

SELF PSYCHOLOGY NEWS

Authors' Corner

An Interview with Robert Stolorow

Interviewed by Shelley Doctors, PhD

Robert D. Stolorow is one of the original members of the International Council for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology, the group which evolved over 25 years from one begun by Heinz Kohut in 1980 and named by him the "Self Psychology Publications Committee". The 1995 recipient of the Distinguished Scientific Award (given by the Division of Psychoanalysis [Division 39] of the American Psychological Association), Dr. Stolorow is has been a sought-after presenter, teacher, and supervisor on the national and international scene since the inception of his career. His latest book, *Worlds of Experience: Interweaving Philosophical and Clinical Dimensions in Psychoanalysis* (with George Atwood and Donna Orange), joins his many other books and countless articles which are central to the psychoanalytic understanding of a vast, appreciative audience around the world. He is a founding faculty member and a training and supervising analyst at the Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles and a founding faculty member and supervising analyst at the Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity in New York City.

Shelley Doctors: I was so complimented to learn you had told Allen Siegel^[1] you wanted me to interview you for the newsletter, but I was puzzled, too, because I wasn't sure what else we'd talk about after the other write-ups that have been published^[2].

Bob Stolorow: I wondered, too, but Allen said he wanted something different and something far more personal, so I agreed to go ahead.

Shelley: Well, then, let's do it. Despite some brief references you've made elsewhere to the personalities of your parents, many who know you only as the brilliant, prolific "founder" of intersubjectivity theory remain curious about your personal journey. We know that you became a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst, but were there other directions you considered?

Bob: Well, actually Shelley, did you know that I went to medical school for five weeks?

Shelley: No, I'm sure you never told me that!

Bob: There's a story there but first let me backtrack. My focus actually shifted around a bit

when I was an undergraduate. For the first two and a half years of my undergraduate work I was a mathematics major. Then I took a course deriving the calculus from axiomatic set theory and symbolic logic and although I did quite well in the course, I felt that I had reached the limits of my mathematical abilities with that course and, also, it was seeming too far removed from real life in the world so I became a physics major for a while. And then, as a result of taking a couple of psychology courses, I decided that what I really wanted to do was hard science research in psychopathology and I decided that the best way to go about that was to go to medical school.

Shelley: How did that turn out to be a five week experience?

Bob: Well, first of all, the psychiatry course was so rinky-dink in medical school compared to what I had already taken and learned in my undergraduate courses that that was extremely disappointing and I really hated medical school. So I left after five weeks and decided to go to graduate school in psychology and become a psychology researcher. I went to Harvard and right around my second year, I became quite disillusioned with psychological research. It seemed to me that by the time you got done operationalizing things and doing statistical analyses and all of that, what you ended up with was something quite meaningless from a human point of view, and so I went to see a former undergraduate philosophy professor of mine, Henry Aiken, who had moved to Brandeis and told him that I wanted to come to Brandeis and do a second doctorate in philosophy while I was finishing my first one in psychology at Harvard and that I had an idea to use philosophy to clean up the mess of psychoanalytic theory . . .

Shelley: My goodness . . . it's taken you awhile to get back to that.

Bob: I know, I'm still cleaning.

Shelley: I know, I know. But you're doing quite a job. [laughter]

Bob: Thank you. And he was interested in sponsoring me but the faculty at Brandeis didn't buy it. They didn't want somebody doing a second doctorate concurrently with another one. But they invited me to come back and do a post-doctorate in philosophy. However, in my third year, I did my clinical internship at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center which was very psychoanalytically oriented and I kind of fell in love with psychoanalysis and decided to go to New York City for psychoanalytic training rather than pursuing the post-doc. in philosophy.

Shelley: So, in some ways one could say that psychoanalysis has interfered with your career in philosophy.

Bob: Yeah, well, the way I've put it until recently is that I had been married to psychoanalysis but philosophy has been my mistress . . . [laughter] . . . but Donna recently said that I am finally coming out of the closet as a philosopher.

Shelley: Well, you know, I thought we'd talk about philosophy but I hadn't known you were thinking of doing a Ph.D. in philosophy back then. Let's come back to this.

