

## **DPSPs Peter Fonagy seminar den 6.oktober 2006**

### **The Abstract of Peter Fonagy, Ph.D., FBA, Freud Memorial Professor of Psychoanalysis, Director of Clinical Health Psychology at University College, London**

#### **The growth and development of personality from childhood to adult years: psychology and psychopathology**

Adult personality disorder is increasingly seen as associated with adverse childhood experience. The relationship of early experience and adult personality turns out to be complex. To understand it we require a comprehensive model based in developmental theory. The paper will present a developmental model of borderline personality disorder with three major risk elements: 1). lack of contingency and markedness of infant-mother interaction; 2). lack of playfulness in the family and 3). attachment trauma. These risks interactively combine with three major categories of sequelae: 1). disorganized attachment and associated disorganization of self structure; 2). failures of mentalization; 3). the 'hyperactivation' of the attachment system and 4). a shift in the switch point between two cortical arousal systems. The outcome of these interactive influences is the distortion of mental function characterized by failure of mentalization and the re-emergence of pre-mentalistic modes of subjectivity including psychic equivalence, the pretend mode, and teleological thinking. We have evolved a therapeutic approach which aims to take into consideration these developmental vulnerabilities and appears to enhance the success of psychotherapeutic interventions regardless of orientation. The key aim of this approach is the enhancement of mentalisation. While many therapeutic approaches to BPD can be modified to fit with this aim, certain aspects of classical treatments come to be seen as not helpful and possibly even iatrogenic. The paper will review key features of the approach and identify aspects of psychological therapy which we believe to be critical in bringing about enduring change as well as those we believe to hinder recovery.