



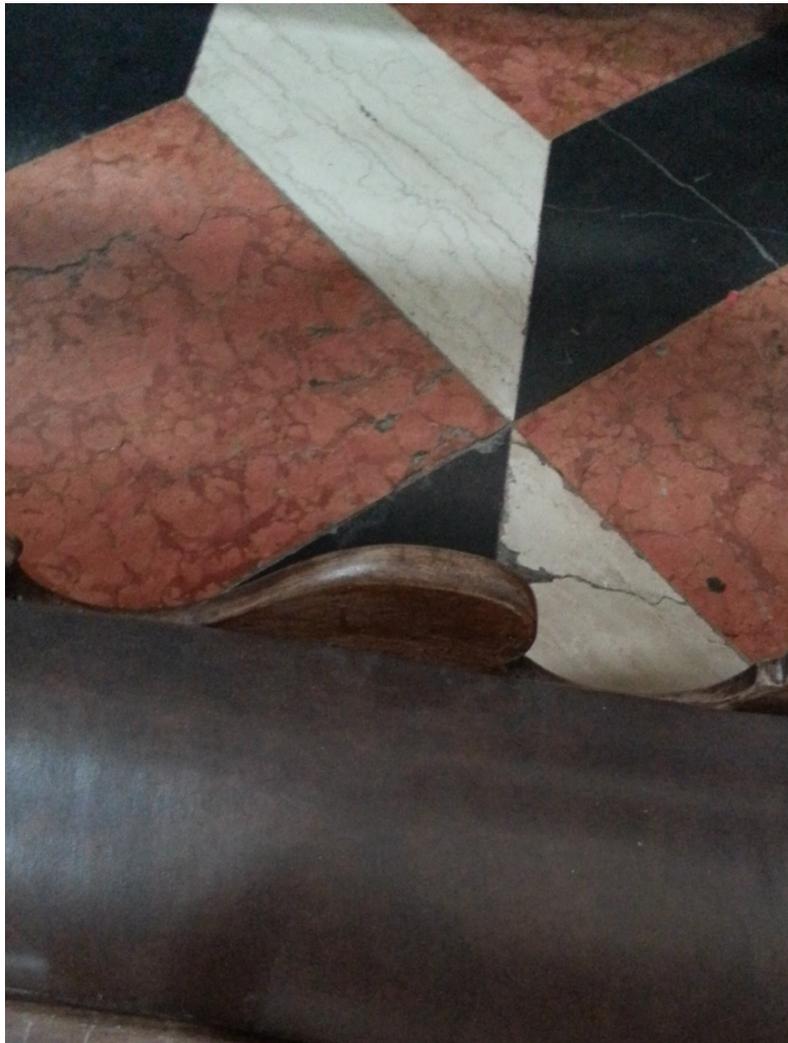
# UCL

## **Re-visiting Psychotic Aspects of the Personality**

A UCL Psychoanalysis Unit Conference

**Friday 3 – Sunday 5 December 2021**

**Parallel Paper Abstracts & Biographies**



## Parallel Paper Abstracts & Biographies

### First Session

#### Panel One

#### ***The struggle for sanity: 'Looked After' adolescents and the task of mourning psychotic parents***

- **Becky Hall**, Association of Child Psychotherapists and British Psychoanalytic Association, UK & **Louise Phillips**, NHS CAMHS and British Psychotherapy Foundation, UK
- **Julia Britton** (*Chair*), Association of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists and Open Door Young People's Consultation Service, UK

#### Abstract

A psychotherapeutic approach to psychotic children and adolescents has proved a deeply instructive area of enquiry for Child Psychotherapists. The opportunity in this Conference for it to be given more thought is a welcome one. Such seriously troubled children and young people often show disturbing behaviours and can withdraw into strange delusory worlds. These unsettle those involved in their care; the spread of misery, confusion, frustration and distress is frequently a feature of settings doing this kind of work. Their task to relieve the psychic suffering of such children particularly those whose difficulties have both internal and external roots, depends on good working professional networks, support to parents, and a shared commitment to the idea that it is possible to make meaningful contact with the inner world of a child whose relationship to reality may be tormenting and fraught.

