the SCRIPT

INTERNATIONAL TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS ASSOCIATION

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IN THIS ISSUE

New TA Textbook Launched
3

2016 Dhaka Conference Call for Proposals
6

New *SAATA Journal* Published
7

Reflections on the IFAT Conference
8

Sydney 2015: A Challenging Experience
11

To Enjoy ITAA Benefits, Keep Your Membership Current!

by Karen Pratt



- Did you know that you need to renew your ITAA membership every year in order to continue receiving the *Transactional Analysis Journal* and accessing the entire *TAJ* online archive with SAGE?
- Did you realize that sometimes renewal notices end up in your spam folder and so your membership lapses without you knowing it?
- Have you missed recent teasers for new issues of *The Script* because your member information online is not up to date?

We have recently learned that following the elimination of auto renewal and problems with email renewal notices some people have had their ITAA membership expire without them realizing it. As the new chair of the membership committee, I have been contacting these lapsed members, and most of them still very much want to continue their membership. They are glad to be reminded that they need to go online to renew and/or to update their contact information (postal and email addresses)—and how simple it is to do that.

It appears that many members do not realize that we currently do not have a membership auto renewal system in place. We eliminated it last year because there were problems with credit cards that led to some memberships not being renewed automatically when the person's card expired. In my contact with expired members, it has been clear that many people prefer auto renewal, so we are now looking into reinstituting that option but with better safeguards for credit card expirations.

The other issue is that the automatic renewal system, which sends renewal reminders 60 days and 30 days before and on expiration, has not been working as we thought it was. Although the web company has evidence of the emails being sent, only a small percentage of them have actually arrived in members' in-boxes, the rest having gone either into spam folders or somewhere lost in cyberspace.

It has been fascinating to connect with members from so many countries—most recently from India, Hungary, the UK, Mexico, Switzerland, China, Italy, New Zealand, Denmark, the Nether-

lands, Australia, Turkey, New Zealand and Slovenia. I have enjoyed and been heartened by people's responses:

- "I definitely want to continue my association with the international TA community."
- "Of course I want to renew my membership, but I'm not sure how to do that."
- "I'm very interested in TA and will be a permanent member of the ITAA."
- "Thanks for the reminder—with my life so busy, I forgot to renew."

There were also some touching moments as older members of the ITAA shared their memories, including a note from Hilde Anderegg Somaini (formerly Hilde Anderegg Bärtsch), who wrote, "Thank you so much for all the years I had contact with and served the TA community. In 1998 I was Congress-Coordinator for the MITAC in Zürich. I will never forget that great international happening with all the nice colleagues from the whole world." I was able to respond thanking her for her years of involvement and wishing her well. She replied, "Thank you—your response touches me." As always, personal contact and connection make all the difference.

"I have been contacting these lapsed members, and most of them still very much want to continue their membership. They are glad to be reminded that they need to go online to renew and/or to update their contact information—and how simple it is to do that."

I also heard from some people who, when asked what they want from and also can give to the ITAA, said how important they believed it was to develop greater academic recognition for transactional analysis. An Italian member wrote, "From ITAA, I would like an enormous effort in supporting recognition of TA as an empirically supported treatment. In Europe, psychotherapies that are not so recognized are going to die. I can offer to ITAA my competencies as a professor of dynamic psychology and a researcher in psychotherapy at Padua University." A member from Madrid wants the ITAA "to think about membership interests and a high level of scientific [inquiry in] psychology."

This process has helped make tangible to me the wonderful qualities of the international TA community.

Karen Pratt of South Africa is chair of the ITAA Membership Committee and a Teaching Transactional Analyst (education). She can be reached at info@tamatters.co.za .

We can only make an ever-increasing impact on our families, communities, organizations, and countries as we share ourselves and our experiences with others.

We are excited to have energetic young members on the membership committee who are joining us as we look seriously at how to ensure that we both retain current members and encourage new ones. We are planning ways of engaging more actively with all of our members, especially using twenty-first-century online platforms, and we invite you to become involved by offering your ideas and joining in our discussions. We are working diligently to rectify the hiccups in the reminder email process and to set up a new and more efficient auto renewal system. In the meantime, we urge you to check your membership status online so that you can continue to be part of the ITAA.

