FROM THE PRESIDENT

At the midwinter Executive Committee meeting we accepted with regret the resignation of Dr. William A. Barry as editor of the Newsletter to take effect at the APA meeting this summer in Toronto. We are grateful for the fine work he has done for the past two years and appreciate the press of other work which has brought him reluctantly to this decision. The Newsletter is the most vital link we have to one another and thus anyone who undertakes this editorship does us all a great service. The Executive Committee made known to Dr. Barry our gratitude. we are asking the members for nominations (including self nominations) for the position of newsletter editor which will be vacant this summer. Please submit any names to Dr. Eileen Gavin, The College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, MN 55105 before May 1. A new editor will be appointed at the meeting in Toronto. Once again, thanks to Bill Barry.

Vytautas J. Bieliauskas

REPORT ON APA COUNCIL MEETING

The 1977 APA Council of Representatives held its winter meeting, January 27-29, in Washington at the Mayflower Hotel, close to APA headquarters. Actually, the winter meeting, since the same Council members are present for it, constitutes a single whole with the summer meeting. Consequently, some items which came up in a preliminary form or which were not finished at the summer meeting were completed at the winter meeting.

One such example is the budget which was presented in a preliminary form in the summer and was adopted in final form at this meeting. The Council approved a budget of somewhat over $10 million, the largest in the Association’s history. Another example was the decision reached in the summer not to hold the 1979 convention in Atlanta, unless the Georgia Legislature at its fall session ratified the ERA. The Council was informed that the ERA Amendment was not reported out of Committee in the Georgia Legislature and it was announced in consequence that the 1979 convention will be held in New York City instead of Atlanta.
A third example had to do with the publication of the proposed magazine PSYCHOLOGY, intended for the educated lay public. A strong effort was made to have the Council reconsider the decision made in the summer not to proceed with the publication. In connection with the debate on the magazine in the summer, it had been proposed that the APA should rather establish an ad hoc Public Information Committee which would be commissioned to study a series of alternate means (of which a magazine would be only one) of enhancing public awareness of the activities and competencies of psychologists. The Council in its Washington meeting voted to establish such a Committee, and the possible reconsideration of the magazine was referred to the Committee as one of its commissions.

One of the most controversial measures coming before the Council had to do with the evaluation of training programs in Institutions viewed as practicing religious discrimination. Because this matter is likely to be of particular interest to members of Division 36, I will report on it in some detail.

Background data submitted to the Council in this connection indicated that the question of religious discrimination has been a troublesome issue for the APA in its accreditation program since 1973 at least. The procedures and criteria of the Accreditation Committee of APA require non-discrimination with respect to religious orientation in faculty hiring and admission of students as a condition of program approval. A recurring issue in the implementation of this criterion has been that of a religious orientation requirement for faculty members at several Church-owned or affiliated institutions. Such a requirement is seen as religious discrimination, and recently the Committee on Accreditation of the Education and Training Board by a majority vote agreed not to approve programs that explicitly and systematically discriminate.

The Committee on Accreditation has recently reviewed an application from a doctoral training program conducted by a private church-owned institution which requires Christian oriented faculty members and a verbal statement that the person is a committed Christian. The Institution was notified by the Committee that the requirement of a specific religious orientation for a faculty appointment was contrary to APA interpretation of its policy of religious non-discrimination. The Institution questioned the interpretation of the policy pointing out that the federal government recognizes the right of church-owned and church-related institutions to select faculty members who subscribe to the religious orientation of the institution. It was pointed out that selection of faculty on the basis of religious orientation by church-owned and related institutions has the support of some regional accrediting associations and the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation. It was suggested that APA should operate in the same manner as regional accrediting bodies regarding religious orientation.

This matter was given serious consideration by the Education and Training Board and by the Board of Directors. The latter recommended to the Council of Representatives that the following be adopted as a statement of APA policy:

The procedures and criteria of the Accreditation Committee of APA require non-discrimination with respect to religious orientation in faculty hiring and admission of students as a condition of program approval. In the application of this general principle, reasonable exceptions with respect to religion may be made in the case of education institutions controlled by religious groups, provided that any preferences in student admissions or faculty hiring on religious grounds be explicit and publicly stated.

After a debate which became quite emotional at times and which unfortunately was curtailed because of an upcoming break for lunch, the Council rejected this recommendation. Any selection of faculty (or students) on a basis of religious orientation was seen as religious discrimination, and a significant number of Council members would not countenance any limitation on APA policy of religious non-discrimination. However, if a program is denied approval solely on this basis, it is not clear that APA itself may not be discriminating against religion while operating in the name of religious non-discrimination. The President of the educational institution being denied approval threatens to bring suit against APA. Quite evidently, this is a complex and thorny issue.

I want to report on one further development which did not appear on the Council agenda, but which may affect the very existence of the Council. I refer to the proposed restructuring of APA. This topic occupied virtually an entire meeting on the evening before the start of the Council sessions, the meeting having been called by the Research-Academic Coalition with which Division 36 is voluntarily associated.

