



D S P P B U L L E T I N
Dallas Society for Psychoanalytic Psychology
Exploring and promoting the psychoanalytic perspective

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Volume XIX Number 6

April 2003

APRIL MEETING PREVIEW

MELISSA BLACK, PHD
 presenting on
***Cultivating the Improvisational
 in Psychoanalytic Treatment***

**WEDNESDAY
 APRIL 9, 2003**

Dr. Melissa Black closes out our monthly meetings by furthering our understanding of the ideas and style of Phil Ringstrom. Dr. Black invites us into the intimate and sometimes playful space of her consulting room by discussing Ringstrom's ideas on cultivating the improvisational in Psychoanalytic treatment. Ringstrom states that the capacity for engaging in improvisation may well be one of the most defining capacities for the development of a genuine psychoanalysis.

Readings:

Ringstrom, P. (2001). Cultivating the improvisational in psychoanalytic treatment, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 11 (5), 727-754.

This reading is available online at:

<http://www.dspp.com/papers/ringstrom2.htm>

APRIL MONTHLY MEETING

Date: Wednesday, April 9, 2003
Social Time: 7:00 PM
Presentation: 7:30 PM
Location: Pecan Creek Office Park
 8340 Meadow Road
 Dallas, Texas
Speaker: Melissa Black, PhD
Topic: *Cultivating the Improvisational
 in Psychoanalytic Treatment*

MARCH MEETING SUMMARY

GERALD MELCHIODE, MD
 presenting on
The Bane of the Conjoint Therapist

Reported by
PATRICIA WOOD, PHD

Gerald Melchiodo, M.D. presented DSPP's March, 2003 program: *The Bane of the Conjoint Therapist* based on Philip Ringstrom's paper: *Competing selfobject functions: The bane of the conjoint therapist*. Dr. Melchiodo is a psychoanalyst, a training analyst at the Dallas Psychoanalytic Institute, and a member of the faculty at U.T. Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

He began his conversation with the audience by saying that he would use a jazz format rather than a lecture format for the evening. With Ringstrom establishing the basic musical theme, Dr. Melchiodo and the audience would together improvise around that theme.

Dr. Melchiodo noted that, where Ringstrom is concerned, he agrees with him in some ways and disagrees in others. In particular, he objected to Ringstrom's apparent tendencies to put down classical psychoanalysis as wrong and to claim that his approach represents something novel, which does not overlap with the work of others. Dr. Melchiodo observed that he finds various models of the mind helpful in doing conjoint therapy including self psychology, object relations, intersubjective approaches, various developmental theories, etc. These models all have overlapping elements with others as well as their own unique characteristics.

As an example, Dr. Melchiodo outlined Ringstrom's six-step model of necessary components for conjoint therapy in the intersubjective model (Ringstrom, 1994). These include: 1) attunement to each spouse's subjectivity; 2) articulation of the view that neither spouse has more ownership of the "truth" about the situation; 3) position that each partner's complaints arise partly from that person's early life experiences; 4) assumption that each partner reenacts the past in an attempt to maintain an inner sense of self; 5) emphasis on introspection for each person's sense of ownership of his or her contribution to



the conflict; and 6) encouragement of each couple's capacity to support each other's growth. Dr. Melchiodo noted that some of those elements are specific to Ringstrom's approach to conjoint treatment and others are not. The model overlaps with other views as well as having specific characteristics of its own.

Dr. Melchiodo went on to discuss Ringstrom's view of two transference components seen in each partner's relationship to the other as well as to the therapist in conjoint therapy. One is the self-object or reparative dimension where the partners look for affirmation of the self. The other is the repetitive dimension where each person hopes for affirmation but expects disappointment. Dr. Melchiodo considers this view limited in that it does not take into account the distortions, regression, displacement, projections, etc. inevitably involved in the transference. He also noted that disappointments are not automatically negative but can lead to positive developments in the treatment process.

Dr. Melchiodo also took issue with Ringstrom's description of an optimal marriage as involving Pollyannaish and idealized self-object attunements. Instead he argued that good marriages entail combinations of idealization and de-idealization, control and relinquishment of control, togetherness and separateness, etc. These comments led to a very interesting discussion between Dr. Melchiodo and the audience on the bases of self-esteem and the question of whether or not self-esteem arises solely from self-object attunement. Are the sources of self-esteem all interpersonal? Some audience members thought that all self-esteem derives from interpersonal sources. "Is there any experience without an object?" "A sense of solitary achievement is a rarity." "I think Ringstrom thinks that all sources of self esteem are interpersonal." Some audience members argued that sources of self-esteem can be both interpersonal and internally generated. "It is an interwoven process involving interpersonal sources and elements of solitary mastery including competence and the ability to entertain oneself." "Enhancement of the self is both from the other and in the self." "In the movie 'Chariots of Fire', one runner is motivated by competition, the will to win, and another is invested in the solitary running experience."