You mentioned the clinical internship at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center. Could you say more about some of the influences, some of the people you met, because it evidently led you to think about a different sort of philosophy and a different sort of science.

Bob: Right. Well, I had two supervisors who were very influential. One was Justin Weiss, who was the director of the clinical training program at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center. He was not formally a psychoanalyst but he was very well informed

psychoanalytically. The other was Ralph Engel, who was actually an advanced candidate of the Boston Psychoanalytic. And I had very good experiences with the patients that I followed with those two supervisors.

Shelley: The clinical work drew you in.

Bob: Yes and I arranged to continue with those patients for two years on a volunteer basis after my internship was over and Ralph Engle agreed to supervise me even though he wasn't getting any payment or credit for it. So those experiences with doing analytic therapy and getting really good analytic supervision from both of those people were very influential. I really loved it.

Shelley: Tremendously. You essentially discovered that you were a talented clinician.

Bob: Right.

Shelley: That's quite a shift from where you began. From hard science, math, physics to psychoanalysis and clinical work! I think I knew you had been a math and physics major and knew you had enjoyed courses in quantum mechanics and relativity theory but I never knew what the transition had been.

Bob: There's a connection, of course. As an undergraduate, I particularly liked the courses in quantum mechanics and relativity theory (and I actually knew that stuff back then). [laughter] I think you can see certain similarities between the sensibilities involved in comprehending those points of view in physics and the kind of radical contextualism that I and my colleagues have developed in psychoanalytic theory. Both quantum mechanics and relativity theory are radically contextual in comparison to Newtonian physics. And I might mention that this interest goes back quite far into my history. When I was bar mitzvah'ed I was already an atheist, but I wanted to please my grandfather, Ben Stolorow, whom I love very much and whom my son is named after, so I basically got bar mitzvah'ed to make him happy, but as my bar mitzvah sermon, I gave a talk on Albert Einstein's concept of God.

Shelley: You were making them think, even then. How did that go over?

Bob: Basically, his concept was that God was an impersonal principle of order in the universe. It scandalized the congregation. So I was already a subversive and a troublemaker back when I was thirteen years old and um, by the way, I also did my high school senior thesis on the life and work of Albert Einstein.

Shelley: Actually, I was going to ask you when you might have first recognized your intellectual muscle - your capacity to conceptualize and systematize. I wonder if you have any memories of knowing, as a young boy, that you could be headed to something quite special.

Bob: You know, I didn't really have that view of myself when I was a boy. Maybe I'll give you a little more background about that.

Shelley: Please.

Bob: I actually grew up in the sticks in the country outside of Pontiac, Michigan and Pontiac itself wasn't exactly a . . .

Shelley: . . . major metropolis.

Bob: Right and I didn't even live in Pontiac; I lived outside of the city. There were still dirt roads - we lived on a dirt road - there were fields on all sides of us. My family was not particularly intellectual. When I first went to private school in the seventh grade I felt really quite inferior to the other students. I felt like a hick there and when I went to Harvard I felt that even more strongly . . . until I started to do well. Probably when I started to write some term papers, particularly for psychology courses, I began to sense my talent as an essayist. And that came in especially strongly when I started graduate school. The very first publication of mine, I don't know if you know about this, was a paper called "Anxiety and Defense from Three Perspectives", the perspectives being the intrapsychic, the interpersonal and the ontological.

Shelley: There's the philosophical part!

Bob: Yeah, there it is! By the way, in between medical school and graduate school I took a course at the New School from Rollo May. That was also very stimulating to my philosophical interests. So that paper I published was actually a term paper that I wrote for a first year pro-seminar in graduate school. And, it won an essay prize during my internship at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center. No psychology intern had ever won that before. One of the judges, told me I should submit it for publication which I did and it was accepted, so I was beginning to get the idea that I had a talent at that point.

Shelley: I'll bet. [laughter] I mean, there were intellectual heroes; clearly Albert Einstein was an intellectual hero.

Bob: Absolutely!

Shelley: But now we are starting to talk about you coming across some intellectual mentors.

Bob: Mmm hmmm, right . . .

Shelley: I wonder if any of those early mentors followed your subsequent career and crossed your path again.

