  and  $\hat{c}$ . The mother-infant relationship is an example of a bond between a  $\hat{C}$  (mother) and a  $\hat{c}$  (the infant). Under favorable conditions the  $\hat{C}$ - $\hat{c}$  couple is emotionally bound. In this case, the bond is said to be positive, that is, leading to further development and psychic stability of both  $\hat{C}$  and  $\hat{c}$ . On the opposit, the negative bond designates a  $\hat{C}$ - $\hat{c}$  couple emotionally disbound. Bion associated the negative bond with stagnation, emotional and intellectual disturbance, and even psychic death of the  $\hat{C}$ - $\hat{c}$  couple.

Developing further Klein's concept of *projective identification*, Bion postulated that this phantastic process is not only a defensive means, but is also a communicative means without which the emotional  $\hat{C}$ - $\hat{c}$  bond would not be possible. It helps the infant ( $\hat{c}$ ) to communicate with its mother during the pre-verbal phases of its development. According to Bion the infant resorts to projective identification to combine with its mother and put into her/his painful frightening and unbearable experiences or ego-parts (for example, the feeling of hunger and its bodily consequences), identifying these with her. This allows him/her to have her contain them, namely experience and transform them into better ones.

The infant's resort to projective identification is due to the fact that the latter is deprived at birth of what Bion (1962) calls "alpha function" ( $\alpha$ -function), or the apparatus which gives meaning to our sense impressions and experiences. Due to the lack of  $\alpha$ -function, the infant is unable to make sense of its emotional (as well as bodily) experiences. Bion calls the infant's meaningless emotional experiences "beta-elements" ( $\beta$ -elements). These  $\beta$ -elements are experienced by the infant as painful and frightening, and stir in him the fear of annihilation, and, therefore, the urgent need to get rid of them by means of projective identification. The aim of the infant's projective activity is to get bound to the mother (or the breast), and then make her contain his fear and distress. Containing for the mother involves using her  $\alpha$ -function and its



inherent factor, *reverie*, in order to transform the infant's nameless fear into a one which can be named and beared, or into an "alpha ( - ) element". Thanks to the repetition of this kind of positive - interaction, and increase of -elements, the development of an -function proper to the infant will take place, leading to a decrease in the infant's resort to projective identification as a means to get bound to the mother. Hence, as implied by the ideas discussed above, especially the concept of projective identification, for Bion, like for Klein, fantasy fulfils a bonding function between a subject and its object.

The Bond's Quality: Bion (1970)'s work, especially his - model, subtly suggests that the bond between the two ( and ) can be either healthy and growth-inducing or pathological and destructive, depending on its quality. Bion distinguished between three types of bonds: "symbiotic", "commonsal", and "parasitic". When the bond is of a symbiotic type, one of the pair, usually the , "depends on another to mutual advantage" (p.95). The prototype of this bond would be the one linking an infant with a stable mother. Its main characteristics are constructive confrontation, promoting growth and maturation, reliance on projective identification, the need to feel contained by the container, and predominance of positive emotions, such as love, hate and knowledge, which are opposed to their negative counterparts mentioned below.

By commonsal bond Bion meant "a relationship in which two objects share a third to the advantage of all the three" (p. 95). As put by Grinberg et al. (1993), when related by a commonsal bond, and "coexist without affecting each other; there is no confrontation or change even though there might be some change if the relation changes" (p. 19). The feeling of separateness and psychic independency by each member of the couple is a pre-requisite for the establishment of this type of bond. The sexual bond between the parent and its outcome, the child (the third), and the therapist-client encounter and its resulting third, the subjective experience, constitute examples of the commonsal bond. Moreover, this type of bond is characterized by what Bion (1970) calls knowledge, or "K-link", discussed later.

The third, or parasitic type of bond, "represents a relationship in which one depends on another to produce a third, which is destructive of all the three" (p.95). The prevailing emotions are envy, and the negative or anti-links described below, and their outcome, destruction. Projective identification is excessively used as a defensive means in the parasitic relationship. As example, Grinberg et al. (1993) refered to a "group that promotes an individual who is exceptional in his creative-destructive role to a position in the Establishment where his energies are absorbed by administrative functions" (p.19). The author (Hafsi, 2004a) also discusses a detailed example of parasitic relationship in a group. Other researchers also have further developed (Meltzer, 1992) or rephrased (e.g., Billow, 2003; 2004) these three quality types of the bond, but they will not be discussed here, because this goes far beyond the scope of the present

paper.

The Bond's Key: Bion (1962) discussed also the  $-$  bond in terms of the basic key emotion, or "link", characterizing it. The term "link" depicts the emotional experience resulting from the encounter of two people or two elements of a same person. Bion believes that a relationship is impossible, and mental development unthinkable without these basic links. He argued that  $+$  and  $-$  can be linked by three basic links, namely Love (L), Hate (H), and Knowledge (K). He explained that these links between  $+$  and  $-$  or two subjects (A and B) can be phrased as, "A L B", "A H B", and "A K B". The first formula corresponds to a bond energized by love, and means that A and B are in a mental state such as they can love each other. The second one describes the bond of two persons linked by hate, meaning that A and B hates each other and are able to tolerate it. The third one describes a mental state where the two subjects knows and are still involved in the processus of knowing each other.