To renew your membership and/or check your account information: Go to www.itaaworld.com, click on "Member Login" in the upper right corner of the homepage. If your information does not immediately appear, enter your username and password and click on "Log In."

- Click on "Edit Your Profile" to check and update your postal address.
- Click on "Join or Renew Your Membership Online" to renew your membership (unless you are a student member, in which case you will find a link to an offline form).
- Click on "Update Username/Password/E-Mail to check and update your email.

If you have questions or need help, please contact Janet Chin at janet@itaaworld.org .

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New TA Textbook Launched

by Trudi Newton



Into TA book presentation in Rome (from left): Bill Cornell, Trudi Newton, Moniek Thunnissen, and Anne de Graaf

Into TA: A Comprehensive Textbook on Transactional Analysis, coedited by William F. Cornell, Anne de Graaf, Trudi Newton, and Moniek Thunnissen, will be published this month by Karnac Books. We offer here a conversation among them about the process of working together.

Trudi: If you wanted to write a new, original transactional analysis textbook, where would you start? When Anne de Graaf and Moniek Thunnissen decided to do that in 2013, they wanted to write a book for both beginning and more advanced TA students, to "open up our windows" to the world of other modalities, and to include how practitioners apply transactional analysis in their daily work. Moniek's involvement in the field of mental health also motivated the project as a way to gain recognition for its success in that area. I remember reading an article in the December 2013 issue of *The Script* about their new Dutch book, *Leerboek Transactionele Analyse* [Comprehensive Textbook of Transactional Analysis] and then seeing a copy when I visited the TA-Academie in the Netherlands. I don't read Dutch, but I could see how innovative the book was by its diagrams, which showed very up-to-date concepts, and because there was a large practice section that included all four fields. A year later, when they asked me to be involved in the English edition, I wondered what prompted the translation.

Anne: It was prompted by the success of the Dutch version and our feeling that we had produced something unique, so we thought an English translation would make it available for readers around the globe. Once we had a publishing agreement, we decided we wanted to give the content a more international flavor with contributions from TA practitioners worldwide. That was a way to provide readers with the global perspective that is so great about TA. So we invited Trudi and Bill to team up with us. Moniek and I produced a translation and asked them to read it and give us their feedback. We didn't then foresee what a fruitful process we were entering into!

Moniek: It is important to us to be part of that global community of TA professionals who are passionate about improving their practice. The first part of the new book presents basic TA theory within the contexts of the four fields, discusses contemporary developments in theory and practice, describes specialized applications, and offers critical reflections about the relationship of TA to other theories in the four fields. The second part presents TA professionals from around the world talking about the application of TA within their specific areas of human relations work,

"When we started, some of the language and ways of describing concepts (such as OKness) led to the question, whose voice is this? As we talked, we began to realize we were in it together: Bill and I were not only language editors but coauthors. I think this changed the book a lot and brought in some new perspectives."

where questioning one's practice is a normal way to develop and grow. To mention just a few of our contributors: The new president of ITAA, C. Suriyaprakash, writes about how he works to facilitate an enterprise in India to grow healthy again; Jo Stuthridge from New Zealand describes using her own countertransference as a pathway to understand script; Liselotte Fassbind-Kech from Switzerland allows readers to watch how she counsels an overburdened woman; and Karen Pratt from South Africa offers an inspiring story about her experience using TA with community care workers.

Trudi: I know I felt very excited to become part of this project and at the same time a bit overwhelmed at the scope. Bill, what was your experience?

Bill: When I signed on, I thought I would be doing some editing and checking of the translation—familiar tasks for me given all the editing I do for the *Transactional Analysis Journal*. But once the four of us got started, the project morphed into something quite different and more exciting. Each of us took on particular segments of the book for authoring and editing and then sent drafts to the full team to read. We met regularly by Skype to talk through our differences (sometimes quite vigorously!) and to arrive at a consensus.

