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# Politics and Psyche

## Can Psychotherapists Make a Difference?

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This is a lightly edited version of the transcript of the keynote address given at the annual conference of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists held in Christchurch in February 1997.

### Introduction

The paper divides into five sections. The first section is called 'We've had 100 Years of Psychotherapy Wanting to Improve the World, but It's Stayed Pretty Much the Same.' Many therapists know of Hillman and Ventura's book *We've had 100 years of psychotherapy but the world is getting worse*. However, therapists displaying concern about politics is not a new phenomenon.

The second section is called 'Grounds for a Cautiously Optimistic Prognosis'. The third is on 'The Economic Psyche' and the fourth is on 'The Political Self'. Finally, there is a section called 'Citizens as Therapists'. The first two sections are the more academic parts of the paper but set the scene for the fun and games of the last three sections. One earns the right to experiment!

### **We've Had 100 Years of Psychotherapy, Wanting to Improve ....**

Many psychotherapists, particularly in New Zealand it seems, want psychotherapy at last to realise the social and political potential which was there from the beginning, and which the pioneers knew about and cared about. Many want this to happen, but have we actually got beyond the slogans about it? Have we, as the Americans say, reached the beef? Where is the detail? Where are attempts to go beyond the slogan?

Winning a debate in any area of knowledge or practice, like therapy, isn't enough. We need to push on from the victory in a debate about psychotherapists

playing a role in social and political processes to conceive of them actually playing that role and achieving results. But we also need to acknowledge that anybody seeking to improve anything in this world is up against massive and impersonal forces that do not want things to change: the economic system, the workings and institutions of global capitalism, patriarchy and its ways. I also have in mind the following paradoxical problem: the human unconscious and the human soul are the sources of imagination, creativity, hope, smiles - but they are also sources of our problems. The unconscious in its cruel and negative aspects resists improvement and change and definitely contributes to the difficulties human beings face. This statement could be seen as a psychotherapist's philosophy of life: the very thing that gives us hope that solutions might be found is also the source of the problems that scream out for solutions.

At the beginning of the enterprise called psychotherapy, the founders felt themselves to be social critics just as much as personal therapists. In 1913, in a paper entitled *The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to the Interest of the Sciences*, Freud said that psychoanalysis had the capacity 'to throw light on the origins of our cultural institutions, on religion, morality, justice and philosophy. Our knowledge of the neurotic illness of individuals has been of much assistance to our understanding of the great social institutions.' And Jung, in 1946, in a collection of essays on Nazi Germany, said 'We are living in times of great disruption. Political passions are aflame, internal upheavals have brought nations to the brink of chaos. This critical state of things has such a tremendous influence on the psychic life of the individual that the analyst feels the violence of its impact even in the quiet of his [or her] consulting room. The psychologist cannot avoid coming to grips with contemporary history, even if his [or her] very soul shrinks from the political uproar, the lying propaganda and the jarring speeches of the demagogues. We need not mention his [or her] duties as a citizen which confront him [or her] with a similar task.'

The great founders of humanistic psychology such as Maslow, Rogers and Perls recognised the same thing - that they had in their hands a tool of social criticism and a possible agent of social change for the better, just as much as something that would help individuals in emotional difficulties.

Then there's the Frankfurt School, the group of thinkers who tried to marry up Freud and Marx, producing books and papers in profusion, even now. Probably psychotherapy trainees do not study the Frankfurt School but, in my view, they should. Or Wilhelm Reich and his work in the area between

communism and psycho-analysis. All manner of radical therapists have existed for many, many years. One thinks of R. D. Laing. What about more modern thinkers, post-Jungians like Hillman, Bosnak or myself? Increasingly, psychoanalysts are thinking about society. If we listen to the titles of their books, we will hear their message. Neil Altman on *The Analyst in the Inner City*, Philip Cushman on *The Making of the Self, The Making of America*. Or Arnold Mindell, John Rowan, Joanna Macey. Or feminist psychotherapists like Susie Orbach and others. **This is not a new project.** It is so old that we might even consider it a failed one.

