

WORKSHOP ADDICTIONS MEETS CURRENT EPIDEMIC IN NEW YORK CITY

by Robert Marchesani

The sign of a good workshop is not always determined by the size of the audience. Yet more than 25 participants came to hear Dr. Mark Sehl and Alice Weintraub speak on addictions, a subject that is problematic for even the most seasoned practitioners.

Sehl's approach is one that begins with an understanding of his own reactions, his own countertransference to his addicted patient from the very beginning of treatment, where fears of staying or leaving can be in the minds of both parties in the analytic relationship. Sehl pays close attention to the treatment-destructive resistance which is a modern psychoanalytic conceptualization of the patient's own destructive tendencies as acted out in the treatment.

The compassion in Sehl's presence could be felt in the room as he described his treatment of addicted patients who suffer low self-esteem, and narcissistically injuring introjects which fill the patient with scolding and criticism. Sehl explained, "All this rage has nowhere to go and is turned inside against the self to protect the object, since as a child there was no room to protest being attacked." Sehl elaborated that we want to get those criticisms out of the ego and into the object world. As one patient described after stopping crack use, "The more angry I feel, the less urge I have to use drugs."

Sehl's approach is one that respects the choices of the patient, to help patients discover how they want to work

with their drug or alcohol use. In a discussion whether to forbid the patient from coming to session while under the influence of a substance, Sehl offered a comparison with obsessional neurosis: "You wouldn't ask an obsessional neurotic not to come in obsessed." Sehl advocates being open to Harm Reduction and Abstinence approaches, always depending upon the needs of the client and not the therapist's bias.

There are times when a person can be dangerously out of control, as in the case of a person who is so intoxicated that getting behind the wheel of their car could lead to their death or someone else's. Such a case came up in the discussion following Alice Weintraub's presentation, the second part of this two-part workshop.

One of the themes of Dr. Makari's presentation in the morning session was how communities are built around shared ideas. This workshop surely created a community, at least for the moment, that fostered the sharing of the ideas and concerns, the successes and failures we all have experienced in working with addictions.

Not only was the topic of NAAP's conference relevant for our present times, but this particular workshop on addictions proved to be as timely. On the following Monday morning, the main headline filling the front page of *AM New York* was "Heroin High: Abuse of drug hits 'epidemic' levels in city." The article also cites prescription drug use as part of the epidemic. We have our work cut out for us!

A HEALING ARCHETYPE FOR OUR TURBULENT TIMES

by Roberta Slavin

On October 24, 2009 I had the pleasure of attending the 37th Annual NAAP Conference. Every aspect of it was done with care and consideration. I will focus here on a workshop presented by Pamela Donleavy. Her fascinating topic was "Themis: A Healing Archetype for our Turbulent Times."

Originally, I had known Pamela as the former President of the New England Society of Jungian Analysts, and faculty member of the Jung Institute-Boston, and someone who has been fighting ardently to get a Massachusetts law passed that would enable psychoanalysts in that state to continue their analytic work with patients.

However, the theme of this workshop introduced an entirely different aspect of Pamela; Pamela as psychoanalyst. She introduced her patient to the audience and described her patient's problems from a Jungian point of view. This involved traveling back in time thousands of years to the powerful hold of the gods. I found myself completely taken in by the presentation and admired the hold that Pamela was able to put on me in terms of understanding aspects of Jungian therapy. I look forward to working with her again in the future.