Bob: Well, actually Robert White was the person for whom I had written the term paper. And White was one of the people who wrote a discussion of my work in an issue of the *Psychoanalytic Review* years ago that was devoted to a critical discussion of my work. So he definitely got a chance to see at least some of the fruits of my studies.

Shelley: And the kind of work that he did must have inspired you. Isn't his book *Lives in Progress*?

Bob: Yes! White was a major player in the personological movement in personality psychology that originated with Henry Murray and that whole tradition was deeply influential for me - the in-depth study of the psychological world of the individual.

Shelley: Given that you're saying that the atmosphere in your home and maybe in your community wasn't especially intellectual, what do you suppose helped you to keep your intellectual curiosity alive?

Bob: Well, I don't think that I really started to be an "intellectual" until I quit medical school and began to study things out of an interest or a love of the subject matter when I went to graduate school.

Shelley: It makes sense then that that often is the place you begin your story. There's

another detail that you mentioned that I'm curious about too. Somehow, you know, from the sticks, as you say, you found your way to a private school. Is there a story there?

Bob: Well, I think, it was just that my parents, my father wanted me to get a good prep school education in order to get into a good college and there was one school fairly close to where we lived that I applied to. I almost didn't get in by the way, I was on the waiting list and apparently one of the kids who was accepted didn't end up going there. That was Cranbrook School, you may have heard of it . . .

Shelley: Yes, a dear friend of mine went there. Can you say more about what kind of family you were from, how you would describe them now?

Bob: At the surface it was a sort of a traditional upper middle class family. My dad was a business man. He was in the parking business. My mother was a house wife. My mother did not go to college. My dad actually made it through part of law school, but dropped out of law school to go into business. That was influential because he was a sort of adamant about my becoming a professional of some sort, to make up for what he didn't do. He was heartbroken, by the way, when I quit medical school. Do you know what the definition of a psychologist is by the way?

Shelley: Tell me.

Bob: A Jewish boy who can't stand the sight of blood. [laughter] I have fond memories of my involvement with my dad's parking business. Here's a little personal data that has nothing to do with me as a psychoanalyst or theoretician. At one point my dad virtually owned every parking lot in Pontiac, Michigan. He owned all of them. They called him the "Parking Czar of Pontiac Michigan". [laughter] I went to work on the parking lots when I was 14 years old. My dad taught me how to drive when I was thirteen and I was parking cars at the age of 14 - two years before I got my driving license. So I was parking cars at 14, at a parking lot right across the street from the jail. [laughter] I thought I was doing it illegally, but I probably wasn't, because you could drive on private property.

Shelley: Do you want to say other things about formative influences that might interest people? Your beloved grandfather, for example.

Bob: Well, that's a nice story actually. My father's parents were Ben and Esther. And actually they were a very strong formative influence on me because they were an unbelievably romantic couple right up until their deaths. My grandfather, prior to World War One, was inducted into the Czar's army.

Shelley: That was a nightmare for Jewish boys.

Bob: It was a big problem for Jewish boys - they'd never get out!

Shelley: Yeah, for forty years I think.

Bob: Yeah, and he was madly in love with my grandmother at that time, Esther, so he deserted and he and my grandmother fled to Paris and then to Canada where my dad was born and then to South Bend, Indiana where my dad went to college at Notre Dame. And, I used to love them as a couple. They were so full of life and vitality and they could be you know, crazy with rage also. But they were so full of life and very romantic. They would dance and sing together at family gatherings and I used to love to go visit them. As soon as I got my driver's license at sixteen, I would drive from Pontiac to South Bend, a couple hundred miles and as soon as I got there my grandfather would pull out the Seagram's VO and we would start drinking straight shots of VO to my grandmother. And we would call

them "L'chaim Esthers"[3]. "Let's have a 'L'chaim Esther'," he would say. So we would take a shot of VO and go, "L'chaim Esther" and wolf it down. Well, after the fourth or fifth "L'chaim Esther", Esther would not be too pleased with her husband because her husband was getting her grandson drunk. I have such fond memories of that. A few years ago, a Russian translation was done of one of my books and they asked me to write the preface for the Russian translation. So I told the story of my grandparents in the preface, and, um, how they would be very proud to see a piece of my work translated into Russian.