Similarly, psychotherapists work in and their ideas are used in all kinds of social and communal institutions, and have been for 100 years, sometimes making a little headway, but often doing well. It simply is not new. Grim, psychodynamic insights have been brought to clinical engagements with people living in poverty. I repeat: we need to face that the project is not only not new, it may not work. Why?

Let's be therapists of this political project that we as therapists have. Let's analyse the possible reasons why it hasn't worked and use that analysis as a basis for a way forward. To paraphrase Freud, it is not only impossible to bring psychotherapy to the world, it is also very difficult.

The first reason why we failed is our incurable psychotherapy reductionism and triumphalism. We write articles for newspapers about the phallic symbolism of cruise missiles going down ventilator shafts in Baghdad. We talk about Mrs Thatcher as a restorative container for British infantile greed. The Jungians are just as bad, or even worse with their archetypal reductionism - the military industrial complex as the work of the Greek God Hephaestus, feminism as the legacy of Artemis. What is the point of this? If we are inviting the world into therapy, then the world has been right not to come to its first session. What motivates such psychotherapeutic reductionism is a quite understandable desire to be right. Many times when talking to therapists about politics, I have felt our energy as dedicated to the successful application of an idea to a social problem, rather than having much to do with the resolution of that social problem.

Another reason why we failed is that we split off our social analysis and social criticism from our clinical knowledge. There has been a big divide between the therapist as a sort of social critic and the therapist as a professional working with an individual, family, marriage, or small group. I think this has been a terrible mistake because, if we don't bring in our clinical knowledge, then what

possible grounds are there for anybody listening to what we say about politics? Clinical expertise is all we have. Hence it is very important to me to continue to be a clinician, even though I have had opportunities not to. Our therapy work constitutes what marketing people call our USP - unique selling point - when it comes to social criticism. It is more than a question of using what we hear from clients in an evidential way. It is also about seeing how the inner world - emotion, affect, fantasy - builds up in a ceaseless feedback loop with the outer world. It is understanding that outer world problems contain emotional and fantasy elements as well, seeing how the political and the psychological mutually irradiate. That is what I mean by not splitting politics off from clinical work.

The third reason why we have failed has to do with the professional mentality of many therapists, stemming from psychoanalysis even if the therapist is not a psychoanalyst. There is a residual worry in the culture of the profession about abandoning 'neutrality'. This worry affects even those people, like me, who have abandoned a good deal of the professional neutrality they were trained to privilege. I feel guilty and anxious because the critics of the abandonment of professional neutrality have got a point - they do need to be listened to. This is not the time and place in a keynote address to go into the detail of why the critics of those who have abandoned professional neutrality and abstinence are wrong. Suffice it to say that it is possible to have a debate about this, to dispute what constitutes good practice. My colleague, the psychoanalyst Earl Hopper, working in similar areas to mine, says, quite honestly, that we are going to have to start advocating what is at present 'bad practice' in order to achieve a new definition of what might constitute good practice.

The fourth reason why I think we've failed is that we do not have access to politicians, powerful people and opinion formers. On the one hand, I think this is a real problem and I wish we did have such access - and I do not just mean having politicians as clients. There are very good reasons why any serious student of political process might not want to have us on board. Our record is appalling. One does not have to be Jeffrey Masson and write a book against therapy, or James Hillman and give up practising therapy, or the novelist Fay Weldon launching yet another attack on what she calls 'therapism', to conclude that many attempts by therapists to work in the social domain have been disasters. Consider First World War attempts by therapists to deal with shell shock and battle neurosis, or the affective part of psychological testing (TAT), or co-operation by therapists with oppressive regimes all over the world and at all stages of the history of therapy, including Jung and his ambivalent

relationship with Nazi ideology. Nikolas Rose, a Professor of Sociology at the University of London, refers to our profession's goal as being to 'govern' the soul and, actually, if one looks at the grim record, one can see what he's getting at. Then there's the whole question of our weddedness to normative standards in relation to gender, or parenting, or sexuality. There has been an appalling failure by the psychotherapeutic professions to come to the aid of lone parents and their families as they are made the scapegoats for economic failure by almost every Western-type society.