Trudi: When we started, some of the language and ways of describing concepts (such as OKness) led to the question, whose voice is this? As we talked, we began to realize we were in it together: Bill and I were not only language editors but coauthors. I think this changed the book a lot and brought in some new perspectives.

Moniek: I felt supported by the input from Bill and Trudi, including Bill's extensive knowledge of ITAA history and Trudi's experiences with TA in educational settings. Sometimes we had discussions about certain phrases we used in Dutch that were difficult to translate. In the Dutch book, for instance, we use the term Structuring Parent instead of Critical or Controlling Parent to avoid sounding pejorative. I'm glad Bill and Trudi agreed!

Anne: The discussions we had were marvelous. Sometimes we talked about specific words. For example, we chose not to use the phrase *racket feeling* with its Mafioso connections and replaced it with *inauthentic feeling*. At other times we talked about the development of TA over the years. For instance, the chapter about discounting and passivity was completely rewritten based on forceful debates we had about the history of the ITAA and its dealings with Cathexis Institute. You can look forward to reading that.

Trudi: We also Anglicized some of the personal names in examples, but not all of them because we wanted them to have an international flavor. Some of our debates revealed real language and cultural differences in the way TA is used and thought about.

Bill: As a *TAJ* coeditor, I've grown accustomed to the challenges of translating writing from one language to another. Transactional analysis language is highly idiosyncratic to American English, so translating TA terms into other languages can be a real challenge—then when they are translated back into English, they can be hard to recognize! The cultural differences were more subtle, and we kind of stumbled along gradually recognizing our cultural influences as we discovered quite different interpretations of various TA concepts. These differences required a good bit of talking through.

Trudi: I think the result of all this debate is a multilayered book that brings together a good deal of current thinking as well as hands-on practice. What do you hope for in response from readers?

Anne: My ambition was to come up with a brand new, state-of-the-art TA book that can be used in courses around the globe. Because of the differentiation in the various chapters (into basic and more advanced TA theory), it can be used in TA 101 courses, in preparing for the CTA or TSTA exams, and by non-TA professionals. I hope readers like the way

Book Reviews 2016

The *Transactional Analysis Journal* is looking for book review submissions for the year 2016. Books published within the past 3 years are preferred, and reviews are limited to 1,000 words. We are looking for reviews that offer readers a solid critique that reflects substantially on the book rather than one that is primarily an endorsement. For more details or to discuss a possible book review, please contact *TAJ* Book Review Editor Ed Novak at edtnovak@gmail.com .

we made connections to other modalities and for all four fields.

Moniek: My hope is that the book will promote TA in mental health practice. A recent large research study in the Netherlands on the effectiveness of psychotherapy for personality disorders showed a 3-month inpatient TA-based program as the most successful approach. My hope is that *Into TA* will help transactional analysis to become increasingly accepted as an effective method of psychotherapy worldwide.

Trudi: Looking back on the process, what was the best part of it for each of you?

Anne: For me it was meeting soul mates on our way to creating a better world using TA. For me, in the end, studying and teaching TA is not a goal in itself. The question is, will TA professionals around the globe be able to use it to make this world better?

Moniek: I was most excited about engaging with colleagues in the same endeavor intellectually and personally and writing an inspiring book on a subject that is close to my heart.

Bill: For me, it was creating a book that is not based on any single model of TA practice. This volume is a wonderful melding of theory and practice, the first TA book to represent all four fields of practice as coequal. That is the accomplishment of which I am most proud.

Trudi: And for me, as well as the enjoyment of working together, I like the way we updated the Cultural Parent of TA to reflect where (and how) we are now.

Trudi Newton can be reached at trudi.newton@btinternet.com .

