

# The Chemistry of Interpersonal Attraction: Developing further Bion's concept of "valency"

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## Abstract

The present is an attempt to further develop Bion's (1961) concept of "valency", a term the latter borrowed from chemistry. First, the author extended the concept to include not only, as Bion believed, the person's readiness to combine with other members to contribute to the formation of the basic assumption group, but also the person's way to relate and react to his peers in general. Second, he provides a detailed description of the main characteristics of the four types of valency (fight, dependency, flight, and pairing). Then, developing further Bion's analogy between man and atom, he discussed the relationship between these types of valency, proposing thus a set of hypotheses which shed a new light on the "chemistry" of interpersonal relationship and attraction. Third, filling the gap left by Bion, the author discussed the psychogenesis of valency, tracing it back to early psychotic positions (paranoid-schizoid and depressive) and object relations described by Melanie Klein (1946). Finally, the author postulated a causal relationship between valency and psychopathology, proposing a new concept, namely the "minus valency" (-V). This concept corresponds to a mental state where valency functions in reverse. That is, instead of bounding the subject to his peers, -V does the opposite; it hinders, destroys and prevent the establishment of interpersonal relationships. According to the author each valency type has a minus counterpart. Thus, there are four possible -V types (minus fight, minus dependency, minus flight and minus pairing) and each one is associated with a number of mental and psychosomatic diseases, especially personality diseases. This suggests thus that the concept of -V provides the psycho-analytically oriented psychotherapist working with personality disorders with a "starting point", namely the client's -V, and a goal to achieve, that is, the restoration of the client's valency, or his/her ability to establish "healthy" and lasting relationships with others.

## Introduction

Who attracts whom, who is and will be bound to whom, and when and how people are connected to each other constitute vital questions in human life. For human being existence itself is the outcome of an encounter and attraction between two persons: a man and a woman. Of course, this encounter does not only lead to our entry into life, but assures also, in favorable conditions, our physical and psychical welfare and survival as individuals and as species. Therefore, we are always trying to relate to people to whom we feel attracted, and find out who likes or is attracted to us, and who is not. It is not an exaggeration to say that this is a matter of life and death. Berscheid (1985) writes that "those early humans who were either indifferent to

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or incapable of making evaluative judgment of other human – who could not differentiate between friend and foe – did not survive" (p. 414).

According to some researchers, our attraction to and repulsion for others are deeply rooted in our biological baggage (Mellen, 1981; Plutchik, 1980). In other words, our positive and negative feelings for others precede our encounter with and our ability to differentiate people. According to Hartley (1946), we tend to display negative or positive feelings and impressions towards even fictitious people such as "Danerians", "Pirenians", "Wallonians". Similarly, Zajonc (1980) also found that people tend to make judgement of a stimulus even when they are, due to their brief exposure to it, unable to identify the nature of the stimulus in question.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, Freud argued that what links people together is libido and the mechanism of identification. He introduced the term "libido" as the instinctual (sexual) energy or force that binds the subject to his/her objects and subjects altogether. In other words, libido refers to an energy which makes interpersonal relations and attraction possible. According to psychoanalysis, especially object-relations theory, the origin of our attraction (liking, preference, etc.) and repulsion for later external objects (people, etc.) goes back, to earlier stage of our development and their characteristic schizo-paranoid and depressives positions described by Melanie Klein and her followers. According to Klein (1946) the infant's first objects are parts of his own and his caretakers' (mother and her substitutes) body (breast, penis, faeces, phantasized children). As a result of its physical and mental dependency on its mother, and inborn aggressive impulses, the infant experiences frustration in relation to its object (breast) as a threat to its survival. As discussed latter, owing to its resort to paranoid-schizoid and depressive defense mechanisms such as splitting, projective identification, and idealization, and reparation, the infant becomes then overwhelmed by fear, and anxiety. As a result of these defense mechanisms the infant will thus face an object world split into "good", loving, and "bad", threatening breast. The infant will love the former because it contains its own loving impulses, and hate the latter upon which aggressive impulses have been projected. According to Klein, these love-hate experiences in relation to early part objects constitute prototypes for our later adult interpersonal positive (attraction) and negative (repulsion) relationships.

Hence given the importance of interpersonal attraction for human birth, development and survival, it is natural that people, especially scientists in general, display interest in the laws underlying humans' interaction towards each other. For instance, the attempt to understand human attraction and shed light on its presupposed laws of attraction is, as pointed out by Berscheid (1985), "as old as psychology itself" (p. 413). However, we had to wait until a few decades ago to see, the development of systematic and objective methods to measure interpersonal attraction. The most influential method was the sociometric test which is based on Moreno's (1953) sociometry theory (Newcomb, 1961, 1978). The development of the sociometric test and other similar tests, led to an ever increasing large body of research on attraction.

The purpose of the present study is to further develop Bion's (1961) concept of "valency". First, the author will redefine the concept, and provide a detailed description of the main characteristics of the four types of valency (fight, dependency, flight, and pairing). Then, developing further Bion's analogy between man and atom, he will discuss the relationship between these types of valency, proposing thus a set of hypotheses concerning the relationship between these different types, shedding thus a new light on the "chemistry" of interpersonal relationship and attraction. Next, he will discuss the psychogenesis of valency, a task undone by Bion. Finally, the author will present a hypothesis concerning a possible causal relationship between valency and psychopathology, proposing a new concept, namely the "minus valency" (-V), and discussing its psychogenesis.

### Bion's Definition of Valency

In order to describe what links a person to others as a group, Bion (1961) used the concept of "valency" he borrowed from chemistry. In chemistry, valency refers, according to Longman Dictionary of the English Language (Major New Edition), to "the property of an atom, a chemical group, or a chemical element that determines the number of bonds it can form and therefore the number of other atoms, chemical elements, or groups with which it can combine; the degree of combining power of an atom explained in terms of the number of electrons available to form bonds". Applying this definition to human interpersonal relationships, Bion suggested that like atoms, people also have valency. He emphasized that a person without valency is no more a human. He thus defined valency as "the capacity of the individual for instantaneous combination with other individuals in an established pattern of behavior" (p. 175), and as "the individual's readiness to enter into combination with the group in making and acting on the basic assumptions" (p. 116). According to Bion (1961), basic assumption group corresponds to an unconscious mental activities, shared by all the members of a group, which "have in common the attribute of powerful emotional drives" (p. 146), and which obstruct, divert, and occasionally assist the "work group" (WG), the opposite mental activity. Bion adumbrated three different basic assumptions, namely, basic assumption of dependency (baD), basic assumption of fight/flight (baF), and basic assumption of pairing (baP) which can not be discussed here, because this goes far beyond the scope of the present study.

To go back to valency, although Bion did not discuss it, his definitions suggest that there are as much valency types as basic assumptions. There are thus three possible valency types: dependency valency (DV), fight/flight valency (FV), and pairing valency (PV). Bion's overt contribution and suggestions concerning the concept of valency end here. Developing further the latter's idea, the author argued that a person is basically polyvalent; he/she has one principal, dominant or active valency (ACV) and three other auxiliary (AXV) ones. The ACV

corresponds to the valency the subject displays (unconsciously and consciously) the most in his/her interactions with others. Relatively speaking, AXV refers to the valencies the subject displays less frequently. They have two principal functions: an adaptive function, and a supportive function. The AXV allow the "healthy" subject to refrain consciously and temporarily from displaying his/her ACV in order to adapt him/herself and respond adequately to different interpersonal situations. When a person with FV experiences a situation which requires for example DV and discourages FV, he/she will temporarily resort to his auxiliary DV to adapt to that situation. When fulfilling a supportive function, AXV help the subject to maintain his/her interpersonal relationship based on his ACV. In this case, while continuing to behave based on his/her ACV, the subject will temporarily display, depending on the situation, some aspects of a specific AXV, in order to maintain and strengthen his relationship with his/her partner(s). This describes a situation wherein, for instance, a subject with FV tries to respond to the partner's needs displaying consciously from time to time some attitudinal and behavioral aspects peculiar to DV, in order to keep the status quo, and consequently preserve the relationship. In this case, as an AXV, DV will, at the same time, help the subject to preserve the relationship, and serve as a defensive means against change; because it allows the subject to continue relating to the object (partner) based on one's ACV.

