

EDITORIAL

This final issue of PPI's third year of publication sees us with a new publisher. Whurr has been bought by John Wiley & Sons, which of course has a tremendous track record in the field of psychotherapy publishing, and with which we hope and expect to have a happy and fruitful relationship in years to come.

This is perhaps a suitable point, as well, to look back over our first three years, and to consider what has been achieved. A journal is, in a sense, an example of direct democracy: its subject matter and approach are largely defined by what people choose to contribute. The editorial group does, of course, have the power to filter contributions, and to steer the journal in certain directions; it can also decide what to seek out and commission. But it cannot create something out of nothing, and is finally dependent on what becomes available for publication.

This is particularly important with a journal like PPI, which is trying both to discover and to create a new field of study. We began with the conscious knowledge that the area described by 'psychotherapy and politics' was largely undefined; over the last three years, we have seen its scope and extent grow remarkably, and at times unexpectedly. As we said in our mission statement in the first issue, 'the journal

cannot operate with overly fixed terms of reference, because one of its primary projects is to discover what terms of reference flow from its title. The hope is to build up a body of knowledge from which conclusions might eventually be drawn.'

Considering our first eight issues from this point of view, what, so far, does PPI seem to be about? Most obviously and centrally, we have published work of great intellectual and emotional distinction; work describing important and little-known forms of pioneering psycho-practice; work carving out new areas of theoretical exploration. That all of this material has found its home in PPI is itself a significant new fact about the landscape of psychotherapy. But more specifically, what can we notice about the content of the journal?

A striking feature, and an unusual one in the current climate, is that PPI has published material from across the board of clinical approaches, in particular from both psychodynamic and humanistic psychotherapists and counsellors, but also papers from and about cognitive-behavioural therapy, process-centred therapy, and, in this latest issue, neuroscience. The openness of PPI to all theoretical and clinical models is perhaps one of its most significant aspects. It was a central part of our original intention, and in itself constitutes a

political intervention in a world where different therapy approaches are generally speaking corralled into their separate journals, conferences and training programmes, fostering the development of little therapeutic ghettos and hindering communication between different approaches. (A good example is Process Oriented Psychology, a powerful and creative methodology that is hardly known outside its own circles; PPI has published two papers by POP practitioners, and intends to publish more in the future.)

Psychotherapy and Politics International has, after all, also published several papers about interventions in ghettoized social environments – about the importance of finding ways to support the different communities in sitting down and talking together. This is no less true of the different psychotherapy communities! And the simple existence of the journal constitutes such an intervention. As we said in our original mission statement, ‘The journal is not wedded to any single account of the psychotherapeutic process, and will publish material drawn from all schools of psychotherapy; similarly, it will not limit the political orientation of its contents. It welcomes controversy as a vital element in the creative development of its field.’ There are several aspects to this: it is both a practical measure towards the basic project of ‘building up a body of knowledge from which conclusions might eventually be drawn’ – since we don’t yet know which theoretical-clinical model will be most illuminating of the political field – and also a direct intervention in the internal politics of psychotherapy, where very few journals indeed adopt the same policy

Looking at the same issue from another point of view, it has been equally striking to see how writers in PPI have used very different theoretical approaches, which would

generally be seen as in conflict with each other, to reach conclusions that are essentially similar or at least complementary. I am thinking in particular of the several papers we have published in the field of conflict resolution, by psychoanalytic, humanistic and process-centred authors: all of them addressing the same central issues, and all contributing to a single, as yet incomplete, project. This seems to be a particular feature of the psycho-political field, a great deal more than with most other areas of psychotherapy. Understanding why this is so might well tell us something very important about the nature of that field. It also offers the beginnings of a perception that *the political might actively illuminate the psychotherapeutic*, not just the other way around.

Looking back through the eight issues, there are half-a-dozen themes that have been treated repeatedly and extensively – sometimes overlapping with each other. These are: conflict work, as already mentioned – from both theoretical and practical standpoints, and with a particular emphasis on Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine; societal trauma; environmental politics; racism; and issues around gender and sexuality. We have also published several very strong general theoretical papers. Can we treat this as a straw poll on which issues are of most concern to psychotherapists who write papers (not necessarily representative of psychotherapists as a whole)?

Perhaps. If this is true, though, then are the significant gaps also indicative? We have published little or nothing so far on homosexuality – perhaps these papers tend to go to specialist journals. There has also been little about a theme that one might perhaps legitimately expect to be central: the politics of psychotherapy itself and its institutions, together with psychotherapy’s relationship to the larger institutions of

society. Too much of a hot potato, possibly. A very striking gap is the relative absence of contributions from outside the Anglo-American sphere - despite the deliberate policy of setting up an editorial advisory board with members widely distributed around the globe.