These three links (L, H, K) characterize only relationships or bonds which promote growth and mental maturity. Bonds leading to stagnation and destruction are characterized by the negative or minus counterparts of these links, namely, minus L ( $-$  L), minus H ( $-$  H), and minus K ( $-$  K). Unlike the positive links, these minus links are characterized by greed and envy in a Kleinian meaning of the term. They tend, consequently, to spoil and destroy the  $-$  bond, and any possibility of development.

Moreover, Bion considers the links as keys to understand the nature and dynamics of the relationship. Knowing the type of link which characterizes a given relationship helps us to give meaning to the verbal content exchanged within the relationship. The link is, according to Bion, like the key for a piece of music; it helps to link the notes together in a given way, giving rise to the melody. For instance, a behavior displayed as an acting-out, or a daily statement like "I don't feel good today, Doctor" would be incomprehensible without knowing the key or the link characterizing the therapist-client bond at a certain moment of the therapy. In spite of the fact that he emphasized the importance of these links, Bion did not discuss in details all the links and their negative counterparts. He confined himself to K and  $-$ K, because these are directly related with the analytical relationship.

The Bond's Chemistry: Changing the vertex, Bion has attempted also to shed light on human bond from what might be called a chemical perspective. Based on a widely held metaphorical representation of the individual as an atom (Moreno, 1937), Bion (1961) borrowed from chemistry the concept of "valency". According to the English dictionary, "valency" designates a measurement of the power of an atom to combine with others, by the number of hydrogen atoms it can combine with or displace. Bion used the concept to explain how people come to combine with and get bound to each other. He defined it as an individual mental predisposition

"to enter into combination with the group in making and acting on the basic assumption" (p.116), or the phantasy dominating the group at a certain period of its development and history. This combination of group members through valency is made, according to Bion, "at levels that can hardly be called mental at all but are characterized by behavior in the human being that is more analogous to tropism in plants than to a purposive behavior" (p.117). He thus concluded that valency is "a spontaneous, unconscious function of the gregarious quality in the personality of man" (p.136).

Furthermore, since Bion adnumbrated three different "basic assumptions" (Hafsi, 2000; 2002), basic assumption of dependency (baD), basic assumption of fight/flight (baF), and basic assumption of pairing (baP), we can, following other researchers (e.g. Stock & Thelen, 1958), assume that he suggested also the existence of three valency types, namely the dependency valency, fight/flight valency, and pairing valency. As long as a man is mentally functioning, he/she has valency (Hafsi, 2006), or in Bion's own words, a man "can have no valency only by ceasing to be, as far as mental function is concerned, human" (p.116). To put it differently, as long as person is mentally alive, he/she is tied to others through valency. The intensity of valency can also vary from low to high; a person can have a low or a high level of valency. This is all what Bion had to say about valency, a concept he introduced but left incomplet or, to use his terminology, as "unsaturated" as possible for further investigation and development.

## 5. Beyond Bion: The Valency Theory

The antecedents: With the exception of the almost inexistent reference to this concept by psychoanalysts, including Bion's followers and reader, the concept of valency has not, unfortunately, attracted enough attention. Until recently only few rare researchers have shown interest in this concept. All the attempts made to contribute to the understanding and development of this concept failed to go beyond Bion's restricted and vague conception (Hafsi, 2006). In the 1950s, for instance, Stock and Thelen (1958) with their students have conducted a number of empirical studies, using the concept of valency. They also devised a sentence completion test they called the Reaction to Group Situation Test (Hafsi, 1997) to measure valency and work. Unlike Bion, they conceived valency in terms of four types, separating the fight/flight into fight and flight valencies. The purpose of most of the studies conducted by these researchers was to investigate the effect of valency on the person's behavior and different other independent variables. Following Stock, Thelen and their colleagues, other researchers, such as Katerud & Foss (1989), Armelius & Armelius (1982), have continued working on the effect of valency, but no one has tackled the basic questions related to this concept left unanswered by Bion. That is, no one has tried to discuss, for example, the psychogenesis of valency, and its relationship to other Bonian concepts. In other to remedy this, the author has undertaken the

task to address, in his way, the most important of these unanswered questions. What follows is a summary of the author's (Hafsi, 2006) main contributions which led to further enhancement of the status of valency from a concept to what he calls a *valency theory*.

A redefinition of valency: Valency theory is based on the Freudo-Bionian idea that the distinction between individual psychology and group psychology (Freud, 1921), or between individual and group (Bion, 1961) as two independent entities is ephemeral and misleading. For the individual is in perpetual interaction with group, and one can not exist without the other. The individual is present in the group, and the group, even when not visible, has an internal presence within the individual, as an entity Bion called "groupishness". That is why both, Freud and Bion, regard the difference between the two as merely a matter of numbers. Bion goes even further, stating that "the apparent difference between group psychology and individual psychology is an illusion produced by the fact that the group provides an intelligible field of study for certain aspects of individual psychology" (p.134), such as valency.

