



## From the Editor

In his Commentary included in this issue of the Bulletin, Cory Wright raises a challenging question concerning our efforts in the intersection of philosophy and psychiatry: namely, "What justification is there for thinking that a new subdiscipline formed around this intersection is needed?" Whether we label it a 'subdiscipline' or not, we certainly take it for granted that our work in the intersection is important and unique. In the limited space available to me I would like to address the question posed in the Commentary.

I will distinguish a practical from a theoretical dimension in the 'subdiscipline' question. Practically speaking, the existence of AAPP, the Royal College Philosophy Interest Group, PPP, this Bulletin, and of course the multitude of national groups that have come together for international meetings and that coalesced, as reported in this issue, in South Africa as the International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry—all this bespeaks a desire on the part of a lot of philosophers and mental health professionals to gather together over the issues in which their respective disciplines overlap. Call it a 'subdiscipline' or not, it seems merely efficient to carry out this dialogue between the disciplines in meetings and in a journal where the participants know one another and can take their shared interest for granted.

As a footnote to this discussion of the practical dimension of the subdiscipline question, I should point out that, in the case of AAPP, we are doing it both ways this year. We are holding our annual meeting as usual in conjunction with the American Psychiatric Association; but in addition to our meeting on first weekend of the APA, we are involved in the APA meetings themselves: one symposium officially sponsored by AAPP, another organized by AAPP members, and finally a course given on conceptual issues in psychiatry by AAPP members.

Aside from the practical advantages of shared meetings and a targeted journal, there is a theoretical dimension to the question raised by Cory Wright in his

## President's Column

This first 'president's column' must begin with thanks to Jennifer Radden, on behalf of AAPP, for the truly splendid work that she did as president for the past four years. Many of us had hoped that she would not notice the passage of time and might stay on indefinitely, but such was not to be. Jennifer has led and represented AAPP with wisdom, dignity, and enthusiasm, and we are all appreciative of her leadership. It will be an accomplishment if I can manage any two of the three qualities mentioned above. This is my second stint of being a president of something, and it is entered with trepidation. The first, at the dawn of my 'career', was my election as president of the high school student body. The election campaign was fierce, and I won on an imaginative list of promises utilizing student government funds to fix up the football field, purchase art and history films, increase the number of social clubs, and other whatnots. The campaign promises were sincere, and I was devastated to learn, after the victory party, that the faculty advisors of the student government fund (which was sizable) never had any intentions of letting students get their hands on the money. This was my early introduction into the distance between promises and delivery, and into the ease with which promissory platforms divorced from reality can be convincingly sold. Upon entering college, I vowed to avoid campus politics and found consolation in philosophy, never running for or holding an organizational office from that tender time fifty years ago until now, at the 'other end' of my career.

Holding office in AAPP is an honor that hopefully will not be burdensome or disillusioning to myself or others. It should be a corrective emotional experience. The important thing is not to make promises. However, this would be a good opportunity to outline some goals for AAPP for all of us to work towards. There are several organizational imperatives if AAPP is to flourish. These involve, interrelatedly, increasing the general membership, attracting younger members to the Executive Council, and increasing our appeal and thereby usefulness to minority and women professionals. None of these goals is easily reached. In psychiatry, as the importance of a philosophical perspective becomes increasingly important, the time and energy even to think beyond the immediate clinical problem is increasingly diminished. Philosophers may be in a reciprocal position: they may have much to say, but it is hard to get anyone other than other philosophers to listen.

The critical answers must somehow encompass relevance and marketing. This is a terrible thing to say, but if by marketing we mean not hucksterism, but publicizing our existence and our relevance, then it becomes important and valuable. The issue of relevance is, of course, essential, and here AAPP has to continue to offer a forum for interdisciplinary dialogue and a clearing house for philosophers, psychologists, and psychiatrists to find each other to work together. The three main vehicles for critical exchange of ideas are the Bulletin, the journal PPP, and the annual May meeting in conjunction with the American Psychiatric Association. In addition, formal panels at the three different APA (philosophy, psychiatry, psychology) meetings, the formation of local groups, and an

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Commentary. He writes: "Now, either psychiatrically-posed questions are inherently philosophical, or they are not...Also, the traditional aims of psychiatry—that of understanding and treating mental illness—would be grounded in the history and epistemology of mental illness rather than purely in the clinical situation itself..." Well, why must all "psychiatrically-posed questions" be inherently philosophical or not. It might be the case—and I for one think it is—that there are some psychiatric issues that pose no philosophical problems and others that do. Deciding on the merits of one treatment of depression versus another does not require philosophical discussion. But sorting out the role of unacknowledged values in the DSM nomenclature (a favored activity of some of our members)

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AAPP presence at international meetings serve as opportunities for collaboration and discussion between our respective fields.

Readers of this newsletter and members of AAPP are encouraged to contact the Executive Council with ideas for conference topics and other thoughts about interdisciplinary work. Finally, I do not recall if a solicitation for financial contributions has ever been made to the membership, but AAPP is always on the lean side of the ledger and if you are at a loss for which deserving non-profit organization to make a year-end tax-deductible donation, think philosophically.

