

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

With this issue, the first of our second year of publication, we inaugurate a new feature, *LETTERS TO THE EDITOR*. The goals of this portion of *DISSOCIATION* are three-fold.

First, we want to provide a forum for readers to respond to and comment upon the articles that we publish. It is important to offer a place for constructive remarks, dissent, and all other forms of feedback. Whenever a letter is received that speaks to points raised by an article, the article's author(s) will be invited to write in response. The absence of a response indicates that an author or authors declined the invitation that was extended to him or her.

Second, we realize that there are many contributions that are useful and stimulating, yet cannot be put in the form of a scientific article. Others are based upon opinion rather than data, so that their translation into a scientific article is unlikely. Many observations that bear on important matters that have not yet become the focus of systematic research also need a forum.

Third, we recognize that there are times at which a scientific investigator or clinician wishes to share his or her ideas in a preliminary fashion. Such communications are more fit for this section of *DISSOCIATION* than for the general articles section.

We hope that you, the readers, will find this section informative and stimulating.

Richard P. Kluft, M.D.
Editor-in-Chief

On the absence of references to Masson's *The Assault on Truth*

To the Editor:

In Volume 1, Issue 3 of *DISSOCIATION*, Walter Young, in his article, reviewed Freud's shifting viewpoints regarding the role of trauma and fantasy in hysterical symptoms. In the same issue, Eugene Bliss discussed two main concepts: Freud's rejection of the concept of spontaneous self-hypnosis; and Freud's rejection of actual child molestation as primary in the formation of neuroses and acceptance of fantasy instead. Neither of these articles refer to the 1984 book by J.M. Masson, *The Assault on Truth*. Is there some particular reason why Masson's work is not referred to?

I am under the impression that Masson's book is important in helping those of us who deal with the aftereffects of child abuse, such as multiple personality disorder, in historical perspective. Masson argues that Freud suppressed the seduction theory of neurosis due to a failure of moral courage rather than due to a clinical or theoretical insight. While Masson's wording on Freud's lack of moral courage may be regarded as inflammatory or an unjustified attack, that does not have to distract us from the information presented. Masson reports that Freud was initially met with ostracism when he initially presented his paper on *The Aetiology of Hysteria* in 1896. Freud's initial response was to get very angry. Freud later did shift his view although I don't think Masson or anyone else has fully explained Freud's motivation for this shift.

Besides Masson's historical account in regards to Freud,

I think his book is important for the information it contains on Sandor Ferenczi. Masson gives a translation of Ferenczi's last paper, which was presented in 1932 and gives historical notes surrounding that. The original announced and more descriptive title of Ferenczi's paper was *The (Sexual) Passions of Adults and Their Influence on the Character Development and Sexual Development of Children*. Ferenczi not only refers to the negative aftereffects in adults of childhood abuse but appears to refer to at least ego states, if not MPD: "If traumatic events accumulate during the life of the growing person, the number and variety of personality splits increase and soon it will be rather difficult to maintain contact without confusion with all the fragments, which all act as separate personalities but mostly do not know each other." (Masson p. 293)

Freud met with rejection when he talked publically about the aftereffects of child abuse upon adults. Ferenczi met with the same type of response. Masson was faced with a lot of criticism and even got fired for his efforts. It seems common for therapists dealing with MPD to be met with criticism by colleagues from an emotional, not scientific, level. It seems to me that Masson's work both reports and reenacts the same thing. Is this work worthy of dissemination or not?

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Reference: Masson, J.M. (1984). *The assault on truth. Freud's suppression of the seduction theory*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Dr. Young responds:

In answer to the letter to the Editor, I might simply state: I would like to thank Dr. Adams for his comments and insights regarding Jeffery Masson's work, *The Assault on Truth*. It does bring into focus the complicated issues involved in the theoretical vacillations in Freud's thinking and the efforts of trying to assign motives for these changes. Personally, I don't feel that Freud lacked moral courage. I thought that he had a great deal of moral courage in trying to present the views as best as he could ascertain them in his climate. On the other hand, my particular article on "Observations on Fantasy" was designed to look at the particular role of fantasy in the formation of multiple personality disorder, rather than to examine Freud's theoretical thinking and his underlying motivations. Masson's book was not deliberately left out. I simply chose to focus on other aspects of fantasy in that particular article. In no way did I intend to indicate that there is not abuse in the lives of patients with multiple personality, but rather tried to show the interplay of fantasy and other restitutive efforts on the part of patients suffering from multiple personality disorder.

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