As discussed above, Bion used valency to describe the means through which the individual is bound with others in the group and with the group's dominant basic assumption. However, this does not imply that valency is exclusively a group-related characteristic, and therefore, the group presence is indispensable. As an arena for interpersonal interaction, the group allows the person to express his/her valency, rendering it thus more visible to an observer; but it is not a *sine qua non* condition. For even if in a dyad or alone a person is always in contact with a group, be it real or fantastic. The analytic couple, for instance, is also a group situation, because of the invisible "analytic third" (Ogden, 1994). Therefore, omitting reference to the group, the author has attempted a broad redefinition of valency, regarding it as an individual mental (unconscious) predisposition and means which allows the person to get bound to and relate with one's (internal and external) objects (including people, groups, etc.) in a determined and stable manner. It is also reflected in the person's perception of and attitude towards his/her physical and social environment, and determine various aspects of his/her social life. Moreover, valency is different from the other seemingly similar concepts discussed above, such as libido, phantasy, identification, link, or "bonding"(Billow, 2003) which is not discussed here. While those concepts describe the mental process taking place within the subject-object relationship, or in the interpersonal mental space, valency refers, as explicated above, to what links the subject to his/her object. Temporally speaking, valency refers to a moment or period previous to these mental processes. To put it differently, for these processes to be deployed, the subject and the object need to be first bound through valency. In this sense, the author believes that, whether defective (pathologic) or healthy, valency is a prerequisite for the emergence and/or mobilization of projective (and introjective) identification, libidinal cathexis, and attachment, and other kinds of object relationships.

The typology: Following Stock and Thelen (1958), the author distinguishes four different types of valency: Dependency valency (DV), fight valency (FV), flight valency (FIV), and pairing valency (PV). As discussed in details elsewhere (Hafsi, 2006), DV is characterized by interdependency. The DV (DVP) allows the person to establish bonds or interpersonal relationships wherein he can depend or rely on someone (spouse, partner, friend, teacher, therapist, etc.), and have this person rely on him/her. This valency type is therefore associated with various secondary individual features, such as low self-evaluation, unconditional trust of others and altruism, empathy, which will not be discussed here. But, suffice to say that all these secondary features reflect the basic need for interdependency.

The FV is characterized by confrontation. It predisposes the person to form interpersonal bonds through interpersonal confrontation. A person with FV(FVP) will tend to relate to others by confronting them and expecting being confronted by them. Confrontation as used here comprises healthy self-assertiveness, outspokenness, competitiveness, criticism and aggressiveness. The FVP gives the impression that he/she behaves as if "he/she wants the world to confront it (see Hafsi, 2006).

The principal characteristic of FIV is conflict avoidance. It allows the person to establish interpersonal relationship devoid of conflicts. This valency is consequently associated with a manifest lack of excessive activity, self-assertiveness, overt aggressiveness and dependency. For All these are perceived by the person with a FIV as features inducing interpersonal conflicts; refraining therefore from displaying them is valued as a the best road leading to a conflict-free interpersonal bonding.

The PV allows the person to establish intimate bond with the object. What characterizes the PV is thus a need for intimacy, and every feature and trait that may lead to improve and strengthen it. For instance, a person with a PV (PVP) would value highly freedom and equality because he/she perceives them as closely associated with intimacy and friendship. His/her preference for small groups over large ones is due to his/her belief that intimate bonds are more probable to be formed in the former. Moreover, for a PVP, a sexual bond is the prototype of the kind of human bond he/she is predisposed to and need to establish with his/her peers.

Valency Constitution: According to valency theory, a psychologically well-adjusted person is "polyvalent", that is he has a valency constitution comprising more than one valency, with only one dominant, or "active valency" (ACV). The other, or less active valencies, he/she may display are called "auxiliary valencies" (AXV). The ACV refers to the valency which a person resorts to most frequently to form interpersonal bonds, and AXV to the less frequently displayed ones. The latter fulfill two principal functions: one adaptive and the other supportive. They fulfill an adaptive function allowing the person to form temporary bonds, when he/she is in a situation which, for a given reason, does not allow him/her to relate to others through his/her ACV, and

therefore to adapt to that situation. When fulfilling a supportive function, they help the person to maintain and strengthen the bond formed through his/her ACV, by displaying from time to time one of his/her AXV. This corresponds to a situation wherein, for instance a person with FV as ACV tries to respond to his/her partner's need for dependency by occasionally displaying DV, and therefore maintaining and eventually strengthening the bond.

Moreover, a mentally-stable person can display only one valency (whether ACV or AXV) at one time towards one person. When one valency is displayed or active, the other three remain inoperant, and are kept undifferentiated within the individual "protomental system". Bion (1961) coined the concept of protomental system to "explain the fate of the inoperative basic assumptions" (p.101) of the group when one is manifestly dominant. He visualized the protomental system as a concept transcending experience, and as a matrix "in which physical and psychological or mental are undifferentiated" (p.102). Although this concept was meant to understand the whereabouts of the group's basic assumptions, it is here applied to the individual because, as discussed by Bion, 1) the group protomental system is an extension of the individual one, and 2) because it is helpful when one is trying to investigate about the whereabouts of the AXV. Nevertheless, it is used as a model and not as a theory; it can be thus discarded when it is no more useful (Bion, 1970).

