

INTOLERANCE SEMINAR SERIES AT LSE

Susie Orbach
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LSE

What is psychoanalysis@lse?

psychoanalysis@lse is a new initiative, based primarily in the Sociology Department at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

LSE has been at the forefront of thinking and innovation on Social Policy since its inception. In this endeavour it has often struck out in new directions, forming unique approaches by bringing together researchers and academics across the disciplines whose specialist knowledge has strengthened our understanding of societal problems and how to address them as well as contributed to the academic and public conversation about the various factors that need to be considered when approaching difficult social phenomena. What has been missing from the dialogue is any systematic attempt to use the research base arising out of psychoanalytic thinking in a way relevant to the school's mission.

Psychoanalysis at LSE

Psychoanalysis in society and within the LSE has been confined to its more usual territory in social work policy and social work training. DW Winnicott, the important analyst and pediatrician was a regular contributor to the department of social science and administration. Between 1938 and 1939 the LSE under Durbin instituted an investigation into the *Psychological Causes of War*. Participating in the seminar was John Bowlby, one of the most influential of British psychoanalysts

In 1997 I became a Visiting Prof at LSE and gave some lectures on psychoanalysis and social policy. As psychologists, sociologists, economists, anthropologists and those in media studies have become more interested in psychoanalysis, its findings and ways of thinking have seeped into many departments to reframe and revitalize discourse and to suggest ways of approaching problems that can often seem intractable and elusive to transformation.

Psychoanalysis studies subjective experience and human agency. It is a discipline that examines meaning and motivation. It observes individuals and groups of people in the process of change. It details how the individual subject develops from a biological infant into a gendered child and then adult who has the capacity both to absorb the world around it as well as to act on that world. It understands the factors that make individuals robust, able to participate effectively in work, in social, civic and family life and those which incline the individual to act destructively and against what is perceived by others to be their self interest. It has a contribution to make in terms of explaining destructive social groups as well as those that operate as social capital.

Psychoanalysis is an important adjunct to the more familiar academic disciplines whose knowledge base and methods are brought to bear on social policy. Just as social policy seminars routinely include statisticians, economists and sociologists, there is a technocratic aspect to psychoanalysis which should be drawn upon.

Why Intolerance?

Focusing on a theme under which a whole set of questions and difficulties cohere, Intolerance allows us to give attention to the play of intrapsychic, interpersonal and unconscious issues and shows how this kind of attention could prove a productive addition to the more habitual modes of enquiry and explanation in social science.

In this seminar series, we are bringing together psychoanalytic thinkers with those who are expert in other disciplines to see if we can this kind of conversation can advance our understandings and challenge fixed modes of thinking and action.

The current tension between the need for certainty and the desire for a kind of pluralism that allows open questioning and critical thinking to occur is easily seen in discussions around the theme of intolerance. This is acutely focused now with questions of human security, human rights and the law. In addition, issues of religion and ethnicity and of how we might approach 'the other' are clearly crucial for the maintenance of civil society. The usual ways of understanding historical tensions of race, class and religion, can benefit from psychoanalysis's understanding of the construction of the notion of 'the outsider(s)' and what the function of this kind of inclusion exclusion represents.

Intolerance and Fundamentalism

In this first seminar, Karen Armstrong situates religious fundamentalism. Henrietta Moore and Andrew Samuels then comment on the ways in which a psychoanalytic approach can be brought to the dilemmas posed by fundamentalism today.