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Prologue: The Dissociative Spectrum

It is with great promise and excitement that I welcome the reader to this issue of *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. We are bringing together a group of diverse clinicians to discuss dissociation and dissociative process. Both in the literature and in consulting rooms, dissociation has become a highly debated topic. To some, the concept of dissociation may seem to be the natural replacement for repression as a central organizing construct around which psychoanalysis is built. To others, dissociation is a concept that is often overused or ill-applied. Regardless of one's position, it's safe to say that much of what we do clinically is influenced by our relationship to this concept. Approaches to trauma, the nature of self-experience, understandings of defense and adaptation, transference, and countertransference are all shaped by our underlying views of what we mean when we refer to dissociation and dissociative processes.

In this issue of *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, we have brought together a variety of perspectives illuminating current and emergent views on dissociation and dissociative processes. Through this endeavor, we hope to provide the reader with an opportunity to question and appraise the theoretical and clinical usefulness of this concept. Some of the ideas found here are part of ongoing traditions within psychoanalysis; others are new offerings from other domains of psychotherapy. We hope that through this work, the reader will be better able to consider the concepts of dissociation and dissociative processes as a spectrum of experience along which one can observe the subtleties of intrapsychic and relational experience. It's a broad subject; our brief survey has no aspirations to be representative or complete. Instead, consider it more like a snapshot: a single scene containing a group of compelling characters.

In the first article, "Dissociation and Its Disorders," Harold Blum provides a springboard for our issue in laying out the historical, etiological, and definitional understandings of dissociation and dissociative disorders. His views on dissociation are broad and nonpathologizing. He recognizes in the breadth of human experience many altered states of consciousness that share much with our understandings of dissociation as a response to trauma. Dr. Blum brings to this subject many years of experience that reveal nuances of meaning within a highly complex subject. In his case material, Dr. Blum shows the ways in which an awareness of interpersonal trauma needs to be balanced with an appreciation for internal fantasy.

Melvin Bornstein's article is entitled "Dissociation and Repression: A Clinical Study." In this article, he illuminates the complexities surrounding wholeness; it is both sought after and, at times, intolerable. Through detailed clinical material, Dr. Bornstein builds a model that illuminates the subtle ways in which many of our patients seek to avoid wholeness—some through repression and others through dissociation. Dr. Bornstein discusses the differences between these two defensive styles and shows similarly how our approach to treatment can be fitted to meet these differences.

Jean Knox explores the ways in which early relational trauma impacts a person's life-long sense of wellbeing. Her article, "The Mind in Fragments: The Neuroscientific, Developmental,

and Traumatic Roots of Dissociation and Their Implications for Clinical Practice,” presents differing views on how clinicians approach the effects of trauma and dissociation, as well as the roots of these approaches in the early work of Freud and Jung. Bringing these approaches into contemporary perspective, she outlines the ways in which attachment theory and neuroscience provide what she holds to be a more grounded and effective treatment model.

In “‘Sudden Holes in Space and Time’: Trauma, Dissociation, and the Precariousness of Everyday Life,” Carola M. Kaplan, a Joseph Conrad scholar and psychoanalyst, illuminates a new aspect of traumatic experience that she calls “traumatic spatiality.” This disruption of internal and external space is revealed in Conrad’s (1907) novel, *The Secret Agent*, and also in her clinical work. Looking at the abusive history of the main character, Dr. Kaplan finds clear examples of dissociation that parallel what she experiences with her patients. In this work, Dr. Kaplan explores the potentials for meaning and change that emerge from an awareness of transference and countertransference enactments within traumatic spatiality.

Donald E. Kalsched, in his article, “Encounters with ‘Dis’ in the Clinical Situation and in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*” looks at the psychological parallels of Dante’s *Inferno* to the character of Dis, the one who dis-members, the one who dis-sociates. Extending the work he (1996) began with his book, *The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defenses of the Human Spirit*, Dr. Kalsched deepens our understandings of the ways in which trauma evokes protective and often hostile forces of dissociation and self-attack. Through detailed clinical work, he explores the ways in which this powerful and dangerous “internal caretaker” can be worked with in the here-and-now relationship of therapist and patient. This is an article that illuminates the contemporary values that can be achieved through integrating an awareness of the mythopoetic alongside the developmental.

In the final article of this issue, “A Heaven in a Wild Flower: Self, Dissociation, and Treatment in the Context of the Neurobiological Core Self,” Diana Fosha writes on dissociation from the perspective of healing. Beginning with the work of Panksepp and Damasio on the neurobiological basis of *core self*, Dr. Fosha builds a model of treatment based on providing a therapeutic environment that can facilitate the reintegration of those lost, tender, and excluded parts of the self. In her highly nuanced case material, she works with the glimmers of life, the fractals of self, that sneak through the dissociative barrier. Dr. Fosha reveals a process that undoes aloneness through radical recognition and supports the often scary business of being a more fully integrated *I* in this world.

Frank Faranda, Ph.D.
Issue Editor

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