The psychogenesis: According to the theory of valency, the psychogenesis of valency is rooted in the infant's early object relations characterizing psychotic (paranoid-schizoid, and depressive) positions, pre-oedipus as described by Klein (1946) and her followers, and Oedipus. The infant acquires the four types of valency as a result of its interaction with the internal and external objects prevailing at these developmental phases (Hafsi, 2006).

Owing to its physical and psychical immaturity, the infant experiencing the paranoid-schizoid position is faced with two opposite and fantastic breasts, one all good, dependable and ideal, and one all bad, frustrating and persecuting. It is during its interaction with the ideal object that the infant acquires the DV. Under favorable conditions, the infant has repetitive good experiences in its relation with the ideal object, which are reinforced through the feeding behavior. The more the infant needs the ideal object (breast), and the more the latter is experienced as responding positively to this need, the more the infant learns to associate these positive and gratifying experiences with the object and its idealization, and with dependency on it. In other words, the infant gradually learns that dependency is a means to relate to, and be fed and protected by the good object against the bad one. The DV is thus the result of the infant's ability to experience this learning process and the introjection, in a stable way, of a good and dependable loving object. Developmentally speaking, DV is the first bonding means the infant acquires.

One of the child's tragedy resides, however, in the fact that as soon as it becomes aware of the

good breast as its sole source of nourishment, and, therefore, life, this stirs in the infant envious feelings and desires. As discussed by Klein (1946), the infant wishes, not only to take possession of the good breast and its goodness and replace it, but also be itself the source goodness. However, the infant soon comes to realize that this is impossible. This leads him/her to resort to the projection (projective identification) of its envious feelings into the breast, turning it, in phantasy, into an envious, bad object, and therefore devaluating and spoiling it. The infant begins consequently to experience the breast as a persecutory object. This stirs in him/her persecutory anxiety and fear to be attacked and annihilated by it, and various defensive reactions. Thus, to protect itself, the infant will either flee from or attack the breast to spoil and render it unenviable. This marks the beginning of a new kind of object relation. Through this object relation, the infant discovers and learns that fight and flight can be effective means for self-protection, and also for the preservation of the relationship with a good breast, although this relationship involves frustration, fears and suffering. The FV and FIV are thus the outcomes of the experience and introjection of these paranoid-schizoid object relations.

The next acquired valency is PV. As discussed above, the main characteristic of PV is a need for intimacy and the unconscious perception of sexual relationship or bond as the prototype of interpersonal relationships. Its acquisition takes thus place during the early phase of Oedipus complex, or preoedipal phase. It coincides with the depressive position and the moment when the infant begins to recognize people, especially the parents as separate persons linked libidinally to each other. At this period of its development the infant phantasizes his parents in an interrupted intercourse, exchanging oral, urethral and genital gratifications. The father's penis is phantasized as a "magic tool" with unlimited and reparative powers; a tool indispensable not only for intercourse but also for interpersonal relationships in general. Therefore the infant will, in phantasy, attempt to incorporate it as a means to repair (reparation mechanism) one's object, experienced as having been destroyed by its (the infant's) aggressive, envious, and greedy attacks. It is this phantastic experience of the parental relationship and the idealization of the penis that leads to the development of the PV in the infant.

At this point of its development, the child has thus acquired the four types of valency, and is ready to deploy them all, showing no particular preference for any of them. In other words, the infant has not acquired a specific ACV yet. For the emergence of a specific valency as an ACV coincides with the infant's working through the Oedipus complex and its entry into the latency period. It is noteworthy that, in terms of valency, working through the Oedipus depends on the child's ability 1) to establish a bond with the same-sex parent by means of DV, and 2) find substitute objects for the parent of the opposite sex and get bound to them through PV.

When the child has worked through Oedipus complex, and entered the latency period, his interpersonal relationships are in general still limited principally to few playmates and family members, especially the mother. The child is likely to spend most of his/her time with the

latter. To be able to relate and have a stable bond with his/her mother, the child must thus display the valency type to which the mother is more responsive and which she values more as a bonding means. The mother's preference for a specific valency reflects her ACV. As a result of his continual interaction with his/her mother, the child will gradually begin to display preference for the valency corresponding to the mother's ACV, not only in his relationship with her, but also with his/her social entourage as a whole. The emergence of ACV is thus determined by the child-mother relationship.