This last gap feels like a piece of direct *political enactment* within the space of PPI - not something on which we can comment from an external, pseudo-objective position, but a problem we have to live through and struggle with: the profound, multi-faceted privileging of the 'First World' mainstream over the so-called 'minorities' who actually constitute a large majority of humanity. We may invite, solicit, negotiate, even believe we have secured, contributions from beyond the charmed circle; but what subliminal messages are we also giving that discourage these contributions from actually appearing? Perhaps some of those reading this will be able to help answer these questions.

The other gap of which I am aware is a familiar one for most editors. In our original mission statement we said that PPI 'welcomes controversy as a vital element in the creative development of its field.' Although a number of the papers we have published seem quite sufficiently controversial, however, the controversy itself has not materialized. The real evidence of PPI's success, in a sense, would be the furious letters and stinging rebuttals, the howls of rage and groans of anguish, which would tell us that a therapeutic process of change was actually under way. Well, we live in hope!

Meanwhile, we have another excellent issue to console us: strong new perspectives on some subjects that we have already begun to explore - Northern Ireland, environmental politics - and also papers on some areas new to PPI - AIDS, neuro-

science, comparative anthropology. Both of the papers we have previously published on environmental issues, by Hilary Prentice and by Mary-Jayne Rust, have been from the perspective of ecopsychology. Rosemary Randall uses a psychoanalytic lens to examine a number of questions around the climate change crisis - to begin with, the very obvious question, why is so little being done about it? She suggests that the appearance of complacency in the face of climate change is thoroughly illusory, and that in reality defences of denial, splitting and projection are being mobilized - what analysts traditionally, and in this context interestingly, call 'primitive' defences. Randall draws together a number of apparently disparate cultural phenomena - including shopping, risk aversion, and psychotherapy itself - into a coherent pattern. *Psychotherapy and Politics International* is particularly glad to welcome her to its pages, because some years ago, together with John Southgate (who also appears in this issue), she was responsible for two of the best pieces of psycho-politics so far: *The Barefoot Psychoanalyst* and (together with Frances Tomlinson) *Co-operative and Community Group Dynamics, Or, Your Meetings Needn't Be So Appalling*.

Raman Kapur's paper on Northern Ireland also employs psychoanalytic concepts - in this case specifically Kleinian ones. He argues that pain deriving from social deprivation is 'acted out through psychic violence', both in the consulting room and in society as a whole; and that in some contexts this psychic violence can become direct physical violence. Hence his paper is a further contribution to PPI's ongoing exploration of societal trauma. Kapur reflects on his own experience as a first generation Indian growing up in Northern Ireland; and ends with a heartfelt

plea for practitioners' psychotherapeutic understanding to actually make a difference to how we live and act socially.

James W Prescott's pioneering work on the relationship between childrearing practices and cultural formations has had an enduring, if somewhat underground, influence; it has now experienced something of a renaissance through its wide availability on the Internet – but also because other people have eventually started to catch up with him. It cost Prescott a great deal in career terms to take the positions he did but he has never backed away from his radical stance, supported always with a wealth of references and research. His paper here reprises and sums up a lifetime's work on the societal consequences of infant trauma.

Edward Emery, whose work has already appeared in PPI, is that (presumably) rare creature: a psychoanalyst attached to the United Nations. His paper on AIDS and gender demonstrates the enormous potential value of such a role: it welds the very practical and crucial issue of AIDS transmission to fundamental aspects of gender socialization, arguing that AIDS is spread by the behaviour of 'men who are remotely

detached or attached ambivalently . . . *and this is most men*' (my italics). Like Rosemary Randall in relation to climate change, Emery is suggesting that a truly effective response to AIDS would involve putting into question large tranches of our society and its psychological underpinnings.

John Southgate and Elizabeth London also address the psychology of climate change, but from a visual as well as a verbal direction, with a diagram illustrating the dynamics of 'creative fighting' versus 'destructive fighting'. The full colour version on their Web site is highly recommended! This is part of an ambitious project to bring together – among others Freud, Lacan, Bowlby and Marx.

And finally, a mention for our reviews section, and its editor James Taylor, who has created a continually provocative and interesting 'left-field' selection of books and reviewers, many of which one would never have thought of, but which always (so far) turn out to be relevant and worthwhile. I hope that readers enjoy this issue of PPI, and continue to read further editions.

Nick Totton