



## The Italian Seminars

*By Wilfred R. Bion*

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The Italian Seminars, previously unpublished in English, comprises lectures W.R. Bion gave in Rome in 1977. The volume consists of questions from the floor and Bion's fascinating, and sometimes controversial, answers. The lectures are divided in two; the first part was organized by the Italian Psychoanalytical Society and the second by the Group Research of Via Polliolo. Bion's replies examine subjects as diverse as difficulties in the interaction between the therapist and the patient; music and psychoanalysis; non-verbal communication in the consulting room; and methodology in psychoanalysis.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

Previously unpublished in English, this book comprises lectures W.R. Bion gave in Rome, in 1977. The volume consists of questions from the floor and Bion's fascinating and, at times, controversial answers. The lectures are divided in two: the first part was organized by the Italian Psychoanalytical Society and the second by the Via Pollaiuolo Research Group. Bion's replies examine such diverse subjects as difficulties in the interaction between the therapist and the patient; music and psychoanalysis; non-verbal communication in the consulting room; and methodology in psychoanalysis. 'What I want to draw attention to is this idea that the human animal has a mind, or a character, or a personality. It seems to be quite a useful theory, and we behave as if we thought it was more than that. When it comes to being psychoanalysts and psychiatrists, this cannot be treated as if it were simply an entertaining theory. Nor do patients come to see us because they are suffering from an entertaining theory. We could say that there is one collaborator we have in analysis on whom we can rely, because he behaves as if he really had a mind and because he thought that somebody not himself could help. In short, the most important assistance that a psychoanalyst is ever likely to get is not from his analyst, or supervisor, or teacher, or the books that he can read, but from his patient.'- W.R. Bion

### **About the Author**

Wilfred R. Bion (1897 -1979) was born in India and first came to England at the age of eight to receive his schooling. During the First World War he served in France as a tank commander and was awarded the DSO and the Legion of Honour. After reading history at Queen's College, Oxford, he studied medicine at University College London, before a growing interest in psychoanalysis led him to undergo training analysis with John Rickman and, later, Melanie Klein. During the 1940s his attention was directed to the study of group processes. Abandoning his work in this field in favor of psychoanalytic practice, he subsequently rose to the position of Director of the London Clinic of Psychoanalysis (1956-62) and President of the British Psychoanalytical Society (1962-65). From 1968 he worked in Los Angeles, returning to England two months before his death in 1979. A pioneer in group dynamics, he was associated with the 'Tavistock group', the group of pioneering psychologists that founded the Tavistock Institute in 1946 on the basis of their shared wartime experiences. He later wrote the influential *Experiences in Groups*, in 1961, an important guide for the group psychotherapy and encounter group movements beginning in the 1960s, and which quickly became a touchstone work for applications of group theory in a wide variety of fields. Bion's training included an analysis with Melanie Klein following World War II. He was a leading member in the Kleinian school while in London, but his theories, which were always based in the phenomena of the analytic encounter, eventually revealed radical departures from both Kleinian and Freudian theory. While Bion is most well known outside of the psychoanalytic community for his work on group dynamics, the psychoanalytic conversation that explores his work is concerned with his theory of thinking and his model of the development of a capacity for thought.

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