August 6 to 10, 2007
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The Great Instrument of Orientation

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Symposium Description and Objectives.

The brain reads place, and where one is misplaced. The dream reads the interior world and its mismatch with the exterior world. The inner language of English allows nearly everything to be said with a small number of verbs of motion, positioned by prepositions. This beautiful convergence of brain, dream and language yields us the remarkable powers which we will explore as follows for their practical import in brief psychotherapy in three cases presented on DVD each day.

MONDAY. The first power of the instrument is the access to the interior world, which is generally lost in our behavioral medicine. Freud and Jung opened it up beautifully, in their nightly departure from the train station of dreams, but we also need to find the departure in the present moment, or the present ten minutes. We do not have as much time as they gave themselves, in free association of five hours a week. Our subject will be how to get there in a single detail, which is a fractal, or the same pattern or rhythm on every scale of space and time. For example, the detail of dizziness can carry us from a psychosis to sitting at the family table in a dream, to being pushed by the boss.

TUESDAY. The second power of the instrument is to read the motion of the interior thrust into the exterior field, a subject almost totally ignored by psychoanalysis until Sullivan, with his concept of selective inattention and its resultant amazement at the mismatch between the interior figure and the exterior ground. But Sullivan did not go far enough, either, into the difficulties of the exterior ground, which is the speeded up group rhythm into which we must all fit our own slower individual rhythm. How to be free of being captured by the frenetic machine rhythm (like Charley Chaplin in Modern Times), but, instead, to capture it in our rhythm! For example, a dream of postponing ten emails embedded in one email is punctuated by a thud at one’s office door like a dead body falling against it. When we are rushed like Chaplin, we need such acuity to attend to true emergencies.

WEDNESDAY. The third power of the instrument is access to what Winnicott called transitional space, which is gotten by what I have written about as equipoise, or keeping the interior pulse equal to the exterior pulse in strength. This brings about an ease of flow in the body, such as being in balance on a bicycle, or sailboard, or in dancing, or in any sport. It opens up access to a single detail so that it is luminous on every scale of space and time, not only in the individual life of a particular patient, but also in the life of humanity itself. In other words, it yields tremendous depth, the hiatus, which literally means yawning open, out of which all renewal, or rebirth, or redemption
flows. For example, a dream of a beautiful surface of a river between water and sky, where a fly floats weightlessly, could help to orient a person in general.

THURSDAY. Access to the transitional space, and equipoise, and hiatus, quite thrilling as it is, has to be protected by an acute sense of the scale in which it is to be counted on -- our fourth power of the instrument. In general, a fundamental change in the patient's exchange with the world has to begin in the smallest scale of space, because it can be shielded there from the world, until it is ready for larger scales of space. For example, a woman who says “yes” to everything, confronted with the resulting exhaustion, lifts her hands to say “no,” quite unconsciously. The single gesture has a whole new world in it, implicitly.

FRIDAY. Access to transitional space also has to be protected by an acute sense of the scale of time in which it is to be counted on -- our fifth power of the instrument. In general, the smallest scale of time is the moment in which a new exchange with the world can be begun without jeopardy. For example, a man who proposes to control everything, confronted with his resulting frustration, opens his hands palms upward, for a beautiful moment, letting it go.

Participants will be able to wield these five powers in the crucial and precise details of their own cases.