



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

4516 Lovers Lane #446 Dallas, Texas 75225-6993 * Phone: 214-890-3351 * www.dspp.com

Volume XIX Number 7

May 2003

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

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

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

**HOPE: CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYSIS'
PASSION FOR THE POSSIBLE**

APA Division 39 Spring Meeting, April, 2003
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Janie Keller

I was able to attend the Division 39 meeting through the invitation of DSPP and President-Elect Steve Patrick, the generosity of Section IV (Graduate Student Initiative) and Laurie Wagner. Laurie, winner of this year's distinguished Leadership Award within the Division, made it possible for me to be part of the theater experience "Six Degrees of Separation" held in conjunction with the conference. When Steve asked me to write about my response my first thought was "Six Degrees of Freedom." Granted, that is an amalgam of the title of the play and a throw-over from my graduate program stats class; but, I think, perhaps not a bad description of the experience.

Flying to Minneapolis in the midst of a semester filled with Texas Mental Health Law, Applied Data Analysis

and clinical seminars was in itself a breath of fresh air. I had few preconceived notions about what to expect, having never been to Minnesota or to a psychology convention or conference of any kind. What happened was an immersion into an experience that I will try to describe. I was welcomed with open arms by Section IV members and made to feel quite at home. In fact, I felt surprisingly "at home" the whole time. In attending meetings and talks I soon discovered that the stereotype of psychoanalysis is shifting and transforming. Clinicians spoke of "the changing face of psychoanalysis," of brain imaging and the hypothesis that the right brain is the physiological substrate of the unconscious, of a dedication to research, of social outreach, and of their own struggles with the limitations of their discipline. It was refreshing to hear a profession so open to self-reflection and growth--so opposite its cultural "Woody Allen" stereotype. I was delighted to encounter a group of persons who were just as varied as any I have ever been with from the most practical to the most erudite. I was delighted to get to hang out with Steve Patrick, to meet Laurie Wagner for the first time and to talk with graduate students from around the country about their interest and participation in the field of psychoanalysis. I was delighted to be considered "a young 'un" in the field and as a result I've reset my career trajectory. Six degrees of freedom? You bet!

What touched me most, however, was what I perceive to be one of the differences that makes psychoanalysis stand out among the psychologies. That is the depth of human experience it embraces and the committed way in which it does so. I was most moved by the case presentations, delivered with respect for persons involved, but even more with a certain reverence, even tenderness. These presentations struck a cord within me that is still palpable and profound. This is not a resonance I experience often in my training to become a psychologist. I was captivated and enlivened and believed anew in my mid-life career change. Phrases have stayed with me—a quote from Freud that "we all live psychologically beyond our means," another from a talk by Donald Kalshed—"When our patients fall into hopelessness, watch for the place where hope will emerge"; that "human beings can feign death in order to bring about necessary rebirth." In a session titled *The Analyst's Dreaded Otherness as a Source of Hope*,

Malcolm Slavin presented a case in which he struggled mightily with his own limitations and that of his discipline, in working with a patient. His discussant, Jessica Benjamin, articulated “in seeing the process of how we struggle (contending with our existential counterpart of their problem) the patient can be the observer. This allows the analysis to survive the de-idealization. ‘I (the patient) have to understand you to understand me.’ This is the creative process of creating the third, the moral third or shared recognition that we each have a subjectivity.” Stephen Cooper offered insight in the Keynote Address showing that hope is a corporealization, having a heart and a brain and can die. He did this through narrating the story of a long analysis, where there was a strong alliance and much groundwork. Stating that even in his patient’s perception of his own (Stephen’s) “badness,” his selfishness and maybe even greed there was fertile ground for struggle and growth for the analytic pair. Stephen’s (?) “I am who I am” and Benjamin’s quote from Nietzsche “It’s not good taste; it’s not bad taste; it’s my taste” might be comforting words to the analyst and patient, at such times, as they grope in the dark toward understanding one another and encounter that shared realization, and hopefully a shared respect for the realization, that in some ways they can understand, but not in all. That each person in the dyad’s thinking of himself, could be enlivening and connecting to the other. According to Cooper, it is this new “bad object” who struggles to, but cannot fully understand who facilitates true growth; not the false hope of a primarily positive transference, but real hope for the analytic pair in dealing with the realities of the transference and countertransference. And, in another quite different sort of talk, commenting on a presentation of how early abuse and neglect affects the human brain, Cooper offered a response to working with abused and neglected patients that was empathetic and understanding to both therapist and patient. “In doing the difficult work entailed with abused and neglected patients you need endurance and an ability to resonate with slow movement. In these cases remember that it is real stuff you are doing with people, don’t go doing transference/countertransference.”

I have learned much about psychoanalysis this past week including increased respect for its possibilities and increased forgiveness for its limitations. I have much to think about and much more to learn. For this opportunity, I am grateful.

APRIL MEETING SUMMARY

MELISSA BLACK, PHD

presenting on

***Cultivating the Improvisational
in Psychoanalytic Treatment***

Reported by

PATRICIA WOOD, PHD

As Melissa Black, Ph.D., President of DSPP, began the April meeting presentation on *Cultivating the Improvisational in Psychoanalytic Treatment*, she invited audience members to think about improvisational moments in their own work. “Let’s allow our minds to play in the safe space here.”

