

Parents, Illusions and Disillusions.

Parents are always present, as internal objects, remnants of everybody's childhood, and as external objects in real life. We must deal with 'parents' in all psychoanalytic work. In adult analysis we work primarily with the imaginary parental figures of our analysands, but we also hear about their external parenting disposition as they bring material related to their real children to the session. Although this brings the mourning of their own childhood experience forward, no work with external objects is done. In child and adolescent psychoanalysis on the other hand, the complexity of the analytic work demands inevitably dealing with parents both on the level of the internal object relationships of the child or adolescent as well as on the representation in the parents' mind of their youngster. Therefore, parents as real objects are always part of child & adolescent psychoanalysis in a variety of settings, depending on the age, the problems of the child or adolescent, the family situation, and the psychoanalytic culture of the analyst.

Parents' internal objects and psychic defence mechanisms are significant aspects of all analytic treatment of minors and the parent-child/adolescent relationship offers itself to the child & adolescent analyst in a complex mutuality. The narcissistic illusion that characterized the relationship between child and parents undergoes a process of disillusionment that involves psychic suffering on both sides. As such, illusions (f.e. the idealized parent, the idealized analyst/setting, the scapegoating of a child,..) need to be worked through and mourned. In child & adolescent analysis we have an opportunity of connecting internal and external psychic realities.

The presenters will bring clinical material from child and from adolescent analysis to demonstrate how maintaining support of the parents in addressing their (un)conscious illusions, expectations and disillusionments is essential for the treatment of their child or adolescent.