New ITAA Service Award Established

The ITAA Board of Trustees (BOT), realizing that there is no specific award that recognizes members who have made a significant contribution to the life and functioning of the ITAA, has established the ITAA Service Award as a way to bestow such recognition and to celebrate members' service to the organization as a whole. The award is described as follows: "The ITAA Service Award is established to recognize members of the ITAA who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of the ITAA and to its development as an organization that promotes transactional analysis internationally, supports its members, and offers a social benefit to the public. Honorees will be recognized for their commitment, the nature of their service, and the 'I'm OK, You're OK' manner in which they conducted themselves in the process. The nominee will have demonstrated a generous spirit of service, responsibility, and effectiveness in their contribution to the life of the ITAA."

The guidelines for making nominations for this new award will be posted soon on the ITAA website at https://itaaworld.org/itaa-awards . The deadline for nominations for the 2016 award is 1 January 2016. Please send nominations to ITAA Secretary Mandy Lacy at mandy@lacyconsulting.net .

Welcome to New Members

JULY 2015
Sarah Burris, UK
Inga Dankert, Germany
Marije Field, UK
Rossella Grassi, Italy
Liliana Horvath, Romania
Sook Ja Jeong, Republic of Korea
Krispijn Plettenberg, Netherlands
Sriharsha Rao, India
Marcus Scott, UK
Anita (Sr. Marie Bernadette) Steinmetz, Germany
Pascale Théobald, France
Ian Tomlinson, UK
Tin Vanderhoeven, Belgium
Peter Williams, UK
Qi Zhang, China

AUGUST 2015
Deborah Blagden, UK
Amy Cooper, UK
Sharmila Gupta, India
Maria Adriana Monteiro, Brazil
Fleur Newton-Edwards, UK
Louise Samme, UK
Priya Veeraraghavan, India
Klaus War, Australia

SEPTEMBER 2015
Sally Bailey, UK
Alistair Berlin, UK
Rosalyne Ewart, UK
Jemma Ladbrook, New Zealand
Komal Narang, India
Arash Niroushak, Iran
Laila Faramarz Niroushak, Iran
Sapna Sajan, India
Ramaratnam Suresh, India
Adina Tita, Romania
Lisa Wisher, UK
Jianxin Xue, China

Call for Proposals

Deadline: 31 January 2016
South Asian Transactional Analysis Conference
Hosted by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)
2-4 September 2016 Dhaka, Bangladesh

For a decade, the South Asian Association of Transactional Analysts (SAATA) conferences have been a major hub for the dissemination and development of transactional analysis in the South Asian region. They have provided a forum for legends, trainers, and practitioners of this region to come together and meet the global transactional analysis community. The theme of the 2016 conference is "Freedom Within." There exists within each of us a place of freedom to experience love, joy, and peace, so life is a matter of choosing either to suffer or to enjoy. According to Eric Berne, autonomy means having the capacities of awareness, spontaneity, and intimacy, which leads to growth and change. How do we nurture and attain this freedom within to establish freedom without? The conference will be comprised of high-quality institutes, keynotes, workshops, lectures, posters, and papers. We invite you to submit your forward-looking new work in the relevant areas by filling in the form here and submitting it with the relevant information no later than 31 January 2016. Presentations of new ideas will be given priority. Please note that a separate proposal submission is required for each presentation.

INFORMATION COVER SHEET

Title of Presentation: _____

Name, Academic Credentials, ITAA/SAATA Certification (If none, please include an email or written endorsement from a Certified Member): _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____

Country _____ Postal Code _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email _____

Copresenter(s) Name and Credentials _____

What do you hope to accomplish during your presentation?

- Include a 100-word note on your presentation
- Include a 50-word profile for each presenter
- Include a picture of each presenter (jpeg format)
- Duration 30 minutes

Format of Presentation:

Format: ☐ Lecture ☐ Workshop **Duration:** ☐ 1.5 Hour ☐ 3.00 hour
Level: ☐ Beginner ☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced **Group Size Limit:** ☐ 30 ☐ 50 ☐ 60

Guidelines for Paper Submissions: All papers must be in English; contain author's name(s), affiliation(s), and email address(es); be formatted according to online template with 10-point Times Roman font, double spaced; be a PDF that can be viewed on any platform; and be a maxium of 10 pages, including abstract and appendices but excluding references

Guidelines for Posters: All posters must be in English; be 3' x 2'; be in 2 or 3 primary colors; handout.