Shelley: Where were your grandparents from in Russia?

Bob: Kiev.

Shelley: It's remarkable how many Jewish people in the United States are from that area of the world.

Bob: Before my grandfather changed it, our last name was Stolurefsky. Stolurefsky.

Shelley: Stolurefsky. We're going to have to leave that in. I could see though why they decided to change it to something that could be spelled by English speakers. [laughter]

Did your grandparents and parents live to see your success?

Bob: My grandparents died when I was an undergraduate. But my parents lived to be very proud of me.

Shelley: How wonderful. There is a special pleasure in that. It didn't matter that you didn't go to medical school.

Bob: Well, I think my dad, who was a little nuts, didn't regard me as a full-fledged psychoanalyst because I didn't have an M.D. even though by the time he died I had written several books.

Shelley: Several books. I mean, is it six or seven now?

Bob: Eight!

Shelley: Eight! Excuse me, okay?! And certainly well over a hundred articles, wouldn't you say?

Bob: I think it's close to two hundred at this point.

Shelley: I remember meeting you in 1976 when you began to teach at Yeshiva and I was out on internship. I can picture you then, picture your office, where reprints of the chapters of *Faces in a Cloud* were lined up on the bookcase for students. So, eight books and close to two hundred articles later, would it be fair to ask you which of your contributions pleases you the most, and which you believe to be your most important contributions?

Bob: Well, several things come to mind, I think *Faces in A Cloud* will always have a favorite spot in my heart because that's where it all began with George Atwood and that is really where the intersubjective perspective began - with the demonstration of how a personality theory takes form at the interface of the subjective worlds of the theorists and the people whom he studies.

Shelley: Reading those papers of yours, Bob, changed the way I read and understood what

I read forever. After that book, I understood that everything I read was the product of a particular mind and, for that matter, a particular time and place. I became less able to view anything with the conviction that it was the absolute last word on any subject.

Bob: The book *Contexts of Being* is a real favorite of mine because it's a book that resituates all of the foundational concepts of psychoanalysis within an intersubjective context.

Shelley: I remember very well of when you and George went to Ranglely, Maine and embarked on that book. It's important that you had George and important work to occupy you then. And we're the richer for it.

Bob: You mean in the wake of Dede's death?

Shelley: Yes.

Bob: Uh, I think my last book may be our best.

Shelley: *Worlds of Experience*?

Bob: Yes, *Worlds of Experience* with George and Donna. I think the couple of papers that I did that are based on my own personal experience of traumatic loss were among my best. Very short papers, very personal, particularly the first one on the phenomenology of trauma. Many people, I've heard from many people, traumatized people from all around the world who would come across that paper and feel very much helped by it. It found its way to a woman who had lost her son in the World Trade Center. She called me up and told me that after reading that paper, for the first time she felt that someone could understand her experience and did I know anybody in New York who understood traumatic loss the way I did.

Shelley: Mmmm hmmm, Donna.

Bob: Donna. I sent her to Donna. Yep.

Shelley: Do you have a sense of which of your concepts, which of your contributions, will be regarded fifty years from now as having made a pivotal contribution to the field?

Bob: Well, there's no telling. My hope is that the last book will have that effect: *Worlds of Experience*, because that is the one that reaches most deeply into the philosophical underpinnings of psychoanalytic theory and practice.

Shelley: You know, I hadn't planned to ask you this, but I think I will. Some people still say that they don't understand why philosophy matters in psychoanalysis and though you've answered the question, let's try it again.

Bob: Well, the philosophical assumptions that underpin one's psychoanalytic theory and therefore one's psychoanalytic practice can have a huge impact on the course of the clinical process and probably this impact is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the work that George Atwood has done on the treatment of psychotic states. If you approach psychotic states with the traditional assumptions that derive from Descartes's philosophy of the isolated mind and the split between internal and external reality (which is assumed to be absolute and universal), not only will you not help those patients, but you will often damage them. Whereas, if you approach such patients as George has shown, within a phenomenological framework, that deals with their experiences in their own right rather than being distortions of an external reality which the analyst knows, if you approach those states

in their own right, phenomenologically, in terms of their embeddedness in the often devastating intersubjective systems in which they take form, then, as George has shown, one can often be very helpful to patients that used to be considered beyond the reach of psychoanalytic treatment.

