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National Convenor's Message

Greetings,

Re: The National Conference of Psychoanalytic Interest Group 26-28 March 2004

This is our first national conference as an interest group. It will need the support of as many members who can possibly make it to Brisbane for the conference. Please give it every consideration. After all it is what we should be about – the provision of the best educational and clinical opportunities for our members.

This is a wonderful initiative, two years in the planning and has been discussed at the last two AGMs of our interest group. There will be at least two international speakers and leading psychoanalytic thinkers from around Australia. You will find details of the program attached. Mr Giac Giacomantonio and his local committee are to be congratulated for what they have organized.

Our interest group tends to be centred on the capital cities and while the local groups have great programs, this is an opportunity meet other psychologists from around Australia. It is a privilege I have had since becoming convenor and meeting with local groups. There is a vibrancy in our interest group at the 'grass roots' level and I believe that it will be very stimulating to get together. Not to be missed!

If you can come, not only mark it in your diary, but register now (and pay your registration fee with the 'early bird' discount). This will help us to remain 'in the black'

and encourage the group to risk further conferences in the future. If you have been thinking about presenting a paper, this is a great opportunity. See you there!

For more information about the conference and to download the registration form visit:

http://www.psychology.org.au/news/conferences/10.5_4.asp

Bruce A. Stevens, National convenor
c/- Canberra Clinical and Forensic Psychology,
Level 10 AMP
Canberra City, ACT, 2601
P: (02) 6285 6193

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Editorial: Notes from behind the couch

Giac Giacomantonio

Editor

The differences we share

Psychoanalysts disagree. We disagree on issues of theory, of technique, what constitutes proper training, and even what constitutes psychoanalysis itself. Perhaps we share some implicit sense of belonging to a common approach or sharing an understanding at the broadest levels. However, trying to explicate this commonality might be difficult at best, and might produce further disagreement at worst.

There are many different sets of ideas that we include under the term psychoanalysis, and while we might want to group analysts together as a whole, we will often find strong feelings amongst them regarding their theoretical identities—identities that are distinct. Differences in theory often come to be treasured by their originators and their followers, and splits emerge in our field when the new theories do not sit comfortably with the old. While this discrepancy might be criticised by some as evidence of a poor scientific standing for psychoanalysis (Macmillan, 2003), the disagreement amongst theories surely requires more than a simple question of which theory must be right and which must be wrong. We need a criterion of theoretical utility beyond whether or not the new and the old can get along or “dance to the same tune” (Macmillan, 2003 p26).

Undeserving of Macmillan’s scorn are the analysts who cite their consistent clinical application of Freud’s theory as an index of their identity as analysts. Surely, someone who adheres to Freud’s theory and practice guidelines must be an analyst. However, the obverse notion—that someone who goes beyond Freudian practice must *not* be an analyst—is not so easy to endorse. If we were to hold that a departure from Freud should come to signify a break with psychoanalysis, then we must acknowledge the first of what can only become a series of impediments to scientific progress—impediments that other, neighbourly sciences seem never to be so guilty of accepting. Surely the incompatibility

with former theories is precisely that which defines subsequent ideas as “new”; if later theoretical contributions were wholly in-tune with existing theories, they would offer nothing beyond a *translation* or a re-casting of old ideas. That they cannot be translated into their predecessors is to their credit (Goldberg, 1984). This holds true for all science, psychoanalysis included, and this need not mean that we must “start from scratch” with every theoretical innovation.

Yet, this latter position cannot be engaged without the dowry of some sort of guidelines for identifying the scientifically innovative from the simply irrelevant. We must remain able to distinguish development from digression. But just how different must a new theory be, before we can call it truly new and how different can we allow it to become before we must consider it foreign? What makes a theory psychoanalytic?

We might be tempted to appeal to certain fundamentals of our theoretical heritage, in searching for which elements must be present to qualify a theory as psychoanalytic. Should it be the centrality of one or another particular concept? Perhaps transference, perhaps drive conflict, perhaps the Oedipus Complex could be a theoretical lynchpin that will carry the weight of new theories, and the burden of distinguishing good innovation from bad. However, any one of these (or other) aspects of our theory is perhaps not nearly as universally accepted as we might have suspected. In his decade-old book entitled “The Prisonhouse of Psychoanalysis” Arnold Goldberg addresses (among other things) the question of solid foundations for psychoanalysis, while lamenting our common tendency to look outside of our field for data to support our theories. He supplies, in one section, a list of assumed commonalities, but closer inspection soon reveals the universality of our disagreement (see the chapter entitled “Psychoanalysis without foundations”). While the book’s focus lies beyond this single issue, he demonstrates how we simply do not agree on what constitutes those seeming fundamentals like transference, the unconscious, etc...; and the binding, constricting quality of certainties and absolutes is both the theme and the shackle of the Prisonhouse. Absolutes end discussion and preclude development, yet we seem addicted to them and the comfort they provide. Our addiction often shows in our resistance to acknowledging innovative theory, or our tendency to relegate it to somewhere beyond the bounds of psychoanalysis proper.

