

Palacky University

Olomouc 2017

Proposed schedule, 26 September, 2017

9:00am – Greetings/Gathering

9:15am – Lecture 1

10:15am – Break

10:45am – Lecture 2

12:00pm – Lunch

2:00pm – Presentation and Roundtable Discussion

Titles and Descriptions

Lecture 1 (one hour, including Q&A):

Fragmentation, Integration, Transformation: Worldviews and Psycho-Spiritual Wholeness

Description:

We are fragmented people. In the West – and especially in the United States - we are divided *societally*, as evidenced in our political polarization and the rise of hate groups, we are divided *interpersonally* as evidenced in increasing loneliness and isolation, and we are divided *intrapersonally*, as is evidenced by the exploding usage of antidepressants and the correlation between early adverse childhood experience and morbidity, mortality, and disability. If we are to move toward wholeness societally, interpersonally, and intrapersonally, psychological theory and practice alone are not enough. Even depth psychologist James Hillman, notoriously averse to metaphysical speculation, recognized “the terrible need for metaphysics” after hearing David Bohm admit that physics had “released the world into its perishing” and acknowledging that the “physical threat of the end of the world results from a metaphysical catastrophe.”

In this lecture, Dr. Sheri D. Kling will show how a generative synthesis of Whiteheadian metaphysics and Jungian psychology positively address the deleterious effects of a dualistic worldview, the fragmentary nature of human experience, the ability of humans to encounter a life-giving source of dynamism in their everyday lives, the inherent value of diversity and all beings, the validity of non-sensory experience, and the relationship of mind to body. Such synthetic work is necessary now because neither Whiteheadian thought nor Jungian thought alone are capable of achieving the widespread change that is required for wholeness. As Hillman argues, we can no longer “decline to engage in metaphysics,” so we must supplement Jung with Whitehead. We cannot effect a change in the popular imagination with conceptual language alone, so we must supplement Whitehead with Jung. And we cannot achieve a transformation of consciousness simply through elegant theories, and so we must supplement

Whitehead and Jung with an embodied, transformational praxis wherein one can encounter a primordial, transpersonal Reality that shows us that *we matter*, that *we belong*, and that *we can experience positive change*.

Lecture 2 (one hour, including Q&A):

Trauma, Imagination, and Healing

Description:

The symptoms of Western cultural dis-ease go beyond political polarization, racism, loneliness, and the increasing usage of psycho-pharmaceuticals. In 1998, physician-researchers Vincent J. Felitti and Robert F. Anda released the findings of a collaborative study between Kaiser Permanente's Department of Preventive Medicine in San Diego (Felitti) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, Anda). Known as the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study, their research was conducted to examine the relationship between "traumatic stress in childhood and the leading causes of morbidity, mortality, and disability in the United States: cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease, chronic liver disease, depression and other forms of mental illness, obesity, smoking, and alcohol and drug abuse." A major epidemiological study of 17,000 participants, the ACE research analyzed the effect that early childhood trauma had on adult health, behavior, and life expectancy.

The study showed that traumatic experiences in early childhood are directly correlated with higher incidences of a wide range of risky behaviors and public health ills including: alcoholism, alcohol abuse, smoking, and illicit drug use; depression and suicide attempts; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, ischemic heart disease, liver disease; financial stress and impaired worker performance; and higher risk for intimate partner violence and sexual violence overall. For those who had more than one kind of adverse childhood experience, incidences of such risks were exponentially higher than for those with less. The findings were so alarming and the correlations so strong that Robert W. Block, former president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, claims that "Adverse childhood experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today."

At the same time, new research into what is known as the "placebo effect" have revealed that it is possible to enlist the human capacity for imagination as a healing resource to aid in dealing with and/or recovering from illness. In this lecture, Dr. Kling will introduce the results of the ACE study and new insights into the human imagination and the placebo effect. We'll then explore what such research might mean in terms of the lingering effects of adverse childhood experience. Can imagination be the key to solving the ACEs crisis?

Presentation and Roundtable Discussion (90 minutes):

The Dreaming Body and Religious Experience

If imagination can assist in healing, how might the images in our dreams be part of the journey toward psycho-spiritual wholeness and transformation? Rather than perpetuating the chasm between dreams-as-brain-generated or dreams-as-divine-messages, Dr. Kling will show in this presentation how the bold epistemological claims of Alfred North Whitehead about perception and internal relations can expand our discussion of dreaming to include brain, body, world, and that transpersonal reality that some call “God.” Bridging the chasm with Whiteheadian thought allows us to accept Kelly Bulkeley’s claim that “dreaming is a primal wellspring of religious experience,” while rejecting both the view that dreams are somehow “delivered” into a sleeping person through supernatural agents and the notion that transpersonal reality *must* relate to us supernaturally. Neither current scientific nor religious approaches to dreams alone can provide an integrated theory to explain how dreams can be understood as embodied while still somehow capable of being perceived as guiding and healing encounters with a transpersonal reality.

By exploring Dr. Kling’s *relational-imaginal theory of dreaming*, participants will discuss the ways in which dreaming can be understood as a natural function of a perceiving body-mind that 1) perceives the entire actual world and God with “vector feeling-tone” and 2) combines that emotionally-laden material with images generated through the influence of transpersonal reality. Such relational, emotional, and imaginal elements may then be transmitted via the vagus nerve to the brain where its capacities for exploration, association and metaphor, cognition, simulation, and adaptation can be put to use to advance learning, and emotional memory integration. If proven to be true, the implications of such a relational-imaginal theory of dreaming could be far-reaching; therefore, the Dr. Kling is interested in conducting a dialogue with participants that explores ways in which this relational-imaginal theory of dreaming can be tested and the usefulness of this approach to address the “public health disaster” of adverse childhood experience and trauma.