### **Further development of the valency concept**

A number of other researchers have also made further contributions to the development of the concept of valency. For instance, Stock and Thelen (1958) and others have split the FV into fight valency (FV) and flight valency (FLV), as a minor change. Likewise, in an attempt to develop further the concept of valency, the author has also contributed a number of ideas which will be discussed below, .

According to Bion (1961), the distinction between the group and the individual as two independent entities is ephemeral and therefore misleading. For an individual can not exist without, and is in perpetual interaction with the group whether real or fantastic, that is, a product of the individual's activity. Even if the group is physically absent, this does not prevent the individual from dealing with the internal group presence, or what Bion calls "groupishness". Bion writes 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). And "valency" is, according to the author, one example of these aspects. It is true that Bion has discussed it in relation to the basic assumption group, but this does not mean that "valency" is exclusively a group-related characteristic. The physical presence of a group allows the person to express valency, rendering it thus more visible, but it is not indispensable. For a person is always in contact with a group, be

it real or fantastic, even if he/she is alone or in a dyad relationship. Regardless of the actual number of participants, a dyad relationship, like for instance the therapist-client one, is often if not always a group a relationship. There is always an invisible (analytic) third (Ogden, 1994), fourth, fifth object (person) and so on. In spite of their physical absence these objects have, very often, a great positive or negative influence on the interacting persons and their relationship. Hence, given the fact that even when alone a person is always in a group situation, it is not necessary to refer to the group when defining valency. It can be therefore broadly defined as an individual predisposition to relate to one's objects (people, groups, etc.) in a relatively stable and determined fashion. This is the first basic alteration the author has made to the concept of valency.

The second fundamental alteration concerns the valency typology. As previously mentioned, Bion (1961) suggested three valency types with each one corresponding to one of the three basic assumptions he adumbrated. However, following Stock and Thelen (1958), the author distinguishes between the the FV and FIV. The distinction is based on the fact that, although they share some behavioral and psychical features, these two valency types display also important differences, as discussed below. Therefore, the author proposed thus a four type typology which includes Fight Valency (FV), Flight Valency (FIV), Dependency Valency (DV), and Pairing Valency (PV). Here is a brief description of each valency type.

### Description of the valency types

Valency is basically, like in the case of atoms, a means which links a person to an other. It is also reflected in the person's way of thinking about his/physical and social environment, his/her interpersonal relationships and preferences for, and disapproval of different aspects of the group life and activity. For instance a person's valency type determines, as discussed later, his choice of friends, partners and leadership style (Hafsi & Yamagata, 1998), and the role he/she would play in a group situation.

What are the characteristics of each valency type ? Although he suggested the existence of different types, Bion (1961) did not provide any description of these types. Therefore, as another contribution to the development of the concept of valency, the author will attempt now to describe briefly the manifest (conscious) and latent (unconscious) behavioral and psychical contents of the four valency types.

**Fight Valency:** As put by Stock & Thelen (1958), an individual displaying a FV tends to express hostility and aggressiveness freely towards other individuals, or groups. This aggressiveness towards others is expressed in form of criticism, complaining and self assertiveness. In other words, a person with FV is always complaining and criticizing others. As suggested by the famous French singer Charles Aznavour in one of his famous songs, a

person with a FV "wants the world to criticize the world". Reacting during a group session to the therapist's remark that he has been "criticizing just to criticize", a participant with FV replied saying:

I have tried to avoid criticizing others opinions, but I really can help it...it's the only way I can express myself and get involved with the group... besides I can't stay here and say only yes to any body... behaving in this way for me is like ignoring the presence of the group... and my presence...I think that if I disagree with someone's opinion I should say it to him even if it may hurt him...If I don't say it, it means I am lying to myself and others, and therefore I am being impolite vis-a-vis that person... Anyway I always behave in this way, and I want everybody to behave towards me in this way... I also think that without this kind of true interaction no real interpersonal relationship is possible...

As demonstrated by this statement, for a person with FV, criticizing, debating, competing is the sole means to solve problems, relate and be bound with others, and therefore to exist and survive. The first impression one have of a FV person is that he/she is outspoken, assertive; he/she has his/her ideas and vision of the problem in question and he/she wants, if possible, everybody (partner, friends, colleagues, etc.) to know it.

A typical FV person would, without much hesitation, intervene during gathering to ask questions, comment or criticize the speaker's idea or statement. His/her need for self expression is such that he/she would, for instance, rise his/her hand few seconds before the end of a meeting, and express his/her idea or ask a question, ignoring others' visibly strong and pressing desire to end the meeting and immediately go back home. On the other hand, he/she is also willing to listen to others ideas and what they have to say about his/her own, and is always ready to discuss and counter their criticism in an apparently democratic manner.

Moreover, generally, a person characterized by FV gives the impression that he/she is tough and severe in his/her relationships to others. He/she also does not admit, or display fear, and when he/she can't help being afraid, he/she would do every thing to hide, rationalize and overcome that fear. He/she is characterized by a relatively strong need to excel, achieve success, prestige and recognition by his/her surrounding, and outsmart others. He/she values highly ambition, power, hard working, and realism; for these features are perceived as effective means to satisfy his/her need to be in touch with his/her peers.

Owing to his/her manifest tough character, assertiveness, "outspokenness", the tendency to take for granted that everyone is a rival that have to be "beaten", the tendency to play the role of a superior by controlling and giving orders, and the tendency to express freely anger, the person with FV tends to be selected, or spontaneously emerges as a leader. The effect of the leadership which he/she will provide the group with depends on the type of mental activity (WG or baF ) the group is involved in. If the group is functioning as a WG, this leadership type would help

temporarily the group achieve its goal and grow. If, however, the group is under the influence of baF for instance, this leadership will accentuate the group's regressive paranoid fear of and battle with its fantastic in-group and out-group enemies, and, consequently will value, promote and give priority to group cohesion over the actual task.

**Dependency Valency:** The person with a DV is characterized by, on one hand, a relatively strong attraction for relationships and situations characterized by vertical interpersonal interactions. In other words, he/she will tend to get involved in such interpersonal relationship wherein he/she can depend on someone (spouse, partner, friend, teacher, leader, therapist, etc.) perceived as superior and unquestionably reliable. This explains the DV person's marked need of and active search for a partner, and his/her repugnance of solitude. Owing to his/her marked need for affection, love, approval, and praise, being related to someone or a group is a matter of life and survival. Being in a relationship allows him/her to satisfy these very needs. "I can't live without you" is the conscious and unconscious message the person with a DV would like to convey to those on whom he/she depends. Because a person with a DV is characterized by a low self-evaluation, and, sometimes, a low self-esteem. He/she believes that he/she is not enough strong, intelligent, healthy (and so on) to make it alone. He/she needs someone to help, guide, control, support and, sometimes even, do the task, and take responsibility for him/her. Speaking for the group during a D-group session (Hafsi, 2004a), one participant with DV complained to the trainer in the following:

You said that we can think and speak freely here, I have been trying since the beginning of the session, but I can't think of anything. The more I think the more I feel that my head is empty... I think you have to teach us how to find a task, a theme to discuss here...we are like a baby if you don't help us, the group will not grow anymore... (as there was no supportive intervention from other participants, he continued)... I feel like this does not concern the group...it's probably my own problem, isn't it?... May be, I am stupid... "

This need for love, dependency, and low self-evaluation constitute only one aspect of DV. The person with DV does not only seek unilaterally other's love. On the contrary, altruism and self-sacrifice are also other traits characterizing his/her interaction with others. His/her need to be loved, approved, thanked and praised by those seeking his/her help is so strong that he/she is also ready to respond to others needs for dependency. In other words, he/she needs to be helpful to others needy persons and be of importance to them. Having similar dependent needs he/she can show empathy towards others and identify with their needs and feelings of dependency. The author once asked a student who was complaining that he is having financial problems why he was doing volunteer work instead of taking a part-time job. He replied that he does it because he "wanted to see in their (handicapped persons) eyes the feeling of gratitude and love. That is more important than anything" for him.

