

## Dark wisdom

### *Symposium in commemoration of 100 years Freud in the Netherlands*

Date: 6 April 2017, 1.30 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.

Venue: [Koninklijke Industriële Groote Club](#), Dam 27, Amsterdam

## Abstracts and short biographies

### **Yra van Dijk, Professor of Dutch Literature, Leiden University and Arnon Grunberg, Author – *A conversation***

**Dr Yra van Dijk** (1970) is full professor of Modern Dutch Literature in a Global Perspective at Leiden University, and was a visiting scholar at UCSD in 2010-2011. She was part of the HERA-funded collaborative research project ELMCIP, in which she focused on the poetics of digital communities. Her Ph.D. on typography and poetry was published as a Dutch monograph (Vantilt, 2006), and she published volumes on Late-postmodern literature (AUP, 2011) and on Intertextuality (Vantilt, 2012). She is currently coordinating an international research project on Digital Memory of the Shoah and a minor program in 'Cultural Memory of War and Conflict'. In 2017 Van Dijk will publish her monograph on the oeuvre of Arnon Grunberg in the perspective of second generation Shoah-memory and trauma.

**Arnon Grunberg's** (born in 1971) books are bestsellers in his native Netherlands and have been translated into 26 other languages. He writes regularly for Dutch and foreign newspapers and magazines, among them *de Volkskrant* (daily column), the weekly *Vrij Nederland*, *The New York Times* and other publications. He also writes essays and plays. Grunberg frequently abandons his desk in order to plunge into new experiences. For example, he took up residence in a psychiatric clinic, was embedded with soldiers serving in Afghanistan, and lived alongside chamber maids, 'normal Dutch families' and the staff of the Swiss railway catering service. He recently joined brain scientists in carrying out research on the neurobiology of artistic creativity and perception. Since his debut novel *Blauwe maandagen*, Grunberg has received numerous awards in the Netherlands and other countries. He has been a writer-in-residence at various European universities. Arnon Grunberg is a member of the [Society of Arts](#).

### **Werner Bohleber, Psychoanalyst – *Native and Alien, Psychological Processes of Exclusion and Violence***

The psychic formation of self and other is a lifelong process. I will describe the pathological processes of exclusion of the Other in individual psychic development and on a collective social level. Globalization and the new refugee crisis in Europe did bring up in political and social debates a renaissance of the national and a revival of ethnic thinking and cultural homogeneity. They have given rise to nationalistic and populist political currents in many European countries. Psychoanalytically we can contribute to the understanding of the special attraction this kind of thinking can have on the minds of people. In a depth analysis of nationalistic mentality we find collective phantasies of purity and homogeneity that have roots in ubiquitous unconscious fantasies of care and sibling rivalry, of purity and the idea of the Other, of visions of organic unity and fantasies of fusion. With this analysis we are able to make comprehensible how a narcissistic fantasy of identification with an ideal object can intermingle with violence and how both can mutually reinforce and radicalize each other on the psychological plane.

**Werner Bohleber**, Dr. phil, is a psychoanalyst in private practice in Frankfurt and a training and supervising analyst. He was director of the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute (1994-2000) and president of the German Psychoanalytical Association (DPV) 2000-2002. He was a member of the Board of Representatives of the IPA (2003-2007); a member and chair of several IPA committees, the last one as



chair of the IPA Committee on Conceptual Integration (2009-2013). He is the main editor of the German psychoanalytic journal *Psyche* and co-chair of the International Council of Editors of Psychoanalytic Journals. In 2007 he received the Mary S. Sigourney Award. His research subjects and main publication themes are: late adolescence and young adulthood; psychoanalytic theory; history of psychoanalysis in Germany; transgenerational consequences of the Nazi period and the war on the second and third generation; nationalism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism; trauma and violence; religious fundamentalism and terrorism. Werner Bohleber is author of several books and numerous articles. His last book in English is *Destructiveness, intersubjectivity, and trauma. The identity crisis of modern psychoanalysis*, London (Karnac) 2010.

### **Antonie Ladan, Psychiatrist/Psychoanalyst – *The wish for war***

The author shows how we are clinging to a personal version of war that allows us to solve inner conflicts around the feelings of impotence, inherently connected with the human condition. Among other things, impotence can generate a need for destruction. In time of peace there is a great taboo on destruction in our society. We may only gratify destructive wishes in indirect and less annihilating forms, e.g. in sport, work or fantasy. Although in general we manage very well to channel our aggression into directions that are not too destructive, in this respect a state of non-war is psychologically burdensome. "War" seems to offer a legitimate stepping-stone for our need for destruction and for this reason can be something that is wished for. This makes it increasingly difficult to face the reality of the wars we are currently waging.

