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Sailing to Ithaka with Socrates and Zorba The Athens 2007 Conference

Spyros D. Orfanos, New York

*As you set out for Ithaka
hope the voyage is a long
one,
full of adventure,
full of discovery.*
C. P. Cavafy, "**Ithaka**"

In 1911 Constantine P. Cavafy wrote the poem "Ithaka." On either side of the Atlantic, it is the most frequently quoted Greek verse. A sublime poem about sensual experiences, it is for many of us also about analytic process. Mikis Theodorakis' "Zorba the Greek" is the most popular Greek music. Composed during a late night in 1964 and created for a dance between two men on a beach in Crete, it is about loss and separation and the importance of living. The music means it. The most often quoted philosophic adage, which

actually originated in Delphi, is Socrates' "Know thyself." The pithy phrase has been associated with the mischievous gadfly of Western philosophy, who poked at intellectual pretensions. And the most amazing psychoanalytic conference ever to take place in Greece—and there have been a few—was hosted by IARPP on July 5-8, 2007, at the Athens Hilton. This was a conference with a difference.

With the theme "Metamorphosis: Therapeutic Change in a Changing World," the conference drew 399 analysts and therapists from 22 countries, which one Swedish registrant observed "was not only about Relational psychoanalysis but was itself 'relational.'" One cannot explain the light, one has to see it. So

it is with a gathering such as ours in Athens. While any significant experience falls short when explained, I think we can say that our second IARPP conference abroad was an epic success.

The feelings generated at this conference were incredible. Presenters shared

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first-rate scholarship and clinical narratives, and audiences responded with sparkling questions and rousing applause. Mark Gerald's photography exhibit "In the Shadow of Freud's Couch: Psychoanalytic Portraits of Psychoanalysts in their Offices" was mesmerizing. Friday evening's Theodorakis' "Songs of Eros and Love" concert with Gerasimos Andreatos and Lina Orfanos demonstrated the very best of Modern Greek culture. Saturday afternoon's theatrical performance of Plato's *The Apology of Socrates* with Yannis Simonides showed how relevant the philoso-

pher's challenges to those in power remain in today's unsettled world. And Saturday night's festivities at the magical seashore with food, wine, and dance allowed us to glimpse a spontaneous Dionysian frenzy. What astonished me was how gracefully our large group moved from the clinical to the artistic, from the earth to the heavens, and from the tragic to the affirmation of life. I have chaired many wonderful conferences over the years, and this is, without question, my favorite.

In the summer of 2005, the IARPP Board approved my offer to hold its 2007 conference in Athens. Hazel Ipp, our indefatigable and talented president, and the IARPP Board of Directors provided wonderful support throughout the planning and implementation of Athens 2007. With Alexis Mordoh as the Athens co-chair and an international conference committee consisting of Zeynep Catay (Turkey), Susanna Federici-Nebbioli (Italy), Per Linder (Sweden & Greece), Nick Papouchis (USA & Greece), Dafni Stamatogiannis (Greece) and Larry Zelnick (USA), we aimed for a conference of superb Relational scholarship, cultural richness, and community building.

We created a few firsts in the process. For example, we devised a

"Call for Papers," which brought in 94 submissions. The original plan was to accept about 25% of the submissions, but then we increased the acceptance rate to 50% because of the superb quality and desire to be inclusive. In retrospect, this was a bold and creative move, because it brought many new Relational voices to the conference. These new voices blended with some of our finest seasoned Relational ones. All in all, there were 90 presentations over three days. Out presenters were the core of the conference and delivered extraordinary papers and workshops. I wish there was a way to have given each an olive wreath in one large public ceremony.

The top five participating nations in terms of numbers were United States (157), Israel (58), Greece (37), Turkey (25) and Italy (23), indicating, perhaps, the emergence of a Mediterranean Relational spirit. Moreover, we had an unprecedented 49 candidates and 47 graduate students, which allows for an obvious optimism about the future of the IARPP community. Yet, it is not numbers that really tell the story of the IARPP Athens conference.

In the context of busy personal and professional

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lives, the fear of global terrorism, and the strength of the euro, those that came to the Athens conference had to make some serious sacrifices in order to travel and participate. I stand satisfied that if they had to make their decisions all over again, at least the people that I spoke to, and I spoke to practically everyone, the choice would be the same: examine the Relational spirit in the Greek light.

It did not take a highly attuned clinician to observe the personal meaning of this conference for me. I announced at the start that this would be my last turn at the helm of a conference, for I may be getting too old, and I have other projects that I must explore. I felt deeply honored that so many of my friends and colleagues came to my ancestral land. This brought great joy to my heart. I felt so fortunate that my daughter, Lina, realized a life-long dream and performed with the Mikis Theodorakis orchestra and that my wife, Sophia, witnessed the translation of her memoir into Greek. I left Greece in late July "so full of experience" as the poet says. But the news in the late summer of the devastating fires in Greece created heart-ache for all. I received

so many messages of concern about the tragedy from old and new friends. I was touched by how people reached out to me. Life teaches that at any given moment we can be toppled from Mt. Olympus and descend into Hades. I hate such repeated lessons.