Another characteristic trait of DV is an unconditional belief and feeling that people are basically good and trustful. Unlike the person with FV, a person with DV tends to have good first-impressions of people, believes them easily, and is less likely to learn from his or her deceptive experiences. He/she tends to think that those experiences are mere exceptions which confirm the rule that all people are trustful and merit to be trusted. When deceived he/she would tend to rationalize his/her deceiver's behavior, and finally forgive him/her, arguing generally that, for example, "he/she could not help it", or "that was not his/her real intention". Consequently, a person with DV would believe that interpersonal problems result basically from a lack of interdependency and mutual trust. As put by a client, "with mutual trust, there will be no war, no crime, and no starvation, and there will be always a better place to live".

**Flight Valency:** The principal characteristic of a person with FIV is conflict avoidance. Unlike the FV person who uses conflict as a mean to relate to others, the FIV person avoids any conflictual situation that may jeopardize his/her interpersonal relationships. His/her hypersensitivity to human relationships, and his/her remarkable gift for observation help him/her in this task. Consequently, although this seems paradoxical, he/she needs to put emotional (and sometimes even physical) distance between him/herself and others in order to preserve the relationship with them. He/she refrains from getting too involved in love, hate or even cooperative relationships with his/her peers. For he/she fears that a deep emotional involvement may lead to conflict and consequently destroy the relationship. This explains why he/she gives the impression of being detached and withdrawn.

Moreover, owing to his/her desire to avoid any conflict, a person with FIV would, unlike the FV person, refrain from imposing his/her opinion or idea on his/her partners, giving and receiving advices. He/she would thus, if possible, avoid situations wherein he/she is obliged to assert him/herself, express clearly his/her own views and consequently run the risk of entering in conflict with others.

Unlike the FV person, the FIV person will, whenever possible, manage to escape notice, and refrain from providing any kind of leadership. For he, unconsciously or consciously, believes and fears that, like the Japanese proverb says, "an outstanding nail will be hammered in". He/she feels no attraction for jobs, status, or occupations in which he/she has to provide guidance to people. For advising and guiding someone is perceived as a form of dominance.

Unlike the person with DV, he does not like to seek help from people, for fear that this may embarrass or put them in trouble. Moreover, he/she perceives dependency as an expression of mental and physical weakness which may lead to dominance of the dependent person by his/her care-taker. Therefore, the FIV person has a strong need for self-sufficiency. He/she would do and think about everything by him/herself in order to avoid relying on others and therefore disturbing them, and/or being dominated. Here is how a client with FIV described himself.



... I need to do everything by myself if possible... I don't feel good about bothering people with my problems. I really can't understand how can one easily borrow someone's notes... I prefer not taking the test than asking someone for a copy of his lecture notes... Not only at school, but wherever I am, I refrain from asking people's help... My sister is my opposit, she never does things by herself; she is always asking people to tell her what and how to do things; if it's not my mother it's her friends. Whenever she has a problem she phones her friends to ask them for advices. For example, when she's lost, she never try to find her way alone... she asks anyone she can find... I really can't understand her behavior... If it was me, I would first try to find my way by consulting a map instead of asking people... I would rather die than asking around for my way... I don't want to bother people with my problems...

As shown by this client's statement, the need for self-sufficiency characterizing the person with FIV is the result of the value the latter attaches to privacy, his and others' privacy. He does not like to bother, disturb and embarrass people; in few words, he/she does not want to intrude into others' private lives, and, reciprocally, expect others to respect his privacy and refrain from intruding into his life. For he/she believes that it is the only way to keep conflict at bay and preserve his/her interpersonal relationships, although these relationships are soften superficial and emotionally poor.

**Pairing Valency:** What characterizes a person with PV is principally the tendency and wish to establish close and warm relationships (Stock & Thelen, 1958), and value highly intimacy. A person with PV likes to share personal informations and secrets with friends, and is always interested in others' private lives and personal matters. As a person, he/she appears as cheerful and gay, and tends to like socializing with and entertaining his/her acquaintances. Owing to his/her need for intimacy, a person with PV would prefer small groups than large ones. Since the structure of large groups is such that intimacy between group members is often discouraged, he/she tends to avoid large, highly structured or formal groups, perceiving them as leading to cold and unfriendly interpersonal relationships.

Albeit his/her preference for small groups and intimate relationships, a PV person values highly justice and equality between people. He/she tends to believe in the slogan that "all men are brothers", namely equal, and act in concordance with this belief. Accordingly, the leadership which appeals most to a PV person is that of a democratic type. He/she tends to feel repulsion for autocratic leadership, because it goes counter the PV person desire and expectation of equality among people, and restricts individual freedom.

Another characteristic of a PV person is his/her considerable manifest optimism. Owing to his/her seemingly high optimism, he/she gives the impression that he/she is rarely disapointed following a failure; and that he/she always expects that everything will be alright. In other words, he/she believes that one should never lose hope, for as long as there is hope, and as long

as one is closely and intimately linked to a partner, there would be an answer to one's problems, and a better life. It is noteworthy that this manifest optimism does not always correspond to a real trait character. It is, in many cases, a persona and a means used by the PV person to appeal to and please others, especially those of the opposite sex. The sexual relationship is the model for the relationship sought by a person with PV. Therefore, relationships established by the latter involve often (sexual) attraction and seduction. The following example, extracted from a diagnostic group, or D-group (Hafsi, 1990; 2000; 2002; 2004), may serve as an illustration of a PV person.

When his turn came, D. introduced himself saying "As you know, my name is X, but my friends call me Y; so, please use this nickname... this make me feel close to you... I don't like using these alphabet when refering to someone here (in the first session, participants wear a name plate with an alphabet letter, and are let free to decide whether to use it or not as a means to address each other)... I think this (using alphabet letters) is not going to help us getting close to each other... To begin with, I am from Nara... my girl friend left me few day ago, so I am looking from someone who wants to share with me my lonely walk in Nara Park, and go with me to a friend's place in the country side to watch stars in summer...". This search for closeness as means to relate to others was also reflected in the following intervention: "... we have been gathered here and designed as a group, without giving us any precise task to perform... so the only thing we can do here and now is getting close to each other... isn't it ?... As long as we continue to think about the whole group, we can't do anything. We will spent all the time talking about trivial and formal things. I think we should first refrain from avoiding looking at each other..., stop using keigo (polite speech) when addressing each other, and try to talk about personal matters, for example one's girlfriend or boyfriend, hobby, dreams, personal problems or troubles... I know it is difficult to talk about these matters here in front of the whole group; so I suggest to separate into small groups of 2 or 3 persons, and talk about these matters... when we get to know each other, then we can share these personal matter with the whole group... we are free, we can do what ever we want... we don't have a defined goal to reach, so our goal is to become friends, and the group common task is to find out a means to achieve this goal..." This suggestion which reflected D.'s own PV did not affect the group which continued operating under the basic assumption of dependency.