**Antonie Ladan, M.D.** is a supervising and training analyst with the Dutch Psychoanalytical Association. He is full member of the International Psychoanalytical Association and published extensively on the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, for instance *Walking Heads; on the secret Fantasy of being an Exception* (Other Press, 2005) and *On Psychoanalysis, Disillusion, and Death; Dead Certainties* (Routledge, 2014). In his writings he tries to combine elements from memory research, neurobiology, attachment theory, and developmental psychology that are important for psychoanalytic theory and technique. He illustrates how a specific form of observation, where the analysand and the analyst pay careful attention to their relationship over an extended period of time, makes it possible to gradually recognize the automatic expectations and behaviours of the analysand in relational situations. Recently he published *Het verlangen naar oorlog en andere zaken* ("The Wish for War and other Affairs") (Sjibbolet, 2015), wherein he elaborates on looking at the world from a "disillusioning" perspective in order to accept life and the prospect of death for what they are.

### **Wouter Gomperts, Clinical psychologist/Psychoanalyst – *Society and its perverted discontents***

In Freud's Civilization and its discontents, the civilizing process demands restraining from the gratification of sexual and aggressive impulses. The civilizing process imposes a pressure that leads to discontents and neurosis. Freud describes the neurosis as the negative of perversion. That which is repressed in neurosis, is glorified and acted out in perversion. If neurosis is a byproduct of civilization, then perversion can clarify de-civilization processes. Currently, psychoanalysis views perversion as a deep disorder in the sense of self and identity, characterized by a complex defense that results in two parallel realms of experience. One compartment is dominated by a terrifying arid, deadly, hopeless sense of self that the second compartment disavows. A pseudo-reality of a whirl of excitement is created in the second compartment. In this presentation I will propose that Trump instigates, exploits, manipulates and personifies a perverted world of experience. With his pompous display of wealth and power, his unabashed money grubbing, disdain for flawed or ugly people, contempt for women, black people and other minorities and newcomers, coupled with his lies and projections and denial of factual knowledge, he creates an exalted pseudo-reality. Many individuals, who feel that they have been deprived of male and/or white privileges, or fear that they will lose their social position, identify with this pseudo-reality. Their feelings of hurt, disregard, unacknowledged shame and powerless anger transform into an excited sense of power and triumph. In a process of projective identification their fear, hopelessness and



confusion is pushed under the skin of (groups of) people who view and viewed themselves as standing on the 'right' side of society.

**Wouter Gomperts** (1951), Ph.D., clinical psychologist, is training and supervising psychoanalyst at the Dutch Psychoanalytical Society and a supervising psychotherapist at the Dutch Society for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. He teaches psychoanalysis, and was an assistant professor at the Department of Clinical Psychology of the University of Amsterdam from 1979 until 2016. He was a member of staff of the Dutch Psychoanalytic Institute (1987-2015) and a member of the editorial board of the *Tijdschrift voor Psychoanalyse* (Dutch Journal of Psychoanalysis) from 2008 until 2016. He is chair of the Training Committee and a member of the Board of the Dutch Psychoanalytical Society. In recent years he has published on Society in the mind, Inter-ethno-cultural psychoanalytic treatment, and the relationship of psychoanalysis and science. He is a practicing adult psychoanalyst.

### **Abram de Swaan, Emeritus Distinguished Professor for Social Science, University of Amsterdam – How normal are “normal” mass murderers?**

There is a strong consensus - a rarity in the social sciences - about the nature of genocidal killers: they are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances committing extraordinary evil. Indeed, the genocidal situation does very much influence the behaviour of the perpetrators; but there is more to it. The 'situationist' approach tends to ignore that. There is the long-term socio-cultural process that gives rise to the circles of identification and disidentification that shape and divide the society. There is the impact of the regime and its institutions that create the genocidal situations. And, most pertinent, the perpetrators are persons with a history and a personality of their own, which may facilitate or inhibit their murderous actions. The relevance of these dispositions is flatly denied in the situationist approach. Granted, the perpetrators cannot be observed while at work, their childhood and adolescence can rarely be reconstructed, they are loath to divulge anything about their criminal past, and when they do come forward, it is usually before their judges, trying to exonerate themselves. Yet, there are quite a few cues about the genocidal disposition, from diaries, letters, memoirs, interrogations and trials. Here, psychoanalysis comes in, to be handled with care, since there is no material from direct, intimate and prolonged contact. But psychoanalysis assumes that people may hold different, layered emotions, which may well be in conflict; that they may not be aware of all their emotions at any one time and even successfully repress them; that childhood experiences may continue to shape their inner experience and actions, and so on. Indeed, perpetrators differ from most other people to some degree in certain respects, such as acceptance of authority, a more circumscribed moral conscience, a diminished sense of agency, and above all a lowered capacity for empathy beyond their immediate social circle. The concepts of 'mentalization' (Fonagy) and 'dysmentalization' (W. Gomperts) turn out to be quite productive in this context.