The evolutionary function: Seen from an evolutionary vertex, valency has a biological and therefore a survival function. An individual equipped with a healthy valency constitution, or having an ACV and a number of other AXV, is more likely to have survival advantages. The DV allows him/her to seek and keep a good enough bond with the object which will provide him/her with the nutrition, care, and protection indispensable for survival. The FV predisposes the individual to intuit, feel, recognize, predict dangers, and face or fight them in order to remove them and protect him/herself. The FIV will help the individual to run away from and keep a good enough proximity between him/herself and these dangerous objects and sources so that he/she will not lose sight of them. Finally, the PV allows the individual to seek a partner with whom to form an intimate mental and bodily (sexual) relationship, procreate, and assure thus one's genetic preservation. To put it differently, a healthy valency constitution, provides the individual with an acquired armature which allows him/her 1) to be fed and nurtured, 2) to protect oneself from eventual dangerous objects by means of attack and flight, and 3) to contribute to the preservation of the human species by mating.

The minus valency: As discussed above when a person is equipped with a healthy valency constitution, he is able to form healthy psychical bonds with his peers. Therefore, when, on the contrary, he/does not feel bound mentally to others, we can say that he/she is deprived of a healthy valency. By borrowing the concept from chemistry, Bion (1961) seems to suggest that like atoms humans have valency and are bound to each other through it; a person can have no valency, writes Bion, "only by ceasing to be, as far as mental function is concerned, human" (p.116). Bion did not discuss what he meant by having no valency, and "ceasing to be...human", but some of his other concepts seem to suggest that a person is always mentally functioning and therefore bound with his/her objects (real or *bizarre*), other people, and reality in general. The quality and intensity of the bond may differ, depending on whether it is the "psychotic part" or the "non-psychotic part" (Bion, 1967) of the personality which is operating. Building on Bion's ideas, the author holds that when it is the non-psychotic part that is operating, the person is bound with the object by a healthy or a positive valency (+V). However, when on the contrary, it is the psychotic part that prevails, the person and his/her objects are bound by a negative,



pathological, or minus valency (-V). Like in the case of positive valency, there are four -V types: - DV, - FV, - PV, and - FIV.

In the case of healthy, or positive valency, the subject can thus enjoy healthy interpersonal relationships, adapt to one's social environment, and consequently feel mentally connected, and secure. On the opposite, -V refers to valency when it is negatively functioning. That is, when the subject is led to get bound to the object in a restrictive, perversive, aggressive, adhesive, and destructive way, depending, as discussed below, on his/her degree of frustration toleration and the type of - V displayed. Nevertheless, the resulting bond will, in any case, lead to what Bion (1961) called "parasitic" interpersonal relationships, stirring in the subject (and sometimes in the object as well) a feeling of psychological and physical disconnecteness and isolation.

Hence, - V functions is a destructive or disconnecting means leading to the negative links (- L, - H, and - K) described by Bion (1967, 1970), and their specific object-relations, and pathological discussed later. Each - V is associated principally with one specific minus link: - DV with - L, - FV and - FIV with - H, and - PV with - K. Thus, - V is the opposite of +V, in the sense that the latter binds two persons (or objects) together, and the former disbinds them, or binds a subject with (his own) fantasy.

Furthermore, seen from the concept of "socialism/narcissism" states, which Bion (1992) regards as the roots for mental pathology, positive valency, or +V, is associated with the person's ability to satisfy both of these instinctive poles (socialism and narcissism). On the contrary, -V will lead the subject to seek the satisfaction of only one of the poles, the socialistic or narcissistic one, which will result in a relational fiasco, and a number of mental disorders discussed later.

The aetiology of minus valency (- V): Like +V, - V is also the outcome of the infant's early object-relations. However, their aetiological difference resides in the fact that the former results from the presence and experience of healthy object-relations, and the latter from a psychologically missing or defective ones at an early stage of the development. Using Bion's (1970) terminology, - V is, in other words, the by-product of an encounter with a minus container (- ), as an environmental factor, and a lack of toleration of frustration as an individual factor. As mentioned above, - refers to a container which has no containment ability; a container who is, due to a defective "alpha function" (Bion, 1967; 1962) and other mental difficulties, unwilling or unable to respond adequately to the infant's need for bonding and containment. As a result of the encounter with this - , the infant will not be able to establish a stable and secure bond with it, and will not acquire a personal alpha function; an indispensable apparatus for its mental life and survival. This is followed by a feeling of "disconnectedness", and its consequent feelings of loneliness, frustration, and annihilation fear.

Whether the infant will be able to overcome this feeling of disconnectedness depends on its

ability to tolerate it and the frustration engendered by it. Paraphrasing Bion (1967), we can say that if its toleration is sufficient enough, the infant will be able to resort to thinking as a means to think, transform and modify its experience of frustration. By means of thinking, the infant will thus be able to recreate the bond with the object by using one's AXV, and therefore experiencing a temporary satisfaction. This is what takes place under favorable conditions.

If, however, its ability to tolerate frustration is not sufficient, the infant will not be able to make use of thinking and "learning from experience" (Bion, 1962) abilities. Therefore, unable to bear its feeling of disconnectedness, the infant will tenaciously and forcibly attempt to restore the bond with the object by means of the same valency (ACV), ignoring, or denying its repetitive failure. In this case, each vain attempt will further increase the object's unresponsiveness, and the infant's frustration and intolerance of it, leading thus to a vicious circle. The more the infant tries to restore the bond, the less responsive is the object; and the less responsive the object is, the more frustrated and intolerant is the infant, and the less is its chance to restore the bond through its ACV. The consequences of this vicious circle is not only creating a gap between the infant and the object, but also widening it gradually until, eventually, annihilating totally the very bond linking them.

