

Standing in the Spaces: Essays on Clinical Process Trauma and Dissociation

By Philip M. Bromberg

Early in these essays, Bromberg contemplates how one might engage schizoid detachment within an interpersonal perspective. To his surprise, he finds that the road to the patient's disavowed experiences most frequently passes through the analyst's internal conversation, as multiple configurations of self-other interaction, previously dissociated, are set loose first in the analyst and then played out in the interpersonal field.

This insight leads to other discoveries. Beneath the dissociative structures seen in schizoid patients, and also in other personality disorders, Bromberg regularly finds traumatic experience -- even in patients not otherwise viewed as traumatized. This discovery allows interpersonal notions of psychic structure to emerge in a new light, as Bromberg arrives at the view that all severe character pathology masks dissociative defenses erected to ward off the internal experience of trauma and to keep the external world at bay to avoid retraumatization. These insights, in turn, open to a new understanding of dissociative processes as intrinsic to the therapeutic process per se. For Bromberg, it is the unanticipated eruption of the patient's relational world, with its push-pull impact on the analyst's effort to maintain a therapeutic stance, that makes possible the deepest and most therapeutically fruitful type of analytic experience.

Bromberg's essays are delightfully unpredictable, as they strive to keep the reader continually abreast of how words can and cannot capture the subtle shifts in relatedness that characterize the clinical process. Indeed, at times Bromberg's writing seems vividly to recreate the alternating states of mind of the relational analyst at work. Stirring evocative in character and radiating clinical wisdom infused with compassion and wit, *Standing in the Spaces* is a classic destined to be read and reread by analysts and therapists for decades to come.

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Review

*"Philip Bromberg's essays on psychoanalysis are unique jewels that derive from the convergence of two strikingly different sensibilities. On the one hand, Bromberg is an interpersonal analyst par excellence, with a plain-speaking forthrightness, a finely honed sense of the mutual impact of people upon each other, and a distaste for the abstractions of theorizing. On the other hand, he has a keen appreciation of the mostly deeply private domains of experience, the hidden recesses, the nuances of 'innerness' within which personal existence is preserved. This combination has generated a unique vision and finely textured conceptualization of the psychoanalytic process that captures, with both wit and warmth, some of its deepest contrasts: sameness and difference, safety and growth, the emotional contacts that make a deeply personal life possible and the immutably private. Standing in the Spaces makes available a body of work that is one of the finest achievements of contemporary psychoanalysis." - Stephen A. Mitchell, Ph.D., Author, **Relationality (Analytic Press, 2000)***

"Setting out to solve the riddle of meaning formation and therapeutic leverage, Bromberg presents a vivid and compelling new picture of the mind as more tenuously integrated than we had thought - a paradigm that sheds so much light on clinical phenomena and on the margin available for change that conflict theorists simply cannot ignore it. But Bromberg's greatest service is to reveal the high, technical dignity of those powerful forces that practitioners sensed in their bones but scorned as nonspecific and ungovernable, now orienting us to a more respectful and less impatient use of them. I predict that the impact of Bromberg's book will remain with the reader in every subsequent clinical encounter and rescue him in times of trouble." - Lawrence Friedman, M.D., Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Weill Medical School, Cornell

"Every psychoanalyst and psychotherapist should read Standing in the Spaces in order to achieve a full understanding of what it is they do every day. The scholarship is remarkable; the style elegant and readable; the content imaginative, original, and wide-ranging; the clinical presentations tremendously evocative. The book is written from a predominantly interpersonalist perspective, but is masterly in the way it gathers in a

wide range of ideas from other psychoanalytic orientations and beyond. Philip Bromberg is clearly an exceptionally gifted clinician as well as one of the outstanding theorists of our time." - **Peter Fonagy, Ph.D., Freud Memorial Professor, University College London**

About the Author

A preeminent writer on the understanding of trauma and dissociative phenomena, Philip M. Bromberg, Ph.D., is author of *Standing in the Spaces: Essays on Clinical Process, Trauma, and Dissociation* (Analytic Press, 1998), *Awakening the Dreamer: Clinical Journeys* (Analytic Press, 2006), and *The Shadow of the Tsunami: and the Growth of the Relational Mind* (Routledge, 2011). He is Training and Supervising Analyst, William Alanson White Institute, and Adjunct Clinical Professor of Psychology, New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. Emeritus Co-Editor of *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, Dr. Bromberg serves on the editorial boards of *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* and *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. He lectures widely, and is actively involved in the training of mental health professionals nationally and internationally.

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