Submissions that do not comply with these guidelines may be rejected without review. Research submissions must represent new and original work. Concurrent submission is not allowed. All submissions will go through a single-blind peer review, and accepted papers will appear in the online conference proceedings published on the SAATA and ASK website and by ASK publication. Authors of accepted papers will retain intellectual property rights to their work but will be required to sign a copyright release to SAATA and ASK. After publication by SAATA and ASK, extended versions of papers may be submitted to refereed journals in accordance to the policies of those journals. Accepted refereed papers, posters, and so on must be presented at the conference by an author who is registered to attend. We strongly encourage at least one author of every paper to register by the early-bird deadline so that session chairs can make plans for its presentation.

All presenters shall register for the conference and take care of their own travel and accommodations.

For questions and to submit proposals, email to psh@askbd.org with a cc to nasima.akter70@gmail.com or mail to Nasima Akter, Coordinator, Psychosocial Counseling Unit, Ain o Salish (ASK), 7/17, Block - B, Lalmatia, Dhaka - 127, Bangladesh

saata | THE SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSTS

SAATA Journal *Launched*

The publication of the first issue of the new journal of the South Asian Association of Transactional Analysts (SAATA) is a dream come true for all of us, and especially for C. Suriyaprakash, who first conceived of the idea, and the editorial team of Ragini Rao, Deepak Dhananjaya, and Smitha Chimmanda Potty, who finally made it happen.

The *SAATA Journal* is a peer-reviewed, e-journal focusing on transactional analysis theory, principles, and applications in the fields of psychotherapy, counseling, education, and organizational development. The idea behind it is to invite TA trainers and trainees to articulate their learnings, applications, and innovations in transactional analysis theory and practice in our region. By doing this, we hope to develop a better understanding of the strong, diverse cultural influences not only on our personalities but also on our theory (both positive and limiting) and how they influence us professionally.

The objective of the *SAATA Journal* is to build awareness about the impact of transactional analysis among the general public and professionals and also to promote development of new theory, application, and research in transactional analysis. It will be published twice yearly, and the first issue came out in August 2015. It is available for readers on the SAATA website at http://saata.org/saata-journals/

The submission categories include:

- The personal impact of transactional analysis, that is, any experience of using/living TA concepts that led to a change in one's personal life
- The professional impact of transactional analysis, that is, any experience that improved a practitioner's way of working (e.g., managers, teachers, coaches, etc., who integrate TA into their work) and how efficient and effective one's work has become by using transactional analysis
- Integrating transactional analysis models and developing a holistic understanding of TA as a practitioner; not only understanding TA concepts individually, but integrating them with other concepts and bringing in experiences of diagnosis, interventions, process, and so on
- Transactional analysis working papers about research and work within the TA field

Please let us know what you think of our first issue. The editorial team welcomes constructive feedback from our readers worldwide.

Ragini Rao, Deepak Dhananjaya, and Smitha Chimmanda Potty
SAATA Journal *Editorial Team*



Ragini Rao



Deepak Dhananjaya



Smitha Chimmanda Potty

A Trip to a New Frontier: Reflections on the IFAT Conference

by Nicolas Hours

Editor's Note from Laurie Hawkes: We have not had a national TA conference in France for years and so were very happy to gather together this year in La Rochelle. The organizing team did a fabulous job, and it was particularly heartening to have so many students present thanks to the great work of the association of students in TA (ETG6, Etudiants Groupe 6). Kudos to them! We also had participants from other countries, including Belgium and Germany, among others, so the international flavor was most satisfying. We invited Nicolas Hours, a student at the Paris TA school, to share some of his post-conference thoughts.

The 30th national conference of the Institut Français d'Analyse Transactionnelle (IFAT), the French TA association, took place in La Rochelle over the first weekend of October 2015. La Rochelle is a harbor city on the Atlantic ocean, about midway between the south and north tips of France. The venue was a modern building with large windows for the sea view. And what were we looking for at the IFAT conference, what were we seeking there, what were our hopes, what could be found?



