Religious Lay Counseling: Giving Psychology and Religion Away

Siang-Yang Tan
Graduate School of Psychology
Fuller Theological Seminary

Invited Fellow Address, Division 36 (Psychology of Religion), presented at the 104th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, August 12, 1996, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Religious lay counseling, especially Christian counseling conducted by nonprofessionals or paraprofessionals (Tan, 1991a) has become a significant part of both the contemporary mental health scene (e.g., see Tan, 1992), and the religious or Christian ministry arena (Tan, 1997, 1999, 1991b, 1994b). Lay counselors, also called nonprofessional or paraprofessional helpers, have been described as persons who lack the training, education, experience or credentials to be professional therapists but who, nevertheless, are involved in helping people cope with personal problems (Collins, 1986). The "nonprofessional revolution in mental health" (Sobey, 1970) has mushroomed and grown tremendously in recent years. In fact, lay counseling in general will play an even more crucial role in the delivery of much-needed but ill-afforded mental health services in today's era of managed health care (Tan, in press), including the special context of rural mental health delivery (e.g., see D'Augelli, 1982; Kelley, Kelley, Gauron, & Rawlings, 1977; Voss, 1996). Lay counselors are also being used more widely in the broader field of health psychology (Taylor, 1990).

The Effectiveness of Lay Counselors

A key question in the context of the growing use of lay counselors in both secular and religious settings is whether they are effective in their counseling or helping endeavors. There has been some debate over the effectiveness of lay or paraprofessional counselors, both in literature reviews of studies evaluating the comparative effectiveness of paraprofessional and professional counselors (Durlak, 1979, 1981; Nietzel & Fisher, 1981), and meta-analyses of such studies (Berman & Norton, 1985; Hattie, Sharpley, & Rogers, 1984; Stein & Lambert, 1995). However, the weight of the data so far seems to support the conclusion that lay or paraprofessional counselors may be as effective as professional counselors in certain contexts (see Christensen & Jacobson, 1994; Lambert & Bergin, 1994; Tan, 1991a, 1992). Most of the research done has been on secular lay counseling.

The research literature evaluating the effectiveness of religious lay counseling, and Christian lay counseling in particular, is much more scarce. In a recent 10-year review of empirical research on religion and psychotherapeutic processes and outcome, Worthington, Kurusu,McCallough, and Sandage (1986) cited a few studies that have generally shown positive results in favor of the effectiveness of lay Christian counselors, but they all had some significant methodological shortcomings (e.g., see Boan & Owens, 1985; Harris, 1985; Walters, 1987). More recently, two other studies have been completed in this area of outcome research. Toh, Tan, Osburn and Faber (1994) reported positive

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE

Div. 36 Convention Program .... 5
Announcements ............. 6
Book Review ............... 8
Report on the Meeting of the Council of Representatives .... 10
Counseling

—Continued from page 1

results in a preliminary evaluation of a church-based lay counseling program, without any control groups. In a subsequent controlled outcome study on the effectiveness of church-based lay counselors, Tan and Tan (in press) found that counsellee who received 10 sessions of religious or Christian lay counseling in a local church context had significantly more improvement on all outcome measures (Target Complaints, Brief Symptom Inventory, Spiritual Well Being Scale, and Global Rating of Client’s Psychological Adjustment) compared to a no-treatment, waiting-list control group. The treatment group counselee also maintained their therapeutic gains at a one-month followup. Counselee were randomly assigned to either the treatment (lay counseling) or control group. Empirical support for the effectiveness of religious or Christian lay counseling is therefore growing, but there is still a great need for more and better research in this area.

Christensen and Jacobson (1994) in a recent review of the research literature concluded that paraprofessional helpers or lay counselors are generally as effective as professional therapists in terms of therapeutic outcome produced. Other nonprofessional psychological treatments such as self-administered materials and self-help groups have also shown positive effects. They therefore challenged professional psychologists to “give psychology away” (Miller, 1969).

The research summarized in this article suggests that the psychology that is given away (or at least sold much less expensively) through paraprofessional, self-administered and mutual-support group treatment may be as effective for some problems as the professional psychology that is sold. A second body of research summarizing the current prevalence of psychological disorder and the available resources to provide treatment suggests that if psychology is not given away, most people in need will not get it because they cannot afford it. The first body of research encourages us in our efforts to give psychology away. The second body of research demands it.