### **The Chemistry of Interpersonal Attraction**

As mentioned previously, Bion (1961) borrowed the concept of valency from chemistry, to describe how an individual relates to the group's fantastic activity, or basic assumption group (baG). However, he did not go further enough to discuss in more details how and why a person tends to prefer and relate to some people and not to others. He borrowed thus a chemical term, but did not shed light on the "chemistry" of human interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the

author will try here to remedy to this, proposing a number of hypotheses which deserve to be empirically tested .

Like atoms, humans relate to one another creating strong and weak (chemical) bounds. Like in chemistry a strong bound is made possible by the interaction of similar atoms or different and complementary atoms. However, unlike atoms which, under favorable physical conditions, create unconditionally and automatically fusions, healthy people tend to display preferences for, and repulsion of their peers. Table 1 represents a hypothetical representation of the relationship between the four different valency types.

**Table 1. Hypothetical Representation Concerning Human Chemistry**

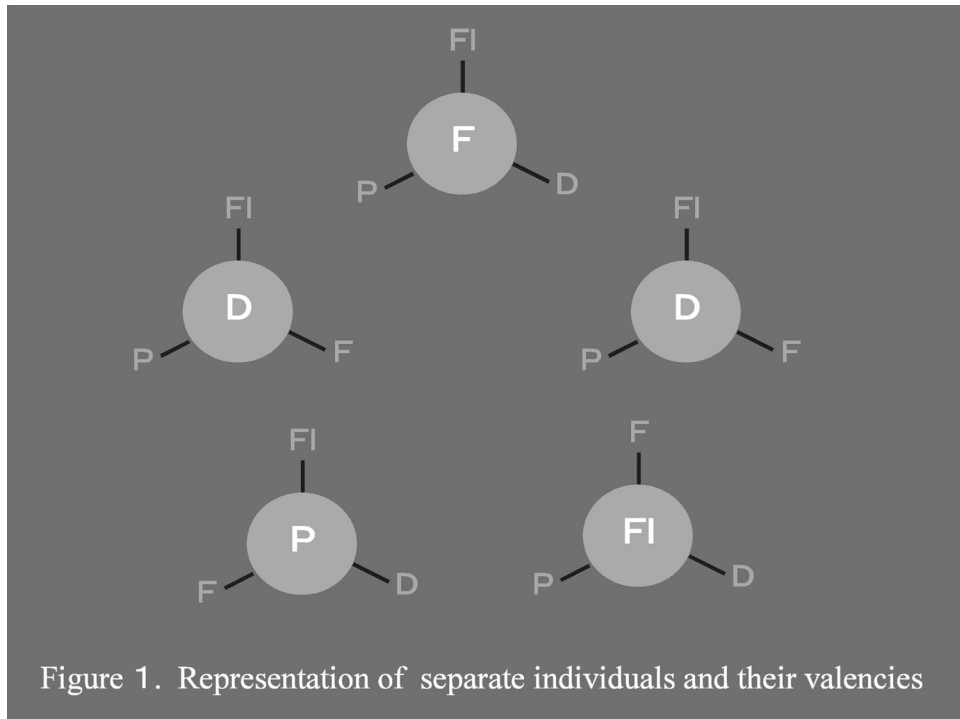
Valency	DV	FV	PV	FIV	
DV	○	●	○	○	●= Lasting (complementary) relationship
FV	●	○	○	×	○= Temporary relationship
PV	○	○	○	×	×
FIV	○	×	×	●	×

As indicated in Table 1, a person with DV can establish a temporary relationship with a person having a same valency type, as a result of their mutual tendency to value, encourage, and promote dependency. This sort of attraction is based on the principle of similarity (Newcomb, 1961). A person with DV tends also to have a similar relationship with PV people, thanks to the latter's characteristic need for friendship and intimacy. Due to their low self-evaluation and a consequent lack of assertiveness, people with DV tend to show preference for those with FV, forming thus a lasting complementary relationship. Concerning their relationship to people with FIV, it is temporary, resembling the one referred to by Bion (1961) as a "commonsal relationship". They can coexists without influencing each other.

Reciprocally, a person with FV tends to form complementary lasting relationship with people with DV, and temporary relationships with those having FV and PV types. They also tend to establish with people of FIV relationships characterized by mutual disliking and avoidance, because of their common characteristic aggressiveness, and their different ways of expressing it. For people with FV tends to be overtly aggressive, and those with FIV covertly aggressive.

People with PV tends to form temporary relationships with people having DV, FV and PV types, but tend to, reciprocally avoid people with FIV. As shown in Table 1, they are less likely to form strong and lasting relationships with people of any particular type of valency, owing to their desire to please everybody, and an unconscious/conscious belief in the presence of an ideal and yet-to-be met partner.

Finally, people with FIV tend to avoid people with both PV and FV types, form temporary



and commonsal relationships with people of DV type, and lasting relationships with people having the same valency (FIV). For only people with FIV knows the appropriate interpersonal (psychical and physical) distance needed by FIV when interacting and forming relationships with others.

Finally, I will now turn to another aspect of interpersonal chemistry, namely the relationship between the individual, the group and the emergence of baG. Discussing this relationship, Bion (1961) confined himself to the statement that, as mentioned preciously, valency is the means through which the individual combines with others and contributes consciously and uncounsciously to the prevailing baG. As can be remarked, this does not enlighten us about how group members combines with each other. Therefore, developing further Bion's basic idea, the author has tried, as represented in Figures 2 and 3, to shed light on how the group members combine with each other to generate the baG and its different forms (baD, baF, and baP). As discussed above and shown in Figure 1, a person has at his/her disposal one dominantly active valency (central letter) and three inactive auxilliary ones (peripheral letters). For the group to display a specific form of baG, the group members must be bound to each other through the valency which corresponds to that baG. For instance, the emergence of baD is, as shown in Figure 3, the result of the group members combination via their respective DV. The emergence of the baF and baP is determined by the members combination by means of their FV and PV respectively. However, it should be noted that being bound does not imply that all the members

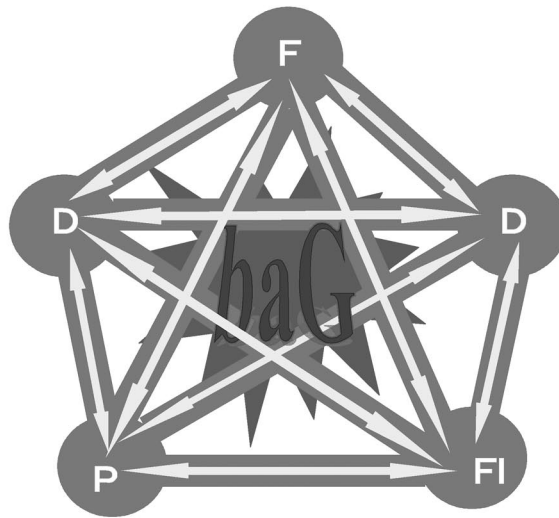


Figure 2. Mutual projective identification and the emergence of baG

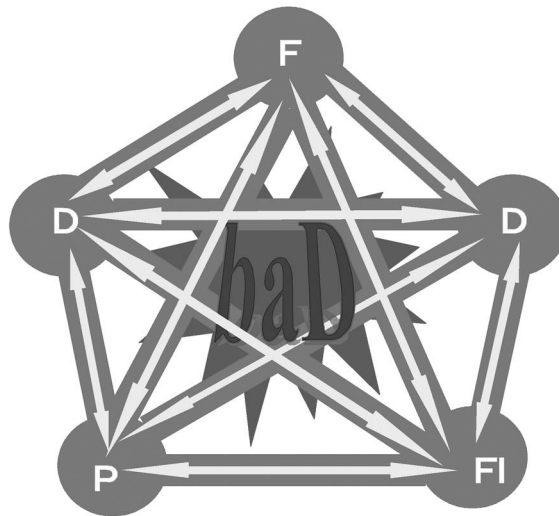


Figure 3. Mutual projective identification and the emergence of baD

will undistinctively and equally be able and willing to contribute to the prevailing baG. Those who will unconsciously or consciously be able and willing to contribute and play an active role in the group are those whose active valency corresponds to the baG being displayed by the whole group. For instance, the members who will tend to play the most active role under the dominance of the baF are those who have FV. Hence, developing further Bion's analogy, the author postulated that, like atoms combine by means of valency to form chemical substances, group members, and people in general, combine to give birth to numerous social and psychic phenomena of which the basic assumption group and its different types are examples.