Maternal mental ill-health is a common factor in childhood psychosis, particularly when coupled with the impaired capacity or absence of the father. The emotional impact of a mother's mental disorder, and the child's response to this impinging, premature, possessive rival for attention, can lead Local Authorities to intervene, and precipitate temporary or permanent transfers into the Care system. We describe one such situation, and one such child, drawn from our work in an NHS team for *Looked After Children and Care Leavers*.

Robbie presented as an 'odd' teenage girl with torturous rituals, visual and auditory hallucinations, and tics. The difficult, delicate work of separating out the serious mental illness in parents from psychotic states of mind in a child gets a special thrust in adolescence, when the developmental task of separation, and the conflicts it involves, become paramount. We give clinical material as a troubled adolescent moves from '*Looked After*' to '*Leaving Care*' status. Discussion will include looking at how 'madness' can get hold of professional networks. However, also we describe

Robbie's gradual emergence from a psychotic state, and the painful yet meaningful work involved in her distinguishing a mind of her own.

## Biographies

**Julia Britton** is a Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist and Director of Open Door, an NHS commissioned charity based in Haringey, North London which offers a range of psychological therapies to adolescents and young adults aged 12-25 and therapeutic support for parents and carers.

**Becky Hall** trained as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist at the Tavistock following postgraduate work in the field of English Literature and post-colonial studies. She qualified in 2009 and more recently trained as a Psychoanalyst at the BPA. Since qualification from the Tavistock, Becky has continued to work in NHS services for children and families and has developed a special interest in work with Looked After Children, adoption and parental mental health. She currently works in a specialist NHS service for children and young people in Care and in private practice with children, adolescents and adults. She is an active member and Training Analyst for the ACP, teaches Infant Observation for the BPA and is a Trustee of the Stuart Hall Foundation.

**Louise Phillips** is a practising Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, currently specialising in work with Looked After Children, and with adopted children and their parents as part of an NHS CAMHS provision. She also has a private practice for young people and adults. She qualified in 2004 from the Tavistock and qualified in 2020 as an Adult Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist at the BPF. Since qualification, Louise has worked in a variety of settings mainly for adolescents, including secondary schools and Open Door, a voluntary sector organisation providing therapeutic services to young people and their parents. She has taught on the child and adolescent psychoanalytic training programme offered by Birkbeck College, and on courses at the Tavistock Clinic. She has also participated in the Sino-British project, running infant observation groups and participating recently in conference programmes in Shanghai and Beijing.

## Panel Two

### *No signals of insanity*

- **Carine Minne** (*Contributing Chair*), British Psychoanalytical Society and Royal College of Psychiatrists, UK
- **Alla Rubitel** (*Presenting and Discussing*), Tavistock and Portman Clinic NHS Foundation Trust and British Psychoanalytical Society, UK and **Tomasz Fortuna** (*Presenting and Discussing*), British Psychoanalytical Society, UK

#### Panel Summary

**Carine Minne** will begin by introducing two of Leslie Sohn contributions to our understanding of psychotic forms of functioning. The first is what he termed ‘delusions of normality’. He conceived of these as states of abnormal belief which are adopted not only by those suffering the disorder, but sometimes those involved in their care adopt versions of them as well. They particularly come into play when a defect in symbolization has eventuated in an act of great violence. The second idea is how these same reactions also play a part in the widespread wish for a discontinuity between the diagnoses of personality disorder and those of mental illness, and in the distinctions made between ‘mad’ and ‘bad’. She will give examples.

**Alla Rubitel** and **Tomasz Fortuna** will then present two outwardly much less disturbed cases. Nevertheless, in different ways, in each prolonged therapy there were difficulties which resembled lesser versions of those with which Sohn was concerned. Their relatively undramatic form allows them to be brushed under the carpet. However, AR & TF show how the lesser intensities of the disturbance they elicit also permit us to examine them in more detail. Given the right context and setting, we can then consider how better to work in relation to what seem to us like the outer limits of psychic change, and perhaps, also at the outer limits of acting out. The experiences involved seem to be on a continuum.