Professional psychologists can be involved in giving psychology away by taking on crucial roles in the area of lay counseling or paraprofessional helping. Such roles include: training and supervising lay counselors; serving on the board of directors of a lay counseling organization; educating specific groups about the positive contributions of psychological services; consulting with organizations interested in establishing lay or paraprofessional counseling services; serving as a referral source when professional help is needed; doing outcomes research and evaluation of lay counseling, and educating psychologists about the significant role they can have in the development of lay counselors and paraprofessional helpers. (see Tan, in press). Religiously-oriented professional psychologists in particular can play a unique role in the development of religious lay counseling programs and services.

Religious lay counseling is a special example of giving both psychology and religion away to people struggling with problems in living and spiritual issues that professional psychology can on its own. As with religious psychotherapy conducted in a professional context (see Tan, 1999a, 1999b; also see Stashefs L 997), religious lay counseling that explicitly uses spiritual resources such as prayer and the Scriptures, and openly discusses spiritual issues (Tan, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d), should be conducted in a clinically sensitive, ethically responsible, and therapeutically competent way (also see Becker, 1987; Schaech, 1989, 1999). Informed consent from the client is a crucial part of the ethical, effective and efficient practice of religious lay counseling, as it is of professional therapy (Tan, 1999a, 1999b). Furthermore, religious lay counselors should also be trained in techniques of referral and therefore be made aware of their limits and limitations.

Service Delivery Models of Religious Lay Counseling

Three major models for the delivery of religious lay counseling services usually provided free of charge, have been described by Tan (1991a, 1992). The first model is the “informal, spontaneous” model in which religious lay counseling
or helping is provided by untrained or minimally trained lay counselors in informal and spontaneous relationships or friendships that occur in natural settings. Peer or friendship counseling is one example. The lay counselors in this model may or may not receive some basic training in counseling skills, but there is no ongoing supervision or formal organization and coordination of their helping endeavors. The second model is the "informal, organized" model in which religious lay counseling is still provided in natural or informal settings such as restaurants, homes, hospitals, neighborhoods, classrooms, businesses, prisons, and other religious, social or community meeting places. However, the lay counselors are carefully selected, and do receive systematic training in helping skills, including the use of spiritual resources, as well as ongoing, regular supervision. Organized religious peer counseling in schools and colleges, as well as church youth groups is a good example (see Starkie & Tan, 1992, 1993). The third model is the "formal, organized" model in which carefully selected lay counselors provide counseling services in more formal settings such as a church counseling center. The lay counselors also receive systematic training in counseling skills and the use of spiritual resources, as well as regular, ongoing supervision, usually by mental health professionals. Many churches and parachurch organizations have adopted such formal, organized models of religious lay counseling, usually expressed through their religious counseling centers.

The professional psychologist or other mental health professional, especially if he or she is religious, has a special role to play in the training and supervision of religious lay counselors, in both the "informal, organized" and "formal, organized" models of service delivery of religious lay counseling. The "informal, organized" model seems particularly suitable for use in ethnic minority or culturally diverse churches and communities where informal helping may be more acceptable than formal counseling services (Tan, 1991a).

In addition to religious lay counseling in churches and other religious or parachurch organizations, Tan (1991a) has also provided examples of religious lay counseling in other contexts and settings, such as missions work, prisons, mental health settings and hospitals, nursing and retirement homes, schools and educational institutions, and other community settings. The specific needs of rural communities, many of which lack adequate mental health services and how the church can function as an agent in rural mental health, including the provision of religious lay counseling services, have recently been addressed by Voos (1996).

A comprehensive text or handbook on religious lay counseling written from a Christian perspective is now available (see Tan, 1991a) for those interested in developing or establishing religious, Christian lay counseling programs and services. It covers the need for lay counseling ministries, the biblical basis for lay counseling, a biblical model for effective lay counseling, the literature of lay counseling, the selection, training, supervision and evaluation of lay counselors, the local church (and beyond) and lay counseling, potential pitfalls and legal and ethical issues in lay counseling, and conclusions about the future of lay counseling.