**Abram De Swaan** (1942) is Emeritus Distinguished Research professor (University Professor) for Social Science at the University of Amsterdam and held the chair of sociology from 1973 until 2001. He was co-founder and dean, then chairman of the Amsterdam School for Social Research (1987-2010). For many years he was a columnist for *NRC/Handelsblad*. De Swaan has been a visiting professor a.o. at Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest, at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, and this Fall at Columbia University N.Y.C. In 1983, De Swaan received the Busken Huet essay prize of the City of Amsterdam, and in 2008 the P.C. Hooft prize, for his entire essayistic oeuvre. De Swaan studied psychoanalysis at the Netherlands Institute for Psychoanalysis and practiced as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist from 1973 until 1984. In those years, he published a series of studies on subjects at the intersection of psychoanalysis and sociology, a.o.: *Omggaan met angst - Coping with fear in a cancer ward* (1978); *The politics of Agoraphobia; On Relational and Emotional Management* (1981); In recent years, De Swaan has published on mass annihilation in the twentieth century: *The Killing Compartments; On the Mentality of Mass Murder* (2015). He presently works on the extreme rightist and jihadist backlash against women's emancipation. De Swaan is a member of the [Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences \(KNAW\)](https://www.knaw.nl/).



**Nel Draijer, Clinical psychologist/Psychoanalyst – *On the comfort of splitting in the face of threat***

How do people react to perceived threat? The threat of the recent economic crisis and co-occurring masses of refugees on the move, have created for many an existential insecurity that is hard for them to bear. Worldwide we observe reactions of increased anxiety and hyper vigilance as well as aggression. Splitting, the division of the world in 'good' and 'bad' seems to be an attractive psychological defense to handle existential insecurity. But splitting - being the basic dynamic in populist ideologies - has its inherent hazards: it lies at the root of discrimination, exploitation, war and violence. Still, not all people - nor governments - are drawn to split. People react differently under hardships. Psychoanalysis assumes - and empirical evidence supports this - that security of attachment in the first years of life lead to the development of an integrated identity, a coherent sense of self, empathy, resilience in the face of danger and to the perception of others as benevolent. It is exactly this connecting constellation that is needed to counter the splitting force currently dominant in national and international politics.

**Nel Draijer**, PhD (1950) is Emeritus Associate Professor at the Department of Psychiatry VU Medical Center, Amsterdam (1989-2015). She is a (registered) clinical psychologist, psychotherapist, psychoanalyst (IPA), internationally certified TFP trainer/supervisor as well as trainer/supervisor for Dutch Society for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (NVPP). She is a senior researcher in the field of child sexual and physical abuse and neglect and its impact, both in epidemiological research (prevalence studies among the general population, psychiatric inpatients), as well as in clinical psychological, psychiatric en neurobiological research. She teaches post-doc psychiatry, clinical psychology, psychotherapy, psychoanalytic psychotherapy, and supervises psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and psychotherapists. She received the first National Mental Health Award in the Netherlands (1989) for special achievements in the field of mental health because of her research on the impact of child sexual abuse. The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD) granted her the David Caul Memorial Award in 1993 and the Morton Prince Award in 1994 for her research in the field of dissociative disorders; she became ISSTD Fellow in 2011 for her work in the field of dissociation. She was a member of the Health Council of the Netherlands, Advisory board for Ministry of Health, The Hague (2004) on 'Recovered memories' and (2011) on 'Treatment of the effects of child abuse'. She was a member of the Dutch Committee (Deetman) on Child Sexual Abuse in the Roman Catholic Church (2011). Currently she is President of the Dutch Society for Psychotherapy, vice-president of the International Society for Transference Focused Psychotherapy and member of the board of TFP Nederland.