Shelley: You know, Bob, with your mathematical, structuralist mind, you can easily apprehend the difference between the formal structure of a thought or proposition and its content. Many people don't grasp that difference. They mightn't see the aesthetic beauty in mathematics and see instead numbers, just a series of computations that can be done by a machine. In that same vein, I think you are saying that clinically, it is not just the content of one's thoughts or the words chosen to convey them. Rather, considering the matter at the proper level of abstraction, *how* one thinks is crucial in clinical work.

Bob: Yes, exactly. I think so and Donna Orange was getting at this when she described the clinical attitude that is characteristic of our intersubjective theory as a sensibility - a broad contextualist sensibility.

Shelley: I remember when Donna said that for the first time and it was exactly, exactly right.

Bob: I think the phrase that may best capture in a nutshell the different philosophical paradigm, is "phenomenological contextualism". That phrase gets at both features in one phrase - phenomenological and contextual.

Shelley: That is the essence of intersubjectivity theory, isn't it?

Bob: That's right.

Shelley: I wish people wouldn't get so nervous about big words. With that phrase, you are succinctly describing the work of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

Bob: Absolutely. That's definitely how I see it. In terms of the evolution of our framework, going back to *Faces in A Cloud* and the work with George, the phenomenological emphasis came first, largely as a result of the *Faces in A Cloud* studies. In fact, the first phrase that we used to describe our framework was Psychoanalytic Phenomenology, which never caught on.

Shelley: It did with me. I think it's in my dissertation. [laughter]

Bob: Yeah, the contextualism almost follows inevitably from a thorough-going phenomenology. If you maintain strict focus on understanding experience on its own terms, including the principles according to which it's structured (there's your structuralism), if you maintain a strict focus on experiencing, you almost cannot escape the recognition of how profoundly embedded experience and structure are in context, intersubjective context, as they say. You can't escape it. People escape that recognition by leaving phenomenology and objectifying their concepts.

Shelley: You've spoken of people's "dread of structureless chaos" and people's desire to ground themselves in something that has a "thing-ness" about it, which experience does not. We'll surely come back to this.

What are the developments in the field that look most interesting to you now or if you like, what are the developments in the field that look most worrisome to you?

Bob: Well, the second question is easier to answer. I think the resurgence of neurobiological reductionism is the most worrisome thing to me in the field right now.

Freud's "neuroism," by which I mean his project to reduce psychoanalytic narrative to neuroscience data - it's back.

Shelley: You find it another aspect of the "dread of structureless chaos"?

Bob: Yes, I think so. By the way, Donna and I wrote a review of a wonderful book by Leslie Brothers called *Mistaken Identity* criticizing this resurgence of neurobiological reductionism. Leslie, before she became a psychoanalyst was a world renowned neuro-science researcher, and knows what she's talking about in contrast to many of the people who are writing about the neurobiology that is supposed to underpin psychoanalysis. And her critique is devastating.

Shelley: You fear this may set psychoanalysis back a hundred years.

Bob: YES! The search for bedrock, whether it's biological or epistemological, has been, I think, responsible for much of the mischief which has been created within psychoanalytic theory.

Shelley: Say more about that, please.

Bob: Well, I think it's scary to stay firmly grounded within the world of experience or maybe I should say stay firmly ungrounded within the world of experience. It's scary. That "dread of structureless chaos" or what the philosopher Richard Bernstein calls the "Cartesian anxiety", there's a certain agony that one has to bear if you're going to approach clinical work in a post-Cartesian intersubjective manner. In instances of chaotic disruptions, when there is tremendous suffering produced by the clinical process, you can't point a Cartesian finger at the patient's deranged, isolated mind any longer. You have to recognize the way in which you yourself as clinician, as therapist, as analyst, are implicated in everything that takes place, so there can be an agony that goes along with that that one has to bear.

Shelley: And a certain acknowledgement of the enmeshment, the inevitable enmeshment that you have with the very thing that you're trying to understand.