Religious lay counseling is a unique and special example of giving psychology and religion away. Its contributions to human welfare and well-being are not limited to the psychological dimension. Its uniqueness lies in dealing with the whole person, including the spiritual or religious dimension that has recently been recognized as an important part of human diversity and experience (see Tan, 1994b). Religion in clinical practice (see Bergin, 1991; Kelly, 1995; Shafranske, 1996; Tan, 1996), including religious or Christian lay counseling (Tan 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1994b) and Christian counseling in general (Collins, 1988; McMinn, 1996), is therefore an important area of psychology that will need increasing attention in the coming years (cf. Worthington et al., 1996).

REFERENCES


(Continued on page 4)
(Continued from page 3)


Friday, August 15, 1997

8:00 - 9:50 a.m.

Symposium: Integrated Training in Clinical Psychology and Spirituality: Empirical, Theoretical, and Applied Considerations
Derek McNeil, Chair and Discussant

Impact of Religious Versus Secular Doctoral Training on Psychologists' Use of Spiritual Practice in Psychotherapy
Shawn Hales and Randall L. Sorensen

Integrated Training in Clinical Psychology: The Care of Students' Souls
Michael W. Mangus

Integrated Training in Clinical Psychology: The Perceptor Group Model
Richard E. Butman

9:00 - 10:50 a.m.

Invited Symposium: Soul Betrayal: Sexual Misconduct by Spiritual Authorities
Anne A. Simpson, Chair

Who Goes into Trouble? A Typology of Offending Clergy
Gary Schoener

The Effects of Priest Child Sexual Abuse on Trust
Stephen J. Roessit

Clergy Misconduct: From the Victim's Perspective
David Clohessy

Practical Approaches to Dealing With the Problem of Clergy Misconduct
Chilton Knudson

Guarding Against Sexual Abuse: An Eastern Religion Perspective
Yvonne Rand

10:00 - 10:50 a.m.

Paper Session: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Religious Phenomenon
Michelle Carlson, Chair

Religious Beliefs and Trauma Among the Cree: A Case Study
Jayne L. Gackenbach

Religious Beliefs or Schizophrenia: Cross-Cultural Issues in Psycho-Spiritual Training
Sharon Ann A. Gopaul-McNicol

A Multicultural Perspective of Dissociative States in Trauma and Transformation
Michele H. Carlson, Marilyn Snow, and Greg Brack

3:00 - 3:50 p.m.

Symposium: Paths of Transformation
Carole A. Rayburn, Chair
Aphrodite Clamar, Discussant

Transforming Mind/Emotion Balance Through the Kabbalistic Psychological System
Rabbi Luvi Woll

Dreamwork and Spirituality: Insights from Jewish Mysticism
Edward Hyman

Living Intentionally in Our Waking and Dream Worlds
Marcella Bakar Weiner

Aging as Spiritual Emergency
Bernard Starr

3:00 - 3:50 p.m.

Paper Session: Social/Personality Approaches
Elizabeth Werden, Chair

The Satanic Ritual Abuse Controversy: A Case of Groupthink?
Richard Kaczynski

Religious Conversion Paradigms and the Brainwashing Controversy: Social Psychological Perspectives
Ezer Kang

From Goal to Whole: Spiritual Strivings and Personality Integration
Robert A. Emmons and Chi Cheung

Social Identity Theory as Applied to Religious Identity
Elizabeth Werden

(Continued on page 6)
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Graduate Student Research Award
Division 36 will provide support for graduate student research in the psychology of religion. Amounts of up to $250 per award will be granted. Funds may be used for any purpose related to a clearly defined research project in the psychology of religion, including support for masters theses and doctoral dissertations.

Interested persons should submit 3 copies of their research proposal. The proposal should be no more than 5 pages. It should include a clear statement of the research project, the methods to be used, techniques of analysis, and a statement of the contribution of the project to the psychology of religion. Include a brief itemized budget for funds not to exceed $250.

Proposals may be submitted at any time. However, to be considered for the following academic year, proposals must be submitted by January 15, in which case decisions of the committee will be made by March 1.