Moreover, as discussed somewhere else (Hafsi, 2006), this combination is stirred by the frustration experienced by the group, as a result of the mating of their "pre-conceptions" about the group with negative realization (Bion, 1967; Hafsi, 2000).

### **The Psychogenesis of Valency**

How and when does valency emerge? The author postulates that valency is the result of early object relations. The infant acquires gradually the ability to relate to its partial and whole objects through its experience of early psychotic positions, pre-oedipus, and oedipus, as described by Klein (1946). Due to its physical and psychical immaturity, the infant is exposed from birth to an external frustrating reality and anxiety produced by the incorporated death instinct. To defend itself against this anxiety, the infant resorts to splitting of the ego, projective identification and other defensive mechanisms such as denial and idealization. As a result, the infant is thus faced with two breasts "a bad" breast containing the death instinct and aggressive impulses, and "a good" and ideal one containing a part of the infant's libido and life instincts. This developmental stage has been referred to by Klein as the paranoid-schizoid position. The aim of the infant's ego in this position is 1) to separate the good part of itself and of the breast from the bad part of the self and the bad part of the breast, and 2) to introject and identify with the good and ideal breast and preserve it. For, in normal conditions, this breast will satisfy the infant's need for nourishment, comfort, and protection from the bad breast and those parts of the self experienced as terrifying and persecuting. This, therefore, determines the infant's dependency on the object (the good breast), and leads his/her to associate dependency on the object with the gratification of one's basic needs. In other words, under these favorable mental and physical conditions, the infant gradually learns that dependency is a means to relate to one's good object, and, consequently, feels satisfied and secure. DV is the result of this learning process, and the introjection of its outcome.

As described by Klein (1946), this kind of relationship to the good object does not last long. For it is generally soon hindered, modified and even prevented by a number of individual factors such as envy. The infant begins to display envy as soon as he becomes aware of the breast as a source of nourishment, comfort, warmth, love, satisfaction and consequently life. This awareness will increase the infant's love and desire to possess and preserve the object, and, at the same time, will stir in him envious feelings towards the object and desire to spoil it. For a spoiled object does not stir envy. Owing to these envious feelings, the infant will wish also to be as good as the object, or take the object's place and be himself the source of goodness. However, as he will soon realize that this is impossible, he will project his envy into the object, experiencing it, in phantasy, as envious, bad, and as attacking him. This stirs in him anxiety and fear, interferes with the normal operation of splitting, and consequently leads to confusion between the good and the

bad object, and a defensive reaction. Thus, to protect itself, the infant will, in phantasy, flee, attack and spoil the good object to render it uncompetitive. In other words, the infant will establish a relationship with the good object characterized by fight, flight, and destruction. Owing to this experience, the infant learns gradually that fleeing and attacking may be effective means for a temporary self-protection, and preservation of the relationship with the object, even if this relationship involves suffering. It is this interaction with the object, experienced in the paranoid-schizoid position, that generates in the infant FV and FIV.

As discussed above, one of the main characteristic of the PV is a tendency to appeal to others, seeking of closeness and intimacy, and a tendency to (sexually) manipulate and seduce one's partners. A person with PV tends, as previously mentioned, to look at the sexual relationship as a model for interpersonal relationships. Taking in consideration the importance attached to sex in interpersonal relationships by the person with PV, we can assume that the psychogenesis of PV goes back to the pre-oedipal stage when the infant begins to recognize people, especially his parents, as separate individuals linked libidinally to each other. In this stage the infant phantasizes his parents in an interrupted intercourse, exchanging oral, urethral and genital gratifications. The father's phantasized and real penis is, at this stage, perceived as a magic "tool" that makes possible intercourse, interpersonal relationships in general, and has unlimited reparative powers. In fantasy, the infant wants to incorporate the father's penis as a means to repair one's object, felt as destroyed by his/her aggressive and envious attacks on it. It is from this phantasized perception and experience of the father's penis that the infant learns to relate with his objects by means of the penis, or through sexual intercourse, and therefore acquires its PV.

Hence, as mentioned previously, a "normal" person has at his/her disposal four possible valencies: one principal and active, and three auxiliary less active ones. How is the active valency determined is a question which should be now answered. The author postulates that the child begins to display preference for a specific valency in the period ranging from later oedipus stage to the period coinciding with the entry into the latency period. When the child is experiencing oedipus complex, he/she has at his/her disposal the four possible valencies to relate to his parents. He thus opts for DV and PV in relation to the parent of the opposit sex, and for FV, FIV in relation to the same-sex parent. Then when the child has finally worked through oedipus complex, and entered the latency period, or the stage of cultural and societal education, he/she will be obliged to conform to the norms and rules of his/her social environment, especially to the mother's norms of how to relate to others. Otherwise he/she will be deprived of the latter's attention, love and care. Since the mother's norms and standards reflect her own personality and valency, we can postulate that the child's definitive choice of a specific valency in his/her interpersonal relationships is determined by the mother and reflects her own valency type. For instance, if the mother has DV, she will tend to respond only to

dependency needs, relate to her child in a dependent way, and expect him/her to do the same towards her and other people (Hafsi, 1993). Consequently, the child gradually learns that dependency, or DV, is the most adequate way to relate people in general, and would thus tend to display this type of valency when interacting with people.

### The Minus Valency

As discussed above, valency is a means to relate to others (as separate individuals and groups) and respond in interpersonal interactions. Given the fact that, as suggested by the chinese idiom for Man, [人間] (meaning literally someone between others), a man can not exist without others, valency can be conceived thus as the psychic equivalent of food for the psyche. For man's existence and subsistence depends on his/her valency. As put by Bion (1961), a person "can have... no valency only by ceasing to be, as far as mental function is concerned, human" (p. 116).

The logical implication from this statement is that if a man is psychically bound to his peers, it means he has a valency, and if he is not bound he has no valency, and he is, consequently, mentally no more human. What does this "mentally no more human"? Bion provides no answer. But, as can be deduced from a number of his other concepts (which can not be discussed here), this is inconceivable. Even when suffering from the most acute and chronic psychosis, the person is, albeit partially, bound to reality, and to objects, regardless of whether they are real or "bizarre" (Bion, 1967). and has therefore valency. Hence, the dichotomic view of valency/no-valency does not hold true. But, this does not mean that there is no difference, in terms of interpersonal relations, between a "healthy" person and a patient displaying a personality disorder, for instance.

This difference do exist, and that is why the concept of valency is in need for further development. Therefore, in order to explain this difference, the author distinguishes between a healthy or "plus valency" (+V) and a "pathological" or "minus-valency" (-V). The former corresponds to valency as conceived by Bion (1961). Whereas the latter refers to valency when it is negatively functioning, that is leading the subject to destroy his/her interpersonal relationships by running from others and making others running away from him/her, and to some extent, getting thus psychologically and physically disconnected from one's social environment. In this case valency functions as a destructive or disconnecting means, leading to what Bion (1967, 1970) calls the negative links (minus K, minus L, minus H) and their pathological object-relational consequences. Briefly speaking, -V is thus the opposit of +V; for the latter bounds objects together and the former disbounds them.

