

EDITORIAL

Work at the interface of psychotherapy and politics both requires and discovers new forms of discourse. It may or may not fit easily into the formal, impersonal rhetoric of academic writing. Even when it does, there are points of stress and strain, knots and wrinkles in the smooth unfolding that may in fact be the growth points for the emergence of new theory, new practice. At times psychotherapy and politics can function like two huge continents of thought drifting implacably into each other, with enormous grindings and heavings along the line of contact where new mountain ranges are being slowly born.

All the more impressive, then, that so many powerful and eloquent papers are being submitted for publication in this journal. It is as though the simple announcement of its existence has reconstellated the field: material on psychotherapy and politics turns out to have ‘always already’ existed everywhere, waiting only to be named as such. More and more relevant research and potential contributors are appearing all the time. The field is in a phase of elaboration, of complexification, which at some point will no doubt turn into a phase of systematization where larger theories appear – theories whose groundwork is no doubt already being laid. Hilde Rapp’s paper in this issue is a substantial and important example of such synthesizing groundwork, suggesting that the concept of ‘emotional intelligence’, if properly articulated, could be a central

element in the development of a new ‘peace culture’ for humanity.

Examples of the elaboration of the field include the papers by Polly Young-Eisendrath and by Denis Postle, which tackle very different aspects of the internal politics of psychotherapy. Young-Eisendrath writes of her ‘passionate wish’ for ‘the further development of a human science of subjectivity, rooted in the ideas and practices of psychoanalysis and analytic therapies, that can stand toe to toe with biological explanations of human behaviors’. She thus intervenes in the political debate between neuroscience and psychotherapy, which is arguably crucial for the future of human society: deeply differing models of human agency are at stake, with profound implications for how society could or should intervene in the lives of its members. There are possibilities both for alliance and for mutually destructive opposition between the biological and the subjective accounts. Young-Eisendrath stands for an autonomous development of ‘a science of human intentions’, based in psychoanalysis, which she believes could help us live ‘more responsibly and cooperatively’ – which, in Rapp’s terms, could help build a peace culture.

Postle addresses a very different, but equally serious, psychopolitical conflict: the debate around modes of accountability for psychotherapy and counselling. So far, one model has swept the board: state regulation,

using traditional concepts of professionalism and qualification. As Postle argues, the intellectual backing for such a model is astonishingly weak. If one starts out as he does from the question ‘What does a prospective psychotherapy/counselling client need and deserve from a process of practitioner accountability?’ then very different possibilities suggest themselves. This paper is intended as the first of several taking different positions on the issue of practitioner accountability.

The development of psychotherapy and politics as a field of study is, of course, not happening in a vacuum. We are living and writing in a time of war. When has this not been true, one might ask? But this current war (the outcome of which is not yet known at the point of writing) is one that brutally rips apart the tissue of moral justifications surrounding most contemporary violence, and demands that we look deeply into the non-rational sources of violence and domination. Several pieces in this issue respond to the Iraq conflict – most directly, those by Petruska Clarkson and David Wasdell, and David Brazier’s review article. The first two of these both seek to examine the roots of war. Wasdell finds them in perinatal experience and takes the bold step of trying directly to influence world leaders. Clarkson offers a complex mix of factors that she suggests, unexpectedly, boil down to philosophical errors! A great virtue of her paper is the way in which it seeks to reopen its readers to the sheer pain of our global situation, stripping away layers of ‘tough-minded’ denial.

One of the stylistic issues raised by psychotherapy and politics is that of self-disclosure. Two papers in the current issue,

those by Clarkson and by Neil Altman, each draw heavily on the authors’ own experience and emotional response. This is, of course, frowned upon in traditional academic discourse, although these conventions are beginning to change. But work which tries to address both parts of the journal’s title, psychotherapy *and* politics, is bound to enter areas where ‘the personal is political’ and vice versa. Both papers combine their personal material with great erudition; and the mingling of these two elements in each case generates the sorts of energetic growth-points I described above. One might reasonably compare this sort of disclosure with the value of measured sharing of one’s own feelings in a clinical setting.

In fact, of course, there are *three* parts to our title; and the third one, ‘international’, is perhaps so far the least satisfactorily addressed. In the journal’s first year, its contents have been predominantly drawn from white, Northern, Western, First World, and indeed Anglo-Saxon sources. It is all too easy to let this remain the default situation. Our intention for the second and subsequent years is to make every effort to attract and publish material from the South, from non-Western countries, and from writers of colour.

This is not an expression of pious guilt, however. Far from breast-beating and gnashing of teeth (and other suitably Kleinian formulations!) and however grim the world situation, the appropriate mood at the end of our first year’s production is one of satisfaction. As suggested above, the existence of the journal, together with the excellent work published therein, has already brought about some degree of re-ordering of the field in which we work; and that feels like no small achievement.