

Addiction Pandemic? Attachment, Desire and Chemical Distraction

28 March 2021

Abstracts

Michele Morphitis *Introductory Thoughts*

Abstract

“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” T.S. Eliot

Addiction has been notoriously difficult to define, as it can be a shapeshifter depending on one’s experience and insight. However, in some introductory thoughts, Michele will suggest that a common theme is a lack of connection (to self and the external world) and a set of compensatory behaviours to adapt to this “dis-ease”. In the modern world of the ubiquitous screen and the cycle of lockdown, perhaps we are all nudged into addiction and the boundaries of who is “an addict” have become blurred. Looking ahead to the topics covered in this conference, perhaps we can start by thinking of the psychoanalytic theme of the return of the lost loved object – as this can mirror the trajectory of addiction’s fall, as well as its recovery. The invitation is to tumble down a rabbit hole of words and images to reconnect with our own experiences of finding, losing and returning home – through the kaleidoscopic lens of psychotherapy and the unconscious.

“So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” ? F. Scott Fitzgerald

Martin Weegman *Questions of Substance: Attachment, Consumption, Dangerous Desire*

Abstract

Martin will share some of his experience as NHS psychologist working in substance misuse for over 20 years. He will present- in an accessible manner- some psychodynamic models of addiction and explain how these can play a part (sometimes, but seldom the only part) in helping addicted patients, their teams, and ourselves.

Cosmo Duff Gordon *Discourses of Drunkenness, from Chaucer to the Enlightenment*

Abstract TBC

Online Conference

Mary Wild *On Being a Junkie in Requiem For A Dream*

Abstract

Darren Aronofsky is an expressionist film director who seeks to represent intense psychological states: obsessive isolationist scientists, performers pushing their bodies to the limit, and addicts yearning for a greater high. In this talk, we will rely on psychoanalytic theory to engage with the director's signature style (a combination of melodrama, body horror, and existential fantasy) as he portrays the amplified pleasures and devastating pitfalls of being driven by substance abuse in *Requiem For a Dream*, ranging from doctor prescribed "diet pills" sought after to fit into an old favourite dress, to a needle full of heroin injected into an arm conquered by necrosis.

David Morgan *Blowing or Having a Mind. Addiction to "minus K"*

Abstract

Sex, porn, gambling and various substances are utilised in addictions to circumvent painful thought, and to arrive at regressed states of mind. All anxiety in these states of mind resides in the other, who acts as an accomplice or 'projection bucket' for the devalued thought. This talk investigates the process.

Jackie Malton *A Need For Belonging - Is Addiction The Prime Suspect?*

Abstract

In this paper, Jackie will talk about the need for belonging, from a psychodynamic perspective. The premise is that people are adapted to live with other people and our social relationships with others are the most relevant adaptation environment. People need other people to survive and as a 'core social motive' the first principle is the need to belong. Four other core social motives follow logically from the overriding premise of belonging. The presentation will build on Susan Fiske's work detailed in "Social Beings".

Is addiction an attempt at self-repair when we feel we do not belong, do not understand ourselves, feel we have no control over our lives, have low self-worth and do not trust ourselves or others? We will look at examples of the feelings of incongruence of individuals in the police, prison and the Priory clinic, in respect to their sense of self.

We are creatures of habit - the unconscious can drive us in our everyday living. To discuss this and explore her paper further, Jackie will be joined by John McKeown, Managing Director of Ibiza Calm treatment centre - and they will feed into a wider discussion on the topics covered during the day to end.