Furthermore, -V can be also apprehended from Bion's (1992) "social-ism/narcissism" theory. According to Bion, instincts are characterized by a bi-polarity which "refers to their (instincts)



operation as elements in the fulfilment of the individual's life as an individual, and as elements in his life as a social or, as Aristotle would describe it, a political animal (p. 105). When the instincts' operation is directed towards fulfilment of the individual's life, the tendency is ego-centric, and the pole is that of narcissism. When, on the contrary the operation aims at fulfilling his social needs and obligations, the tendency is said to be socio-centric, and its corresponding pole is social-ism. Pathology, according to Bion, lies in these two opposit mental states, especially, from the author's point of view, in the individual's tenacious tendency to seek satisfaction for only one pole, the narcissistic or the social-istic one. Developing further this idea of the instincts bipolarity and combining it with the concept of  $-V$ , the author postulates that this attempt to seek tenaciously satisfaction for only one of the two poles, namely narcissism, or social-ism, is a result of the subject's resorting to  $-V$ . And since this tendency is, as suggested by Bion, pathological, then  $-V$  is also a pathogenic predisposition, associated, as discussed later, with a number of personality disorders. Before developing further this idea, let us discuss the etiology of  $-V$ .

### The Etiology of Minus Valency

What are the antecedents of  $-V$ , or how does it develop is the question which will be tackled here. Integrating Bion's "container-contained" ( $\varphi/\delta$ ) theory (Bion, 1970), thinking theory (Bion, 1967), especially his idea on the lack of toleration and its effect, the author has developed a hypothesis describinyg the process leading to the emergence of  $-V$ .

As shown in Figure 4, the tragedy of the subject who would display  $-V$  begins with his/her encounter, at an early stage of his/her development, with a psychologically missing, or defective object, namely a breast or the whole mother, depending on the position (paranoid-schizoid or depressive) experienced by the infant. This defective object corresponds in Bion's terminology, to a "minus container ( $-\varphi$ )", namely a  $\varphi$  who is, due to a defective alpha function, unable or, for personal mental difficulties, unwilling to respond adequately to the subject's need to relate and be contained. Confronted with this  $-\varphi$ , the child will experience obviously a feeling of being disconnected, that is unable to relate to his/her object through valency. This will, consequently, stir in him/her feelings of loneliness, frustration, fear and anxiety. This experience is described by a schizophrenic patient in relation to her mother in the following:

... My mother is besides me but I don't feel her presence... she is not going to hug me...my mother does not look like real... I feel like crying but I have to restrain myself... I try to touch her, but I feel as if there is a real wall standing between us... I can't reach her... I am suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness... I want to touch her but I can't... it is like if it was forbidden... something in me tells me "my mother is dead"... I don't feel secure... I feel like a dead surrounded by dead people... I want to be held tight by my mother...

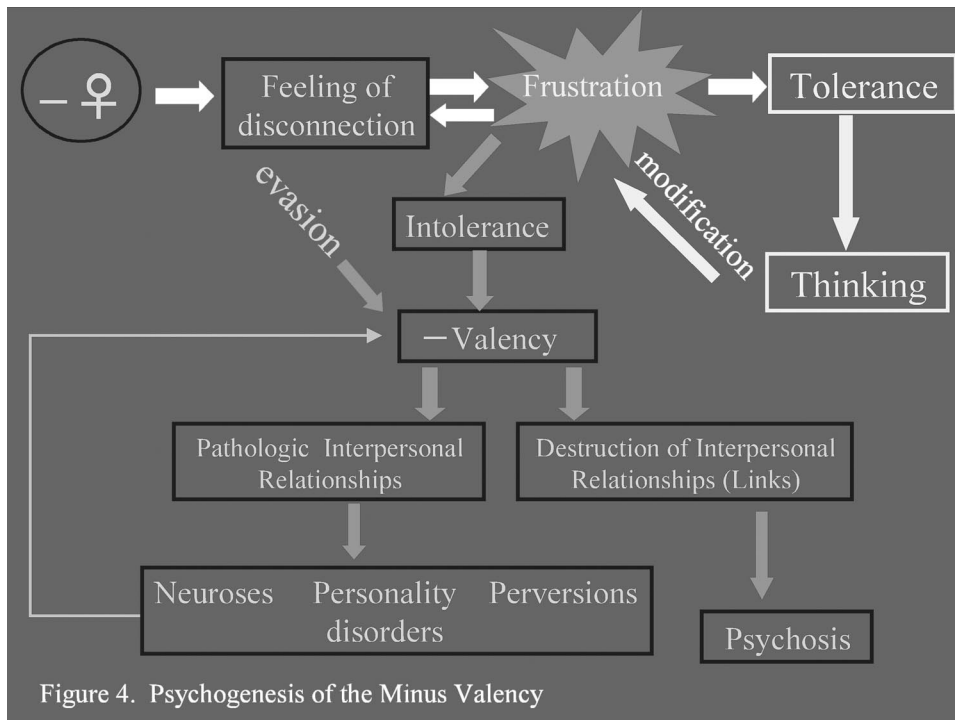


Figure 4. Psychogenesis of the Minus Valency

Please Dr Hafsi help me... My mother let me down... what shall I do if I don't find a way to help myself... I don't want to be left alone... I don't want to part with my mother...

Whether the infant will be able to work through this feeling of disconnection, depends on his/her ability to tolerate it and the frustration engendered by it. If the infant can tolerate the frustration, then he/she will be able to resort to thinking as a means to think, transform and modify his/her experience of frustration into a better one, by expecting, waiting for, and, finally recreating the object through the reparation process or mechanism. For instance, if a person has failed to relate to the object by means of DV as principal valency and has failed to relate to his/her object through it, he can use temporary one of his auxiliary valencies, namely, FV, FIV, and PV.

However, if the infant is unable to tolerate the feelings of frustration and loneliness resulting from the break of the link with one's object, he/she will then keep on trying tenaciously to restore the link with the object using the same valency, regardless of the negative consequence the interaction may generate. If, for instance, the infant is experiencing the paranoid-schizoid position and trying to relate to the ideal object, he/she will unceasingly and solely use dependency to relate to the object. The object's unresponsiveness will increase further the infant's frustration and intolerance of it. And, due to his/her inability to tolerate frustration, and think and learn from experience (Bion, 1962), and will lead the infant to hurt him/herself and the

object. These object relations lead to a vicious circle; for each time the infant's attempt to relate to the object fails, his/her reliance on the same valency becomes gradually excessive, and the more excessive it is, the higher the infant's failure to restore the link with the object. And the stronger the infant's frustration, the greater his/her intolerance. This vicious circle will lead to a folie-a-deux, characterized by destruction of interpersonal relations, and isolation.

It is to this excessive and tenacious attempt to relate to the object that the concept of  $-V$  refers. The more the subject resorts to  $-V$  to relate to his/her object, the lesser the possibility to establish a stable and healthy interpersonal relationships. To summarize,  $-V$  has two antecedents: 1) the experience of a  $-♀$ , and 2) the infant's intolerance of the feeling of frustration caused by this experience, and the consequent tenacious reliance on the same valency.