Then there is the whole question of sexual orientation and the fact that, even in the mid 1990s, it was necessary for me and others to launch a campaign in London to end the discrimination against lesbian and gay candidates for training at the Institute of Psycho-Analysis. Never mind the fact that most psychoanalytic theories about homosexuality are prejudice dressed up as theory.

Finally, and appropriately here in New Zealand, with talk of biculturalism and multiculturalism in the air, the claim of psychotherapeutic thinking to universality is damaging. Yet it is so difficult to get beyond it, to come to terms with the Oedipus complex as characteristic only of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, or with Jung's idea that women should not wear trousers. Moreover, at the heart of Western psychological theorising is a notion of the self that may actually be quite destructive even in the West, and irrelevant everywhere else. Such a self rests on fantasies of autonomy, self sufficiency and disconnectedness. There is empty space between us, according to psychoanalysis, space that is overcome by projection and introjection. Such thinking is not neutral in that it is very convenient for the powerful to function (and to sell the idea to the less powerful) as if there is only empty space between us. So the problematic claim of psychotherapy thinking to universality is much more than simply an imposition of 'white' psychology on 'non-white' psychology.

### **Grounds for a Cautiously Optimistic Prognosis**

I think I have got the credentials to talk about a cautiously optimistic prognosis. With others, I have founded a number of small organisations in Britain working at the interface of psychotherapy and politics. Since *The Political Psyche* came out in 1993 I reminded myself that the major work of politics is stuffing envelopes and I decided to get into political organising once again. In my youth I was very politically committed and I learned that you have to add organising to all the other political virtues. It is in fact the quality that guarantees all the others, to paraphrase what Churchill said about courage.

One organisation is called Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility. We thought we would get 50 or 60 members. We had nearly 800 at the last count and it is still rising. We are, in fact, the largest psychotherapy body in the UK if you leave out the umbrella organisations. It does not mean that all the 800 members see PCSR as their primary affiliation. Probably none of them do, including me. Nevertheless it is a sign of the times that something like this has come into being. I wanted to call it 'Psychotherapists Sans Frontières' until somebody pointed out that this could be translated as 'Therapists Without Boundaries'!

I started a second organisation together with Susie Orbach. It is called Antidote, and is a psychotherapy-based think tank. Whereas in PCSR the idea was to recruit as many therapists as possible, in order to create a movement for therapists, in Antidote we want very few therapists because the idea is to get into multidisciplinary work with other professionals in other disciplines: academics, politicians, media people. We seek to do collaborative work in areas as diverse as emotional education and emotional literacy on the one hand and economic policy and attitudes to money on the other hand.

The third organisation is called the St James' Alliance. This is an attempt to bring together the disparate elements in what I call transformative politics. Basically this refers to those political groups that have some kind of commitment to spiritual and/or psychological values. Mostly, but not exclusively, these stem from environmentalism, the new economics movement (following Schumacher) and certain kinds of feminism. The problem with all these social movements, as they're called, is that (in Britain at least) they are single-issue-based groups who are unbelievably unsympathetic and hostile and enviously destructive towards the aims and goals of other single-issue groups. So a person working on poverty in the inner city simply has no interest in animal rights and animal liberation, and vice versa. What we are trying to do with the St James' Alliance is to get these people to sit down and see what it is they do have in common and whether some kind of loosely-woven alliance of the elements of transformative politics could happen.

Another forum where I and others are working is the British Labour Party. We take to the Labour Party Conference a fringe meeting called The Political Psyche Network. We had some trouble with the most recent conference prior to the 1997 General Election because I put in, as a proposed title for the meeting, 'Preparing for Failure'. What I meant was that we are not going to be able to achieve what the membership of the party wants. The party officials

heard this as suggesting that we might not win the election. We got a letter from party headquarters saying you cannot call it that, so we called it 'Preparing for Disappointment' instead, which was all right apparently.

Other work that I have done personally has been with the remarkable United States Senator Bill Bradley; there has been a series of conferences on myth and politics. I have done some conflict resolution work and, as you know, I try to do things in books as well. Anyway, these are some credentials for talking about the optimistic side of this.