Submit 3 copies of the proposal to:
Ralph W. Hood, Jr.
Awards Chair
Dept. of Psychology
University of Tennessee
Chattanooga, TN 37403-2598

(Continued on page 7)
Women’s Ordination: The Relationship Between Personal Characteristics and Opinion
Juanita J. Allen

Contrasting Spirituality and Intrinsic Religiousness
Anthony Sciolli, Tony Stavely, Ruth Stevenson, and Amy Chace

Gifted: Therapeutic Competence and Therapist Experience, Personality, and Spirituality
Ronald J. De Vries and Siang-Yang Tan

Toward Misconduct Prevention: A Survey of Psychologists and Clergy
Sandra E. Graham

Homophobic Christians: Loving Sinners While Hating Sin?
Rodney L. Bassett, Julie Allen, Denise Bartos, Jasmine Grastor, Emily Sherman, Lynette Settig, and Jason Strong

Functions of Perceived Effectiveness of Prayer in the Coping Process
Mary K. Bade and Stephen W. Cook

Older Women’s Religious and Spiritual journeys: A Longitudinal Study
Susan H. McFadden

Coping With Death Among Jews
Jill L. Zerowin and Kenneth I. Pargament

Grief Therapy: The Interface of Psychology and Religion (Spirituality)
Paul E. Robinson

Applying Tozer: The Effects of God-Language on Perceptions of God
Brian R. K. B. Lim

Essential Forms of Prayer
Kevin L. Ladd, Anne Luckow, Bernard Spilka, and Daniel N. McIntosh

Sacred Votes: The Socialization of Marriage and Its Psychosocial Implications
Annette Mahoney, Kenneth I. Pargament, Tracey Jewell, Mark Rye, Eric Scott, Erin Emery, Aaron Swank, and Eric Butter

Religion’s Effect on Psychological Symptoms as Measured by the SCI-90-R
Patricia L. Bullard and Crystal L. Park

Religious Involvement, Adult Daycare, and Depression in Spousal Caregivers of Alzheimer’s Patients
Nancy E. Michelson Rivas

4:00 – 4:50 p.m.

Symposium: Risk and Growth: Religion as Protective and Transformative
Lawrence G. Calhoun, Chair

Religiosity Protects Against Recurrences of Depressive Disorder: Ten Year Follow-Up
Lisa Miller, Virginia Warnet, Prina Wickramaratne, and Myrna Weissman

The Roles of Religion in Stress Related Growth
Crystal L. Park

Prediction of Stress Related Growth in Adult Protestant Church Members
Tanya K. Hettler and Larry H. Cohen

Saturday, August 16, 1997

8:00 – 8:50 a.m.

Symposium: Spiritual Experience and the Five-Factor Model of Personality
Joseph E. Williams, Chair
Lee J. Richmond, Discussant

Development and Validation of the Transcendence Scale: A Measure of Spiritual Experience
Ralph L. Piedmont

How Religious are Measures of Religiosity?
Richard Csanyi

Different Voices: Insolences of Gender and Personality on Images of God
Joe Ciaccocchi

9:00 – 10:50 a.m.

Invited Symposium: Assessing Spirituality Today
David M. Wulff, Chair and Discussant

Contemporary Spirituality: A New Chapter on the Problem of Defining Religion
David M. Wulff (Continued on page 8)
BOOK REVIEW


If there is such a thing as a basic text in the psychology of religion, this volume meets most of the criteria — particularly for those who understand “empirical” in the same sense that current mainstream American psychology does.


The authors — all recognizable as major contributors to the psychology of religion — have offered those new to the field, as well as old timers, an excellent overview of research and leading-edge issues. In preparing this second edition the authors have performed

(Continued on page 9)

Karen Wick, Brock Weedman, and Ray F. Paloutzian

Religiosity and Thinking Styles
Kelly A. Costello, Stacy Baxter, Joanne DiPietro, Garth Essig, and Crystal L. Park

4:00 – 4:50 p.m.

Paper Session: Interface Between Psychologists and Clery
Patricia L. Bullard, Chair

Psychologists Collaborating With Clergy: Surrey Findings and Implications
Mark R. McMinn, Clark D. Campbell, and Laura C. Edwards

Congregant or Patient?: Willingness to Consult Among Psychologists and Rabbits
Glen Milstein and Elizabeth Midlarsky

The Psychological Effects of Secularization of Presbyterian Clergy in Australia
Maureen H. Miner

Reflections of a Church Psychologist: Practical Dilemmas and Service Opportunities
Roger A. Hall

Sunday, August 17, 1997

8:00 – 9:50 a.m.