A very radical restructuring of the Association is being proposed whereby the Council of Representatives would be replaced by Assemblies, either three (possibly, academic/scientific, professional, and public interest) or four (on functional lines: Service to Individuals, Service to Groups, Research, and Teaching). Currently, it is not clear whether the proposed Assemblies would supplant the Divisions as currently established, or whether the Divisions would remain, but would be grouped under the Assemblies. The APA would continue and would speak with one voice for psychologists on national issues, but the Assemblies would have considerable autonomy. They would set their own dues pattern, and would run their own conventions, either in conjunction with the APA convention (which in the supposition would be much shorter), or possibly separate from it. This reorganization is not imminent; it is a long way from implementation and probably will be substantially modified before implementation, but something like this is emerging in the background.

William C. Bier
Council Representative
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

At the Business Meeting of Division 36 on Saturday, August 27, 1977 in San Francisco Constance B. Nelson, Chair of the Awards Committee, presented Distinguished Service Awards to Dr. William C. Bier and Dr. Virginia Staudt Sexton. Drs. Bier and Sexton, distinguished psychologists and successful educators, authors, and administrators, were given these awards because of their unique contribution to the establishment of Division 36.

EDITOR'S NOTE

As you gathered from Dr. Bieliauskas’ message I have reluctantly resigned as editor. I have been happy to serve as editor these past two years, but I have found myself with too many irons in the fire. I need to remove some of them. Thus, my resignation. Please let Eileen Gavin know if you are interested in the job or know of someone who might take it.

The program committee has received a number of symposia and papers and they assure us that the program for Toronto will be a good and interesting one. B. F. Skinner and Raymond McCall will give the invited addresses. Plan on Toronto in August.

Deadline for next issue: May 10, 1978. Send news or other notes to me at 80 Lexington Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138.

William A. Barry

NEWS AND NOTES

News About Members. Gary R. Collins recently published The Rebuilding of Psychology (Wheaton, ILL.: Tyndale House Publishers) and delivered a series of lectures for the eighth annual John G. Finch Symposium in Psychology and Religion entitled, “Psychology and Theology: Prospects for Integration,” at The Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary. H. Newton Malony was one of the respondents.

Bernard Spilka has been elected Vice-President of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion for a two-year term and H. Newton Malony has been elected a council member.

E. Mark Stem has prepared a symposium entitled: “The Religiously Committed Person: To Whom Does He Turn in Psychotherapy?” for the meeting of the New York State Psychological Association.

Eileen Gavin, Richard Kahoe, and Mary Jo Meadow will lead an open meeting at the Midwestern Psychological Association Convention in Chicago to discuss issues important to Division 36. Time: Thursday, May 4, 8:30 p.m.

Conventions. The 1978 convention of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies will be held April 13-16 at the Holiday Inn City Center convention Facilities, Chicago. The theme is “Society and the helping professions.” For more information contact Dr. Arlo Compaan, Trinity Christian College, 6601 W. College Dr., Palos Heights, IL 60463.

The fifth annual convention of the Western Association of Christians for Psychological Studies will be held at Pepperdine University, Malibu, June 15-17, 1978. For more information contact Dr. Clarence Hibbs, Director of Counseling, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA.


National Media Awards. Since 1956 the American Psychological Foundation annually has presented National Media Awards to those individuals who during the year have best presented psychology to the general public. The purpose of the awards is to recognize and encourage outstanding, accurate reporting which increases the public’s knowledge and understanding of psychology.

Awards are made in five categories: (1) Television/film; (2) Radio; (3) Newspaper reporting; (4) Magazine writing; (5) Books/monographs. Each winner will receive $1,000, a special citation and be invited to attend the 86th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Toronto, Canada, August 28-September 1, 1978. The Foundation will pay expenses of each winner for up to three days.

Materials nominated must have been produced or published between May 1, 1977 and May 1, 1978.

Nominations may be made by anyone, including the author, and must be received no later than May 5, 1978. Send to: Mona Marie Olean, Public Information Officer, American Psychological Association, 1200 Seventeenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

New Journals. Biography, an international interdisciplinary journal, is now accepting articles and subscriptions. Biography will contain articles and essays on all aspects of biography from all points of view. Address all correspondence and subscriptions to George Simson, Editor, Biographical Research Center, 3238 Alani Dr., Honolulu, HI 96822.

The Journal of Divorce is devoted to research, counseling, and therapy for use by a wide variety of helping professionals involved with divorce. Editor is Esther Oshiver Fisher, 1050 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10028.
The Committee for Equal Opportunity in Psychology. Dr. Alejandro Ramirez is Division 36 liaison to this committee. He requests that any members who belong to one of the four minority groups, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Black Americans, and who wish to identify themselves as such and explore possibilities for furthering equal opportunity write to him at C2, Rivercrest Road, Riverdale, N.Y. 10471.

