

Book Review

The Turning Tide: Pluralism and Partnership in Psychotherapy in Aotearoa New Zealand

Edited by Keith Tudor

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Reviewed by John McAlpine

In the current debate over whether or not to register counselling and psychotherapy, this book will be of great interest to many psychotherapists, counsellors, and “midwives of the human spirit.”

Sixteen highly respected New Zealand health practitioners, steeped in the art of counselling and psychotherapy, offer a thought-provoking critique of the current debate regarding “the statutory regulation of psychotherapy and the state registration of psychotherapists in New Zealand” (hereafter referred to as “state regulation”).

Technically, I can’t name some of these well-respected health practitioners as “psychotherapists.” Why? The title “psychotherapist” is currently the preserve of those therapists who are state-registered. Yet the art of psychotherapy has its origins in early humanity, and as such, in my opinion, seems impossible to corral by legislation.

In his preface to this book, respected Māori elder Haare Williams challenges us to create “a new ‘New Zealand culture’ in which both tikanga Māori and tikanga Pākehā are accepted, respected, honoured and protected for their separate but complementary values, and which makes provision for recognition of later cultural influences.” He affirms the first steps that the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists (NZAP) has taken in this regard with the emergence of Waka Oranga (a Māori psychotherapists’ collective within NZAP); he then notes the continuing struggle of Māori to have a true voice in the “Big Organisation.” He doesn’t say it explicitly, but I will say it: Where is the true voice of Māori within the “Big Organisation” of state regulation?

In his introduction, editor Keith Tudor questions whether the voice of dissenters to state regulation was truly heard within NZAP, or were the dissenters dismissed in the push for registration? He notes that in most countries of the world, psychotherapy is not regulated by state or statute, and then offers a summary of four objections to state regulation. He includes a useful continuum of various models of regulation, ranging from the least constrictive to the most constrictive models.

The book has three parts: (1) the background to regulation and registration; (2) reflections on and responses to regulation and registration, and (3) regulation, resistance, and action. It also carries a glossary, three “afterwords,” descriptors of the editor and contributors, and an extensive author and subject index. Each chapter carries its own comprehensive list of references.

In Part One, Grant Dillon traces the history of NZAP’s push toward state regulation, noting that “it is debatable that NZAP got the registration and regulation it wanted.” He posits that the Association’s push for state regulation was more a search for an identity and the professional recognition of psychotherapy within New Zealand.

In his chapter ironically entitled “The Law is an Act,” Keith Tudor reviews and critiques the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, which introduced a new era of regulated health professions in New Zealand.

Margaret Poutu Morice and Wiremu Woodard review the objections by some tangata whenua to the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, and offer some overarching values and principles derived from *te ao Māori* (the Māori world). They point to similarities between the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 and the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907, suggesting that both Acts are “prefaced on fear and invoke the holy grail of public protection,” and both Acts “undermine an indigenous position and superimpose a Western paradigm.”

Chapter Four displays an exchange of email correspondence between Paul Bailey, the NZAP architect of state regulation, and Keith Tudor—an exchange that models the potential for respectful conversations between people holding quite different points of view within the professions of psychotherapy and counselling.

Susan Shaw offers a sociological view regarding “whence, why, how and wither regulation boards?” She concludes: “Registration boards are arguably mechanisms of dominance using the tools of socialisation and expertise to define and defend their existence. Our first port of call in considering the future of registration boards is to accept that there are other models for defining, promoting and ensuring the well-being of professions and those who engage with them, either as practitioners or patients.”

Jonathan Fay concludes this section of the book by critiquing the authority of the state authority that now governs psychotherapy, the Psychotherapists Board of Aotearoa New Zealand (PBANZ). He asserts: “NZAP had just enough political knowledge and skill to lobby successfully for the Board, but not enough knowledge and skill to maintain any ability to steer the new authority, which has subsequently shown itself to be a rogue Authority answerable to none but itself. Apparently unwilling or unable to practise according to recognised psychotherapeutic norms and values,

PBANZ has also turned out to be of no help whatever with the important task of developing public psychotherapy services.” Strong words!

Part Two offers six reflections on and responses to state regulation.

Evan Sherrard, a respected elder of the psychotherapy community, confesses to having made a U-turn after initially supporting registration. He observes that with the advent of regulation, the concept of “protection” shifted from being defined, discussed, and managed by psychotherapists as professionals to one defined and regulated by the Act (in effect, by politicians and administrators). He argues that regulation creates a culture clash—the state’s power of control being inconsistent with the emancipatory purposes of psychotherapy. Should psychotherapists be held accountable for their professional practice? Absolutely, but through supervision and continuing education rather than through state regulation.