There is a change in the definition of politics going on. Feminism started it off with 'the personal is political' and all the work on the hidden politics of family process. I would like to build on and go beyond what feminism achieved in redefining politics. This involves understanding how much of human aspiration, how much of that reaching upwards, onwards, outwards, that we know of in the arts, or in spirituality, may actually also be achieved in and by social and political action. What happens generally is that there is a kind of breakdown or dysfunction in language that has to be overcome. The language of the heart (inner world language) and the language of politics (outer world language) have got so separated that bringing them together sounds somewhat flakey. This breakdown in language is, of course, a problem but it is also an opportunity to create a hybrid language. It has become somewhat easier to do it in a postmodern, pluralistic, multicultural world. The hybrid language reflects psyche in some ways and polis in others. Moreover, what was an academic, feminist insight is poised to break into mainstream conceptions of politics.

Another very interesting development is that people are beginning to see that there is a difference between what we could loosely call political **power** and what we could loosely call political **energy**. Political power is what everyone knows it is and the people that have it are the people we know have it - whites, men, financial institutions, the military, governments and the like. Political energy is more to do with an imagination-based approach to politics, a focused approach that uses imagination as much as realism or empiricism or facts. Almost by definition political energy doesn't get things done, therefore it doesn't show up according to the kinds of measurements that are conventionally used. Yet so many people seem to know that it exists and that it is the polar opposite, at present, of political power. Recognising that there is something called political energy is in and of itself empowering. It enables you to stop judging a political situation, a political act, a political statement by the kinds

of criteria that the media and the so-called real world use. Those criteria have much to commend them, but the criteria for political energy also have much to commend them. I think this discrimination between political power and political energy is a new and exciting development.

Another reason why I think we can be cautiously optimistic is that the politics of difference with which many Western type societies are presently engaged have started to spawn a psychology of difference based on experience and not on definition. The experience of being a Maori, the experience of being a child, or a woman, or a lesbian or gay man, or a Jew. Not what a Jew *is*, or is supposed to be; not what a woman *is*, or is supposed to be; not what a Maori *is*, or is supposed to be. Rather, fashioning a psychology based on the experiences, testimonies and stories of these relatively marginal groups (which are anyway not as homogeneous as they seem. Women are not exactly a marginal group except when it comes to politics and there, in many senses, they still are, which is why I included them under the heading of a marginal group.)

Another reason to be somewhat optimistic and hopeful is that everybody wants to do multidisciplinary work now. This is what might save us from the reductionism and the triumphalism which I put at the top of the list of reasons why our project has failed. In the air at the moment, there are attempts in many disciplines to reach out and find people who are doing different work with which they can achieve a linkage: for example, between religious studies and sociology or between psychology and physics. These diverse disciplines are linked up now in ways which the conventional Western academy could not have imagined even 25 years ago. Moreover the nature of knowledge is changing. Tacit, intuitive, feeling-based or fantasy-derived, heuristic knowledge is finding a new welcome, even in bastions of rationalistic Enlightenment thought like universities.

A further reason for optimism is the psychotherapy professions themselves are beginning to pay more attention to their political problems such as the historic discrimination against homosexuals. The question of the hierarchy within the profession also needs to be addressed: psychoanalysts who belong to the International Psycho-Analytic Association at the top, some Jungian analysts at second, psychoanalytic psychotherapists third, other Jungian analysts fourth, Lacanians fifth, psychodynamic therapists about sixth, humanistic therapists coming in seventh and last. This hierarchy may not be completely relevant for New Zealand, but I have had enough conversations in the few days I've been here to know there is a hierarchy and reading the entrance criteria for



membership of this Association further convinces me that this is the case.

There is also the beginning of a challenge, not only to the hierarchy, but also to what in academic jargon is called the 'social and economic location' of psychotherapy, which, roughly speaking, means 'do we consider ourselves as on the social level of teachers, community workers and priests, or do we more accurately resemble gynaecologists or lawyers?' It is, of course, very much a question of money.

