

From Misery to Freedom: Psychotheology Goes to the Movies
Summit '09: Health and Hope: The Hard Reality of Living in the Village of Care
Orlando, Florida
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Workshop Introduction

All great movies—like all great novels—deal with one primary theme, redemption or the lack of it. The journey begins with an experience of a loss, in which the individual is traumatized. This trauma creates a scar that over time give rise to pathology, this pathology creates its own chaotic world. The sojourn back into the land of the living is demanding, but possible. Along the way the injured traveller encounters people who find ways to touch the places of pain and in so doing become agents of health and healing.

In the pre-conference workshop, *From Misery to Freedom: Psychotheology Goes to the Movies* we will examine this journey through the lens of three characters. The workshop will begin with an examination of one of the most emotional crippled figures in cinematic history, Alistair Simm's 1951 performance as "Ebenezer Scrooge" in *The Christmas Carol*. From there we will move to Frances McDormand's portrayal of the brow beaten and painfully subservient "Miss Pettigrew" from the 2008 film *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*. The important thing to note about these two characters is that their transformation takes place in a very short period of time. It will be suggested that such massive shifts in personality are not works of fiction, but very achievable. In the final portion of the workshop we will look at the longer journey, that of Robert DeNiro's slave trading mercenary "Mendoza" in Roland Joffe's 1986 film *The Mission*.

It is the hope that in the workshop we will come to a deeper appreciation of the psychospiritual landscape of those who have experienced acute grief. We will also seek to chart a way forward both for the other and for ourselves as spiritual care practitioners.

Workshop Goals

- Increased capacity to do psychospiritual diagnosis
- A deeper understanding of human resilient and how spiritual care can actively participate in facilitating this journey
- An increased capacity to do theological analysis on the fly

Key Themes

Trauma, grief, murderous rage, the unconscious, anxiety, defense structures, therapeutic covenant, dynamic engagement, hope, healing, resilience, joy, remorse and forgiveness (you know the "light" topics.)

For Who is the Workshop Designed

The workshop is designed for all those who find themselves in the company of people how have been traumatized by life's circumstances, and who are struggling to discover a way forward.

The workshop is also designed for intrepid spiritual care practitioners, who are not afraid of the dark. Particularly when the dark include experiences of trauma, loss, betrayal and the subsequent realities that cause people to further isolate themselves.

Theoretical Background

The term psychotheology refers to the theoretical zone within which psychology and theology animate each other. The workshop will touch on a number of theoretical constructs, and participants are invited to use their own framework to expand our common understanding of suffering and resilience.

Throughout our time will with touch on the theological work of people like Augustine, Origen, Milbank, Santner and Rosenzweig. Psychologically, we will employ object relations theory, self psychology and intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy. Participants do not have to be familiar with these writers or theories. The workshop will provide both a foundational and advanced articulation of these concepts.

About the Pre-Conference Workshop Facilitator

The Reverend Dr. Jody Clarke is an Anglican priest. His doctoral work was a phenomenological exploration of the experience of parents who suffer the death of a child.

Jody's research has focused on bereavement, trauma and suffering. He is also interested in pushing the frontiers of the human condition, believing firmly in the resilience of the human soul. Jody is an Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at Atlantic School of Theology, in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is a teaching supervisor in CPE and a specialist in PCE with CAPPE.

As a psychotherapist, Jody has a small private practice. After years of working with Object Relations Theory and self psychology, Jody began a shift to Intensive Short-term Dynamic Psychotherapy (IS-TDP). For the past four years, Jody has been a part of the Montreal Supervision offered directly to psychoanalytic practitioners by Dr. Habib Davanloo, the psychiatrist who developed IS-TDP.

A Final Note: This is a Workshop

In conclusion, this is a workshop. Participants will have an opportunity to share ideas, converse with each other and work with three extraordinary films. Together we are going to perform a psychospiritual examination—a kind of autopsy of the soul—on several characters found in film and literature. The first question is how did they become crippled? From there we will examine their journey from misery to freedom.