Thus, a therapist will encounter many dilemmas while working with patients who, after the collapse of an omnipotent narcissistic structure, inhabit a post breakdown wasteland while there will be others who inhabit a refuge of delusion permanently.

#### Abstract (Alla Rubitel)

In my contribution, which I entitle Repurposing the void, I describe aspects of the therapy of a patient who at assessment was seen as someone who after the break-up of a relationship had suffered a partial breakdown. He projected an implicit promise of its good outcome and was thought eminently suitable for intensive therapy. However, at the start of the therapy, the patient exhibited an array of superficial identifications and frank acts of mimicry. The extent to which they relied on



masturbatory fantasies emerged. Cumulatively these all had a disturbing effect. They were intended to produce a supposed perfect fit with a view of what I expected, and a disguise to keep the therapist at a distance as well: any closeness posed a danger of merger. But he was also invasive. I had disturbing experiences of feeling myself drawn in. I was given the role of a lady in waiting: a therapist waiting for a patient and worrying about the viability of her treatment. As I began to make sense of these and other experiences of depletion and waste, I became much more aware of the patient's destructive use of a certain kind of passivity. As a consequence of this work, some capacities for more realistic kinds of relationship were partially freed. In small steps, some process of 'psychic repurposing' was possible.

The ending of therapy is always a potentially valuable re-working of separation in the face of all our desires for being at one with what becomes a narcissistic self-object. However, it is of particular importance in patients of this kind, in whom both omnipotence and anxieties are great. The aim of negating the potency of a therapeutic couple and undoing psychic development is often re-activated.

#### Abstract (Tomasz Fortuna)

I will detail the difficulties encountered in helping a patient whose life was structured in a rigid and repetitive manner. This served as a scaffolding to contain anxieties about dangerousness. It represented an omnipotent phantasy of complete control over aggressive and sexual impulses. The patient had presented with a fetish-like preoccupation with a specific idealised part of female body. And by resorting to part-object type relationships, he avoided the confusion he would experience in whole object ones. There had never been a sexual relationship.

Images and dreams that the patient brought helpfully to the sessions suggested the possibility of liveliness and change. They created in the analyst an illusion of a potential for a good analytic contact. This led to repetitive – and sometimes impatient – therapeutic attempts to reach out for these glimmers of life, to emotionally resuscitate, only to be followed by the analyst's disappointment and further frustration when the hopes for a more meaningful contact were not realised. Thus the impoverishment of the patient's internal world, and his confusion about separateness, led the analyst to behave in ways that seek to deny them both. Other phases of overwhelming apathy in the analyst signalled an alternative solution - that of going along with these defences.

The psychotic quality of some of this functioning seemed evident. I will discuss the difficulty of finding ways of making a different kind of contact with the patient that might allow him a different relationship to what is in them.

## Biographies

**Tomasz Fortuna** trained as a psychoanalyst at the Institute of Psychoanalysis in London. He is a member of the British Psychoanalytical Society (IPA) and a Visiting Professor at the Department of Psychiatry of Universiti Putra Malaysia. He worked as a psychiatrist in the NHS for 16 years and now at the Portman Clinic and in private psychoanalytic practice. He teaches and supervises at the Tavistock and Portman Clinics, the Institute of Psychoanalysis and abroad. He has co-authored *Melanie Klein: The Basics*.

**Carine Minne** is a Psychoanalyst at the British Society and a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. She trained as a forensic psychiatrist and psychotherapist, bringing these specialties together in her posting as Consultant Psychiatrist at the Portman Clinic, (Tavistock & Portman NHS F Trust) and Broadmoor Hospital (West London NHS Trust). She is President of the International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy and chairs the IPA community committee on Violence. Her focus for the last 25 years has been mainly on providing psychoanalytic treatments for patients who have acted violently or are troubled by sexual perversions.