Further, hope lies in what I call the frontier areas. All kinds of innovative work is being done outside of the traditional psychotherapy centres in Europe and north America. For example, my colleague, Craig San Roque in Alice Springs, addressing the question of aboriginal alcoholism, speaks roughly along the following lines: these people never had alcohol, so they never had the kinds of containing myths and rituals which surround alcohol. The containing myths and rituals of much of Western civilisation around alcohol are best expressed in Euripides' play *The Bacchae*. Can we take the essence of *The Bacchae*, says Craig, and make it into something that speaks to the problems of alcoholism in aboriginal people? Yes, he says, as he writes his jointly authored epic, *Sugar Man*. It could only happen in the unsophisticated, naive, brash, inexperienced, but oh-so-alive frontier.

Let me give another example which cuts right across the hierarchy and right across the schools of psychotherapy as can happen if you're in a frontier area. I remember meeting a young woman in Moscow. 'What do you like to do?' I said to her, 'What interests you?' 'Oh,' she said, 'I like Winnicott and Neurolinguistic Programming'. You cannot imagine anyone in London...

### **The Economic Psyche**

Why am I suddenly announcing some talk about economics? The first reason has to do with credibility. If you want to be involved in this exciting interface between psychology and politics, you'd better start talking about economics quickly, because it is, as they say, the bottom line issue and if we psychotherapists can't hack it in debate and discussion when it comes to economics then we won't get listened to, and perhaps shouldn't be listened to, when it comes to softer and easier areas. Soft areas for psychotherapists include things like child sexual abuse, family matters, education, even the environment. Money? Economics? They're much more difficult, which is why I've chosen them.

There is also a question of authority here, because economic policy, as stated

in the documents and statements and as visible in its effects, rests on notions of human nature. There is going on at the moment what I call the 'human nature debate'. It is a struggle over a relatively scarce resource called human nature. Now this is a metaphor - I don't mean human nature is a resource literally. What I mean is that those people who advocate free market economics, and you've had your taste of them here in New Zealand, buttress what they do by implicit and sometimes explicit appeals to human nature defined in terms roughly along the following lines: it is human nature to be greedy, acquisitive, competitive, to look after yourself and your family's interests and to only look after the interests of others to the extent that you need some sort of structure, even if you don't call it society, within which to function. Unfortunately, that side of the human nature debate has thoroughly won the argument and social democratic tinkering with economics does not alter that fact. The other side, the side that speaks about co-operation, collaboration, altruism and an already existing sense of connectedness in the economics sphere, lost and has often been castigated as idealistic or over-idealistic, unpractical and adolescent.

I want us as professionals in this area, expert analysts of this resource called human nature, to enter the human nature debate, not only on the positive side, but rather as attesting to the ambivalent quality of human nature. Yes, we are greedy and cruel, and yes, we can co-operate and be altruistic as well.

Economics also brings in ethical issues. People are dying because of economics and even if they're not actually dying there is something called the 'feminization of poverty' to consider. This is the phenomenon, not just in the majority world, but in the Western minority world as well, whereby it is women and therefore children who suffer most from economic problems, economic privation and economic change. As a country gets richer, women and children get richer more slowly than the men do. This is the feminization of poverty.

Another ethical reason for focusing on economics as therapists is that our bit of the wealth/health connection needs to be understood. I'm not just talking about psychological problems of the rich, about which we know quite a bit - Howard Hughes and so forth - or the psychological problems of the poor which a lot of psychiatric social work literature has managed to address. I am actually talking about the psychological problems of the people in the middle - of middle income, middle-class clients. What I've discovered in my practice is that a great deal of emotional misery and neurosis in middle-class clients does stem from economic sources, *but the sources have to do with merely their living in*

*an unjust, unfair and crazy economic system.* Just being in that system makes you psychologically ill. You don't have to be suffering from it in a poverty sense, or mad-makingly overwhelmed with its goodies if you are rich. You just have to be middle-class and it drives you crazy. Economic inequality drives everybody nuts - that is what psychotherapists need to be aware of in their clinical work.