Best wishes for the New Year.

Jerome Kroll, M.D.

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## Report AAPP Annual Meeting

The title of this year's Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Philosophy and Psychiatry, held in Philadelphia on May 18 and 19 2002, provoked a series of creative and insightful elaborations in the papers presented which, while at times orthogonal to one another, combined and ricocheted in an exciting and heady mix which left the two days of the AAPP meeting, in the words of one observer later in the week, "the most interesting thing at the whole APA."

Emphasis on psychiatry & personal agency produced Kennett's sophisticated discussion of the way mental disorder confounds the usual process by which our agency and our selves are 'co-authored' by those around us. Perring's intriguing review of the increasingly popular literary genre of memoirs of mental illness showed how profoundly individualistic are the ways people with mental disorder understand and experience their own agency. Rego offered a clear and thoughtful application of the philosopher Frankfurt's notion of externality to the experience of the patient in the therapeutic process, illustrating the sense of agency achieved through the narrative task, showing, as he put it "what the relationship of one's self to one's experience ought to be" in order to get better from a psychiatric problem. Developed around two case histories of lives and agency affected by Septem-

ber 11, Brendel's presentation emphasized the provisional nature of all clinical diagnosis and static DSM-IV predictions, and clinicians were admonished to always remain "open to surprise." Matthews and Kennett explored the way dissociation and delusion disrupt the usual unity of agency, casting the task of therapy in dissociative disorder as one of restoring not only unity but agency itself. Some of the political strands of the notion of agency were taken up by Yaryura and Pinto, who revealed the social structures - from the family, the media, and the government to the mental health industry itself - which serve to reduce the mental patient's autonomy and freedom. Others, on a more complex level, were explored by Mender, who used an analysis of language to illustrate what he identified as a privileged status for the linguistics of economic transactions.

The subtitle 'Nature vs Nurture Revisited' stimulated a series of necessary corrections, clarifications and qualifications. Hirsch reminded us of the deterministic "passivity assumptions" equally present in nature and nurture theories, and emphasized the importance of the sense of agency required for therapeutic success. An historically sensitive classification was offered by Hoff, which showed the dangers of assuming unambiguous reference with a phrase like "biological psychiatry"; that phrase, he explained, can be understood in four different ways, each conceptually distinct: the somatic substrate; the function of the somatic substrate; correlations of somatic findings with complex mental phenomena, and finally 'biological explanation' of mental phenomena in general. Mindful of Kraepelin's enormous influence on modern psychiatry, Hoff pointed out that while Kraepelin was not interested in philosophy, he worked with clear philosophical presuppositions, realism, naturalism, parallelism and experimentalism.

(He also acknowledged Kraepelin's reactionary politics, which designated all revolutionaries as 'psychopaths'.) Sadler pursued the nature/nurture theme in a continuation of his extensive research on values considerations in the classification of mental disorders, now asking what implications evaluative concept-tooling will hold for molecular neuroscience/genetic explanation in psychiatry. Sadler made reference to the nosology emerging in psychiatric genetics, and to the role of one particular regulatory molecule in addiction, comparing the sorts of evaluations involved in these molecular paradigms of mental disorder with those of DSM diagnosis. In a phenomenological tour de force Jan Brockman provided a

stream of consciousness narrative illustrating the way the internet and e-technology blur the divide between nature and culture. Young approached the nature/nurture issue by way of Aristotle, attempting an application of Aristotelian theories of causation to explanation in psychiatry.

One paper which crossed and re-crossed the divide between agency and determinism was that by Sauvayre, entitled 'Agency, Time, and Identity; or, Agency is found in the Dialectical Nowhere.' Working with the philosopher Bergson's notion of experienced time within which agency unfolds as an emergent, will-o'-the-wispish property, Sauvayre showed the way the psychoanalytic or therapeutic process at the same time heightens the sense of agency, while acknowledging the inevitability of one's sense of oneself as the product of determining causes. Another paper spanning the two sets of ideas was that of Daly, who pointed to psychiatry as the locus of questions linking agency with determinism; as he puts it, psychiatrists want to know how agency-diminishing states come about so that we can restore or maintain the sanity of persons. Last but not least, the two distinguished plenary speakers, Horacio Fabrega, MD, and Kenneth Schaffner, MD, PhD, offered contrasting interpretations, styles and substance in their sweeping and more comprehensive papers.

Fabrega explored the notion of 'contested territories' in which, as he showed, psychiatry inevitably finds itself. Psychiatry, as he put it, is rooted in controversy and contestation. In contested territories such as legal commitment and the application of the insanity defense, he revealed the role and risk of stigma and the controversial part played by the clinician. Schaffner's elegant discussion of the application of behavioral genetics to psychiatry provided a brilliant synthesis of recent work, albeit that he emphasized the complexly intertwined contributions of nature and nurture in both behavioral genetics and psychiatry and warned away from any simple or reductionistic answers.

This conference was organized by Professor Nissim-Sabat, and enormous credit goes to her and to Linda Muncy for their hard work.

Jennifer Radden, D. Phil.

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