

**Psychoanalysis and Anxiety: From Knowing to Being**

**Chris Mawson**

**Saturday 18th January 2020, 10:00AM to 12:30PM**

**Henley-on-Thames**

Kierkegaard, following Lucretius, said that we cannot help but flee from anxiety, that anxiety is universal, and that in anxiety we suffer from our being. Such anxiety arises from the human condition and, in contrast to specific fears, cannot simply be related to a ‘cause’ that can be ‘treated’. Our natural tendency is to flee from that which cannot be altered or modified.

My research, which takes in writings on anxiety from antiquity through to a consideration of the role of anxiety in the writings of Freud, Klein, Winnicott, seeks to understand what, as analysts and therapists, we might be able to offer our patients in the presence of the kind of anxiety to which we are also subject, in the human condition of facing the ontological as well as the ontic in life.

I will be exploring with you Freud’s early writing on the mother’s availability to her infant in states in which both the infant and she fear it could die at any moment, and Bion’s container-contained theory in which the mother takes the baby’s anxiety into herself. These both require the mother to be with the baby’s experience to become informed of the infant’s predicament, and to meet it with something in herself.

The role of interpretation is key in psychoanalysis, and in my work I consider its function in relation to immediate anxiety. Drawing upon insights from a daseinsanalytic approach, which recognises as one of its core principles that our being is revealed in and disclosed by anxiety, I show how I prioritise the experience of being with the patient and becoming informed through being with them, before making an interpretation in the realm of knowing (K).

Participants are invited to make connections between the ideas discussed and their own experiences.

**Chris Mawson** is a Training and Supervising Analyst of the British Psychoanalytical Society. He trained at the Tavistock Clinic in psychoanalytic psychotherapy with children and adolescents, and in psychoanalysis at the British Psychoanalytical Society and Institute. He worked for nine years in St Mary’s Hospital Department of Child Psychiatry, Paddington Green, in the days when children at that clinic were offered intensive psychoanalytic treatment under the care of the National Health Service. He now works as a psychoanalyst in private practice. As well as the clinical practice of psychoanalysis, he is interested in the study of groups from a psychoanalytic perspective. He has a special interest in the work of Wilfred Bion and is the editor of The Complete Works of W. R. Bion (2014, Karnac Books).

Other publications include:

Psychoanalysis and Anxiety: From Knowing to Being (2018) Routledge.

Three Papers of W. R. Bion (2018, Ed.) Routledge.

Interpretation as Freud’s specific action, and Bion’s container–contained. (2017). International Journal of Psychoanalysis.

“Review: Between Mind and Brain: Models of the Mind and Models in the Mind by Ronald Britton” (2017). International Journal of Psychoanalysis.

Bion Today (2010, Ed.). New Library of Psychoanalysis. Routledge.

The use of play technique in understanding disturbed behaviour in school” (1986). Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy.

“Containing anxiety in work with damaged children: In Anton Obholzer and Vega Zagier Roberts (eds), The Unconscious at Work: Individual and Organisational Stress in the Human Services (1994, 2019). Routledge.

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