But this is not how the story ends, at least this time. On the last day of the conference, I told the large audience in Terpsichore that we would all someday return to

Athens. Little did I know that I would be doing so at the end of September. On the 29th at the Herodion Atticus Odeon at the southern slope of the Acropolis under the gaze of the great maestro and the great goddess of the Parthenon, Athena, my daughter, Lina, sang "Song of Songs" in Greek and Hebrew at an invited benefit concert for the victims of the fires. I wish we could have all been together again. ❖

May 29 - June 1, 2008

IARPP Conference

Sheraton Baltimore City Center Hotel

Baltimore, Maryland

Relational Perspectives on Attachment Theory and Psychoanalytic Process

Conference Chair, Joseph Lichtenberg, M.D.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We are pleased to announce that the submission date for papers for the IARPP 2008 Baltimore conference has been extended to December 3rd, 2007. In addition, while full papers are preferred, we will accept extended abstracts (approximately 1500 words). Papers and workshop suggestions on topics other than the conference theme will be considered.

Please contact Nilou Mostofi at nilou@pcmisandiego.com if you have specific questions about the Call for Papers.

For further information and registration, please go to www.iarrp.com

A Candidate's Perfectly Subjective Account of the Athens Conference

Zsuzsa Barta, Sidney, Australia

About a week after I returned from the conference, one of my clients told me about a certain practice she introduced while I was away. She carries an empty bottle or jar with her, and when she experiences moments that are especially alive, enchanting, or moving, she opens it up, fills it with that moment, and then replaces the lid.

I realized that I have a few jars of my own filled with special moments from Athens, which was my first IARPP conference. As a member of the Candidates' Committee, I was in on conference calls with my peers all year long, connecting and working on tasks that led up to our special part in the conference. This takes me to my first jar, which contains the moments of meeting committee members for the first time after knowing only one another's voices for a year.

Orna Kislasy (Israel) and I exchanged our misconceived ideas about how the other would look. I discovered that Deborah Pines (New York) was shades less conservative than my image of her, and all of us com-

pletely misjudged Antonia Piazza (Rome). Above all, Angela Greenfield (London) stood out as the most strikingly different looking person in real life with her gorgeous blonde curls. Guessing how someone would look before we met was great fun. I also have fond memories of the candidates' getting-to-know-one-another lunch and the preworkshop breakfast with Margaret Black. These memories stand on my shelf, labelled and neat.

Another jar was the candidates' reception at which we meet the authors from our compulsory reading lists—Howard Bacal, Anthony Bass, Steven Knoblauch, Gianni Nebiossi, and many others. This was also the first time I said "hello" to Margaret Black, the Candidates' Committee's guiding light, and someone I had heard so much about. It was such fun to realize that these psychoanalytic icons were actually friendly, lively, delightful human beings.

The next special moment I want to share was Alexis Mordoh's beautiful paper, "Unshed Tears: The

Legacy of the Holocaust and Its Effects on the Therapist and His Work." We were all in tears, touched by the emotional depth of his presentation. The fate of the Jews of Thessaloniki and the lessons Alexis drew from his personal journey will be forever remembered: "Don't give up hope, don't leave anyone behind, and persevere with sensitivity."

The last day was the most exciting for our committee with the presentation of the paper that received the first Stephen A. Mitchell Author's Award—Sarah Hill's, "Language and Intersubjectivity: Multiplicity in a Bilingual Treatment." The presentation, along with Orna Kislasy's thoughtful responses and a lively discussion led by Adrienne Harris, drew a thrillingly large audience. We were proud to have organized this remarkable workshop. As a therapist who is bilingual in English and Hungarian and has worked and trained in both languages, I was able to fill quite a few of my jars with Sarah's paper, and I am still enjoying opening them up from time to time. ❖

Writer's Development Program

Stuart Pizer, Cambridge, MA, and Maureen Murphy, San Francisco, CA

The Writer's Development Program takes pleasure in sharing these helpful hints below, with thanks to the generosity of our Advisory Committee member and Chair of the Publications Committee, Suzi Naiburg.

We also take this opportunity to remind all IARPP members that we are here to help writers-in-progress develop a paper for presentation or publication by locating, at your request, a senior IARPP member who will commit to providing pro bono mentorship for one piece of writing, reviewing up to three drafts of an evolving manuscript.

We encourage any IARPP member to send your request for a writing mentor to Program Co-chairs Stuart Pizer (sapizer@psychoanalysis.net) and Maureen Murphy (pinc93@earthlink.net).

Please be as specific as you can about the themes, conceptual framework, specific problems, or other details of your writing project. That will help us to share your request with our Advisory Committee and find a mentor who will be a good match for you and your particular project.