Finally, Dr. Melchiodo maintained that Ringstrom suggests that what intersubjective therapists do is unique when actually all good therapists do similar things. An audience member pointed out that intersubjective and relationist positions came into being in reaction to classical analysis. Thus it is a developmental issue in the field. Dr. Melchiodo agreed that every new theory has passionate proponents and that reaction to the

authoritarian approach, arrogance, or suppression of disagreement by some classical analysts was in order.

The continuing trend toward lively and interactive discussions at DSPP meetings is quite encouraging. Thank you, Dr. Melchiodo, for your contribution to that trend!



FROM THE EDITOR:

As this issue of the *DSPP Bulletin* goes to print, our country is again engaged in a military war. Whatever your view is regarding the rightness or wrongness of this war, it impacts all of us and will bring pain to many. As you are faced with this struggle in your practices, may you also nurture yourselves, find solace in your communities and hold your loved ones near to heart.

---Cheryl Martin, RN, LPC

A year later the war broke out and robbed the world of its beauties. It destroyed not only the beauty of the countrysides through which it passed and the works of art which it met in its path but also shattered our pride in the achievements of civilization, our admiration for many philosophers and artists and our hopes for a final triumph over the differences between nations and races. It tarnished the lofty impartiality of science, it revealed our instincts in all their nakedness and let loose the evil spirits within us which we thought had been tamed for ever by centuries of continuous education by the noblest minds. It made our country small again and made the rest of the world far remote. It robbed us of very much that we had loved, and showed us how ephemeral were many things that we regarded as changeless."

Sigmund Freud--- *On Transience* (S.E. 14:307)



Please submit items for the May issue of the *DSPP Bulletin* by April 20th.



DSPP SPRING WORKSHOP

**Saturday
May 3, 2003**

Distinguished Guest Speaker

Philip A. Ringstrom, PhD, PsyD

**A Relational/Intersubjective
Approach to Conjoint Therapy**

with

**Case Presentation by
Robert Aberg, PhD**

Scottish Rite Hospital
The Solarium I

Working with couples offers many challenges to the psychoanalytically informed therapist. Looking beyond the "he said, she said" battle to determine "who is right" in a couple's interactions leaves us with the opportunity to delve into a myriad of intense relationships and affects. Dr. Ringstrom will present a workshop based on his model of *A Relational/Intersubjective Approach to Conjoint Therapy*. This full day workshop will combine theory, technique and case illustration to provide a comprehensive understanding and application of his model.

Dr. Ringstrom is a graduate of and current faculty member at the Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles. He has taught for over a decade in the graduate departments at UCLA, USC, and Loyola Marymount. He is widely published in the areas of psychoanalysis, self psychology, and couples therapy. Dr. Ringstrom is a publication's reviewer for *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* and the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*.

**Case Presentation
Robert Aberg, PhD**

Dr. Robert Aberg is a Dallas psychologist working with children, adolescents and adults in his private practice. Dr. Aberg is a past president of DSPP and has held many key leadership positions within our organization. Dr. Aberg received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from UT Southwestern in 1989, and his MA in Clinical Psychology from SMU in 1983. Dr Aberg is currently a Clinical Assistant Professor at UT Southwestern.

**Information and registration form available at
www.dspp.com**

Map at <http://www.tsrhc.org/gethere>

ANNOUNCING

Division of Psychoanalysis (39)

American Psychological Association

23rd Annual Spring Meeting

**HOPE: Contemporary Psychoanalysis'
Passion for the Possible**

Minneapolis Marriott City Center, MN

April 2-6, 2003-

For Information go to www.divpsa.org

**The DSPP Arts Committee
and the Dallas Psychoanalytic Society**

present the film

**"Il Postino"
(The Postman)**

with

Gemma Ainslie, PhD
reading and discussing her paper

***IL POSTINO: HOPE IN FILM, LIFE
AND PSYCHOANALYSIS***

**Saturday
April 12, 2003
6:00 - 10:00 pm**

Smith Auditorium of the Meadows Museum

Gemma Ainslie, PhD is a founding member of the Austin Society for Psychoanalytic Psychology and Faculty Member of the Houston/Galveston Psychoanalytic Institute

No Charge for the Film and Discussion

Reception to Follow
(\$20 fee and Reservations required)
call Judith Samson at 214-750-7692 or email
jgsamson@swbell.net , no later than April 5

Full details available at www.dspp.com

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2002-2003**

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