The Association for the Scientific Study of Religion: Southwest. Dr. Richard Goresh of Division 36 wrote to Dr. Constance Nelson describing this organization as an interdisciplinary group focussed upon the scientific study of religious phenomena. They meet annually in conjunction with the southwest sectional meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society for Biblical Literature. Interested members may contact Dr. Goresh at Department of Psychology, Room 309 - Life Science Bldg., University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX 76019.

Invitation to Join. Division 24, Philosophical Psychology, invites APA members to join this Division whose purpose is to encourage and to facilitate the active and informed exploration and discussion of (a) the relationships of psychology and psychological theory to the problems of philosophy and (b) the philosophical issues that arise as psychology develops as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting human welfare. For further information, please write to: Margaret E. Donnelly (Membership Chair), Pace University, Pace Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10038.

BOOK REVIEWS

After this issue and until further notice the newsletter will carry book notices, not book reviews. Books for such notices and suggestions for notices should be sent to the Book Review Editor: Dr. Orlo Strunk, Jr., Area of Religion, Culture, and Personality, Boston University School of Theology, 745 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215.


This is assuredly a compelling book — both in the manner in which the author argues his case (the real existence of demons and demonic possession) and in its capacity to keep the reader spellbound. The author, a former Jesuit professor of biblical studies, built his book around five case histories of exorcism using transcripts of tape recordings from the exorcisms and interviews with significant figures in each case — usually including both the exorcist and exorcisee.

The author acknowledges that many syndromes we now call by other names — paranoia, Tourette’s syndrome, disseminated sclerosis, and others — were at one time considered demonic possession. Yet he argues strongly against explaining possession as a psychiatric syndrome. Possessed individuals are not psychotic; in all cases negative psychiatric results are demanded before an exorcism will be performed. (Paradoxically, the author later calls insanity the closest experience one can have of personified evil.) Possession is not an instance of multiple personality; one psychiatrist who so believed is described as suffering drastic consequences for this mistaken assumption. (Yet the author speaks later of alien powers or personalities — dissociated aspects of personality? — that seek to take up residence in a particular selected body.) One by one, the possible psychological explanations that enter the reader’s mind are considered and dismissed. Citing his above mentioned evidence, the author chooses to posit another “cause” behind such phenomena.

When the author restores the steps by which possession takes place, the parallels to the onset of many forms of affective and thought disorder are striking. There is first the vague indistinct of something foreign “entering” the individual. Deterioration of judgment, in which the person makes errors which increase enmeshment, follows. Finally a more or less voluntary yielding of control to a force seen as clearly alien is experienced. If total consent occurs here, the individual is irreparably lost.

The steps of exorcism sound like experiences every therapist has encountered. First, there is “presence,” the peculiar feeling of wrongness. “Pretest” follows, in which the evil to be expelled “hides behind” the victim and is unwilling to be seen. As “pretest” breaks down, “breakthrough” approaches. This is a time of confusion, manifest pathology, and doubt. Next comes “voice,” and outpouring of babble of distraction. When this is silenced, “clash” occurs; this is the battle which, when successful, results in “expulsion.” A therapist would more likely use terms like pathology, denial, anxiety, defensiveness, confrontation, and insight for the respective steps. Admittedly, these stages are illustrated much more strikingly in Martin’s case histories than in most therapeutic encounters.

Possession is determined heavily by the presence of parapsychological phenomena. Certainly the case histories — even allowing for the effects of the author’s beliefs on his perception — describe instances difficult to explain in any other way. But the author is adamant in insisting that it is fatal to confuse psyche (the ground for such phenomena) with spirit. This error is demonstrated in one case history, while others illustrate similar errors the author considers important: the belief that values are a matter of personal preference; the idea that there is a natural explanation for all mysteries; the confusion of sex, gender, and love; and the contamination of individualism with egotism and selfishness. Making these mistakes robs one of humanness to some degree; the epitome of loss of humanness is possession.

Martin sums up the characteristics of humanness as recognition of helplessness with a willingness to appeal for help, the capacity to give and receive love, and the acceptance of death. The embracing of Evil, in possession, produces pride, lovelessness, and the illusion of survival death — effects opposed to entrusting one’s helplessness to God, living in love, and believing that Christ has transformed death. It seems that one could just as easily say that the individual who “imprisons” self in any way — in a penitentiary, mental hospital, or the isolation of chosen aloneness — has likewise cut self off, in a living death, from the possibilities of forging bonds of love and support with others, thus transcending the limitations of one’s own unique and limited lifespan. (Of course, if Martin is correct, this is committing the error of seeking natural explanations for mysteries.)

There are other small things that can be said. The dogmatism regarding some inconsequential points of belief and theology is distracting. The rejection of approaches, other than the Christian one, to dealing with these situations smacks of an unappealing religious elitism.

To those disposed to be convinced, this will likely be a highly convincing book. Those disposed to be skeptical will probably remain skeptical. Those, like this reviewer, who are pulled by both tender-mindedness and tough-mindedness, should at least consider it a provocative and interesting book.

Mary Jo Meadow, Ph.D.
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