Moreover, each valency type has its minus counterpart; there are thus four  $-V$  types:  $-DV$ ,  $-FV$ ,  $-FIV$ , and  $-PV$ . Like in the case of the valency types,  $-DV$  is the result of the above mentioned antecedents experienced in the early phase of paranoid schizoid. Similarly,  $-FV$  and  $-FIV$  are caused by these same antecedents when experienced in the later phase of the same position. Whereas  $-PV$  is caused by the infant's experience of these antecedents in the period ranging from pre-oedipus — as described by Klein (Klein, 1928; Segal, 1973) — to the oedipus complex.

As previously mentioned, unlike  $+V$  which serves to bound people together,  $-V$  leads to interpersonal disbounding, and is, consequently, associated with a number of pathologies grouped under the terms of "neuroses", "perversions", personality disorders, and psychoses. Each  $-V$  type is associated with a specific pathology or a number of related pathologies. To put it differently, in spite of their symptomatological differences, many pathologies may be related to a common  $-V$ . This hypothesis will be developed further, while defining each of the  $-V$  types here below.

### Minus Valency and Pathology

As mentioned above, to each valency corresponds a  $-V$  type. That is, there are four minus valencies, with each associated with one or more specific pathologies. Let us first describe briefly the main features of each  $-V$ , then adumbrate their characteristic pathologies.

**Minus Dependency Valency ( $-DV$ ):** A subject displaying  $-DV$  is characterized by a feeling of helplessness, low self-esteem, and an insatiable urge to feel safe and protected by a partner (lover, friend, parents, husbands, analyst, therapist, etc.) who is idealized and on whom he/she pathologically depends. Therefore, any absence of the partner (for vacation for example, in the case of a therapist) would stir in the person unbearable feelings of abandonment, rejection, and consequently, self-blaming. The subject's fear of rejection is at the roots of his/her tendency to

emphasize individual similarities and disregard differences; he/she wants to resemble to and easily identify with others. For differences are perceived as a basis for possible rejection by others. Aggressive feelings or behaviors towards the partner would be immediately suppressed, otherwise it will be followed by a strong feeling of guilt. Moreover, when the subject feels that the presence or existence of others constitutes a threat to his/her relationship with the partner, this will arouse in him/her an excessive and morbid feeling of conscious and unconscious envy. A person with -DV resembles the subject displaying what Horney (1945) calls the "moving towards people" tendency.

Moreover, there are a number of psychopathological personality disorders associated with the -DV. The author postulates that -DV may be related to, among others, those disorders comprised in the category named by the DSM-III-R as "Anxious or fearful", namely dependent personality disorder, obsessive-compulsive personality disorders. The dependent personality disorder is characterized by a morbid submissiveness to and dependence on others. For they lack self-confidence and are uncomfortable when they are alone without someone to support them. On the other hand, a person diagnosed as displaying obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, is characterized by perfectionism, preoccupation with trivial details, scrupulousness, rigidity and inability to make decisions expediently, and an excessive devotion to work. It is noteworthy that although these personality disorders may seem different, they share the fact that the person lacks self-confidence and tends to be dependent on others, or on some other substitutes, such as work in the case of the obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.

**Minus Fight Valency (-FV):** For the person with -FV, is characterized by strong conscious and unconscious suspicious feelings towards one's social environment. The world is thus perceived as a jungle where only the strong can survive, and where the strong is always willing to annihilate the weak. He/she tends to be egoistic and self-centered, consciously or unconsciously manipulating and exploiting people around. He/she also shows little consideration for people; for him/her people are mere tools to attain one's goals. Moreover, owing to their strong suspicious mind, people displaying -FV do not attach importance to and value feelings; they prefer action over expression of feelings. Love, sympathy, friendliness, compliance and appeasement, and other positive human sentiments in general play a negligible role in their lives. On the contrary, they tend to exhibit an unrealistic self-confidence, self-evaluation, omnipotent and omniscient tendency, which may develop into an illusion of grandeur. The subject's fantasy consists in believing that he/she is unconditionally the best of all in everything, and he/she does not refrain from repeatedly verbalizing it in front of his/her interlocutors. Consequently, he/she is constantly denigrating, criticizing, and fighting with others, even if not convinced that they are wrong. He/she would defend his ideas and point of view with sheer tenacity and obstinacy. For admitting one's defeat is equated with weakness, and with consequently the possibility of being persecuted, dominated, attacked and destroyed by his/her

opponents. This –V type resembles Horney's (1946)"moving against people" type.

The –FV is associated with a number of mental disorders, such as paranoid personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, and antisocial personality disorder. According to The DSM-IV, the paranoid personality disorder is characterized by a pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others. The person displaying this disorder suspects, without sufficient basis, that others are exploiting, harming, or deceiving him/her; is preoccupied with unjustified doubts about the loyalty or trustworthiness of friends or associates; is reluctant to confide in others because of unwarranted fear that the information will be used maliciously against him/her; reads hidden demeaning or threatening meanings into benign remarks or events; persistently bears grudges, i.e., is unforgiving of insults, injuries, or slights perceives attacks on his or her character or reputation that are not apparent to others and is quick to react angrily or to counterattack; has unjustified recurrent suspicions regarding fidelity of spouse or sexual partner.

Concerning the antisocial personality disorder, it is generally characterized by a number of symptoms whose common feature is violence, aggressivity, provocation, and destruction. The person displaying antisocial personality disorder lacks concern for society's expectations and laws. Consequently, he/she tends to act out this attitude by repeatedly behaving unlawfully towards people and society, ignoring and violating others' rights (property, physical, sexual, legal, emotional, etc.), and physically attacking them, without feeling any remorse. Moreover, in spite of his/her superficial charm and wit, he/she is also consequently unable to have a stable professional (job) and family (home) life.

**Minus Flight Valency (–FIV):** The person resorting to –FIV appears as suspicious, cold and distant. In extreme cases, this will lead him /her to avoid close contact with others by building around him/her a kind of impenetrable fortress. He/she is then overwhelmed by anxiety when a person dare try to penetrate this fortress, or when he/she is put in such situations where he/she has to enter in contact with others. Therefore he/she will manage to avoid occupying social functions and positions where he/she has to provide leadership and be responsible. At first glance he/she appears as expressionless, suppressing all sorts of feelings indispensable to relate to one's social environment. Moreover, in order to avoid being attached or dependent on any thing or anybody, the person displaying –FIV tends to restrict his/her needs to a strict minimum. For he/she is unable to enjoy anything or activity if this demands from him/her active participation and cooperation with a large number of people. For the person with –FIV, independency is an end in itself. A social situation where his/her independence may be threatened is avoided at any cost. His/her repulsion for dependency is also manifest in his attitude towards time. The latter is often experienced as a coercion, and a limit to his/her independency. Therefore he/she hates timetables, tight schedules, managing always to arrive late to appointments, work or school. Passive non-conformism and rebellion towards other's

expectations, accepted rules of behavior, traditions, and social values are also other consequences of this excessive or morbid search for independency. This passive non-conformism and rebellion are rooted in a conscious feeling of uniqueness and superiority which he/she does not need to do any effort to prove it. For he/she expects others to discover it.

Moreover, as mentioned above the person displaying – FIV is introverted. Since real and close relationships with others are source of conscious and unconscious anxieties and fears, they are evaded for more imaginary ones. For instance, a young client with an acute avoidant personality disorder remarked that he can not imagine himself having a sexual relationship with or marrying a real woman, but can often phantasize having as sexual partner and wife one of the heroins of his preferred mangas (comic books). – FIV type shares a number of characteristics with Horney's (1945) "moving away from people" neurotic character.

-FIV can be related to different personality disorders, such as schizoid personality disorder, passive-aggressive personality disorder, and avoidant personality disorder. The schizoid personality disorder is characterized by a remarkable pattern of indifference to social relationships, with a limited range of emotional expression and experience. That is, the patient suffering from schizoid personality disorder does not experience or express strong emotions, and exhibit a few noticable change in mood. He/she is generally indifferent to praise and indifference, which explains his/her cold affect. His/her feelings of detachment or estrangement from others prevents him/her from desiring or enjoying close relationships with friends, and participating in social activities that involves frequent interpersonal contact and interaction.

