

The hostile object

Extract from a Tavistock seminar - transcript of video clip Martha Harris and Wilfred Bion

Mattie Harris: I may be on quite the wrong track, but could it be that the slowness of these little signs that something is happening ... the slowness be in any way connected with the patient's fear of an unreceptive, rigid, or hostile object that would object as soon as it began to feel that things were moving?

Bion: It certainly plays a big part: because, these patients are not only improved, but are probably sensitive in a way that most people aren't. And the result is, that they become painfully aware of the reality of hostility and envy; and one of the difficulties here is to do with the degree to which the patient is robust, to which the patient is able to stand finding out what sort of universe they live in.