The last ethical point concerns ethnic minorities. I have no idea what the statistics are but I am absolutely sure that the per capita income of Maori and their families in this country is less than the per capita income of other ethnic groups. I'll return to that in a kind of depressing coda at the end of the talk.

Economics at the moment is not only a dismal science as Carlyle said, it is a dismal male science. It is impossible in Britain and America to get young women to study economics in spite of the fact that changes are going on in this area - there's even a journal called *Feminist Economics*, which is very good indeed. As you may know, a lot of women's work in Western type societies is simply not showing up in the GNP and other statistics. Not only women's work, but children's work as well, and I don't just mean child slave labour that might be going on in the Indian subcontinent about which you read, but just the work and labour of children in ordinary families doesn't show up on GNP either. We have to challenge the whole myth of contemporary economics.

The clients are very interesting here. I did a survey of 2000 psychotherapists in seven countries. Fourteen different institutions participated in the survey (see Samuels, 1993). I asked people if their clients talked about politics and social issues and which ones they talked about. Worldwide, gender issues for women was top by a long way, but, also by a comfortable margin, number two was economics. I gave some specifics: inflation, poverty and distribution of wealth. I was amazed to find that, to the extent that clients are talking about politics, and to the extent that there are therapists receptive to them talking about politics, and to the extent that those therapists would own up to it in a survey, economics is the number two issue which I think is very interesting.

### **Personal Economics**

Let's get personal about economics. I divide this into (1) economics past, (2) economics present, (3) economics benevolent, and (4) economics shameful. My method here is to try to be psychological about the kind of thing we are not trained to be psychological about. It is, in the best sense of the term, a consciousness raising exercise.

**Economics past.** What was your first 'economic memory' - about money, or the economy, about your parents' jobs? What was your first economic memory? What was the first time you became aware that there was an economic system in existence, with polarities of wealth and poverty, with unfairness - the first memory of that kind? How was money dealt with in your family of origin? Who controlled it? What kind of source of difficulty, or indeed ease, was it? What class was your family, and what did your family feel about it?

**Economics present.** Have you done better than your parents? And if so, how do you feel about it? Have you done worse? And if so, how do you feel about that? Are you much the same economically speaking, and how do you feel? How open about money are you, really? How do you handle money in your personal relationships now?

**Economics benevolent.** How much more tax would you be prepared to pay if you knew where it was going and could control where it was going? What economic and material goodies could you do without?

Now this is a difficult one - **Economics shameful.** I used to call this 'economics sadistic' but it put people off. I want you to fantasize about the most shameful, sadistic, controlling, horrible thing you could or would do if you had a very large sum of money - hundreds of millions of dollars for example. Just to give you an illustration of the kind of thing I have in mind - because I don't mean that you would take all the capitalists and poison them which you may not really think of as a shameful fantasy. There was a college professor of philosophy at one of my workshops in America and he said 'Well, if I had unlimited funds, I'd buy or obtain a very large amount of skiing land at Aspen and I'd fence it off so nobody could use it.' I didn't think this was very sadistic, to say the least. Then he added: 'And I'd hire the US Marine Corps and machine gun anyone who came near.' Then he burst into tears and told us about his tycoon father and the relationship he'd had with him and so on and so forth. So it is not just a question of a self congratulatory sadistic or shameful fantasy I am after. This is about really owning our own bit of the system we can all too glibly detach ourselves from.

## **The Political Self**

Have you noticed that the 'economic psyche' and the 'political self' are hybrid tags? Economics and politics are not words you associate with the psyche or the self.