And we especially want to remind candidates that we are available to help locate a pro bono mentor to support your specific project of writing a paper to submit for the Stephen A. Mitchell Author's Award.

Write On! Notes to Clinical Writers

Suzi Naiburg, Belmont, MA

What do the following opening sentences have in common?

1. "Post-termination is the least understood phase of the psychoanalytic treatment process. While over a hundred psychoanalytic articles and books have been written about termination . . . [references cited here], only a few writings discuss the fate of the analysand and the completion of the analytic process after termination."¹
2. "Psychoanalysis could be (and perhaps has been) defined as 'the most profound exploration of human subjectivity that is consistent with systematic study.' Unfortunately, for historical reasons, this has led to marginalizing the external world."²
3. "When the turn-of-the-last century composer and Freud's contemporary Gustav Mahler observed that the most important thing about music is not the score, he provided an apt metaphor for the psychoanalyst's art as well. The transcript of patient-said-analyst-said utterances offers but the palest guide to the quality and true nature of the experience."³

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In these examples, the writers have identified a gap that needs to be filled, a problem that needs to be solved, or a paradox or condition that needs to be understood. Opening sentences like these create momentum and generate a need to know.

In the Expository Writing Program at Harvard, where I taught, we'd call this necessity "the motive." At the University of Chicago, they'd call what's set up the "problem-solution structure." I think of my high school physics class discussion of momentum. How do you get the ball rolling? It needs a shove.

Once the ball is rolling, a writer's work isn't done. It has just begun. Give that ball an extra push by letting your reader know why this problem needs to be solved. Fonagy and Target (example 2) write in their third paragraph: "A number of recent controversies are linked to the difficulty classical psychoanalysis has with the concept of external reality." Then they enumerate them. They've added what is called the "so-what? factor." They've given their readers reasons to think this problem is really a problem and not just because they've said so. They've identified consequences. The stakes are now higher.

If we're writing in the paradigmatic mode (think argument as opposed to narrative⁴; that is, think of most of the papers we read in our professional journals), generating a motive and underscoring the importance of the ideas we're writing about help engage and focus our readers' attention, something that we can't take for granted in this age of information overload.

References

- 1 Craige, H. (2002). Mourning analysis: The post-termination phase. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 50: 507.
- 2 Fonagy, P. and Target, M. (2003). A psychoanalytic theory of external reality. Manuscript version.
- 3 Bass, A. (2003) "E" enactments in psychoanalysis: Another medium, another message. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 13 (5): 657
- 4 Bruner, J. (1986). Two modes of thought. In *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (pp. 11-43).

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IARPP in Athens

Marsha Hewitt, Toronto, Canada

The word that best describes the IARPP conference in Athens for me this past July is *energy – sustained and creative energy*. The conference attracted 399 people from around the world, all of whom were deeply interested in and committed to the theory and clinical practice of Relational psychoanalysis. There was no person I met who wasn't doing interesting and innovative work, and I had the wonderful opportunity to meet a large number of people while in Athens. One of the most exciting things was that each encounter was also a significant learning experience, and my conversations with colleagues from Israel, the US, Great Britain, and many other countries provoked new directions in my own thinking about the theory and practice of Relational psychoanalysis.

On the basis of these conversations as well as the many fine panel discussions I heard, I realized—again—that Relational psychoanalysis is not a rigid, monolithic theory. In fact, the Athens conference crystallized for me that Relational psychoanalysis offers the opportunity to think and talk about subjects that are well beyond the interests

of several other psychoanalytic approaches.

Where this was most evident for me (although not exclusively so) was in the panels addressing what might broadly be referred to as psychoanalysis and culture, politics, and society. I heard deeply moving presentations by therapists working in combat zones, treating patients traumatized by war, dislocation, and often torture, and therapists who in some cases risked their reputations and even their lives to work with people who might be expected to hate them.

For example, there was a presentation by an Israeli therapist who went with mobile medical units into Palestinian villages to provide whatever help they could. He described how the villagers would gather to welcome the doctors and the hospitality they showed by inviting them into their homes and sharing their food. These experiences gave him hope that perhaps the Palestinian-Israeli conflict might be resolved through such mutual encounters. Hearing therapists who have worked intensively with victims of war and torture

suggested to me the vital importance and efficacy of some of the main elements in Relational psychoanalysis, such as reciprocal recognition and intersubjectivity, for our torn and battered world.

From my vantage point, the Athens conference was a fine success and not least because of the opportunity to meet new people, make new friends, and reconnect with colleagues. I look forward to 2008 when IARPP meets in Baltimore and to 2009 when we convene in Israel. ❖

Upcoming Colloquium

Nov. 5 - 18

Donnel B. Stern

“The Eye Sees Itself: Dissociation, Enactment, and the Achievement of Conflict”

Moderated by Bruce Reis & Margaret Crastnopol

Panelists: Orna Guralnik, Karen Maroda, Jeremy Nahum, Susan Sands & Estelle Shane