Student group in La Rochelle for conference (from left): Virginie Gros Leroy, Didier Schedid, Nicolas Hours, Graciela Ratynski, Alain Dbjay, and Bernadette Py

I went with my peer group and some other students from our school, Ecole d'Analyse Transactionnelle de Paris-Ile de France, psychotherapy (EAT-Paris). There were 10 of us, and it was our first TA conference. The previous one had taken place in Bordeaux in 2008 when we were just beginning our training, so we had not yet had the opportunity to attend such an event. Most of us had been to various psychology conferences, but this was our first one just for us and other people like us—all from TA! In all, some 200 participants attended the conference.

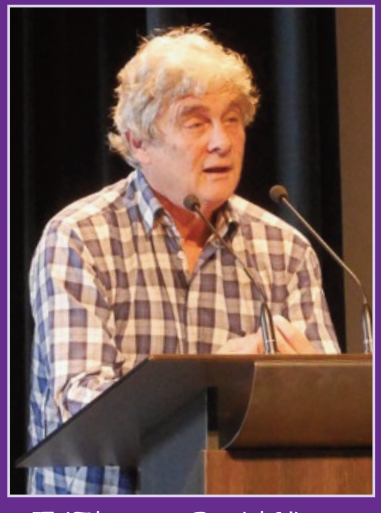
Traveling to an unknown place with a group certainly affords one comfort and lightness. But beyond our own group support, we were really touched by the welcome we received. The atmosphere was welcoming, structuring, well-organized—we really felt like we were in TA country!

Thanks to Henning Schulze, Laurie Hawkes and France Brécard for the IFAT photos



IFAT keynote speaker Charlotte Sills with Laurie Hawkes, who served as Charlotte's translator

The opening keynote was given by Patrick Viveret, a French philosopher who is working actively for an open, alternative economy. In his talk, entitled "La fraternité comme réponse aux grandes mutations actuelles" ["Fraternity as an answer to the major changes of today"], he encouraged us to step back and take a broader view of things. This helped me widen my frame of reference and gave me a sense of opening up to the world and the way the forces of the world function. It made me aware of how transactional analysis can offer answers to the current situation. According to Viveret, nowadays, relationships between people have become primarily mercantile. The present sense of "value" has become "economic value." But a few centuries ago, the word *value* (*valeur*, which can also mean *valor*) included the idea of being a life force, a potent being with good life energy. That made me aware of how the meaning of words can change and become impoverished over time and that we need to question their meaning in an ongoing way. I realized that is much of what we do with our clients when we ask them what meaning they put behind a certain word. By doing so we come to understand the deeper significance it holds for them and thus discover something about their inner world. Listening to Viveret, I understood that remaining within the mercantile finality of today's world causes our hungers for meaning, belonging, and recognition to go unmet. And with our Bernean frame of reference, we know how vital it is to meet such needs!



IFAT keynoter Patrick Viveret

I also deepened my frame of reference by attending some workshops on psychotherapy. I felt well nourished (thanks to Catherine Gérard, PTSTA-P) hearing confirmation that, for a couple to be healthy, each person needs to be OK with himself or herself and that a relationship based on a wound or need does not have a solid foundation. In addition, letting our wounded Child speak up and be heard by the other is a way of opening up for both ourselves and the other. All that resonated nicely with my psychotherapy perspective.

I also attended presentations in other fields, including organizations, and I became aware of how I integrate the content in relation to my own field so as to better understand it. For instance, discounts and passivity are key factors in the management of psychosocial risks, and in difficult professional situations, people may discount the stimulus (e.g., the supervisor does not realize she or he is using inappropriate gestures or speaking aggressively). Then the people being mistreated may not look for options for stopping or changing the situation. Also, thanks to presenter Patrice Fosset (PTSTA-O) I widened my psychotherapy frame of reference with the concept of energy as it is used to accompany change in organizations. Berne wrote about energy to describe changes in ego states, but in Fosset's workshop, energy was defined as a universal phenomenon that inhabits the inside of our bodies as well as our environment. Managing change requires working with this energy and devel-

> *"This dual experience of both opening up and recentering in my field of reference was my general experience of the conference."*

oping tools, or a therapeutic relationship, that allows us to redistribute that energy toward a more satisfactory outcome.

