

Newsletter October 2017

The last NWRPA seminar was on Friday the 13 October 2017. Amelia Mangani discussed *Lacan and Client Work*. Here is a summary of her presentation written by Frank Kelley.

Amelia Mangani has a deep and broad knowledge of the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and some of the ways this might inform our work with clients.

She is a NHS Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist in private practice in Manchester. Before this she trained and worked both as a Psychologist and as a Lacanian Psychoanalyst in Argentina.

Hence Amelia has a lived experience of two different countries and cultures, two different languages and two different therapeutic approaches.

She is very concerned by the conflict between the medical model and the therapeutic approach which explores the meanings of symptoms rather than looking for a cure.

Therapies are becoming manualised, as if they were a medical treatment rather than a way of understanding the unconscious, the meaning of symptoms and the transference. Unlike medication therapy should not be in the hands of industry and marketing. She is afraid that this therapeutic approach is becoming increasingly isolated in the NHS.

Amelia introduced us to the guiding principles of the Lacanian psychoanalytic act.

1. The practice of speech. For Lacan the unconscious is not in a hidden place but in speech and particularly in the gaps and deviations in speech. The analyst repeats the patients own speech which often comes as a surprise. In this way the unconscious reveals itself. Symptoms are rooted in the unconscious and are part of the analysand's speech universe; they are told to them while they are growing up. Words have hurt the patient.
2. The analyst and the patient are two partners brought together in a single session.
3. The analyst needs to be perplexed with the patient about the meaning of their symptoms. Symptoms can also be that which cannot be articulated.
4. The analyst will punctuate the words of the patient. This is a process which takes time.

5. The partners are not equal. Analysts have experience of their own psychoanalysis and are supervised.
6. Each patient is singular. Hence it is a tenet of Lacanian work that the analyst does not explain the nature of the unconscious to the patient.
7. For Lacan the transference means the analyst is in the position the patient wants him or her to be.
8. Analysis is tailored to the patient. The analyst has this body of principles but the experience of each patient cannot be generalised.
9. Lacanians do not discuss countertransference with their patients. To do so is to fixate on symptoms and means the session is not free flowing. At worse the discussion of countertransference may lead to the patient being hostile or leaving analysis. Abrupt endings mean something is not articulated and is hidden from the analyst.

Amelia's own analyst said that people should end analysis because they fall in love, or relate differently to authority, or the way they love or hate changes or their expectations from their life change.

Lacanians have an issue with Ego Psychologists who, from Anna Freud onwards, believe the end of analysis is the patient's healthy identification with the ego ideal of the psychoanalyst.

Lacanian patients are free to question their identification with their analyst. This is a part of not identifying with the Others Desire. In a like manner the analyst is free to question Lacanian psychoanalysis. Lacan wanted to avoid the rigidity and conformity of other schools and institutes of psychoanalysis.

Amelia's talk and discussion were less linear than most of our seminars. This was because she creatively matched the form of the seminar to the content.

As we ended she made an observation that we are a sea of contradictions even if we believe we are coherent. This could be both a point about Lacanian analysis and the distinct atmosphere of this evening.

When writing my summaries of seminars I usually think *you had to be there*. This is particularly true of this meeting in October. So **thank you Amelia Mangani**