

## EDITORIAL

### REFLECTIONS ON "THIEVES OF TIME"

Richard P. Kluft, M.D.

The expressed objective of *DISSOCIATION: Progress in the Dissociative Disorders*, is "to provide a forum for the sharing of advances and the fruits of hard-won experience in the clinical and experimental understanding of dissociation and the dissociative disorders, to place its readership at the cutting edge of this new and rapidly developing field" (Kluft, 1988, p.2). Therefore the editors take great satisfaction in bringing to you, the readers, articles that promote the growth of our knowledge of the dissociative disorders. Very few contributions are definitive, fewer still are without shortcomings, but all play their role in adding to our foundation of knowledge.

We must be grateful to those who undertake the often difficult, frustrating, and demanding task of hammering their ideas, their explorations, and their experiences into the often unyielding form of a scientific communication. Not only do most authors find it time-consuming and at times demoralizing to prepare their manuscripts, but not all articles are accepted, and, of those that are, it is a rare submission that does not require one or more rounds of revisions and modifications, often of a rather extensive nature. Furthermore, once an article or book is published, it may or may not receive recognition or appreciation, it may provoke criticism, and it may very well be forgotten almost as soon as it is printed.

Nonetheless, once a scientific communication is published, it becomes part of the historical record of the advance of science. It may serve to light the path of those who follow, and, even if apparently doomed to oblivion, it may be rediscovered many years later and recognized as a landmark contribution. The work of no less a figure than Janet languished in obscurity for three generations. The contributions of Despine, the first clinician to treat multiple personality disorder successfully, was forgotten for over a century. However, because these authors published, they did advance our science, and could be rediscovered and thereby become the intellectual colleagues of still other generations of clinicians and scientific investigators.

This editorial's concern, however, is not the plight of those who do share their observations and experiences. Instead, its focus is upon those who do not, whose wisdom and findings never enrich the scientific record of our field. According to Hillerman (1988), archaeologists and Indians alike in the southwestern United States refer to a person who pilfers valuable archaeological findings for personal gain, and places them in private hands rather than in settings where they can be studied for the advancement of knowledge, as a "thief of time." At the risk of being provocative, I would like you, the readers of *DISSOCIATION*, to wonder whether some among you, by not sharing what you have learned, and keeping your experience and wisdom to yourself, might be not unlike the "thief of time."

My reflections on this theme were stimulated by the need to look up the abstract of a presentation in the *Proceedings* of one of the first of the International Conferences on Multiple Personality/Dissociative States. As I leafed through the *Proceedings*, I was struck by how many of the presentations that I had thought were worthy of publication had never been put in print. This stimulated me to review the *Proceedings* of the First through the Sixth International Conferences, the symposia on dissociation from several recent American Society of Clinical Hypnosis Scientific Meeting brochures, and the Ohio and Eastern Regional Conference programs. Over 95% of the presentations on dissociative disorders made at these meetings, over 825 in all, remain unpublished. That 95% of our scientific presentations are not being preserved for contemporary and future scholars is cause for concern, and this observation, however unsettling, fails to address all of the valuable ideas and findings that are never presented in any way, shape, or form, and will vanish with those who for one reason or other have not chosen to share them.

Clearly many of these presentations and privately held ideas and findings are either derivative or speculative, and would not merit publication. Nonetheless, the observations noted above suggest that our still-young field is already in the process of losing much of its history. Substantial numbers of useful clinical findings and significant research studies are in danger of vanishing. Procrastination and inertia in the matter of communication can make one a de facto "thief of time." *DISSOCIATION* strongly encourages you, our readers, to make the effort to share what you have learned. Neither clinical nor basic science is advanced by the "thief of time."

Richard P. Kluft, M.D.

#### REFERENCES

- Hillerman, T. (1988). *A thief of time*. Harper & Row: New York.
- Kluft, R.P. (1988). Editorial: A new voice for a new frontier. *DISSOCIATION*, 1(1), 2-3.