This dual experience of both opening up and recentering in my field of reference was my general experience of the conference. It hit an apogee with Charlotte Sills's (TSTA-P) lecture on "L'incertitude en tant que principe relationnel" ["Uncertainty as a relational principle"]. How can we use the anxiety-generating stresses of today's world toward a positive end? Charlotte described how our need for meaning making and predictability allows us to have mastery and order but may hinder innovation, which enables growth and reactivity to change. We each need to find a balance between too much structure (immobility) and too much innovation (chaos and anxiety). At times of anxiety, we stop thinking and feeling and move into driver or automatic mode. The solution Charlotte proposed was to develop a mindful state and make contact with another person. "Links, relationships, are essential because they keep us in full awareness in the here and now and thus free us for experience and novelty," she asserted. Thus, uncertainty as a relational principle means from full awareness, mindfully, turning toward the other and the external world, with trust.



IFAT conference organizing group (from left): Nicole Pagnod-Rossiaux, Stan Madoré, Myriam Chéreau (IFAT general secretary), Marie-Dominique Baudry, Huguette Lanèque, Thierry Desnos, Dominique Basarté, and Agnès Petit

> *"Traveling to an unknown place with a group certainly affords one comfort and lightness. But beyond our own group support, we were really touched by the welcome we received. The atmosphere was welcoming, structuring, well-organized—we really felt like we were in TA country!"*

Then we are not separated either from ourselves or from the other. We need to look inside and outside, to look beyond our field and boundaries, to meet at our border. A border, a frontier, is a place of differentiation certainly, but also a place where one can say hello.

So, at the coastal border in La Rochelle, we were in the right place, at the right time, to embark together on a journey to that new frontier.

Nicolas Hours can be reached at nicolas.hours@yahoo.fr .

Award Nominations Sought

Eric Berne Memorial Award
Deadline: 1 December 2015

ITAA Service Award
Hedges Capers Humanitarian Award
Muriel James Living Principles Award
Goulding Social Justice Award
Deadline: 1 January 2016

See the ITAA Web site or contact the ITAA at info@itaaworld.org for details on making nominations for these awards. Send nominations for the EBMA to committee chair Thomas Steinert at itaa@thomas-steinert.de . Send nominations for the other awards to ITAA Secretary Mandy Lacy at mandy@lacyconsulting.net .

Sydney 2015: A Challenging Experience

by Irina Filipache

I am writing about the ITAA conference in Sydney almost 3 months afterward, aware that stories are born in retrospect. Before I began writing, the experience refused to organize itself, instead residing in me in the form of a personal nebula composed of memories of people I met—a face, a walk, a voice—of discursive tensions and conceptual polarities, of emotions. There were also questions, challenges, moments of silence, and unresolved dilemmas.

The four keynote speakers were stimulating in addressing topics such as individualism, racism, marginalization, the rise and fall of groups throughout history, leadership, the lateral turn, group performance. I was touched by their ethos and pathos and wanted to go back to hear them again. [Note: Three of the four presentations will be included in the April 2016 *TAJ*.] I wondered if something in the title of the conference—"The Power of Group Dynamics"—invited consideration of topics such as tyranny and power relations. One idea in particular has stayed with me: the power of theory to (in)form reality and the use of paradigms to structure the contents of knowledge and to offer corresponding images of the human being and the world.