Bob: Yes. Well enmeshment, yeah, but also, it is enmeshed with you. It's a two way enmeshment.

Shelley: We inhabit our experience of the world as the world in which we live inhabits us.

Bob: Yes, yes!

Shelley: I know that Donna said that recently - the sensibility is identical to that in a phrase I've quoted from Arthur Miller when I was referring to this circumstance, "The fish is in the water and the water is in the fish". You cannot separate the two.

Let's go back to philosophy. Can you tell us about your decision to get your PhD in philosophy - "Why now?" Why go for the degree rather than continue to pursue your independent studies?

Bob: Well, I think several things contributed to that. One was the recognition, I guess I was 60 or approaching 60, that my time on this planet is not unlimited - have you noticed that?

Shelley: Yes, actually I have, too! [laughter]

Bob: Another thing that contributed, maybe three or four years ago I started a little study

group of psychoanalysts interested in philosophy and we spent a year doing a close reading of Heidegger's "Being and Time" and another year doing a close reading of Gadamer's "Truth and Method" and I loved it. And I realized that there was so much more to learn about philosophy, which has a great bearing on my interest in the philosophical underpinnings of psychoanalytic theory and practice. The third factor was my wife, Julia, starting to take art classes. She's really talented and she just loved it and is doing really great. She's had two or three exhibitions, and she encouraged me to take up something that I might pursue with a passion similar to her pursuit of art, so probably the combination of these three things led me to want to study philosophy formally. I may or may not take it all the way to the Ph.D., I'll have to decide whether I come up with an idea that I feel passionately enough about to do a dissertation on it. Mainly I wanted the coursework, the seminars, the background, which I am really enjoying and which have already helped me to write several short articles that have in common the interface between philosophy and psychoanalysis.

Shelley: You know, of course, that I've read those papers which will be published in *Psychoanalytic Psychology* in 2005 and 2006. You relate some of the psychoanalytic concepts you've developed such as pre-reflective organizing principles and contextualism to the work of philosophers such as Kant and several psychoanalytic theorists. Maybe you could say more, because it looks to me as if you've become interested in theory at a higher level of abstraction. What can you tell us about where your interests are taking you now?

Bob: Well, the answer to that question is probably long; I'll try to keep it short.

Shelley: People will be interested in this so talk on, if you will.

Bob: Well, I think it has become clear to me over the last decade or two that the philosophical underpinnings of psychoanalysis both traditional and contemporary, are a mess. A lot of bad philosophy underlies much of psychoanalytic theory and practice, particularly those aspects of psychoanalytic theory and practice that derive from Descartes's metaphysics, which George Atwood and I called "The Myth of the Isolated Mind". And so one of the long-range projects that I have set for myself is to lay the groundwork for a better philosophical foundation for psychoanalytic theory and practice. I've been reading a lot of philosophers with that aim in mind. That's part of the story. Another part of the story is that I take absolute delight in finding the historical roots of contemporary psychoanalytic ideas (including my own ideas). For example, it was thrilling when I read Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" to find the roots of concepts like pre-reflective organizing principles and the systematicity of experience. They're right there in Kant. As well as a form of what Donna Orange calls "perspectival realism". So, to me it is very thrilling to find roots of contemporary thinking, including my own thinking, in philosophical works, including some pretty old ones.

Shelley: Would you be saying then that ways of thinking that permeate culture come to play a part in the birth of so-called new ideas.

Bob: Sure. I wasn't saying that, but I think that's right.

Shelley: Well, I always like to check out what you're saying with how it comes across to me. I've been doing that for almost thirty years. I think this part will be interesting to people. I enjoyed these new papers that I've read, particularly "The Contextuality of Emotional Experience."

On another note, your career has been co-extensive with ground breaking changes in psychoanalytic education. If you were coming out of Harvard today, you'd have vastly expanded choices for psychoanalytic training. Some people may not be aware that you've played an important role in these changes. Would you say something about the founding of

IPSS and later ICP in L.A.?

