Transference and the Moment of Catastrophe

During this pandemic there have been catastrophic moments for many of us. A specific form of transference has been observed in the moment of catastrophe when time stops and speech becomes impossible. Davoine will present examples of this phenomenon, taken from the testimony of anesthesiologists and nurses working on the front lines, and will compare them with the “forward psychotherapy” devised for the treatment of victims of shell shock in World War I, which was the prototype of modern practice with traumatized patients.

Françoise Davoine, PhD, is a psychoanalyst in private practice in Paris. She trained in the École Freudienne de Paris, founded by Jacques Lacan, and was a member of that school until Lacan’s death and the school’s dissolution. She worked for thirty years as a psychoanalyst in public psychiatric hospitals in France as an external consultant. She was a professor for forty years at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), where she and Jean-Max Gaudillière led a weekly seminar entitled “Madness and the Social Link” at the Center for the Study of Social Movements. She was an Erikson Scholar at Austen Riggs Center in the summer of 2017. She is the author of many articles and books, including History Beyond Trauma with Jean-Max Gaudillière (Other Press, 2004), Wittgenstein’s Folly (YBK, 2012), Mother Folly (Stanford University Press, 2014), Fighting Melancholia: Don Quixote’s Teaching (Karnac, 2016), A Word to the Wise: Don Quixote Returns to Fight Perversion with Jean-Max Gaudillière (Karnac, 2018).

Continuing Education Information

Learning Objectives: Participants will be able to (1) distinguish an ordinary transference in which the past is present from a transference in a catastrophic moment, in which time has stopped, and (2) identify what analytic work can look like within a transference in which time has stopped and speech has become impossible.

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