Anna Burrowes and Irina Filipache in Sydney

For his part, Andrew Samuels spoke about the individual from the point of view of the tyranny of the exterior, the social. Following Foucault, he reminded us that for every discourse of a majority, there is a suppressed or discounted discourse of a marginalized minority. Paradoxically, in the individualistic historical moment in which we live, his impression is that the discourse of the individual is the marginalized one. How do we preserve the dignity of the individual in the context of the uniformity and conformity of large masses or in social policies? "As a social unit, the individual has lost his or her individuality and becomes a mere abstract number in the bureau of statistics." These words particularly resonated for me as a citizen of a formerly Communist country in which a totalitarian regime aimed at suppressing any expression of individuality in opposing the system. What is the responsibility of the individual? To rebel? To adjust? What are the limits of this responsibility?

Farhad Dalal elegantly dissected theories to expose their underlying

presuppositions and made further use of a rebellious energy in his aim to expose the double tyranny of internalism and individualism. He was mindful of the fact that "ruling paradigms bind us to the normative unconscious and blind us to the existence of alternative possibilities." I was struck especially by his idea that belonging is not a state but a moment in an ongoing movement born out of the intersecting processes of inclusion and exclusion. His keynote left me with this question: Is there a power struggle when it comes to theories about what it means to be human?

In his speech, Bill Cornell expressed his belief that "the theories that form our work are efforts of marginalized individuals and their communities to make the unbearable bearable and to create spaces and places of belonging." I was particularly drawn to his ideas about the meaning of the historical pattern of resurgence and collapse of group and communal life throughout history. Bill views "the periodic resurgence of groups as a sign of societal health, while the collapse of groups is symptomatic of social regression."

Sari van Poelje spoke about groups from her experience in organizational contexts, and I was touched by the fact that a successful team is made up of individuals who are willing to let go of their ego centrism for some common purpose or shared vision, goal, or value.

Reflecting on the theoretical assumptions and lived experiences shared by the speakers, I was left with the sense that theories are made by people just as much as people are formed by theories.

It was people who motivated me to embark on the journey to Sydney, apart from wanting to visit a bit of Australia. I wanted to have an experience of transactional analysis people from the TA wider community. One workshop, presented by Sissy Likou, provided me with the opportunity to meet others at a level beyond words, to explore my personal space, the space I need when encountering others, the unpredictable movement that is created when you are invited into a dialogue without words. I was also glad to meet some of the TA people whose theories, books, and articles have accompanied me in my training. Their ideas and contributions to TA theory have become more vivid. I was touched by the warm welcome I felt from fellow practitioners from Australia and New Zealand, with whom I shared experiences of the conference as well as stories about our local TA communities and professional pathways. One moving moment was the Eric Berne Memorial Award to Servaas van Beekum, who was visibly emotional. His tears and his words made me feel how important and meaningful TA and the TA community can be on a personal level.

The challenge of being in this group presented itself early. The conference opening offered a moment of experiencing sheer otherness as we were welcomed by a member of the Australian aboriginal community, who performed a beautiful musical ceremony. It was an encounter that reminded me that saying hello is not easy when you do not share related frames of reference and the implicit value system attached to behavior. "The culture influences almost everything that happens in a social aggregation," wrote Eric Berne (1963, p. 110), and "preserving the group culture takes precedence over the group activity" (p. 20).

"How can I belong to this group or how do I know if I want to belong?" are questions I sometimes ask myself. Stories are part of the answer. Each time we come together, a certain story is created. By participating in it, resonating with it, or sharing it with others, I can have a sense of belonging. The novelist Mario Vargas Llosa wrote about the role of stories and the storyteller for the Machiguenga indigenous South American population, which was made up of small communities inhabiting a vast area. They would not have known about each other if it had not been for the storytellers traveling among groups and telling stories about them. "When storytellers appear in the bosom of the humanized tribe, and they always do, without exception . . . the tribe has inevitably started to progress, to overcome obstacles, to develop its knowledge and techniques," wrote Llosa (2012, p. 13).

I think the TA community has its storytellers. I couldn't help thinking about this while listening to Carol Solomon share some of her personal experiences as Eric Berne's client and to the stories told by Bill Cornell that were so touching that it became easy to make them part of myself. They are all stories of people and their endeavors. Now I have a story to share with my people: The TA community is real and alive.

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