Bob: Yeah, well, the founding of those two institutes was in a certain way, governed by different visions. In the case of IPSS (the Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity), the original founding members^[4] didn't want to start just one more among thirty or forty psychoanalytic training institutes in New York City. We wanted to start one that was uniquely aimed at training people who would become teachers and scholars in the field of psychoanalysis. We wanted it to be academically very rigorous and also very ecumenical because academic freedom, which includes a kind of theoretical pluralism, is very important in fostering creative ideas. So that was the aim for IPSS, and I think it has been very successful. It's a small institute, and we don't have large numbers of graduates, but our graduates have been leading contributors to psychoanalytic literature and prominent presenters at professional conferences. The Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis in L.A. had a very different origin, although it had many things in common with the motivating factors for IPSS. Central to the formation of ICP was the dissatisfaction a number of senior teaching and training analysts (who were members of institutes governed by the American Psychoanalytic Association) had with the restrictive grip the American Psychoanalytic had on psychoanalytic training at their institutes. So this group broke away from the establishment institutes, with an eye toward forming a new institute free of any governance by an outside organization (like the American or the International) which would function according to principles of democracy, and, once again, academic freedom and theoretical pluralism.

Shelley: There's another example of how the philosophy that undergirds one's world view comes to have a very profound influence on the form of education and the form of knowledge seeking that one finds congenial.

Bob: Absolutely. Mmm hmm. If I can put it somewhat snidely, in both instances we wanted to create training institutes that were like graduate schools, rather than religious schools.

Shelley: Being both scholarly and imbued with the principles of academic freedom?

Bob: Exactly.

Shelley: Good. I am glad that I asked about that. Now, speaking more personally, I wanted to acknowledge that I've known you for a million years . . .

Bob: [laughter] Yeah.

Shelley: . . . and I've always known that your attachment to your children is a very powerful force in your life.

Bob: Definitely.

Shelley: I remember in the early 80's when your move to California was really dictated by your desire to have constant contact with your children.

Bob: Yes, that's right.

Shelley: Would you say something then about your children and the contribution your relation to them has made to your life in general, and, more particularly, to your career, if that makes sense.

Bob: Well, I don't know that it's made that much of a contribution to my career. I would say that being a dad is probably my favorite thing to be and I think that it has some bearing on

how I am as a psychoanalyst also. So, maybe it does have a bearing on my career, actually, because there are ways in which being a good psychoanalyst is similar to being a good dad, although I don't want to be associated with any concept of reparenting.

Shelley: I understand the distinction. I think that you're speaking about something broader and less "provision-oriented."

Bob: I'm speaking of affect.

Shelley: Yes! There's something about the maturation of one's affective capacities as a parent that changes one utterly. It's cliché to say that parenthood is a maturing experience, but it surely is.

Bob: Right. I know you've seen my poem "Emily Running," about my youngest daughter Emily. You might be interested to know that when I was honored recently at the ICP holiday party, I ended the talk that I gave by reciting my poem, "Emily Running".

Shelley: Oh Bob! I love it! I was going to ask you what you thought of ending the interview with your poem "Emily Running" - that's where I was headed.

Bob: I'd love it!

Shelley: Really?

Bob: Sure!

Shelley: Oh perfect! The intervening question was going to be to ask you to speak more about your poetry and to say that I was very moved when you shared "The Grief Chronicles" with me, but I don't know whether that had been your first attempt at writing poetry. Was that stimulated exclusively by the loss of Dede or were you someone who . . .

Bob: Well, I might have written a little poem here and there, but "The Grief Chronicles" were my first serious attempt to write poetry. It extended over a several year period, and definitely was stimulated exclusively by my on-going grieving for Dede.

Shelley: I have poems beginning in 1992 through "The Leather Jacket" which was, I think 2001.

Bob: Oh. You don't have, "Emily Running"?

Shelley: No, I've got "Emily Running".

Bob: By the way, that's the last in my series of poems - the only one that is not explicitly a grief chronicle.

Shelley: I would love to end the interview with that. The "Grief Chronicles"^[5] are so beautiful. I never read them without crying. And I just love "Emily Running". It's so sweet, so sweet . . . with just a hint of bittersweet.

Bob: Oh, thank you.

Shelley: Thank you, Bob, for this interview, for your work, for your friendship. As always, it's been a privilege.

