

Address to the Graduates, May 31. 2010

Dear graduates, family and friends of graduates, dear hosts at the Faculty Club, dear colleagues - and as colleagues I address everyone at CTP, from the first year of training to faculty members, as colleagues in the exploration of psychotherapy

I feel honored to speak to you today and to celebrate with you this most important evening of our school-year. I know that for you, graduates, graduation has been on your mind for a long time. You all have worked hard and persistently to arrive here, and I imagine you sitting there, experiencing a whole mixture of feelings: relief, excitement, joy, fear, dread, sadness, gratitude, regrets, disappointments, anger... You all have been with us for many years and for some of you, life has changed profoundly. Five babies have been born and are growing, Tien, Minna, Charlie, Gabriel and William. Two of them are present with us tonight, Charlie and Gabriel. I would like to welcome you specially. You have brought a world of colorful richness to those around you. Your mothers going to school has had a deep impact on you and one day, when you struggle with your own studies, you might remember, how she sat there and read and read, and wrote, and listened and spoke on the phone, and didn't give up. Many times you must have asked: what are you doing there, do you have to go again, why can't you stay here? And little William may sometimes cry and his mom feels torn, having to leave and longing to be home with him. Others have seen their children grow and gone out into the world, have seen parents decline and die. Some of you separated from long term partners, some found new relationships. Some gave up lucrative business-jobs and struggle to make ends meet, as you move into a new, for you more meaningful profession. And some of you lived through crisis of health, having to develop patience and a special kind of mindfulness, in order to recognize what is possible at any given time. But beside these factually knowable changes there are other changes. I know with certainty that everyone in this room who knows you will say: you have changed, each one of you has changed; and there might be some people here who say: I wish, he or she had not changed, or not changed in the way he did, or not gone through the process she had to go through. Why is that? Because if one person in a relationship changes, the others have to change too, if the connection is to remain alive.

Relationship and change are intimately connected, there can't be one without the other.

You could not have changed and you would not be here tonight without relationships. We all would not be here, - as a matter of fact- we would not be anywhere without relationships . But the relationships in this room are extraordinary, extraordinary in their meaning and depth. For a moment I would like to invite everyone to imagine in your mind all the connections to others present here right now. Imagine that there is a thread between you and all the people you know, and imagine these threads having different colors, deep colors and pastel colors, red, blue, yellow, green, black, white, mixed colors, threads of different materials, consistency, thickness, elasticity, and so forth. What an incredible piece of weaving we would create together, what an intricate, complex, colorful carpet would begin to unfold. But then it gets even more complicated because these threads keep changing, continuously and never ending - yes-and sometimes these threads become threats - to play with the word. So we don't only have this amazing weaving here, but also take in its ongoing changing.

Relationship is the most important ingredient of change, relationship to others and otherness: people, animals, things... There is something special about the relationships among people though, because we are all of the same kind but also uniquely different.

We live in this field of sameness and difference. A difficult place to live! As people we share the human condition: we are all born from our mothers into a particular family, place and time, over which we had no control and which shapes profoundly who we have become. We all live in a human body, vulnerable to influences from within and from outside. We all are dependent on others... just to name a few of the givens we share. Each of us has responded and is responding differently to these givens, each of us in our own way of openness and limitations. It is the tension between our sameness and our differences that bring delight and joy, but also disappointment, anger, hurt, pain and sadness into our individual lives; as well as development and destruction into the world. The recognition and respect of sameness and difference has to be at the centre of all human interactions, be it on the level of cultures, religions, countries, neighborhoods , institutions, groups, families and between two people. This

asks of us to bring a meaning of our own into the dialogue and listen to a meaning other than the one we have arrived at. It asks of all of us to listen, to see, to show and to speak with care.

Much of your time at CTP has been devoted to developing this particular kind of care. Because psychotherapy is grounded in relationship, this care lies at the core of our work. But because we are psychotherapists, this care has to include more than what meets the eyes and ears. It asks of us to be open to other dimensions which are always already there in every communication. We might name them unconscious, hidden, "unthought known", repressed, dissociated or something else, depending on who's language we use. These dimensions are never 'really' known, and we remain on a path to learn more about them, in ourselves and our clients. This is just like with relationships: we never "really" know an other - and - do we "really know ourselves? Hopefully this will keep us curious and humble. Who are you, who am I, are the questions underlying all therapeutic inquiries. Change happens through the truthfulness of this search. Maybe we come towards the end of our own therapeutic work when we can say to our therapist : Thank you for letting me find enough of you to become more rooted in myself and to accept myself and others with less fear and judgement. This might sound like a modest achievement after years of commitment, but I believe it holds some of the essence of our therapeutic work.