The avoidant personality disorder is characterized by a pattern of social discomfort, fear of negative evaluation, and extreme shyness. Preoccupied with their own shortcomings, people with avoidant personality disorder fear loss and rejection by others. They are willing to form relationships only if they are sure they will not be rejected. Owing to their perceived exaggerate potential difficulties and, consequently, their fear of doing something wrong and failure, they generally would opt for withdrawal and loneliness rather than taking the risk of experiencing criticism, disapproval or rejection.

People with passive-aggressive personality disorder are characterized by their peculiar experience of and attitude towards responsibility. They do resent responsibility, but show it only through behaviors and not through open expression of their feelings. They also tend to avoid responsibility, claiming forgetfulness and inefficiency. Sullenness is a another characteristic of this disorder. Moreover, others symptoms such as procrastination, complaining, blaming others, resentment, resistance to suggestions from others, anger, hostility and other aggressive behaviors, attitudes, and opinion are also displayed by people with this disorder. However, owing to their fear of authority, they rarely express them openly.

As can be deduced from this brief description, these three different personality disorders have in common the patient's pathological avoidance of interpersonal close relationships, and

passivity. The person manages to keep psychological and physical distance between him/her and others, deserting them and leading them to desert him/her.

**Minus Pairing Valency (–PV):** Unlike –FIV, resorting to -PV involves a strong tendency to seek intimate (psychical and physical) interpersonal relationships. In other words, people displaying –PV feel linked to someone and satisfied with a relationship only if they are allowed to know him/her privately, and vice versa. They have a morbid curiosity towards other people private lives. They also expect people to be close to them and show the same strong curiosity towards them. They tend to be passive in such social situations where interpersonal interaction is limited, but very active, attention-seeking, and excessively seductive in small groups. Seductiveness is perceived as the only key to a successful relationship, especially in heterosexual ones. Consequently, people with –PV are characterized by an obsession with sex and pathological tendency to sexualize their relationships. One of my clients, a middle-aged-man, reported that he could not "look at a woman without phantasizing having sexual relationship with her". Love and sex are perceived as having a strong binding function, and the sexual relationship as a prototype for all interpersonal relationships. The same middle-aged-man said also that for him "life is unbearable without sex".

This tendency to seek tenaciously intimate relationships by intruding on others' private lives, and self-exhibition, prepares the person displaying –PV to a number of personality disorders, such as the histrionic personality disorder, neurotic disorders, and sexual perversions. The histrionic personality disorder is characterized by a pattern of excessive emotional expression and attention-seeking, including an excessive and constant need for approval, and socially inappropriate seductiveness and sexual forwardness. This pattern includes also other symptoms such as an excessive concern or preoccupation with one's physical appearance, a weak tolerance of frustration or delayed gratification, and a strong tendency to believe that relationships are and should be intimate. As to sexual perversions, –PV may be associated with exhibitionism, voyeurism, fetishism, stalking behavior, and sexual abuse in both cases, the victim and the assailant.

It is noteworthy that what have been discussed above concerning the relationship between –V and different psychopathologies and, although it was not discussed here, psychosomatic diseases such as, for instance tuberculosis (Hafsi, 2004b), diabetics, eating disorders (Hafsi, 2004c), is no more than a hypothesis which deserve to be examined further and tested empirically.

## Discussion and Conclusions

As discussed above there have been numerous attempts from different psychological perspectives to study and understand what link people together, or what make their interpersonal relationships possible. Each of these perspectives has engendered a theory or a

set of concepts supported by empirical data whose discussion or description goes far beyond the scope and the purpose of the present study. The purpose of the present study was 1) to discuss one of these attempts, namely Bion's idea or concept of "valency", and 2) the author's contribution made to this concept, and 3) the author's concept of "minus valency".

According to Bion (1961), valency is an individual predisposition to combine with others and act in accordance with what he called the "basic assumption group", or the unconscious phantasy dominating the group at a certain period of its activity. He postulated the existence of three different valency types corresponding to the three basic assumptions types (baD, baF, and baP) he adumbrated, namely, DV, FV, PV, and FIV. Under favorable mental and social conditions, a person is able to display flexibly each of the four types, but tends to have only one active valency --the one which she/he frequently displays in interpersonal interactions--, and three auxiliary ones. The author discussed also the relationship between the different valency types in an attempt to develop further Bion's basic Man-Atom analogy, and shed light on the "human chemistry".

Moreover, discussing the psychogenesis of valency, the author traced it back to the infant's early object relations, namely to what Klein called the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. Confronted with an object (breast) split into a good and bad one, the infant acquires the DV as a result of his/her relationship with the good and ideal object, the FV and FIV as a result of his/her fight/flight relationship with the bad object. As to PV, it is concomitant with the child's early discovery, during the pre-oedipal stage, of interpersonal (especially the mother/father) relationships and the role the father's phantasized penis plays in the realization and preservation of these relationships. As to the person's tendency to frequently resort to a same active valency when interacting with people, the author traces it back to the latency stage. In this stage the child learns the "way to his/her mother's heart" and love. In other words, he discovers how his/mother expects and wishes him/her to relate to her and others in order to be accepted and loved, and identifies to her wishes which reflect her own active valency. Thus, the child's choice of one specific valency to relate to his/her social environment is determined by 1) his/her wish to be bound to his/her mother and 2) the influence of the mother's own valency on him/her, and his/her identification with her.

Apprehending the valency concept from a different vertex (Bion, 1965), namely a vertex focussing on the negative effect valency may have on interpersonal relationships, the author was led to develop it further proposing a new complementary concept he named the "minus valency" ( $-V$ ) and its 4 types, namely  $-DV$ ,  $-FV$ ,  $-FIV$ , and  $-PV$ . The concept of  $-V$  refers to a mental state where the person's valency functions in reverse or negatively, that is, leading to the destruction of interpersonal and person-group healthy relationship or link.

Concerning the metapsychology of the  $-V$  the author, based on Bion's ♀/♂ model (Bion, 1970) of and thinking theory (Bion, 1967), postulated that  $-V$  is the result of the person's



experience of a  $- \varphi$  as an environmental factor, his/her feelings of frustration, abandonment, loneliness, "disconnection", and the ego's inability to tolerate and modify frustration by means of thought, as personal factors.  $-V$  refers thus to the subject's tendency to seek the restoration of the link with one's object ( $- \varphi$ ) by resorting tenaciously to a same (his/her active) valency even if the object does not respond to his/her needs. The author argued that  $-V$  is at the roots of a great number of psychopathologies. That is, each  $-V$  type is associated with different psychopathologies and personality disorders. Postulating a link between minus valency and personality disorders, suggests that a psycho-analytically oriented psychotherapist dealing with patients or clients with personality disorders can now have a point where to start, namely the client's  $-V$ , and a goal to achieve, that is the restoration of the client's ability to link to others or his/her "plus valency".

Finally, reexamining and developing further the concept of valency has an important theoretical value; it helps to better understand the motives behind Bion's proposition of this concept. According to the author, Bion's first motive was to provide the "missing link" bounding the individual to the group, and to suggest that there is another new vertex – different from the drive and object relations – from which human (object and interpersonal) relationship can be apprehended. In fact, as suggested by the concept of valency and the "link" (Bion, 1970) concepts, the author believes that modern object relations theory is, as a result of Bion's influence, experiencing gradually a quiet shift from the "relation" to what makes it possible, namely the "link" of which valency is a part.

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