Symposium: Women and the Psychology of Religion: Trauma and Transformation
Carole Z. Rayburn, Chair
Lee J. Richmond, Discussant

Stress Among Women Religious
Mary Elizabeth Kenel

Women, Sex, and the Search for God
Gina Ogden

Alpha Bias and Transformation
Mary Anne Siders

Gender Differences on the Organizational Relationships Survey
Donna J. Goetz

Gender Differences in the Spiritual and Personal Correlates of Leadership
Ralph L. Piedmont
10:00 - 10:50 a.m.

Symposium: Spirituality and Peace; Another Level of Need in International Relations
Steven E. Handwerker, Chair

Spirituality, Peace, and Concern for Others in Times of Need
Carole A. Rayburn and Lee J. Richmond

A Model of the Spiritual Dimension in Peacebuilding
Phyllis J. Burton

Basic Human Needs, Spirituality and Peace
Ervin Staub

Stories of Parental Abandonment: Initial Insults Recalculated by Authoritarian Religion
Kathleen Y. Ritter

Commitment to a Spiritual Journey: Psychological Pitfalls and Possibilities
Nancy C. Kohoe

Narcissism, Spiritual Pride and Original Sin: A Psychological Perspective
Fredrica R. Halligan

Shame and Surrender: The Transforming Power in Facing One's Waterloo
Nancy Thurston

10:00 - 11:50 a.m.

Invited Symposium: Forgiveness: Point of Interface for Psychology and Religion
Michael E. McCullough, Chair
Roy F. Baumeister, Discussant

Ten Years of Theory and Research on Interpersonal Forgiveness
Suzanne R. Freedman and Robert D. Emmons

Interpersonal Forgiving in Close Relationships: An Empathy Model
Michael E. McCullough, K. Chris Rachal, Steven J. Sandage, and Everett L. Worthington

Forgiveness and Romantic Relationships in College
Mark S. Rye and Kenneth I. Pargament

12:00 - 12:50 p.m.

Paper Session: Religiosity and Religious Coping
Amy L. Ai, Chair

Noah Revisited: Religious Coping and the Impact of a Flood
Bruce W. Smith, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Curtis Brant

Differences in Appraisals between Spiritual and Non-Spiritual Striving
Robert A. Emmons and Chi Cheung

Religious Orientation as a Mediator of Type A Hostility
Kevin S. Masters, Dune E. Ives, and David S. Shearer

(Continued on page 10)
Having been your Council Representative for the past six years, it is time to say thank you. It has been a wonderful experience representing Division 36 and trying to safeguard and shepherd your interests as Council moved along. Come August, you will be hearing reports from Dr. Ed Shafranske who will bring a new and fresh perspective to the position. It is my personal belief that the requirement of a turnover at least every six years is an extremely healthy one. As a past President of the Division as well as a highly active member, Ed is especially well-qualified to keep an eye on the Division’s interests.

As most of you know, the Council of Representatives is the policy-making, governing body of APA. As such, many of the matters that come before it tend to be routine, housekeeping items, of special interest only to a few persons or divisions, or are so complex that after heated discussion, are referred back to a variety of committees, task forces, etc., for clarification. Once in awhile, however, an item of especially widespread concern arises.

At the February meeting, the most significant item turned out to be one which was offered for information and explanation, but which would not be taken up until the August, 1997 meeting. Because the proposal appears on its surface to be highly complex and at the same time possibly of high desirability, Council Representatives were asked to try to give as full and clear explanations as possible, both in their reports and to their successors on Council. The proposal is focused on a long-standing concern over the relative representation on Council (or lack thereof) of many states and smaller divisions.

A wide range of proposals across the years to “fix” this problem has failed to win acceptance, resulting in a violation of the APA policy of “one person, one vote.” Most alternatives considered would result in a Council so large that it would provide meeting space problems in addition to extremely added cost. In 1995, Council
appointed a Task Force to try to find an acceptable solution to the problem. In the interim, Council had voted to temporarily allow Liaison Representatives from divisions without Council Representatives to have floor privileges and to have expenses charged with presenting a proposal at the August 1997 meeting and has provided a preview of its recommendations.

