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Type of Presentation: Workshop

The Utility of Melanie Klein's Concept of a Persecutor In Understanding Paranoid Psychosis

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Learning Goal:

Attendees will gain a clear and commonsense understanding of the psychology of persecutory delusions and see the relationship between paranoid psychosis, normal childhood development, and ordinary mental life, a perspective that will show persons suffering from psychosis to be "more simply human than otherwise".

Abstract Text:

The presentation aims at a clear explanation of the ideas of Melanie Klein, which relate psychosis to normal development and ordinary mental life in a way that demonstrates that psychotic persons are "more simply human than otherwise". It is hoped that family and friends of persons suffering from psychosis may gain a better commonsense understanding of the mental life of persons suffering from psychosis. Melanie Klein, a contemporary of Freud who originated child psychoanalysis, described how, early in development, the mental representation that normal children form of people tends to split into all positive images of "all good" images of people and negative "all bad" images of people, because it is psychologically impossible at a young age to be angry at and seek comfort from the same parent at the same time. The familiar wicked witch in fairy tales represents the "bad mother" who in the fairy tale wishes the child ill. Klein's thinking gave rise to psychoanalytic object-relations theory, which examines the structure of and relationship between mental representations of the self and others in the mind. Adults suffering from psychosis often believe that they are in relationship with a persecutor (a government agency, the Mafia, a neighbor, or the deceased) who is the bane of their existence, standing between them, success, and happiness. The presentation will examine the developmental origin of persecutory delusions and describe how psychoanalytic object-relations theory can be useful in understanding the characters that populate delusional beliefs, and how Klein's ideas are useful in the conduct of psychotherapy for psychosis.

**ON THE HEALING POWER
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**