Susan Green believes that she speaks for the many ordinary, stalwart, “plodder” psychotherapists working with full caseloads of clients with “big stories.” She writes of her-story and response to state regulation, and wonders if regulation is actually more a his-story than a her-story.

In Chapter Nine, Keith Tudor reviews and critiques the arguments for and against state regulation.

Jeremy Younger begins his chapter by quoting H. Wilkinson: “If the power structures of psychotherapy are totalitarian, how can our practice fail to be contaminated in significant measure by them?” Younger then reflects on “power-from-within,” “power-with,” and “power-over,” and concludes with the observation that with state regulation, the work of psychotherapists with their clients has been put in danger rather than protected from danger—the danger being that “the baby” (the delicate work of psychotherapy) could be lost in the contaminated bathwater of regulation.

Louise Embleton Tudor, calling on her experience both as mother and as therapist, critiques state regulation through the lens of healthy human development: as we grow and mature, we need less regulation than when we were children. Will state regulation enhance or hinder our development as maturing professionals? She also comments on the politics of state regulation and psychotherapy: “the personal is indeed political, and of course, the political is personal.”

Sue Cornforth critiques state regulation through the lens of eco-social justice—a timely critique.

Part Three discusses the alternatives, and asks: “How else could we protect the public if we were not to have state regulation of psychotherapy?” Three chapters offer different models of regulation, registration, association, and organisation.

Roy Bowden reviews NZAP's experience of professional peer regulation and registration through membership application, mandatory supervision, and peer relationship. He notes that such regulation is based on knowledge through "relationship," and that, as such, it has provided professional safety and public protection for many years, and continues to do so. Commenting on Roy's contribution, editor Keith Tudor notes the philosophy and principles of osteopathic treatment—i.e., "the body possesses self-regulatory mechanisms"—and then laments PBANZ's unwillingness to endorse the self-regulatory mechanisms of NZAP, mechanisms that have evolved over many years of hard-won experience.

Jonathan Fay tells the story of the recently birthed organisation called the Independently Registered Psychotherapy Practitioners (IRPP), established to counter the hegemonic power of PBANZ. Commenting on the need to provide professional safety and public protection, he urges: "Psychotherapists need to be able to embrace a version of public safety that is wider and deeper than the mere exclusion of the rogue practitioner or the relegation of the marginal practitioner to the margins of society. We need to be able to embrace a concept of public safety that equates to real safety—safety to develop our potential as human beings free from violence and from other, more subtle forms of coercive influence." Ever the therapist, Jonathan calls us to expand our vision and to contribute to the wellbeing and healing of both the Human Family and the Earth. Music to my heart!

The final chapter in this section, written by the IRPP Steering Group, offers strategies for resistance and action towards freedom, pluralism, and autonomy in the practice of psychotherapy in Aotearoa New Zealand.

There are three Afterwords: Sean Manning (President of NZAP) offers a thoughtful critique of the ideas presented in the book. Denis Postle (of the United Kingdom), plus Anne Martin and Coinneach Shanks (both of Ireland, and writing jointly) offer international perspectives on our "local condition."

Keith Tudor, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychotherapy, School of Psychosocial Studies, AUT University, Auckland, is to be congratulated for calling forth and editing this most valuable contribution to the national conversation regarding the state regulation of psychotherapy.

I believe *The Turning Tide* offers counsellors *and* the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) rich food for thought as NZAC considers the whence, why, how and wither of self-regulation and/or state regulation. I am a member of both NZAP and NZAC. I am also a member of the newly formed IRPP. I cannot call myself a

psychotherapist, as I have recently chosen to deregister from PBANZ's register. As I wrote to PBANZ: "I regret that I have to relinquish the descriptor of 'psychotherapist', not because of the title, but rather because working psychotherapeutically is of the very essence of how I have worked with people for the past forty years, even long before I studied psychotherapy as such." I continue as a "pastoral-care therapist" and a "mid-wife of the human spirit." Standing under these titles, I salute my colleagues who, in this book, are contributing to the "turning tide" within this nation.

NZAC members: this book is a must-read! To quote Susan Shaw again: "There are other models for defining, promoting and ensuring the well-being of professions and those who engage with them, either as practitioners or patients."

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