In essence, this plan calls for a two-tier counting of ballots and seat allocations using the same 10-vote apportionment ballot as at present. The "first tier" count would allocate seats in exactly the same way and in the same number as is currently in effect. The "second tier" count would be used to allocate 48 new seats reserved for this purpose. The 48 seats would first be divided into two units — divisions on the one hand and state associations, provinces and territories on the other. The proportions of the 48 seats allocated to each unit would be based on the total percentage of the first tier vote count for that unit. For example, in 1997, the proportions were approximately 63:37. Thus, in this situation, of the 48 new seats, 63% would go to divisions and 37% to states, provinces and territories. Within each unit, these seats would be first allocated to divisions or states which had not gained a seat in the first-tier count. Seats left over after this distribution would then be allocated to those which had come closest to a second seat, etc., until all available seats would be exhausted.

Given the ballot for 1997, all divisions would have at least one seat on Council. Of the 58 eligible states, provinces and territories, 47 would have a seat and 11 would not. These 11 would consist of six state associations, three Canadian provinces, and two territories. The 11 would still have the option of forming coalitions as is allowed at present. They could also opt to have liaisons, but these would not have expenses covered and would not be permitted to speak on the floor without permission of the Presiding Officer. In considering all of these proportions, it should be kept in mind that for a division to come into being and be represented on Council, it requires 760 members, whereas states, provinces or territories can affiliate with APA with as few as 10 APA members. All Division 36 members should give this proposal serious consider-

ation. If you have serious concerns about the proposals, or see any hidden unforeseen possible consequences, please notify Dr. Shaffer of this before the August Meeting.

Council also conducted additional actions of business. It voted to approve a budget, with full warning that inflation is beginning to catch up with expenses and members can expect a possible need for a dues increase next year. It also passed a provision and procedures for the changing of a division name. The new requirement is that prior to an actual division vote on a name change, the division must notify the Recording Secretary of APA who will determine that the new name does not change the scope of the division’s activity as originally established. He/she will also determine whether the name change is not inimical to the welfare of the other divisions. Council approved for permanent status the Division of Men and Masculinity. It also approved the candidacy status for a proposed Division of International Psychology. The CEO was formally requested to create an implementation plan for providing a "rapid response" mechanism for late-breaking news and to report back on findings and implementation costs at the August meeting.

Further, Council voted to expand the Accreditation Committee's responsibilities to include post-doctoral residency programs in accord with approved accreditation guidelines. It accepted and referred to the Committee for the Advancement of Professional Practice (CAPP), a Task Force report on organized systems of care. CAPP is to report back to Council in August 1997 with respect to implementation. Council established a Committee on Urban Initiatives, voted to support the Committee on Legal Issues’ Task Force on APA/ABA Relations and approved funds for the development of a Policy Manual for APA to cover the costs of a temporary intern. Council further approved a committee plan for reviewing the scope, criteria and procedures of the Continuing Education sponsor-approval system. It also allotted funds for meetings of the Task Force on Test User Qualifications. All groups with special concerns on this issue were encouraged to forward them to the Task Force.

Funds were provided for production of a VIDEO project by the Committee on Animal (Continued on page 12)
As most of you who are in any way involved in clinical practice are probably aware, the issue of an APA Template for Guidelines for Clinical Practice remains as controversial as ever. Another proposal for revision of the Template was referred for revision after extended debate. In this interim, all interested parties are invited to participate. Feedback of all kinds from all persons who are concerned is urgently requested.

Finally, as was done a year ago, a “break-out” session in which the Council was divided up into many small groups for discussion was held. The topic was on training issues in the emerging workplace. Basically, the concern was that downsizing had reduced the numbers of academic jobs while managed care was restricting availability of traditional private therapy positions. Discussions centered around the need to make graduate students aware of this changed market place and also to modify the programs to better prepare them for it. The ethical issues involved in training too many psychologists along with lots of other concerns were aired. This Council Representative has mixed feelings about these sessions. On the one hand, one gets to discuss cross-discipline issues with colleagues having a wide range of interests and backgrounds. On the other hand, there is no substantive outcome resulting from the sessions. The “reports” from volunteers who were also trying to participate while taking notes were not necessarily reflective of a given group’s concerns and conclusions. Furthermore, they did not appear to lead to feasible, possible solutions, or even partial solutions to the problems presented. However, this criticism may simply be a reflection of my personal bias. Maybe they do somehow help.

Again, thanks for having given me this privileged experience. It has been a deeply appreciated honor.