Dr. Black described Ringstrom’s comparison of classical vs. improvisational theater and the parallels with two broad therapeutic perspectives on psychoanalysis. In classical theater as in classical analysis, therapy and what is known drives the approach. Instead, in improvisational theater and analysis, there is less emphasis on what is known and the therapist works with a beginner’s mind, accepting doubt and open to possibilities. Ringstrom sees theory as valuable, but argues that the unexpected must be welcome and embraced as well. There is a healthy tension between ritual and spontaneity. As Dr. Black said, “There is a difference between the patient connecting to an interpretation and the patient connecting to the therapist in a moment of authenticity.”

Ringstrom would advocate for a grounding in theory forming a foundation for moving into a more improvisational mode. Improvisation can safely occur within a good analytic frame. Similarly, a jazz musician’s ability to create something improvisational and new is based on knowledge of musical structure. For actors as well, improvisation grows from prior knowledge.

Lamenting the fact that Ringstrom failed to provide examples in his paper of improvisational moments on the part of the therapist going awry, Dr. Black cited two examples of such moments in her own practice, one of which was much more successful than the other. In one example, her improvisational comment to the patient immediately instigated relief and a tide of emotional release for the patient. In the other example, a potentially equally helpful improvisational comment angered and shut off the patient, a rift requiring time for recovery. Thus, there are great benefits and potential dangers involved. An audience member observed that while there are certainly dangers in improvisational moments, including the therapist unconsciously acting out in some way, nevertheless, safety is provided by the modifying



and containing elements of the existing relationship and level of trust.

A number of audience members cited examples where improvisation grows out of order. For example, the cadenza in a classical music performance is freedom growing out of order. Another audience member observed that spontaneity does not mean not considered. If it did, it would be impulsive and self-indulgent.

Dr. Black concluded with the comment that the analytic frame provides the structure around the improvisational moment within which the analytic dyad can “court surprise.” After an improvisational moment, the therapist patrols the perimeter of the frame to look for breaks and stands ready to repair empathic failure within the established relationship of trust.

Dr. Black and the other presenters during this year’s programs have done a wonderful job of engaging audience members in rich, lively and interactive discussions. As she suggested, “it is a safe space here.” She has helped to make it so

**Congratulations to Laurel Bass Wagner, Ph.D.
Recipient of Distinguished Leadership Award**

Laurie Wagner, Ph.D., past president of DSPP and Division 39 of APA received the prestigious Distinguished Leadership Award given annually at the Division of Psychoanalysis spring meeting. The award reads, “In recognition of her exceptional contribution to the profession of psychoanalysis, April 3, 2003.” Over many years, Dr. Wagner has contributed literally thousands of hours to the development, recognition, and protection of our profession and our organization both locally and nationally. A well deserved honor!

FROM THE EDITOR:

Items for the final issue of the 2002-2003 *DSPP Bulletin* are due by May 31st.

In addition to the thanks offered to Judith Samson, PhD for her 5-year stewardship of the Arts Committee, I’d also like to thank Dr. Pat Wood for her generous reviews of the DSPP monthly meetings this year. At the beginning of the year, Dr Wood offered to take charge of the always difficult task of finding reviewers for the monthly meetings. However, she went beyond her original offer and wrote the reviews herself, in addition to arranging for Scott Nelson’s thoughtful review of the Fall Workshop. Thanks, Pat!

----Cheryl Martin, RN, LPC

Thanks, Judith!

DSPP yearly membership: \$80
 DSPP workshop fee: \$100
 DSPP Arts Committee Activities: Priceless

It is with deep appreciation and fondness that we say good-bye to Judith Samson, PhD as the DSPP Arts Committee Chair this summer. The Arts Committee, originally a sub-committee of the Community Relations Committee, has become one of the most sought after groups for committee membership in DSPP. Dr. Samson and her committee have worked tirelessly over the past five years in providing DSPP members and the Dallas community an exquisite palette of diverse arts events warmly colored with a background of psychoanalytically informed interpretation and understanding. Events have included a Monthly Film Group, an annual Film Forum, gallery talks, evenings of music and much more--often drawing on the artistic talents of DSPP members. As Dr. Samson steps down, the position of DSPP Arts Committee Chair will be passed on to the capable hands of Denise Humphrey, PhD.

Thanks, Judith, for enriching our lives with your creative vision and passion for the arts.

The DSPP Arts Committee
presents

Understanding and Collecting African Tribal Art
with
Ms. Joy Christie and Dr. Gerry Birdwelllll

Saturday
May 10, 2003

Cocktails--6:30 pm
Program—7:00 pm

Dallas Society for Psychoanalytic Psychology ARTS Committee invites you to our last Arts event of 2002-2003. On Saturday evening May 10, Christie's Gallery owner, Ms. Joy Christie and her husband, Dr. Gerry Birdwell, will present a program, Understanding and Collecting African Tribal Art, at the home of Sandra Pitts and Steven Seidenfeld.

No Charge

A cocktail-buffet supper will follow the program.
Reservations must be received by Saturday, May 3

For reservations and directions contact Judith Samson
214-750-7692 or **jgsamson@swbell.net**
include telephone number or email address for confirmation

Full details and photo gallery available at
www.dspp.com

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2002-2003**

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