



Ottawa Psychoanalytic Society
Société psychanalytique d'Ottawa

OPS SCIENTIFIC MEETING

Presenter: Dr. Cecilia Taiana

**Date: May 02, 2026 – Saturday – 10:30am to 12:30pm,
via Zoom (please RSVP to ottawaps@yahoo.com)**

Title: Pirates of the Pre-Conscious, Snatchers of our Attention, Sirens to our Desires: A Psychoanalytic Understanding of relating to a “non-organic-device-other(s)” (NODOs)

Presentation type: Scientific paper

Abstract:

This paper presents a psychoanalytic perspective on relating to a non-organic-device-other. The author briefly traces the historical links between AI and psychoanalysis, highlighting their shared ancestry in 19th-century thinkers like Hermann von Helmholtz and Gustav Fechner. In particular, their ideas about perception, unconscious inference, and the mind as an energy-regulating system laid the groundwork for both fields. This section also examines the influence of Helmholtz's theories of unconscious inference and energy conservation on Freud's psychoanalytic model and how these concepts resonate with contemporary neuroscientific frameworks like Karl Friston's free energy principle and Geoffrey Hinton's AI's predictive coding model.

The author elaborates on the concept of attention, contrasting how attention works in artificial intelligence (AI) with Freud's idea of “evenly suspended attention” during psychoanalytic sessions. In psychoanalysis, the focus is not solely on the content of what is said but also on the “saying” itself—the emotional prosody of the session or “affect-phrase”. This enunciating voice is foreign and eludes simple categorization, escaping the reach of algorithms. The author argues that AI's approach to attention differs fundamentally from that of psychoanalysis.

The paper highlights the dangers of engaging with non-organic devices in the context of an emerging “intention economy,” where the true intentions of the algorithms' device may be concealed from users. The author examines AI's potential to captivate and direct human attention, especially within this “intention economy,” which aims to predict and exploit human intentions for commercial gain. The

concept of “intention” is discussed in relation to the unconscious, drawing on the ideas of Freud and Lacan.

The rapid evolution in the digital landscape raises ethical concerns about the commodification of human experience and the risk of AI steering users toward predetermined outcomes. By discussing alternative frameworks for understanding attention, the author outlines potential threats posed by AI and summarizes these concerns with phrases such as “snatcher of attention,” “sirens to our desires,” and “pirates of the pre-conscious.”

Suggested readings:

Freud, Sigmund. 1923. *The Ego and the Id*. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 19, ed. and trans. James Strachey, 1–66. London: Hogarth Press, 1961.

Friston, Karl. 2010. “The Free-Energy Principle: A Unified Brain Theory?” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 11 (2): 127–138. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn2787>

Learning objectives:

After attending this presentation, the participants will be able to:

1. To recognize and describe how non-organic digital devices function as attention snatchers hindering our pre-conscious functioning by flooding it with a “universal” and “anonymous” secondary process.
2. To recognize, analyze, and differentiate the intentionality embedded in the secondary process presentation of a non-organic digital device from that inherent in a human organism's self-generated secondary process, which emerges from/with the primary process.
3. To distinguish between using AI as a helpful polymath, we direct, coach, and edit, rather than simply accepting its propositional statements without inquiring about its pre-determining intentionality.

Short Bio:

Dr. Cecilia Taiana is the 2014 and 2017 recipient of the *Dr. Douglas Levin Prize* and the *Dr. Miguel Prados Prize*, respectively, awarded by the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society for two of her articles. Dr. Taiana’s publishing record is impressive, with five articles and three poems in the last three years. She teaches at the Toronto Psychoanalytic Society Extension Committee and has taught at the Quebec-English Branch Institute. She also teaches residents in psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa. She is a member of the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society, Quebec-English Branch, and has a full-time practice in Ottawa, Canada.

Cecilia is one of the keynote speakers at the International Journal of Psychoanalysis (IJP) Annual Online Conference, 10th of January 2026. Her paper is titled: *Poetry at the limits of Prose: The Soldier-Poet as a figure of the Unconscious*. In 2024, she conducted a workshop for psychoanalysts and candidates at the Psychoanalytische Institut Berlin (PaIB), introducing the medieval practice of *versiprose*—substituting prose with verse—and exploring

its application in psychoanalytic sessions by transforming session prose into poetic form. Her most recent articles, part of a trilogy, are on *What does poetry offer psychoanalysis? Robert Frost's Sound Sense*, CJP, Spring 2022, *T. S. Eliot's Concept of Tradition*, CJP, Fall 2022, and *Wallace Stevens, Connoisseur of Chaos, and his notion of Motion*, CJP, Spring 2025. In June 2024, the International Journal of Psychoanalysis published *A Machine of the Same: Repetition in the Foundational Discourse of the Argentinean "Being" (1976–1983)*, which was recently translated to German and Turkish. Also, *'Day's Residues': One Vertex among Multiple Vertices*, was published in August 2022 in the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*.

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Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/4844761127?pwd=MG8zVVNyRVFIWEZ1emlMN2RzTXhwZz09>

Meeting ID: 484 476 1127  
Passcode: 485239

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*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.*

*If you would like to receive participation confirmation, please fill out the feedback form and email it to [ottawaps@yahoo.com](mailto:ottawaps@yahoo.com)*

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**Please note that there is a \$40 fee for participants who are not CPS members or OPS Guests, and a \$20 fee for students:**

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## SCIENTIFIC MEETING EVALUATION FORM

**Meeting title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **# Credits (Hours):** \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the quality of the activity on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

### *This activity*

|                                                             |                                      |                                      |                                      |                                      |                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Met the stated objectives</i>                            | <b>1</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>2</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>3</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>4</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>5</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Enhanced my knowledge</i>                                | <b>1</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>2</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>3</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>4</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>5</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Satisfied my expectations</i>                            | <b>1</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>2</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>3</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>4</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>5</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Conveyed information<br/>that applied to my practice</i> | <b>1</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>2</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>3</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>4</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>5</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Allocated <math>\geq 25\%</math> for interaction</i>     | <b>1</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>2</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>3</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>4</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>5</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Was free from commercial bias?</i>                       | <b>1</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>2</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>3</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>4</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> | <b>5</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> |

**What did you learn or how will this event impact on your practice?**

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**Please indicate which CanMEDS roles you felt were addressed?**

- ☐ Medical Expert   
 ☐ Scholar   
 ☐ Collaborator   
 ☐ Communicator  
☐ Manager   
 ☐ Professional   
 ☐ Health Advocate

| <b>Evaluation of Presenter(s)</b> | <i>Overall Effectiveness</i> |                          |                          |                          |                          | <i>Content Relevance</i> |                          |                          |                          |                          | <i>Teaching Methods</i>  |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
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**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/ SUGGESTIONS:** (please use verso if needed)

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