

## Reflections on the CIPS/NAPsaC Clinical Conference, May 16-18, 2014

By Maxine Anderson, MD FIPA

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Every two years, the Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies (CIPS) holds a clinical conference that has for many years been an open invitation to members from all the CIPS Societies (IPA Societies in the USA not part of APsaA) and focused on the small group experience of presenting and discussing clinical material in a format that includes all members (including the facilitator) as presenters and discussants. This unique format, where candidates, analysts and training analysts work together, puts everyone on a level playing field and establishes a sense of equality and respect for differences among the participants. In an additional effort for inclusiveness that reached beyond the CIPS membership, this year's invitation went out to all the members of the North American Psychoanalytic Confederation (NAPsaC), which meant all of the members of the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA) and of the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society. Another first was locating the conference at the very elegant Ritz Carlton in lower Manhattan situated near the newly opened 9/11 Memorial and inclusion of a panel presentation of invited papers on the conference theme: *Trauma, Destruction and Transformative Potential*. I was honored to participate as a member of the Friday afternoon panel as well as a small group member for the rest of the weekend.

Our panel was well received, the speakers having been chosen for their different points of view: Fred Busch (Boston), Bob Pyles, (Boston), Michael Diamond (Los Angeles), and Maxine Anderson (Seattle). Panelists spoke about trauma and reparation from their own point of view. I chose to consider the inevitability of internal trauma due to polarizing tensions such as the simultaneous urge to grow and the hatred of being disturbed. The title of my 20-minute talk was "Our inner dilemma: the trauma of everyday conflict." We were told that CIPS may organize the papers and discussions into book form. Everyone I spoke with seemed to have had a rewarding experience in the clinical group meetings, some saying that this conference represented a pinnacle in their ongoing psychoanalytic learning.

The weekend in New York City also offered other rich experiences, including observing how much recovery from Hurricane Sandy the southern tip of Manhattan has experienced. The vigor of the city's recovery is impressive, even with the knowledge that other areas beleaguered by Sandy are still struggling. Another unanticipated intense emotional experience for me was the impact of an exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum titled, *Italian Futurism, 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe*.

<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/exhibitions/on-view/italian-futurism-1909-1944-reconstructing-the-universe>

The exhibit suggests that *Italian Futurism* was a movement in art triggered by the impulse to break out of perceived "old, staid and stale" artistic conventions present at the turn of the 20th century. The exhibition demonstrates an impulse which grew in intensity

as young artists thrilled in their efforts to “break out of the mold.” Yet in doing so their fervor seemed also to shatter containment in their idealization of aggression and war and their descent into the inhumanity of glorifying destructive violence, including their ardent contempt for meaning and for “feminine” values, such as receptivity. As one might predict, this movement contributed to the brutal mentality so tragically expressed in the horrors of World War II. I found the exhibit heartbreakingly revealing of how youth can become swept up in the intensity of violence without seeming to know or to care when they have gone too far. Then, tragically, they find that they too have become targets of the same unrestrained violence their earlier efforts had artlessly favored. I found myself realizing the crucial value of the sturdy metabolizing functions of paternal containment and how “chaos as freedom” can overwhelm the quieter efforts within the self when there is an overabundance of zeal and hatred for what has gone before. I am not sure if the curators of the exhibit intended this effect, but a collection of the permanent art was available as one exited the *Futurism* exhibit, including works by Cezanne, Monet, and Picasso’s blue period. Viewing these paintings at the end of the *Futurism* exhibition was like happening upon a resting place for the traumatized mind in the cool waters of deeply emotional art beautifully expressed and so well contained.

All told, it was for me a richly rewarding weekend with various emotional encounters involving what is meant by emotional trauma, the hatred of difference, and what is required for containment, transformation, and repair.

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