

Michael Garrett

Psychosis as a Consequence of Social Adversity and its Treatment with Psychotherapy

Since the advent of neuroleptic medication for schizophrenia in the 1950s, pharmacotherapy has been the mainstay of treatment for psychosis. The presenter will examine evidence that has accumulated in the last two decades that psychosis is causally linked to social adversities, such as poverty, physical and sexual abuse, bullying, and traumatic events such as occur in war. The presenter will argue that because adverse life experiences play a significant role in the etiology of psychosis, psychotherapy is an essential element in the treatment of psychosis. The presenter will comment on the work of Francoise Davione and Jean-Max Gaudilliere in their book *History Beyond Trauma*, as it relates to WWII, and discuss racism, as reflected in apartheid in South Africa and the history of slavery in the United States, as these traumatic social adversities may impact mental health. The presenter will invite the audience to consider how much of what we view as mental illness is not a disease per se, as medical diseases are typically defined, but rather a downstream consequence of our human failure to create a just society in which all citizens can be nurtured. Seen in this way, the familiar symptoms of psychotic disorders follow the contours of how the human mind falls apart from the inside when a person cannot deal with traumatic adversities in life, rather than symptoms being a sign of a biological illness that has afflicted a person.