Kohut felt he had supplied a broad definition of psychoanalysis when he proposed it to be “the science of complex mental states”—a definition he used long before he would contribute anything resembling what we know today as self psychology. As he once noted (many years later; 1981) this definition fulfilled the requirement of being theoretically non-specific: it gave the position of *sine qua non* to the field under investigation, and (as expanded in his later work) to the mode of observation, which he felt could be used to define any scientific field. If we accept such a definition, we must ask ourselves whether we could comfortably conceive of psychoanalysis developing beyond *any* of its theoretical contents—perhaps beyond dream interpretation, perhaps beyond interpretation itself, perhaps beyond any concepts of transference. And if we cannot, why not?

The theme of the inaugural POPIG conference to be held in Brisbane next March is given as “Psychoanalysis in the 21st Century”. Three streams of the influence of psychoanalysis will structure the proceedings: Psychoanalysis in the clinic, psychoanalysis in the culture, and psychoanalysis in the organisation. We will hear from presenters from near and far, and we are guaranteed to see evidence of our disagreement, diversity, and uncertainty. In hearing presentations about our predicted or dreamt-up trajectories for development, I for one hope we will be surprised, subverted, and even a little shocked. In the 21st Century, will we develop or will we disappear?

Conclusion

We like to keep a sense of certainty about our identities, our science and our practice. Often this desire asks the price of a rigid devotion to certain ideas that betrays a fearful resistance to innovation and real progress. That new theories in psychoanalysis will go beyond the bounds of the Freudian model (or for that matter the Kleinian, or the Lacanian, or the self-psychological one) is, in the first place, to their credit. In 2004, I think we can say that anyone who today employs nothing but (for example) Freud’s tripartite model in trying to understand all patients, all of the time, is simply a poorly-informed psychoanalyst; the same would surely be said of GPs who give all patients antibiotics for all conditions, all of the time. The inability of new theories to dance with older ones or with each other is a vital index of their utility, and the diversity of new theories in psychoanalysis is an index of its continued vitality as a science.

To live with multiplicity and to tolerate uncomfortable uncertainty, are two calls to the psychoanalyst that many seem unwilling to answer.

References

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- Goldberg, A.I., (1990). The Prisonhouse of Psychoanalysis, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Kohut, H., (1981). On Empathy. Presented at the Fifth International Conference on Self Psychology, University of California, Berkeley.

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Inaugural POPIG Conference

POPIG Conference
“Psychoanalysis in the 21st Century”
The Stamford Plaza Hotel, Brisbane

26-28 March, 2004.

For more information about the conference and to download the registration form visit:

http://www.psychology.org.au/news/conferences/10.5_4.asp

NOTE THE DEADLINE FOR EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION IS 31 JANUARY
REGISTER NOW AND SAVE

Co-sponsored by

[The Brisbane Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies](#)

[The University of Queensland](#)

S. Giac Giacomantonio
Conference Chair

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Queensland Branch News

Office Bearers

The new office bearers for 2004/5 are as follows:

Coordinator	Giac Giacomantonio
Secretary	Sigrid O' Callaghan
Treasurer	Effie Klimsza

Monthly Presenters

The schedule for our monthly presentations in 2004 is as follows:

February	Paul Gibney
March	Tony Verner
April	Post-conference dinner (to be confirmed)
May	Robert King
June	Giac Giacomantonio
July	Marco Korn
August	Maurice Whelan (to be confirmed)
September	Sigrid O'Callaghan
October	TBA
November	Kerrie Collings-Silvey

TIME: Meetings take place at 6:00pm on the second Tuesday of each month.

VENUE: 260 Petrie Terrace, Normanby, Brisbane. Parking to the rear of the building in side streets.

S. Giac Giacomantonio
Coordinator POPIG Qld

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New South Wales Branch News

Ms. Pauline Nolan is replacing Joanne Abbey as Coordinator of the NSW Branch. Mr. David Goldman will be the contact person for the Branch.
dgoldman@psycnet.com.au

