

NWRPA Newsletter December 2020

The Comedies of Transference

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An online study group on transference with Dr Mark Fisher

Summary by Frank Kelley

Early in 2020 the NWRPA faced an uncertain future because of the pandemic. We were unable to meet together for our monthly Friday evening seminars in Chorlton.

After all the uncertainties created by the coronavirus it was a pleasure to meet online in September for the first of Dr Mark Fisher's study groups. This absorbing and well received series finished in December with *the comedies of transference*.

Thank you to my colleague Paul Melia for the technical organisation of all our Zoom meetings. **Thanks also to Kieran Nolan** for his able chairing of the networking event which followed each study group.

In this final seminar Mark returned to the myth of *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Orpheus descended into the underworld of Hades to rescue his wife Eurydice. Any Greek of this time would know this was a silly and unrealistic quest and contrary to natural laws. You cannot bring people back from the dead. You have to be able to bear frustrated desire, grief, loss and mourning.

Love is what we desire but which doesn't always produce what we want. This is the theme of burlesque and comic opera. It can also be quite frightening.

Aristotle was homosexual and part of a close group of male ancient Greek philosophers. For them love belongs neither to the gods nor to humans. It is something in between, a daemon which pulls and pushes us to dangerous or silly quests like descending into Hades. This daemon approaches what we would think of as the unconscious. Like Lacan's O object it can be fun or terrible, or silly or nasty.

Love is not a constant object. It is like a quantum particle, it can be here or not here or take over.

The human drive to unity means all different loves are one love. Love is not a thing, object or person but a process. For these philosophers love begins with beauty. Like therapeutic theories it becomes more intellectual.

By contrast ordinary everyday love becomes more unsatisfactory as the concept of idealised love becomes more rounded and perfect. As a person grows in wisdom they become more spiritual and less about bodies and parts of bodies. Love becomes the love of the source of beauty as a whole. The soul turns to the great oceans of beauty and the great intellectual talks about beauty. In Lacanian analysis we move from dependence and transference to understanding.

In ancient Greece being a couple was undervalued. There was room for desire and room for wanting to become a god. There was very little room for relationships.

The metaphor of *Plato's Ladder* is about reaching to a noble understanding of love, truth and beauty. Like all metaphors this ladder has problems. One problem is that there is only one ladder.

The comic playwright Aristophanes invented a myth of three genders, male, female and androgynous. (I think Mark referred to this concept as Mr Blobby). These are all part of one person and, very literally, move backwards and forwards on all limbs and as one. This entity is powerful, vigorous and proud. They were so proud that in their hubris they attacked the gods. They were punished by the gods who divided them into two. This division meant the Blobbies spent their lives obsessively looking for their other halves.

Mark's first analysis was Freudian. Later he had a Kleinian analysis. For Mark Klein explored the origins of the sense of loneliness. Unlike his Greek philosophers Mark hasn't got it all together and never will. Pieces of our self are inaccessible and will disappear. This is the root of loneliness. Being able to bear one's own fragments is something to achieve.

We do not know we are at the end of analysis until we get there. In analysis we move from transference to respect for our abilities and inabilities. There comes a stage when they belong to you.

In answer to a question Mark made the following point about objects. All objects are internal objects. Our external objects are imperfect copies of external objects. We can struggle to separate ourselves from our external objects. However this struggle is in effect a struggle with our internal objects and as such is a form of castration.

Talking of separation, this was the last of Mark's four online study groups on transference.

Thank you to Dr. Mark Fisher for his study group which illuminated the complex nature of transference. He has talked to us about the classic conception of transference as a reliving of a whole relationship and the alternative of seeing transferences as plural and fragmented.

If you were left wanting more, Mark will talk to us again in summer 2021.