

## Friday Seminars

Absorbing, involving, educative and and useful. The NWRPA continues with the second of six seminars on the second Friday of each month. We have a comfortable new venue at the Manchester Institute for Psychotherapy in Chorlton. We are enjoying the relaunch of the NWRPA and had sixteen people attend our March seminar with Ian Parker with more new members joining. You can read about this seminar below.



**Ian Parker**

### **Lacan is Always for Beginners**

Ian chose this title for a number of reasons. The first is that Lacan is often frightening, a big theoretical system you are either understand, or not, or is so abstract that that it is hard to make use of in practice. I am a beginner with Lacan. Until this talk by Ian I had read Lacan without finding a comprehensible way in. There are a number of ways into Lacan. Through philosophy and through literary theory. Analytic patients will come to Lacanian psychoanalysis beginning from their own standpoint and history.

Another sense of beginning is that Lacan characteristically started again. He founded a school of psychoanalysis in 1964. He was concerned that like other schools of psychoanalysis it would crystallise into a bureaucracy. A hierarchy of knowledge and power where the people at the top would be reluctant to give up power. Ian summarised one method used by Lacanians to counter this. The cartel is a group of four people who work on a topic of interest from their own standpoints. Each members work is produced in relation with other members of the cartel but the members do not stick together in a consensus which has no productive conflict. The cartel appoints a "plus 1" to report to and to notice when people are sticking together. Cartels should not last more than two years.

Each Lacanian is a different kind of Lacanian.

Jacques Lacan was born in 1901 to a middle class trading family. He was Catholic and his brother a monk. He trained as a doctor and from the early 1930s as a psychiatrist. He was close to the surrealists who had a romantic view of madness which is close to the later views of antipsychiatrists. He was also influenced by the ferment of philosophical work in and was particularly influenced by Alexandre Kojve's lectures on Hegel including the Master/Slave dialectic. He trained as psychoanalyst and his training analyst was Rudolph Lowenstein. He was elected to the Société Psychanalytique de Paris in 1934.

Lacan detested the ego psychology developed by the European emigres psychoanalysts in the USA in the 1950s. (Ian said it had to be said that Lacan was not a particularly nice man. He had some of the provocativeness of the Surrealists.) He objected to the idea that the ego was the central organising principle of the mind from birth and the basis of the rational part of the personality. This conflict free sphere of the ego is part of the treatment alliance. It allows the analysand to hear the analyst's interpretation and accept it as correct. His second objection to ego psychology is the idea that analysis leads to a clarification of the mess in the mind and that the end of analysis is an identification with the analyst.

Lacan thought that the ego is not there from birth but is patched together from images of parents and hence is conflicted. He objected to the idea that ego is adaptive and that the idea of analysis

is to adapt to social norms. He thought this emphasis came from the European analysts need to adapt to living in the USA. For Lacan analysis should be a questioning of social norms and identity. It should be a work of unravelling and beginning again.

Not surprisingly Lacan and his colleagues had a creative and conflicted relationship with the central institutions of Psychoanalysis. In 1953, after a disagreement over the variable-length session, Lacan and many of his colleagues left the Société Parisienne de Psychanalyse to form a new group, the Société Française de Psychanalyse (SFP). One consequence of this was to deprive the new group of membership within the International Psychoanalytical Association. After complex negotiations the SFP rejoined the IPA and left again in 1964 with the founding of the Lacanian Ecole Freudienne de Paris.

Key Lacanian concepts are that language is a system of meaning which people both use to make sense to each other and is the obstacle to understanding. The three main elements of Lacanian thought are *The Imaginary*, *The Symbolic* and *The Real*. These can map onto the ego, superego and the id. The Imaginary is what we use to persuade others. It is crucial to communication. It is the field of images and imagination, and deception. The Symbolic is the realm of language and images which are structured and into which we enter. It is like a more pervasive superego. It both tells us what we must not do and commands us to enjoy and how to do this. The Real is what cannot be symbolised. The resistance to symbolisation gives the Real a traumatic quality. This impossibility of representation is immediately covered over with imaginary understanding and symbolic structure.

Lacan advocated a "Return to Freud." He believed Freud was mistranslated. Trieb is translated as drive. This was not meant as an instinct but as something on the border of the physical and the psychological. Ich means I rather than Ego. Es translates as It rather than Id. These translations by Lacan give a very different meaning to Freud's famous saying of "where Id was there Ego shall be" which summarises the changes of psychoanalytic treatment.

If you would like to know more Ian recommended reading translations of Lacan by Bruce Fink.

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Book now for the following NWRPA Friday Seminars

**Robin Hobbes: Silent Psychotherapy with John Cage**

Friday 12 April 2013

**Dr. John Casson: Working in Miniature**

Friday 10 May 2013

**Helen Rowland**

Where Truth Lies: The Postmodern Turn in Psychotherapy

Friday 14 June 2013

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