



Ottawa Psychoanalytic Society
Société psychanalytique d'Ottawa

Scientific Program Meeting - Presenter: Dr. Arthur Leonoff
January 27, 2024 – Saturday – 10:30am to 12:30pm, via Zoom

Please RSVP to ottawaps@yahoo.com

Title: On Mourning, Melancholia and War

Abstract:

Written before the Hamas-Israel war, the author introduces the concept of social melancholia, a society that has foreclosed on mourning and interprets its losses and disillusionments through the lens of conspiracy, betrayal, and eternal retribution. This “negative of mourning,” its effacement from consciousness, is discussed in terms of its corrosive effects on the collective psyche, polarizing towards extremism, and bringing the society to the mentality of war. Using Russia and Rwanda as examples, the author illustrates how societies which foreclose on mourning can regress into social melancholia, choking off the capacity to mourn, while trying to reclaim some illusive lost destiny or ideal. The capacity to mourn is the pathway to social justice whereas the negative of mourning instills paranoia and the ongoing thirst for vengeance, which is a formula for interminable conflict and war.

Bio:

Dr. Arthur Leonoff is a psychologist and Supervising and Training Analyst of the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society and recipient of the Citation of Merit. He is an Honorary member of the American Psychoanalytic Association and has served in numerous administrative roles in the International Psychoanalytic Association. He is the current chair of International New Groups. Dr. Leonoff is the author of three books exploring parenting issues in divorce in general as well as in contested and high conflict situations. He is a member of the Training Committee of the Quebec English Institute and remains an active teacher, psychoanalytic author, and clinician.

Please note that there is a \$40 fee for participants who are not CPS members or OPS Guests, and a \$20 fee for students; if paid by credit card, the fees are \$45 and \$25 respectively:

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Meeting ID: 895 7208 1535

Passcode: 345777

This event is an Accredited Group Learning Activity (Section 1) as defined by the Maintenance of Certification Program of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and approved by the Scientific Chair of the Ottawa Psychoanalytic Society. Attendance will be recorded.

Learning objectives:

This presentation will focus on three main learning objectives:

- 1) A review of the concept of mourning and its relation to psychological health.
- 2) An introduction to the concept of social melancholia, its furious identification, revolt against mourning of a lost love object, and how this can be applied to societies that instigate wars.
- 3) An exploration of the current rise of dangerous, nationalistic populism that promises life without loss, endless victory, and never a reason to mourn.