POPIG EVENT

BORDERLINE RELATIONS: BATTLES, BODIES, MINDS AND REMEMBRANCES

By Giles Clark

'I am interested in psychotherapeutic work with those protractedly difficult cases who tend to get endlessly passed between institutions, carers and helpers (e.g. from family to doctor to hospital to psychologist to therapist to doctor). I shall focus on a possible psycho-dynamic (analytic) understanding of (and, thereby, a therapeutic way of working with) repeatedly destructive personality disorders, particularly with difficult borderline cases. My approach is partly through using a sense of the psyche-soma and through the finding / creating of passionate stories and images, in the face of the deficits and destruction. In the therapeutic relationship, I understand anti-relational affects and acts as defensive and urgent needs, arising out of early personal and family psychosomatic confusions or frustrations. Such internal and interpersonal disorder leads to primitive psychosomatic communications and identifications, and so to the very difficult task for the therapist and the patient of processing infectious emotional states and trying to 'make sense' in the face of the repeated destruction of all 'good sense'. I suggest we need a frequent, long-term psychically 'martial' (as much as erotic) psychotherapeutic relationship, filled with the pains of thwarted love, frustration, murderous hate, poisonous projective identifications, bizarre fantasies (often acted out), psychosomatic disorders; this may all eventually make for a relationship worthy of a 'remembrance service' after a shared trench warfare, which may be a good enough achievement. I will consider how this can be thought about as unwittingly demonstrating a radical moral philosophy of mind-body relations, not just subjectively but, more significantly, inter-personally. Diagrams and poetry will help us with this rather loaded subject, and hopefully evoke a lively discussion.'

Giles Clark was trained as a Jungian Analytical Psychologist in Zurich. He has been practicing as an analyst for over 25 years, mainly in London, but since 1995 in Sydney. He has had much to do with analytic and other psychotherapy training programs in the UK and in Australia / NZ, and has also lectured widely. He is particularly interested in psychosomatic issues as manifest and experienced in transference/ counter-transference relations in work with severe personality disorders. He also teaches 'Psychoanalysis and Philosophy' at the University of Western Sydney, where his main topic is mind-body relations.

Professional Development points for APS members pending.

DATE: Tuesday 17 February 2004
TIME: 8.00 – 9.30 pm
VENUE: Pat Brunton Room, Crows Nest Centre, 2 Ernest Place, Crows Nest
COST: \$22.00 (includes GST). Please bring the correct money or a cheque made out to the Australian Psychological Society.
ENQUIRIES: Henry Luiker 9389 4512 or Joanne Abbey 9745 5583

This lecture is open to members and guests of the Australian Psychological Society, and other health professionals.

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Western Australia Branch News

POPIG has held its final meeting for the year, a talk by local member, clinical psychologist and psychotherapist Robin Jones, on Attachment and Maternal Depression, the subject of her recently completed Ph.D. thesis. Her talk was fascinating in the light it shed of the particular patterns of attachment style as assessed by the Adult Attachment Interview, associated with depression in mothers pre and post child-birth. In particular, Robin's work highlighted the impact of issues unresolved loss and trauma in predicting emotional difficulties in mothers and the implications of different attachment style for psychotherapeutic interventions with this population. Thanks to Robin for a thoughtful and thought-provoking evening.

I will be stepping down as POPIG Coordinator in 2004, after three years in that position, in order to let someone else have the opportunity of "holding" the Interest Group, perhaps facilitating the emergence of new directions in its activities. It has been a fulfilling experience for me to have been in this position, not least because of the great pleasure I have had in watching the growth in interest in psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy, with POPIG providing a conduit for its expression. Thanks to WA members for the privilege of serving in this position.

For inquiries, or if you have an interest in being on the POPIG Committee or presenting to the meetings next year, please contact me (suzanne-hicks@inet.net.au), Gail Resnick - gresnick@central.murdoch.edu.au or Susannah Flack - susannah.flack@health.wa.gov.au

Suzanne Hicks
Coordinator POPIG NSW

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Victoria Branch News

The Victorian group has had another successful year. POPIG continues to be one of the most popular APS Interest Groups in Victoria with 209 APS members having registered as POPIG members for 2003/2004, and another 109 interested people who receive the newsletter.

There have been four seminars held during the year which have been appreciated by those who have attended. The seminars have been "Passion and the Sacred Texts: Fundamentalism in Theory and Practice" presented by Dr Kay Tourney Souter; "Working with Mothers and Infants in Groups: Keeping Both in Mind Despite Toxic Projections", presented by Dr Jan Smith; "The Serious Business of Child's Play: the Child, the Psychotherapist, and the Parents at Work", presented by Ms Susan Selwyn; and Exploring the Shores of Neverland - The Case of James Matthew Barrie, Peter Pan and The Lost Boys", presented by Mrs Helga Coulter.

This year we introduced a film and discussion afternoon on a Saturday afternoon in July. The film, "The Piano Teacher" was moderated was Dr Zita Marks.

We are currently working on the program for 2004 and will provide details in the Vic newsletter and on the web when they are available.

Thanks to all the committee members for their hard work throughout the year, and to those members who have attended the seminars and contributed to the success of these activities.

Seasons Greetings and best wishes to all for an enjoyable and restful holiday season.

Rosemary Crettenden
Coordinator POPIG Victoria

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Australian Capital Territory News

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