To recapitulate briefly, - V refers to a tendency to combine with an object in a tenacious and destructive way. It is the result of the interaction of two factors: one environmental and one innate or individual. The former corresponds to an encounter with a - with its destructive features, and the latter to an (individual) ego which lacks a sufficient toleration of frustration. I have used here as an example the infant-object bond, but this does not imply that - V is limited to this bond; for it also applies to adults' pathologic interpersonal relationships in general.

Minus valency (- V) and mental disorders: As discussed somewhere else (Hafsi, 2006), - V is associated with a number of psycho-somatic, neurotic, personality, and psychotic disorders, depending on the person's toleration capability, and the type of - V used to get bound to the object. - V is associated, on the one hand, with neurotic disorders, perversions and personality disorders and the consequent pathologic interpersonal relationships, when its holder, for genetic reasons, is able to display only one valency and depends solely on it to get tenaciously and repetitively bound with the object, regardless of the latter's will and any other condition. On the other hand, - V is associated with psychotic disorders (schizophrenia, for instance) when its holder's intolerance of frustration is so intense that he/she will resort to excessive projective (Klein, 1946) and adhesive identification (Bick, 1968 & 1986; Meltzer, 1975; Tustin, 1981) to parasitically stick to the object, and then suffocating it in order to remove it as a source of frustration. As described by Bion (1967), this will lead to a schizophrenic bond with the object which has now become a "bizarre" one, that is a revengeful object which is dominated and "haunted" by the subject's own projected ego-parts. The bond thus formed is characterized by

fantastic aggression, delusion and is therefore likely to be annihilated, increasing further the subject's feeling of disconnectedness and his/her reliance on adhesive (projective) identification as a survival means.

Moreover, - V is, as mentioned above, associated with several psycho-somatic and personality disorders (Hafsi, 2006). For instance, a subject with - DV is characterized with a strong feeling of helplessness, low self-esteem, and an insatiable urge to feel safe and be protected by a partner. Due to projective identification, this person may also display the opposite attitude. He/she will perceive others as in need of protection and care, and therefore feel the urge to take care of them, even if not solicited for that. - DV shares many aspects of the neurotic tendency Horney (1945) called "moving towards people". A person with - DV is also prone to display disorders comprised in the category named by the DSM-III-R as "Anxious or fearful", namely dependent personality disorder, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.

The person with - FV displays such features as strong conscious and/or unconscious suspicious feelings towards others, destructive competition - where the end justifies the means -, arrogance, and omnipotence, and sometimes illusion of grandeur (Hafsi, 2006). A person characterized with - FV presents most of the particularities of Horney's (1945) "moving against people" neurotic type, and a number of mental disorders such as paranoid personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, and antisocial disorder as described in the DSM-IV.

As to - FIV, it is characterized by introversion, excessive shyness, passive non-conformism and passive aggressiveness, counter-dependency, and, like - FV, suspiciousness. It bears a striking similarity with the neurotic character Horney (1945) called "moving away from people". It is also associated with several mental and personality disorders (Hafsi, 2006); for instance, avoidant personality disorder, passive aggressive personality disorder, and schizoid personality disorder (see DSM-IV). In spite of their differences, these disorders have in common a pathological avoidance of interpersonal close relationships, and passivity.

What characterizes the - PV is a strong, invasive, and therefore, destructive need for not only physical but also psychological intimacy, self-exhibition, a morbid curiosity and seductiveness towards especially the opposite sex (Hafsi, 2006), and a consequent concern with, and sometimes, addiction to sex. Like other minus valencies, - PV is also associated with several neurotic, personality, and sexual perversions (voyeurism, exhibitionism, fetishism, stalking, sexual abuse) disorders. The personality disorder most related to - PV type are, for instance, histrionic personality disorder which is characterized by, among others, excessive emotional expression, attention seeking, inappropriate seductiveness and sexual forwardness (see DSM-IV).

It should be noted that what has been discussed here is only the association between - V and mental disorder. The one between - V and psycho-somatic diseases has been neglected, because it goes far beyond the scope of the present paper, and not because of its lack of importance. In fact, a number of works addressing this question, have discussed the effect - V

has on such psychosomatic diseases as diabetics, tuberculosis (Hafsi, 2004b) and eating disorders, for instance.

**Therapeutic goal:** As can be deduced from what has been discussed above, valency theory corresponds to a psychoanalytical attempt to examine object relations from another vertex, a one focussing on the "chemistry" of the relation, that is the element or substance which makes the subject-object bond possible (healthy or positive valency), and which perverts and destroys it (pathologic or minus valency). What follows is a brief outline of the goal and the different stages involved in psychotherapeutic process characterizing valency theory.

