

**Living the Tides of Uncertainty:
Proceedings of the Sandplay Therapists of America
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Living the Tides of Uncertainty is the first edited report of Sandplay Therapists of America (STA) conference proceedings. The book's introduction by Maria Chiaia elaborates the theme of the conference: uncertainty.

The metaphorical meaning of the conference's thematic title Living the Tides of Uncertainty conveys ebb and flow of the emergent quality of consciousness as sandplay takes form in the consulting room. In my experience of Dora Kalff as she presented case work at the San Francisco Jung Institute, she created the same sense of space in which mind takes form in the seminar room. Her capacity to contain nascent consciousness seemed to facilitate development of the image itself. Her strong sense of herself affirmed confidence in how she conducted the method. Her spirit permeates the society and the papers presented as sandplay practitioners share their explorations of the art in this conference offering.

Clinical focus on uncertainty attends to a special emotional quality permeating the technique of sandplay. The core of sandplay centers on creating a quiet space in which the person may select from miniatures or from raw materials in proximity to a sandtray containing dry or wet sand. In that space an emotional expression from the person responding with the materials at hand may happen.

Kay Bradway who is now elder stateswoman for the world of sandplay work summarizes the story of how the sta came about. Her paper humourously narrates how the sta as we know it started out as an "almost didn't happen." The sta story took its beginnings in San Francisco when Dora Kalff's visit caused an impromptu change from the Jung Institute program schedule offered one week end. Kay Bradway, who had been indignant about having to make the last minute program change to change the schedule for Dora Kalff's visit was swept off her feet by Dora's presentation. Kay's experience dramatizes the uncertainty experience as she offers a portrait of herself going from knowing nothing about sandplay to being captivated by it (and by Dora Kalff). As they say, the rest is history.

The theme of uncertainty focuses attention on the broad context of approach to the psyche. Uncertainty forms the core of Jung's comment in 1916 when he marked the fundamental difference between analytical psychology and psychoanalysis in approach to the analytical encounter. Psychoanalysis approaches the encounter knowing an explanatory cause beforehand, e.g., the Oedipus complex as the universal explanation.

By contrast analytical psychology by 1912 returned to its foundation in research on consciousness utilizing an open scientific approach to an interpretive principle in which "the prejudice regarding the explanatory cause had been removed by accepting a purely abstract one (interpretive principle), the nature of which was not postulated in advance..." (Jung, 1916, par.442). In so proceeding as he outlined, the practitioner faces an energizing uncertainty in relation to the clinical situation.

Jung's own story in this regard directly influenced Kalff's creation of sandplay. Jung had realized that a multiplicity of complex phenomena arises from phantasy material. Jung's focus on imagination and phantasy led naturally to his exploration and openness to a universe of approaches to the unconscious:

In what follows, I would like to give a brief description of how this discovery took place. I had often observed patients whose dreams pointed to a rich store of fantasy-material. Equally, from the patients themselves, I got the impression that they were stuffed full of fantasies, without their being able to tell me just where the inner pressure lay. I therefore took up a dream-image or an

association of the patient's, and, with this as a point of departure, set him the task of elaborating or developing his theme by giving free rein to his fantasy. This, according to individual taste and talent, could be done in any number of ways, dramatic, dialectic, visual, acoustic or in the form of dancing, painting, drawing, or modeling. (Jung, 1946, par. 400)

The continuation of this paragraph shows how with his open approach to unconscious material arising out of the psychological work, he discerned a deep developmental process emerging from the self which he identified as individuation:

The result of this technique was a vast number of complicated designs whose diversity puzzled me for years (*italics added*), until I was able to recognize that in this method I was witnessing the spontaneous manifestation of an unconscious process which was merely assisted by the technical ability of the patient, and to which I later gave the name "individuation process." (1946, par. 400)

Michael Fordham, who himself had worked with children utilizing sandplay, enunciated the impact of not knowing beforehand in his book *Explorations Into the Self*. Fordham, taking the lead from Jung, addresses the clinical attitude of not knowing beforehand:

...but I think that all these rest upon a fundamental unknowing— the unknowing about the self expressed in the totality definition of it. That state cannot ever be known, only its manifestations and deintegrates can be observed; thus unknowing" constellates the self. [*italics added*] (Fordham, 1985)

Many examples showing how unknowing constellates the Self in *Living the Tides of Uncertainty* come to the reader interested in sandplay therapy. Edited by founding member (and founding editor of the *Journal of Sandplay Therapy*) Lauren Cunningham along with Joyce C. Cunningham, Maria Chiaia, Gita D. Morena, and Judy Zappacosta, the conference proceedings give the reader a palpable sense of the meeting. The proceedings convey how sandplay work today enthusiastically manifests the special energy of pioneering spirit as it explores and develops technique.

Many contiguous areas currently occupying interest in the wider field of analytical psychology and some schools of psychoanalysis converge in sandplay as its practitioners work to consider and find ways to integrate clinical developments. Examples of convergent areas addressed at this conference include childhood deprivation and trauma, infant observation, cultural influences and complexes, complexity with emergent phenomena (exemplified in the sandplay scene itself!), relational issues, self regulation. And in accordance with conference theme: the psyche's constant uncertainty envelops sandplay evoking an emergent field demanding the therapist maintain and contain the essential attitude of not knowing beforehand.

The clinical position of not knowing beforehand moves attention to a heightened level of perception available in the sandplay method by attending carefully to its application. Sandplay derives much of its effectiveness from the primary experience of deep play upon which adult level work is founded and, if nurtured, out of which work differentiates. Thus sandplay contacts a primal source of psychic energy: the self.

The conference papers provide enlightening reading for anyone interested in understanding the rich offering of sandplay technique as practiced by sta standards. Practitioners may be particularly drawn to papers delineating the clinical situation, taking on the challenge of demonstrating the interaction and/or patient responses to the situation. Sandplay therapists contact the delicate balance in how the therapist encounters or otherwise addresses any pressing issues in the course of therapeutic dialogue before and after the sandplay. For instance, the moment after a sandplay scene completes resembles the moment after meditation; it is a moment which may be followed by an upsurge of fertile expression, also much like the first association after a dream.

Since Dora Kalff developed the method, it has perennially met with the challenge as to how the therapist moves from the space in which the Self manifests to the world of ordinary consciousness to which the patient must return. The conference proceedings illustrate the current dynamically evolving environment dedicated to sandplay method. One can see challenges for future work, such as work in transference, dynamic relations between self and consciousness, developmental model, individuation process.

With the inauguration of an edited publication of proceedings, sta has taken an important step in its coming of age as a discipline offering a rich resource for psychology as a whole.