Earlier, I mentioned political energy. Never mind about defining it precisely. Just associate whatever you want to the idea of political energy. Now - score yourself for political energy, on a scale where zero is a kind of political moribund state, a political catatonia, and 10 is political hypermania. Score yourself on a scale of 0-10, just as you are now. The next time you have a committee meeting, score yourself. What you'll find is that quite a lot of what look like wrangles and disputes are because people are at very different political energy levels. Now let's get more sophisticated and refined with this. When you're with people of the same sex, does your political energy level go up or down? When you're dealing with a political conflict at home, as opposed to the office, which are you more likely to be - very high or low on the political energy scale? You can't answer just yes or no - just think about it. The context is terribly, terribly important for this political energy business. There are some people whose energy level for professional politics seems to be at the 8, 9, 10 end of this and there are others who simply cannot understand that, but have a very high political energy level for real world politics. Now I think those two groups of people ought to talk more, because what they have in common is the high level of political energy. This is supposed to be a value neutral scale, but of course it isn't, obviously. If someone is, in every context, around 0, 1, 2, I regard that as neurotic, just as much a problem as in the case of someone who, in every context, is around 8, 9, 10.

Where do your politics come from? What have been the influences that have made you the political self you are today? What role, for example, did your mother play, or your father? Are you in reaction to their politics, to his or her politics, or are you in identification with his or her politics, or what? And what about your parents, if you had two, as a duo? What I mean is, the image we have of our parents' relationship is a highly political one. You know the story of Lilith, I'm sure, which is the real primal scene of Western culture. Not Adam and Eve, Adam and Lilith. God made Lilith from the same dust as he made Adam, and at the same time, none of this Adam's rib business. The first night in the garden, Adam gets on top of Lilith to make love to her and she protests, saying 'Why are you assuming the superior position, when we are created at the same time from the same stuff?' Adam goes on and rapes her. It is the first marital rape. Lilith calls out the name of God, whizzes up into the stratosphere and has a subsequent career as a she-demon, responsible for stillbirths, which means she attacks what's fundamental to women in Western culture, and responsible for wet dreams, which attacks what's fundamental to men in Western culture, namely the control of their own sexuality. The relationship

between a person's parents is the most political inner world relationship imaginable.

Other significant figures might well have played a part in creating your politics. Teachers, priests, people you meet on a train. It's quite extraordinary how many people will attribute a rise in their political consciousness at such and such a moment in their lives to a strange, chance encounter. Your sex plays a part in your politics, and your sexual orientation as well. I imagine both those points are self evident. Class clearly also is central. Ethnic, religious and national factors play a part as well. National psychology and the impact that has on people's politics is a field that is only beginning to be researched just now. One needs to be awfully careful if you come from a European background about what you say about the relation of the earth to psychology, because there is a shocking history attached to some people who have made that connection (i.e. the Nazis). But there's something in the idea. There is something in the way the earth plays a part in nation building. Jung's phrase was 'the foreign land assimilates its conqueror.' That's happening here, I think, and it's certainly happening in Australia, as well. There is something about the space you inhabit and the earth you are on that plays a part in your politics. (But be careful to keep this observation in the area of metaphor - not to literalize, because that way lies fascism.)

For some people, a specific event is the key thing in their politicality, in the development of political self. For me, the Suez crisis played a huge role in making me aware that there was something called politics.

There are 'political types' to consider - people do their politics in different ways. Let me just give a list of political types that I've drawn up: warrior, terrorist, martyr, exhibitionist, leader, activist, parent, follower, child, victim, healer, analyst, negotiator, bridge-builder, diplomat, philosopher, mystic, ostrich. You don't have to choose just one of these as fitting you. You can say 'I'm often a terrorist with a bit of bridge-builder thrown in', or 'I'm a mystic with a child part' in terms of politics. There are some people who are very well developed in one particular type. They are good at doing their politics in the style or type of a martyr, say, but they really need to work more on their diplomat side. One can use this political typology with discrimination.

I have found that a lot of political conflict comes about because people are actually doing politics in such totally different styles that this is in fact stopping anyone from seeing what the real differences of opinion are and what the real struggle is about. People are simply approaching politics in totally different

ways. For those of you who know the Jungian typology, it is a bit like when an intuitive meets a thinker. There is often complete miscomprehension and misrecognition. I think this happens in political typology as well.

