

NWRPA Friday Evening Seminars

Desire in Perversion

Mariel Barclay

Friday 9 October 2015, 6.30pm-8.30pm

Cost £7.50 or free to members. This includes light refreshments

Mariel's presentation draws on psychoanalysis to look at different clinical structures, focusing on perversion. She will consider whether we can diagnose perversion just on the basis of observable symptoms, how the perverse position is different from the neurotic with regards to desire, and whether we can treat perversion.

Mariel Barclay trained as a Lacanian psychoanalyst in Argentina and worked with young adults in the day centre of a psychiatric emergencies hospital. She later changed careers and moved to the North West where she continues her psychoanalytic studies.

Reflective Writing and Side Glances

Alan Priest

Friday 13 November 2015, 6.30pm-8.30pm

Cost £7.50 or free to members. This includes light refreshments

Three More Words in Therapy

Friday 11 December 2015, 6.30pm-8.30pm

Cost £7.50 or free to members. This includes light refreshments

Venue: The Manchester Institute for Psychotherapy
454 Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton, Manchester M21 0BQ.

Information about the Association is also available on our website at: www.nwrpa.org.uk

Working with Unformulated Experience

Steff Oates

Friday 11 September 2015

Steff Oates qualified as a Transactional Analyst in 1997. She runs a private practice in Cheshire, provides supervision and training, and regularly writes and speaks on TA theory and practice. She talked about a crucial issue in a way that was personal, clear and engaging.

The books she referred to in her talk were:

- *Unformulated Experience: From Dissociation to Imagination in Psychoanalysis* by Donnel B. Stern (2003.)
- *The Referential Process* by Wilma Bucci. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* Volume 22, Issue 5, 2002
- *Psychoanalysis and Cognitive Science: A multiple code theory* by Wilma Bucci (1997)
- *The Circle of Emotional Communication* by Wilma Bucci (2001)
- *Working the Organizing Experience* by Lawrence E. Hedges (1994)
- *The Primitive Edge of Experience* by Thomas Ogden (1992) NB the relevant part is his idea of the autistic - contiguous position.
- *Autistic Barriers in Neurotic Patients* by Frances Tustin (1986)

While listening to Steff I kept translating her ideas into the Kleinian thought which is familiar to me. I was particularly reminded of the theories of Wilfred Bion. For him our deepest unconscious psychic life is barely distinguishable from physical bodily processes. These experiences can be expelled or can undergo successive transformations. These transformed near physical experiences can come into consciousness

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as dreams, images and later thoughts. Please see *The Clinical Thinking of Wilfred Bion* by Joan and Neville Symington (1996.) It then struck me that my translation of her words may be an example of what Steff called "somebody else's template." As she kindly provided her notes for her talk I have used her own words for this summary.

After deciding to talk to this group about working with unformulated experience I decided to chart my journey from my first experience with Transactional Analysis in 1986 to the present day where much of my interest centres on working in this territory.

I referred myself to a therapist in 1990 with anxiety issues. I found TA theory profoundly helpful in providing some meaning to my anxiety, I was able to construct a narrative through Script apparatus where I recognized what was driving me to please or be strong and what inhibited me in work and social situations, a fear of being important etc. etc.

This provided some symptom relief and certainly helped me develop my interests to find a career that suits me well but there were limitations to this narrative, it was one story of my life, a narrative but not exactly my narrative. It was drawn from somebody else's template, kind of put on me, a sort of fit but in some ways it led me to construct a new false self, a TA self, I even began to describe myself in terms of "my process".

I imagine now with some amusement a cocktail party where people are only able to use TA terms to describe themselves, "hello I am a rescuer, which is your favourite position", oh "I'm a be strong - usually persecutor", "on Saturdays I play schlemiel what's your favourite sport, oh "nigysob" I see", well moving along I see a "victim" over there with an open escape hatch I'd better go over"

On a more serious note Eric Berne developed a wonderful theory for which I hold a lasting passion. In his work as a psychiatrist he helped numerous inpatients find awareness of themselves and a more coherent narrative. He developed a system of open communication, helping his patients dialogue with each other and with their psychiatrists with an attitude of "get better first - analyse later", I only wish he had lived longer where I imagine he would have brought together his early thinking around intuition and knowledge of neurology and phenomenology alongside his wonderful phrases such as "think sphincter" where he touched on understanding how the psyche and soma were linked.

After qualifying as a certified transactional analyst in 1997 I pursued studies in body psychotherapy where I found practitioners and trainers profoundly interested in the minutiae of the clients subjective experience, nothing seemed surprising, there was a profound trust and interest in the body as a sources of information and in the clients phenomenological experience.

I realized that whilst TA had promoted the idea that if decisions were made early on they could be re-decided in the light of new experiences and information what the body psychotherapists were interested in was more along the lines of re-organisation at a physiological and psychological level. Unlike some of the TA Parenting approaches which would hint at passivity if full awareness wasn't involved, indeed I remember a a supervisor who once said to me, "Steff, only weather happens, all else is in your power to control" I saw practitioners being interested and curious at whatever "was happening" and using it as important information.

At that time also I was given a book by Lawrence Hedges called "Working the Organizing Experience", I loved the title, it suggested a co-working to me.

In the book Hedges writes of transference phenomena involving those who's trauma was in early infancy and how the infants attempts to reach out have been ignored, and thwarted and then natural impulses to organize themselves around others have withered or died. He suggests that infants first organize themselves physically in relation to the parent's body and later to others in relationship, this is akin to Winnicott's psychosomatic partnership.

So then I got to thinking how can ordinary practitioners not trained in body psychotherapy or interested in training, maybe folks in NHS settings, work with the body and phenomenological experience.

It was then, in my body psychotherapy training that I was introduced to Wilma Bucci a cognitive researcher who developed "The referential process and multiple code theory". She wrote of four modes of processing, all important in helping patients associate from dissociated material. None of the modes are prized over the other and cross referral from one to others is effective in helping association.

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The four modes are Verbal, which we are all familiar with, Verbal Symbolic (Images) Non Verbal Symbolic (Images that are not yet formed) and Sub Symbolic (stirrings).

Her system for helping clients refer across domains is outlined in *The Circle of Emotional Communication* (2001)

The client has words about their distress but not much affect and really no image, they are talking but their words are empty. The therapist opens herself to receiving communication in her sub symbolic. The therapist makes a trial interpretation using texture, tone, images speaking with an "as if" quality, for example, the therapist is feeling lost, cold, immobile, helpless and extremely vulnerable and she speaks to this, "It is as if you didn't have any parents, I'm imagining a "lost foundling" and offers it to the patient.

The patient then receives this communication and creates their own image, "actually I've never felt my parents owned me, I always have a sense of coming from somewhere else, it's clear I am their child I look like them but I've never fitted in", etc, etc, the imagery allows a more true sense of the clients narrative.

**If you would like a CPD certificate for any of the NWRPA seminars
email Frank Kelley at nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com**

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