Keynote:

Moral Injury in a Wounded World: Attachment and Identity through One's own Odyssey

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Our contemporary global mental health crisis represents a complex interaction between psychological, social, cultural, economic, environmental, and political determinants of health. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) estimates that approximately one in eight people worldwide live with a mental disorder, while the burden of mental health difficulties is further intensified by armed conflict, forced migration, poverty, social inequality, climate-related stressors, and disruption of family and community systems. Within this context, moral injury provides an important framework for understanding psychological suffering associated with experiences that violate deeply held moral beliefs or expectations, particularly when individuals perpetrate, witness, experience, or are unable to prevent events perceived as morally transgressive (Litz et al., 2009; Williamson et al., 2021). Such experiences may challenge an individual's fundamental assumptions about self, others, relationships, justice, and meaning in life, thus intersecting our attachment to others, self and one's identity**.**

As we may be familiar with, Attachment Theory proposes that early and continuing relational experiences contribute to internal working models of self and others and influence emotion regulation, interpersonal functioning, and responses to adversity (Bowlby, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Similarly, identity development involves the formation of a relatively coherent and continuous sense of self, values, purpose, and belonging across the life course, Experiences of trauma, displacement, relational disruption, and moral conflict may challenge this continuity and require processes of identity reconstruction and meaning making (Erikson, 1968; McAdams & McLean, 2013).

Homer's (ca. 800 B.C.E.) *Odyssey* provides a powerful literary metaphor for these processes: Odysseus's prolonged separation from home, exposure to danger and loss, encounters with moral dilemmas, and eventual return can be interpreted as a narrative of disrupted attachment, identity transformation, resilience, and the search for meaning and belonging. The *Odyssey* (Homer, ca. 800 B.C.E.) can thus serve as a tool to provide a culturally meaningful framework through which clinicians and clients may explore themes of adversity, separation, moral conflict, identity, relationships, homecoming, and psychological transformation.

From this perspective, contemporary psychotherapy involves not only symptom reduction but also the restoration of relational security, agency, identity coherence, meaning, and connection. Importantly, these therapeutic processes require attention to the well-being of both clients and therapists. Evidence concerning therapist well-being emphasizes the importance of self-care, reflective practice, professional supervision, collegial support, appropriate boundaries, and sustainable workloads in reducing occupational stress and supporting effective clinical practice (Barnett et al., 2007; Norcross & VandenBos, 2018). Self-care should therefore be conceptualized not simply as an individual responsibility but as an integral component of ethical and sustainable mental health practice. In this sense, the *Odyssey* can function as a metaphor for psychotherapy itself: clients and therapists are both engaged in journeys through uncertainty, loss, attachment, identity, moral experience, adaptation, and recovery, requiring relational support, reflection, meaning-making, and compassionate care throughout the journey.

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