EMILY RUNNING

Robert D. Stolorow (9/18/03)

My favorite time of day
is walking Emily to school in the morning.
We kiss as we leave our driveway
so other kids won't see us.
If I'm lucky, we have a second kiss,
furtively, at the school-yard's edge.
My insides beam as she turns from me
and runs to the building where her class is held,
blonde hair flowing
backpack flapping,
my splendid, precious third-grader.
Slowly, almost imperceptibly,
a cloud begins to darken
my wide, internal smile
not grief, exactly, but a poignant sadness
as her running points me back to other partings
and other turnings
further down the road.

Shelley R. Doctors, Ph.D. is a member of the International Council for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology, faculty and supervising analyst at the Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity, the National Institute for the Psychotherapies (in the child and adolescent and adult programs and in the National Training Program in Psychoanalysis), and the Institute for Child, Adolescent and Family Service, and teaches and supervises, as well, at several other institutes. She is a frequent presenter at Self Psychology conferences, and author of papers and book chapters on self psychology, intersubjectivity and adolescence. She has been secretary of the International Society for Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology since 1995. Her personal reflections on Bob Stolorow and his work follow:

I've had the great good fortune to often be in the right place at the right time. In 1976, Manny Berman[6], who knew I hoped to do a clinical dissertation, told me excitedly that the new faculty member, Bob Stolorow, was interested in sponsoring clinical dissertations. At his urging, I scheduled an appointment and gained more than a graduate student's dream - a respectful guide who inspired, directed, and steadfastly encouraged and supported me to produce something we both could view with pride. As I worked with him to make sense of the personal meaning of delicate self-cutting behavior in a group of adolescent girls, Bob introduced me to the notion of the "concretization of subjective experience" and, fatefully, to Self Psychology, which has become my theoretical home. Bob's torrent of illuminating papers followed at an astonishing pace and, happily for me, shaped my clinical sensibilities. I got to grow up with Intersubjectivity Theory as it developed, in print and in person. When I went into practice, Bob supervised my work for several years and demonstrated a facility for following the thread of the transference that was dazzlingly memorable. The psychoanalytic universe has recognized and celebrated his genius and will continue to do so, but those of us who have had personal contact with Bob can attest to his absolute devotion to his students and supervisees. I've certainly gained more than a dissertation advisor. To have the gift of his attention, to live in the beam of Bob's powerful focus, is to apprehend (in the intersubjective matrix!) that there *is* a world of meaning to be discovered in every moment. Could there be a better way to launch, animate, and live out a psychoanalytic career?

Endnotes

1. Arrangements for this interview were initiated by the newsletter's former editor-in-chief,

Allen Siegel prior to Christine Kieffer's succeeding Allen. [\[Return to text\]](#)

2. "Autobiographical Reflections on the Intersubjective History of an Intersubjective Perspective in Psychoanalysis," by Robert D. Stolorow, presented at the 26th Annual International Conference on the Psychology of the Self, Chicago, Illinois, November, 2003, and published in *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* (2004), Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 542-575. "Worlds of Experience: An Interview with Robert D. Stolorow" by Peter Buirski, published in Vol. 20, *Progress in Self Psychology* (2004), pp. 305-321. [\[Return to text\]](#)

3. Yiddish. Translates approximately to, "To Esther's Life and Good Health." [\[Return to text\]](#)

4. In alphabetical order: George Atwood, Beatrice Beebe, James Fosshage, Frank Lachmann, Robert Stolorow. [\[Return to text\]](#)

5. The "Grief Chronicles" were published in *Constructivism in the Human Sciences*. Chronicles 1-12 appeared in 1999, Vol. 4, No. 1. Chronicle 13 appeared in 1999, Vol. 4, No. 2. Chronicles 14 and 15 appeared in 2000, Vol. 5, No. 2. Chronicle 16 and "Emily Running" appeared in 2003 in Vol. 8, No. 2. [\[Return to text\]](#)

6. Emanuel Berman, then Assistant Professor in the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program at Yeshiva University in New York City, now Professor of Psychology at the University of Haifa, Training Analyst at the Israel Psychoanalytic Institute, and visiting Professor at the Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis at New York University. [\[Return to text\]](#)