**Alla Rubitel** is a Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy at the Tavistock and Portman Clinic NHS foundation Trust, an Honorary Senior Clinical Lecturer at Imperial College London Medical School and a psychoanalyst in private practice. She teaches at the Portman clinic and at the Institute of Psychoanalysis. She has co-edited *Containment in the community* published by Karnac in 2011.

## Parallel Paper Abstracts & Biographies

### Second Session

#### Panel Three

##### *Social Dynamics and the Loss of the Reality Principle*

- **Shmuel Erlich**, Israel Psychoanalytic Society and Emeritus Professor at the Department of Psychology, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel and **Philip Stokoe**, British Psychoanalytical Society, UK
- **Daniel Pick** (*Contributing Chair*), British Psychoanalytical Society and Birkbeck College, UK

##### Abstract (Shmuel Erlich)

Paranoia is commonly regarded in terms of destabilized individual mental functioning, reflecting undermined and inadequate reality testing, finding expression in suspiciousness, erroneous attributions, and delusions of persecution, among other symptoms. Paranoia thus spans a wide spectrum of characterological, sub-psychotic manifestations, all the way to paranoid psychosis and paranoid schizophrenia. Numerous theoretical causes and motives have been advanced to account for the phenomenon, ranging from repressed and denied homosexuality to humiliating experiences and sadistic object relations. Prompted among other considerations by recent socio-political events in Israel and elsewhere, I suggest a different, perhaps innovative, perspective, which regards paranoia from the additional socio-dynamic perspective of group and institutional processes that foster regressive social processes. This regression produces paranoia in certain individuals, while in parallel it escalates social corruption, as well as violence and other negative phenomena. Paranoia in this sense involves three interactive and interrelated levels: individual intrapsychic, interpersonal-family-group, and institutional-organizational, with corruption as the societal equivalent of individual paranoid breakdown.

##### Abstract (Philip Stokoe)

In this presentation, I address the questions: “How do we understand organisations apparently abandoning scientifically based, rational understanding of sex and gender; and also go so far as to endorse the restriction of debate or discussion?” I find that this apparently psychotic behaviour can be seen taking over the minds of organisations on a regular basis. There appear to be institutional unconscious beliefs that act as a defence against the perception of a reality that otherwise would arouse a level of anxiety that feels catastrophic. Thus the state of mind of the organisation collapses into a paranoid-schizoid position, and the task switches to maintaining this status quo; this configuration is on a par with borderline functioning.



## Biographies

**Shmuel Erlich** is a training and supervising analyst, and formerly President of the Israel Psychoanalytic Society. Now Emeritus Professor in the Department of Psychology, at the Hebrew University he was formerly the Sigmund Freud Chair in Psychoanalysis and Director of the Sigmund Freud Center for Study and Research in Psychoanalysis (1992-2005).. A founder member of the Nazareth-Conferences (whose work Desmond Tutu compared to Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa after the end of Apartheid). He received the Sigourney Award for his outstanding contributions to psychoanalysis in 2005. As well as the psychoanalytic understanding of social processes, his other work has focused on adolescence, the psychoanalytic situation, object relations and the terrorist mind.

**Daniel Pick** is a psychoanalyst and fellow of the British Psychoanalytical Society and also Professor of History at Birkbeck, where he teaches on the Psychoanalytic Studies MA programme. His publications include *Faces of Degeneration* (CUP, 1989), *The Pursuit of the Nazi Mind: Hitler, Hess, and the Analysts* (OUP, 2012), and *Psychoanalysis: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2015). Daniel's new book, *Brainwashed: A New History of Thought Control* (published by Profile), will appear next spring. Between 2014 and 2021, he led the 'Hidden Persuaders' team-based research project at Birkbeck, on the history of brainwashing, funded by the Wellcome Trust. Further details can be found here: [bbk.ac.uk/hiddenpersuaders](http://bbk.ac.uk/hiddenpersuaders)

