

EDITORIAL:
NOTES ON THE
AMSTERDAM PAPERS

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It is difficult to describe the atmosphere of excitement and pleasant collegiality that pervaded the Amsterdam Conference, the May, 1992 Spring Meetings of the International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality & Dissociation. The hospitality and friendliness of our Dutch colleagues was tremendous, and the scientific and program was powerful. The presence of keen-minded clinicians and scientific investigators from many countries provided for fresh and thought-provoking exchanges. It became clear very rapidly that while the dissociative disorders themselves are very much alike in Europe and North America, and the research on their phenomenology is remarkably consistent in its findings, our cultures and ideas, our clinical traditions, and our service delivery systems are quite diverse, and cover quite a spectrum. We have much to learn from one another. I was reminded very much of the good feelings that suffused the First International Conference on Multiple Personality and Dissociative States in Chicago, in 1984.

It seemed natural to try to share the Amsterdam Conference with the readers of *DISSOCIATION*, and with all those who were unable to attend. Before the Conference had closed, I invited Onno van der Hart, Ph.D., one of its prime organizers, to become the Guest Editor for a special Amsterdam Conference Issue of *DISSOCIATION*. When I asked Dr. van der Hart to undertake this task, and he graciously accepted, I am sure that neither one of us appreciated the enormity of my request. Some of the Amsterdam presenters had already committed their papers elsewhere; they could only be shared with *DISSOCIATION* under certain constraints. Others were presenting material already published in *DISSOCIATION* and other journals and books, and therefore an attempt was made to preserve the tone and flavor of their spoken addresses. Some had extremely busy writing schedules and had not put their spoken remarks for Amsterdam in the form of a written paper. Others were making presentations based on work in progress in cooperation with other colleagues and were directing their efforts toward the writing of an original scientific paper. A psychiatric administrator I know and respect has observed that getting a bunch of mental health professionals to adhere to rules, schedules, and deadlines in cooperating in a common venture is as easy as herding cats. We are deeply grateful to Dr. van der Hart for herding the cats, and carrying the task of editing this special double issue on the Amsterdam papers through to an admirable conclusion.

For the reader, it will be useful to bear in mind that the articles in this issue will not be uniform in style, format, for-

mality, or length. An effort was made to invite the authors to include their entire planned address rather than just what they actually delivered, appreciating that most prepared papers are never presented in full. The speakers and Dr. van der Hart, have made many compromises, concessions and accommodations in order to bring as much of the conference to the pages of *DISSOCIATION*. I hope that the reader will be able to appreciate the richness and diversity of the 1992 Amsterdam Conference, and be inspired to attend the 1995 Spring Conference, which will again return to the wonderful hospitality of Amsterdam.

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