As discussed above, valency theory holds that psychopathology is the result of the subject's pathologic valency. That is, mental disorders, including the so-called psychosomatic diseases, in general are associated with - V, and its inherent inability to form healthy object-bonds. This inability stirs in the subject the vain and morbid reaction to restore the bond, and, as a result, the feeling of disconnectness from the object, and the fear of annihilation when this is not possible. This fear will then lead the subject to defend against it by means of - V, creating thus a vicious circle, and a relational *fiasco or vaccum*.

The therapeutic goal is thus to help the client or patient get out of this vicious circle, and improve his/her ability to create human bonds. In other words, therapy basically aims at helping the client to gain control over his/her - V to prevent it from totally ruining his/her interpersonal relationships, and, in favorable circumstances, to acquire positive (active and auxiliary) valencies he/she has been deprived of through his/her psychological development.

Hence, unlike psychoanalysis in the strict meaning of term, psychotherapy based on valency theory has a clear and specific goal. The therapist knows where to look for the client's mental difficulties. He or she also roughly knows how to proceed, and the different therapeutic phases or stages to pass through. As discussed previously (Hafsi, 1993 & 1995), the psychotherapeutic process includes three main stages: engagement stage, containment stage, and confrontation stage.

The engagement stage consists in providing the client with a stable relational and therapeutic environment which allows him/her to act and make full use of his/her - V without running the risk of breaking the relationship. For this environment is generally rarely available to the client with a - V outside the counselling room. The primary aim of creating this relational environment is engaging the client in the therapeutic process, and creating a therapist-client's emotional bond (Cashdan, 1973 & 1988, Beitman, 1979 & 1987). This will prevent the client from feeling disconnected, deceived, and therefore terminating prematurely the therapy.

The second stage is the one of "containment", in a bionian meaning of the term (Bion, 1962; 1967; 1970). Relying solely on the mental state of "no-memory, no-desire, no-understanding", "reverie", and "negative capability", the therapist will here try to contain the client's - V.

Containing involves accepting unconditionally the client's bonding through - V as a fact, experiencing it, tolerating it, until the therapist has encountered the "selected fact" which will help him/her to put order, and process what he/she has been containing. Processing requires using one's "alpha function" (Bion, 1962), to transform internally, in Bion's terminology, those meaningless content ("contained") or "beta-elements" into meaningful content, or "alpha-elements". If this stage has been successfully experienced by the therapeutical couple (therapist and client), the therapist will be able then to "intuit" the client's - V and the effect it has on their relationship and the therapy. At this stage the therapist will, resorting to what Spontnitz calls "silent interpretation", interpret internally to him/herself the client's type of - V. This indicates that the therapeutical couple are ready for the next stage, namely the one of confrontation.

The confrontation stage is a communication stage. In this stage the therapist passes from intuition to the transmission of the result of this intuition to his/her client. Repetitively communicating the result of his/her intuition, involves providing the clients with interpretations, clarifications, and explanations, confronting him/her with his/her - V and the negative influence it has on the therapeutical relationship, on therapy, and on the client's interpersonal relationships in general. If this stage been successfully passed through, it will provide the client with insight into the relationship between his/her type of - V, the consequent interpersonal disaster he/she is causing around, and the consequences it has on his/her mental life. It is expected that this insight will lead, in the client, to a genuine and stable change in terms of valency, a healthier and a better adjustment to one's social environment.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Seen from a psychoanalytical, especially a bionian vertex, the famous kantian statement, "Cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am), is only partially true when it comes to man. For man exists and is conscious of his existence before the development of his thinking ability. He does not only exist because he thinks; as suggested by the Japanese idiograph 「人間」 or ningen, man exists and is conscious of his existence because he is able to be bound to others. In the present paper I have discussed the main psychoanalytical ideas concerning the human bond, starting with Freud and terminating with my own valency theory. The following is a brief summary of the different attempts to explain the bond.

Although no specific psychoanalytical work has been devoted to human bond, it is inherent in most psychoanalytical theories, holding different names. Freud regarded this bond as fundamendally libidinal. For him a subject is bound to his/her object as a result of his/her libidinal cathexis of the latter. In other words, libido is the means by which humans are bound to each other. This implies that, depending on whether the object cathexis has taken place or not, one can be bound libidinally to or totally disbound from the object.

Like Freud, Klein did not address directly the human bond question, but her work seems to suggest that this bond is formed thanks to the subject's phantastic activity. Focussing on the relationship to the object, she seemed to imply that human bond is the outcome of such defensive fantasms as splitting and projective identification characterizing our relations to our early (part and whole) objects relations and development stages, and which are reflected later in our adulthood interpersonal relationships.

Building on various disciplines, Bowlby developed a theory, known as "attachment theory", to originally explain the emotional bond between the infant and its early care-giver. According to Bowlby, this emotional bond is essentially biological; it is regulated by an innate motivational or attachment system to seek physical and psychological proximity, or get attached, to the care-giver. This attachment system comprises a number of behaviors to signal one's presence, approach or seek the object. When attachment to the object has been successfully experienced, this will lead to the development of an emotional bond with the care-giver which will serve as a secure emotional base from which the infant will be able to safely explore its environment. Bowlby believed that this bond is thus internalized by the infant, and will later function as a "working model", or a basis for the formation of our adult interpersonal relationships and their quality.