**Philip Stokoe** is a Fellow of the Institute of Psychoanalysis in private practice working with adults and couples, and an Organisational Consultant, providing consultation to a wide range of organisations since he qualified in 1983 at the Tavistock Centre. He was Honorary Visiting Professor, Mental Health for 3 years at City University; where he is helping to set up a radically new way to train Mental Health Nurses based on psychoanalytic principles. He worked as a Consultant Social Worker in the Adult Department of the Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust between 1994 and 2012 where he was the Clinical Director of the Adult Department from 2007 to 2011. He has taught and written about the application of psychoanalysis in a wide range of settings. His book, *The Curiosity Drive: Our Need for Inquisitive Thinking* was published in 2020 by Phoenix Publishing House.

## Panel Four

### *Psychosis Proper*

- **Lydia Chambers**, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, UK, **Robert Harland**, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, UK and **John Steiner**, British Psychoanalytical Society, UK
- **David Taylor** (*Chair*), British Psychoanalytical Society, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, University College London, UK

### Panel Summary

This Panel will reconsider the applicability of psychoanalytic ideas in relation to the problems of people with psychotic mental disorders like schizophrenia, schizo-affective, and manic-depressive illnesses; the patients who psychiatric services treat, help and manage.

It asks how - or indeed if - psychoanalytic ideas can help – whether this be through its ideas about the nature of these conditions, or how they develop, by a feeling that one is understood at a level that is not possible otherwise, understanding the impact on those providing the psychiatric and psychosocial care and bearing the responsibility, or the impact at a group level on the in-patient and community settings in which treatment is given.

Speaking from experience which bears on these questions:

**John Steiner** will describe some of the history of attempts to work psychoanalytically with patients with psychotic illnesses. He will review some of the ideas he finds key.

**Lydia Chambers** works on a daily basis with in-patients most with dual diagnoses and comorbidities, and **Robert Harland** is responsible for the services and their management. They will describe the many areas and many levels of anxiety, uncertainty, unpredictability and risk that clinicians involved in the care of patients with these disorders must find ways of managing. There will be descriptions of the many different situations that show the difficult nature and extent of these uncertainties.

Ways in which psychoanalytic thinking and ways of working apply can be identified, but also there is a need for modesty in any claims.

## Biographies

**Lydia Chambers** is a consultant psychiatrist and psychoanalyst working in South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM). She has training and experience in general medicine, older adult psychiatry, medical psychotherapy, community general adult psychiatry and for the last 2 years she has worked on acute inpatient working age adult male ward where her predominant experience has been with high-risk patients with psychosis.

**Robert Harland** is a general adult psychiatrist at the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. He trained at the Maudsley. He has worked as a consultant mainly in community and inpatient services since 2008. He is the Clinical Director of the Psychosis Clinical Academic Group (Kings Health Partners) and the Clinical Director for Lambeth Adult Mental Health. He is the Trust Caldicott Guardian. He is a member of the British Psychoanalytical Society, a Trustee of the Maudsley Philosophy Group Charitable Trust, and a Director of the South London Centre of Psychoanalysis at 10 Windsor Walk.

**John Steiner** is a training analyst of the British Psychoanalytical Society, who was formerly a psychiatrist at the Maudsley Hospital and a psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic. He has now retired from clinical practice but continues to supervise and write. He is the author of *Psychic Retreats* (1993), *Seeing and Being Seen* (2011), and *Illusion, Disillusion and Irony in Psychoanalysis* (2020). He has also edited and written introductions to: *The Oedipus Complex Today* (1989), *Psychoanalysis, Literature and War* by Hanna Segal (1997), *Rosenfeld in Retrospect* (2008), and *Melanie Klein's 1936 Lectures on Technique* (2017).

**David Taylor** is a Training & Supervising analyst of the British Psychoanalytical Society (BPAS). Throughout his career, he has combined NHS work with practicing as a psychoanalyst. Currently, he is an Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist & Psychotherapist at the Tavistock & Portman NHS Trust and a Visiting Professor at University College London.