This has been a very compressed introduction to the political self. I asked you to see how political energy flowed through your political veins, asked you where did you get your politics from, and I wanted you to start thinking about what political type you are. You don't have to use my tags. Just start thinking of politics as something people do in different ways, just like we do sex or aggression or spirituality in very different ways. Somebody pointed out to me when I last talked about this that I am trying to do for politicality what, by now, we do quite automatically for sexuality. Nobody does sex in the same way all their life and it would be awful if everybody did sex in the same way. So, too, for politics.

### **Citizens-As-Therapists**

As therapists, you are now trained to use your subjectivity in the service of the client, to regard what comes up in you on a less than rational or other than rational level, as pertaining not only to you but also to the client. You have permission to regard your subjectivity as a not-me possession. It's called sometimes the countertransference revolution. It has stopped therapy from being an on-high, mechanical, experience-distant activity. It has put the receptivity of the therapist at the centre of the work. You know all that stuff, of course.

Most citizens today have private reactions to politics which they have been trained to disregard as extraneous, as of low grade, and as being slightly embarrassing. They don't know the facts, they don't know the history, they don't know the lingo and they're scared of saying the wrong thing in the wrong place, or they're going to go over the top and get involved in a nasty political argument, or maybe they get only involved in nasty political arguments. But tacit private politics is not privileged in citizenship the way that private countertransference reactions are privileged in psychotherapy. Now, I'm not saying that psychotherapists should offer this precious gift of countertransference to the world. What I am saying, though, is that, if a group of relatively responsible and reasonably well trained and quite thoughtful professionals are valuing subjectivity in this way, then it is not inconceivable that much larger groupings of people that we call 'the people' or 'the citizens' might also begin to value their political subjectivity in a parallel way.

I run events called political clinics in which citizens sit around as if they were therapists considering in their minds a political problem which I have asked them to think of as their client. I have explained to them how therapists approach a client, in a state of countertransference readiness - open to receive the unconscious-to-unconscious, or body-to-body communications. People who are not therapists pick it up pretty quickly. It's quite amazing what comes up when people start reporting their crazy-seeming, body-based, image-based, and fantastical responses to issues such as medical care, Northern Ireland, nuclear proliferation, homelessness, just to name a few topics that have come up. People express what seem like totally mad things and then we try and decode it. When we've decoded it as well as we can, the group has a normal sort of political discussion on the same theme. It is quite amazing what there is locked up in the radical imagination that is excluded from conventional politics. If citizens were more like therapists in their valuing of private responses to public phenomena, then I think we'd have a quite interesting further stage in the development of the notion of the citizen. I think we spend far too much time putting psychology to work in analyzing the leaders. But it's the citizens that can be reframed as therapists.

In the tradition I come from, which is broadly speaking psychoanalytical, the citizen is very rarely in the adult role. Therefore the citizen cannot be a therapist, if a therapist is an adult. The citizen is usually theorized as a baby having a transference to the parental state. The citizen is dependent, having a transference to the caring and/or hurtful medical system. The citizen is passive, functioning as a bystander in relation to forces sensed to be more powerful. The citizen as baby, client, passive, is a formulation that keeps the citizen in his or her place. Citizen as adult, **citizen as therapist**, moves the citizen (just slightly) to a different place.

### Concluding Reflections

This talk has been about a two-way street between the world of the psyche and its therapists and the world of politics and its therapists. I want us to walk this low and difficult road in clinical practice as well. When therapists do talk about politics, usually they report it in the context of a ten-minute chat as the session is winding down. According to me, that chat may well be the heart of the session. I don't want addressing politics in therapy to be a special interest. I want it to be ordinary mainstream therapy practice.

Now comes a difficult bit. In secure conference chambers peopled by liberals, the vulnerable win the conference: Maoris, women, lesbians and gays, poor



people, psychiatric patients, and the like. Virtually every conference I go to is driven within that secure liberal space by what looks like such a victory, and don't we all feel good about it, on behalf of those marginal and dispossessed people? But it isn't a real victory. You can't make a revolution in a three-day conference and it's horrific when people feel that that's what has happened.

I will simply end with a quote from my personal, cultural tradition, from Hillel, the first-century Jewish sage: 'If I'm not for myself, who will be for me? If I'm only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?'

## Reference

Samuels, A. *The Political Psyche*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.