

CTP TRAINING PROGRAM SEMINAR
2019-2020

The Centre for Training in Psychotherapy offers in Canada a full program for training psychodynamic psychotherapists

Christopher Bollas – As the Evocative Object
CP-003-AEO

CTP – Seminar

Please note this Seminar can be appealed as a Concentration through a letter of exemption/exception addressed to the Registrar. The course can be tied to the Freud

Lectures

(30) hours

Lecturer: **Sharon Bedard**

Location: Bertmount Ave
Toronto

Prerequisite: Clinical Applications Phase – Graduates – CAPT members¹

As psychotherapists, what we have in common is a tradition that for the rest of our life will demand a constant engagement with the act of thinking and reflecting. Thinking is part of learning new ideas and reflecting is part of absorbing and assimilating them into our psychic repertoire for later clinical use. Christopher Bollas describes theory in the following way:

“**A** theory (emphasis added) is a metasensual phenomenon. It allows one to see something not seen by other theories; to have as an unconscious possibility should clinical need for it to arise.” (Bollas, 2007, p. 82)

“Psychoanalysts need to learn all the theories they can so that they may become unconscious perception-structures enabling practitioners to participate more deeply in the psychoanalytic experience. The analysand’s unconscious will sense the range of the perceptive receptiveness of the psychoanalyst”. (Bollas, 2007, p. 82)

¹ **CAPT** members are welcome and are asked to speak with me about their own therapeutic clinical experience in order to determine whether or not they will benefit from this seminar.

“If theory is perception, if it indicates an ethics of practice, it also serves as a sign of the limits of consciousness. However much a theory presumes to tell us something about a person, its actual function is less in what it discovers than in how it sees.” (Bollas, 2007, p. 83)

We will be looking at a number of selected writings by Christopher Bollas. His creative effort to say something about how he has digested psychodynamic theory from Freud onwards, and his own original and lively thinking, will further our capacities to think, reflect and perhaps write. This is the tradition to which you have subscribed, and it is a living and changing field.

We are all heirs to a psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic theory and we enter that tradition to take up our full membership. Psychoanalysis and more specifically psychodynamic psychotherapy is at one dimension an oral tradition – we talk and we listen, not merely as a matter of practice, but as a manner of training – we are in personal therapy, group therapy, individual supervision, group supervision, dream groups, seminars and concentrations – in other words we are with others and we talk. But we are also writers – this is communicated to us immediately as we write our autobiographies when we apply. We go on to write our application to the formation years, our application to supervision and our regular supervision updates, and we write our case histories. We are writing about our ability to think, theorize and remain humanly present – not just in our therapeutic clinical work – but in our writing as well. We join a tradition and an ongoing dialogue carried out through learning to reflect via the medium of the written word. We are trained to be writers as a subsidiary task to our training as psychotherapists. You will be encouraged to begin your own process of writing and exploring your own thinking.

One of the other focusses for this seminar is Bollas theory of the ways in which the unconscious is more than the repository for repressed wishes, guilt and desires. Any psychic investment becomes a question of whether the cathexis stifles or elaborates what Bollas calls the articulation of the person’s idiom. Bollas concept of psychic genera suggests that the unconscious can also draw to itself experiences and objects : “Psychic genera are clusters of internal intensity that are created when related ideas, images, and feelings are attracted together with a ‘collective psychic gravity’ ... psychic genera also communicate with the conscious mind.” (P.15 The Metapsychology of Christopher Bollas.). What I believe Bollas is saying is that we have an “ongoingly” and associatively receptive unconscious that is responsive to the world surround, and generates our personal psychic responses. When a person invests in experiences, ideas, belief systems (objects of many different types), these interconnected “impressions, feelings and fantasies” in turn influence the self’s responsiveness to the world.

Bollas calls our idiom, our responsiveness, the “psychic correlate of our fingerprint”. Our idiom or particular “aesthetic of being” arrives with us and guides our “idiosyncratic relationship with the world”. (Summarized P. 19-20, The Metapsychology of Christopher Bollas).

If I put these thoughts together I am left with many helpful questions – for example, what does trauma do to the person’s capacity to continue to articulate their own idiom. As a therapist I am interested in: whether a person’s unconscious was receptive, available, engageable, what objects they seek, refuse or accept. Objects in and of them self have their own intrinsic value, but they also have a use value for an individual. How are they used or not? Ideas, values, beliefs, people, books, films ... can all be objects, I believe.

Bollas explores many types of objects – notably evocative, elaborative and terminal objects for example. We will be thinking together about all of this.

Readings are supplied prior to each seminar and the first reading will be available during the summer.

Dates and Times : the days will be Saturdays 10:30 – 2:00, approximately once a month, specific dates will be sent.

Location: Depending on the size – my home. Bertmount Ave., Toronto.

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Sharon Bedard
April 2019