
IARPP eNEWS

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Rave Reviews for January 2002 Conference

by Spyros D. Orfanos

"I found the weekend a rare event in my experience of conferences in this field. It was a breath of fresh air, its excitement due to the rich legacy of Steve's thought, and to others' work as well," wrote one senior psychoanalyst about the "Relational Analysts at Work: Sense and Sensibility" conference held January 18-20, 2002 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City. Another

participant said, "I can scarcely remember an event in which there was so much enthusiasm and spirit." And still another, "Imagine a conference with a heart at its center." These comments typified the countless emails, notes, and phone calls that started arriving immediately after the event and continue even now. An Israeli participant, noting the rich contributions of the panelists, remarked, "I feel lucky to have attended."

One thousand and nine registrants from around the globe came to the conference, which was held in memory of Stephen A. Mitchell and also inaugu-

rated the International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy. This number nearly doubled our original estimate. Although the conference committee (Jessica Benjamin, Jody Messler Davies, and I) knew it had planned an exceptionally strong program and orchestrated an immersion experience, it too was impressed with the quality of ideas, the astonishing energy, and the stunning attendance. The formal program - 14 invited panels with 60 speakers and 63 discussion groups - presented the best of contemporary relational psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. The many informal gatherings, for their part, facilitated the creation of a

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The Committee for an Inclusive Psychoanalysis

by Lynn Layton

The Committee for an Inclusive Psychoanalysis was meant to be a committee chosen by board members, a committee whose work it is to keep IARPP de-centered. By this I mean that we want to be an organization that would continually challenge the usual organizational structure of a dominant center with subordinate margins; we want so-called

marginal discourses to so infuse the organization that it might be hard to define a center. At the January meeting, a program error brought about a fortuitous result that fit our mission: the program called for an open meeting of anyone wanting to join the “diversity committee” and about twenty people representing largely non-main-stream concerns showed up. At the meeting, we each spoke about what we envision for an organization that challenges the kinds of exclusions psychoanalytic institutions have traditionally practiced, consciously or unconsciously. We spoke about representation for social workers; for academic non-clinicians; for all theoretical analytic schools, including Jungian and body-based; for gender, sexual, class, racial, and ethnic inclusivity; for a truly international and not just U.S. or NYC-centered organization.

The committee meeting

was quite exciting, and, in deference to our mission, the board decided to allow all those who came to constitute the committee. We began an email list and Andrew Samuels posted a paper that received disappointingly little discussion. It remains to be seen how such a large committee might function, but my own thoughts are that we should be in frequent communication with other IARPP committees. The organization as a whole wants to be as inclusive as possible, but it is our committee’s particular focus to see how, for example, programs or newsletters or organizational decisions might broaden their representation. In conclusion, I want to add that this vision isn’t just about adding excluded identities and concerns to a fixed center, e.g., one or two slots on a program; it’s about opening the center up, keeping the center off center. ❖

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Letter from the United Kingdom

by Marsha Nodelman

The U.K. chapter of the IARPP was born out of the enthusiasm many of us felt who attended the Steve Mitchell memorial conference in New York City. We were embraced and moved by the inclusive spirit of community at the conference. This is sorely missing in the psychoanalytic community in the U.K. where we still make the distinction between psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic psychotherapists.

Referring to the conference, Jessica Benjamin remarked that this represented a “real change in trends” from within the psychoanalytic field. She said that these “would have seemed impossible some twenty years ago when I started training.” This “change in trends” has yet to reach the shores of the psychoanalytic and psychotherapy community here in the U.K.

Although Britain and the U.S.A. share a common language, historically a fundamental cultural difference has always been the “class system”. These hierarchical divisions and elitism are embedded and remain operational within and amongst our training institutions today. Professionally one is considered “mainstream” or on the margins of acceptable practice. Neither attachment theory nor relational thinking is considered a “necessary” part of the psychoanalysis-based psychotherapy training in the U.K. “Relational Psychoanalysis” is largely unknown here within the psychoanalytic field.

Who are we? The steering committee of the U.K. chapter of the IARPP is made up of fifteen practising psychotherapists from Analytic, Integrative, Jungian and Psychoanalytic backgrounds who work within a relational framework. Susie Orbach chairs the committee. The N.Y. conference inspired those of us who have thought, taught and worked with relational ideas for many years on our own, to come together for open exchange and to explore and challenge our different viewpoints within the common ethos of relational thinking. Our desire is to invite and encourage a free flowing dialogue amongst colleagues for which there is as yet no forum in the U.K. to reflect and share our diversity of thought and practice. ❖

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new professional community — the IARPP. “It was really great to be able to relate to 1000 other relationals,” wrote one British analyst. Observing the dessert/dance on Saturday night, a young student volunteer exclaimed, “I didn’t know analysts could dance.”

Audiotapes of the program can be purchased through Sound Images (Phone: 303.649.1811, Email: orders@soundimages.net). For further information on future conferences please email Spyros D. Orfanos at sdorfanos@aol.com. ❖

A Note from the Editor

Members are encouraged to forward comments, short pieces of writing, responses, or other matters of importance to IARPP and its membership to:
seth.warren@verizon.net.
--Seth Warren, Ph.D.