



OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY AND CHRISTIANITY

Psychotherapeutic work with the patient's desire, longing, and fear of God and the Church

A one-day seminar for psychotherapists led by Rev. Chris McKenna

SATURDAY 15 JANUARY 2011

About this event

Following Chris McKenna's acclaimed presentation at the Spiritual Narratives and Psychological Therapies conference in Cambridge 2008, this one-day seminar is an exploration of the interface between our inner, subjective worlds, its objects and religious experience with particular reference to understanding the Christian psyche. Beginning with an introduction to Object Relations theory, we will explore the primitive defences and processes of splitting and projective identification that are implicit in both benign and pathological forms of religious thinking. Rooted in the patient's needs in psychotherapy, and tracing the links between God-images and self-images, the seminar will consider how we can facilitate development from concrete to symbolic thinking. We will talk about typical patterns of religious abuse and their consequences. Clinical issues arising from such abuse will be discussed and liaison with religious professionals will be considered. Space will be provided for discussion of participants' clinical work.

Speaker's biography

Christopher MacKenna is an Anglican priest, a Senior Member of the Jungian Analytic Section of the British Association of Psychotherapists, and an honorary member of the Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, London. He has published a number of peer reviewed papers on the resonances between Christian and psychotherapeutic understandings, including *From the Numinous to the Sacred* which was awarded the Michael Fordham prize for the most original contribution to clinical analytic thinking published in the *Journal of Analytical Psychology* in 2009. Currently Chris is Director of St Marylebone Healing and Counselling Centre, London, which offers professional counselling and psychotherapy within a Christian setting, and Chaplain and Clinical Director of the Guild of Health.

SCHEDULE

- 09.30 Registration begins
- 10.00 First session
- 11.30 Coffee
- 12.0 Second session
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.0 Third session
- 16.00 End

Programme

Part I:

Object Relations theory and the psychology of religion

In the first part of the day we will discuss the contribution of psychoanalysis to this discussion, in particular the move from instinct to Object Relations that was explored by Guntrip. We will consider the transition from literal to symbolic thinking and the religious and psychological importance of transitional space (Winnicott). The inner world, and the God in whom we do or don't believe (Rizzuto) will be explored in relation to the Christian psyche.

Part II:

Metapsychology

Part II of the day covers the theme of psychoanalysis and ontology: the strange world of psyche, unconscious communication, splitting, and projective identification. We will look at the work of several psychoanalysts - Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, Bion, Meltzer, and Matte Blanco – and the psycho-theological implications of their theories. In particular, we will explore the thinking of Jung on complexes, archetypes, and synchronicity. The direction of this session will be towards an integrated understanding and practice.

Part III:

Working with patients

Working with religious patients throws up specific therapeutic issues. In this discussion we will ask how we find a home for infinite desire. The psychological functions of authoritarian religion, and charismatic religion, will be explored. Particular attention will be given to working with victims of clerical abuse.