Believing in and putting into practice the belief that an object can be addressed from different vertexes, Bion has indirectly suggested three different approaches to the human bond. He suggested that it can be approached from 1) the vertex emphasizing the bond's *means*, or projective identification, 2) the vertex describing the bond's *quality* (symbiotic, commonsal, and parasitic), 3) the vertex allowing us to apprehend the bond's (basic emotional) *key*, or the kind of link (L, H, K, and their negative counterparts, - L, - H, - K) prevailing within the bond, and 4) the vertex shedding light on the bond's *chemistry*, or valency, that "individual predisposition" which makes possible entering in combination with others to act on and create the basic assumption group. However, in spite of the richness of these ideas, resulting from his vertex changes, Bion never developed them as they deserve to be, especially the idea of valency.

That is why, sensing the conceptual and therapeutical importance of the latter concept, I have, based on my own and others's works, undertaken the task to develop it into what I referred to as the *valency theory* (Hafsi, 2006). Briefly summarized, valency is defined here as an unconscious predispositional means allowing the person to get bound to his/her objects in a stable manner. There are four healthy or positive types of valency: Dependency valency, fight valency, flight valency, and pairing valency. A well adjusted person is supposed to have one active valency (ACV), and three auxiliary (AXV) ones which are acquired through the experience of healthy early object relations. Moreover, valency has an evolutionary function. It assures the individual immediate satisfaction of his/her biological needs (nutrition, self-protection, sex), and therefore contributes to the preservation of the human species.

Valency is opposed to minus valency (- V) which corresponds to a pathological way of interacting and getting bound to the objects. There are as much valency types as - V ones. It is the result of the subject's encounter with, or experience of, what Bion calls a minus container at an early stage of its development. - V is associated with a feeling of disconnectedness and isolation from one's objects (including persons), and with a number of neurotic, personality and psychotic disorders. As a matter of fact, according to valency theory, mental and psychosomatic disorders in general are the result of - V.

The goal of psychotherapy based on valency theory is basically helping the client to gain control over his/her - V to prevent it from destroying completely his/her interpersonal relationships, and, in favorable circumstances, to acquire positive (active and auxiliary) valencies. The therapeutic process consists in three main stages: engagement, containment, and confrontation stages.

What differentiates valency theory from other psychoanalytical conceptions, and concepts (libido, projective identification, phantasy, bonding, etc.) of the human bond is first the fact that it deals directly with it. Moreover, valency, and the bond made through it, is a prerequisite condition for the mobilization and emergence of the mental processes to which these concepts refer. Another characteristic of valency theory is the fact that it distinguishes more clearly between normal or positive valency from pathologic or - V and their respective psychogeneses, and regards mental disorders as a result of the latter. The particularity of valency theory resides in, among others, the fact that it comprises a therapeutical method and a precisely defined therapeutic goal.

Finally, valency theory helps to tackle and understand a number of problems neglected by both drive theory and object-relations theory. By focussing on the bond, valency theory helps us to think about what makes possible the infant-care-giver bond at the different stages of its development. For instance, orthodox psychoanalysis does not illuminate us concerning the nature of the bond between the child and his/her mother at the anal stage, and the one binding him/her with each parent at the phallic stage when experiencing the Oedipus complex. From the valency theory vertex, it is easy to see that, in the anal stage, the child and his care-takers (parents for example) are bound through the fight valency. The child-care-taker relationship observed in the anal stage, which is characterized by the child's need for self-affirmation and opposition to one's social environment, and the parent's desire and role to educate and "domesticate" the child, can not be established, if the opponents do not resort respectively to (active or auxiliary) fight valency. The Oedipus complex and its characteristic child-parent relationship and interaction would not be also possible if 1) the child and the mother (in the case of the boy for instance) are not bound through their respective pairing valencies, and 2) the boy and his father are not bound through alternately the fight and flight valencies. The same can be said about working through the Oedipus complex. This is can be achieved only by a change of

the valency binding the boy to his parents; a change from pairing to dependency in the boy-mother bond, and from fight/flight to dependency in the bond linking the boy and his father. The child's need to get bound through pairing valency will thus be approved only when directed towards outside the familial circle, and the use of fight valency in interpersonal relationships will be temporary discouraged and sublimated resorting to various social and educational means.

To conclude, valency theory can be regarded as the result of an attempt to look at the human psyche from another or a third vertex, different from the one characterizing both the drive and object-relations theory. The difference between the vertex of object-relations theory and the one of valency theory resides in the fact that the latter goes deeper into the "relation", for it studies what makes the relation possible, its very essence, or metaphorically speaking its chemistry. In this sense, we can say that valency theory reflects a move away from the object-relation to the means bonding the subject to the object. It is hopeful that this shift from object-relation to what might be called "object-bond" itself, will open a new window from where the human psyche can be contemplated.

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