

EDITORIAL

Starting with this issue, *Psychotherapy and Politics International* will now be sent to members of UK Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility (PCSR) as part of their subscription package. We welcome the new readers, some of whom we hope will become new contributors; and look forward to a new level of networking and shared creative thinking about the issues central to PPI and PCSR alike.

One of the assumptions behind an academic journal like this one is that psychotherapy constitutes a bona fide academic discipline. And it must: after all, there are the courses, the lecturers, the professors to make the case: psychotherapy is an academic reality!

Several questions are still outstanding, though. For example, which *sort* of academic study is it – science (soft, presumably) or humanity? MSc or MA? This is a way of representing the complex relationship between practical and theoretical aspects of psychotherapy. Some forms of therapy clearly privilege their practical role in helping people – though even here, academic approaches are emerging (I am thinking of professors from fields like person-centred counselling). Other forms, pre-eminently psychoanalysis, have always had a theoretical wing at least as significant as the practi-

cal one – Freud after all claimed, perhaps disingenuously, that clinical work was primarily a means of gathering data.

Psychoanalytic studies, the primary expression of this wing of analysis, lacks an obvious academic home. It gnaws through and tunnels under the barriers between different disciplines and studies – burrowing out a location for itself in a tremendous range of environments, including, in the UK, cultural studies, psychology, social studies, medicine, philosophy, anthropology, history of the philosophy of science, and no doubt others – constructing its nest, frequently enough, from the chewed-up remains of its host's theoretical positions. Like other forms of psychotherapy, it is not always a welcome guest, tending to unsettle things and stir up demarcation disputes.

Whatever its particular location in the battle order of academia, psychoanalytic studies is very plainly a humanities discipline. The same is not true across the board, though: there are other psychotherapies that place themselves firmly alongside, or even within, psychology, as research-based, number-crunching forms of study. Cognitive behavioural therapy is perhaps the only therapy to position itself exclusively in this way – although even here there are exceptions, as a recent paper published in this

journal shows (Spong and Hollanders, 2005) but several others try to keep a foot unsteadily in both camps. (And then there are certain Lacanians, of course, who claim to be practising a hard, mathematically based science.)

Increasingly, the academic issues are being skewed by 'real world' – political – pressures. The twenty-first century is a time of regulation and assessment, of 'evidence-based practice'; by-and-large the only forms of evidence to be taken seriously, and therefore to produce funding, are numerical ones. In a completely back-to-front sequence, the need for quantitative outcomes reduces the allowable goals of psychotherapy to quantifiable ones, standardized alleviations of standardized symptoms. The whole rich history of psychotherapy's multifarious and often contradictory self-definitions – medicine, hermeneutics, science, discourse, enlightenment practice, cultural guerrilla movement, provider of psychological adjustment, revolutionary cadre – is collapsed into a single simple task, perhaps *most* simply expressed as: 'get them back to work'. And naturally CBT, which constructs itself as a discipline of quantities, tends to win most quantity-based comparisons.

In the UK, at least, we are now entering an extraordinary time in which, on the one hand, psychotherapy training is being pushed into universities – on their part often distinctly unenthusiastic to receive it – by a state-led requirement for comparability with other 'health professions', while on the other hand the academic basis of psychotherapy as a way of thinking is being ravaged by narrow demands for evidence-based practice (and theory). Psychotherapy has long had a presence in academia but now it is likely to be moved there *en masse*, just at a time when academia is changing into a less hospitable environment than ever before – one that is incapable of applying appropriate criteria

for admission, for example. We cannot expect the outcome to be good.

At the same time, of course, the study of psychotherapy and politics must necessarily draw upon and dialogue with other academic disciplines – sociology being perhaps the most obvious example, but also psychology, neuroscience, history, anthropology, and others. And this issue of PPI includes very fruitful examples of this sort of interaction. First of all, we have the final part of Sandra Bloom's massively authoritative investigation of societal trauma, a multidisciplinary triumph, which makes a powerful case for the usefulness of this model in accounting for socio-political degradation. Step by step, Bloom has shown how trauma functions in parallel ways on an individual, group and mass level to attack both emotional and intellectual intelligence. She has created a vocabulary for discussing phenomena like America's lurch to the right after 9/11, or Germany's after the Treaty of Versailles, or Israeli treatment of Palestinians as a consequence of the Holocaust. If the relevance of psychotherapy to political analysis were still in doubt, this paper would suffice as evidence.

Liz Evans' erudite ecofeminist account of Jungian and Lacanian versions of the 'woman/nature' equation is equally a model example of a certain (very different) kind of academic, psychotherapy-based political discourse. It may have little concrete anchoring in clinical work but the whole intellectual apparatus derives ultimately from psychotherapy practice; perhaps a rough analogy would be the way in which a theorem in mathematical physics might be in effect a complex riff on a discovery in engineering. And Evans never loses sight of the way in which these matters of high theory actually impact on the lived lives of real women; she is constantly aware of the *tactical* use of theoretical positions by writers like Irigaray

or Cixous, for whom intellectual purity is never privileged over political necessity.

Pierre Morin's discussion of the ways in which rank impacts on health may read more like sociology than therapy. In fact, that was the response of one referee, who reasonably suggested that PPI should not publish on those grounds. However, the understanding of rank on which the paper is based comes directly from the psycho-political group work of Arnold Mindell so that the paper is an important example of the creative interaction between disciplines that is required for the creation of new psycho-political perspectives. Similarly, Konoyu Nakamura's analysis of eating disturbances among Japanese women is a creative combination of clinical psychology, Jungian psychotherapy, and feminism – all the more welcome because it comes from outside the Anglo-American 'magic circle'. Nakamura manages to bring together quantitative and qualitative tools for understanding within the same paper.

In contrast to this, and to the rest of this issue, Penny Priest's article is boldly non-academic in tone (though impeccably referenced!) as it attempts to tackle similar issues to those of Nakamura's paper, using con-

trasting tools. Its form, one feels, is dictated by its content – by the passion with which it struggles to find words for difficult feelings, refusing to let them be hollowed out through intellectual elaboration. The range of papers in this issue represents a range of attempts, conscious or instinctive, to reconcile academic rigour with emotional and political immediacy. Different readers will have their own responses, their own preferences.

The issue is completed by Alec McGuire's extended review paper, three other reviews, and a response from the College of Psychoanalysts-UK to the current and continuing pressure for state regulation of psychotherapy and counselling, which points out some of the more glaring difficulties with the government's proposals, and offers – finally – a forum for debate, at least among psychoanalysts.

REFERENCE

Spong S, Hollanders H. Cognitive counsellors' construction of social power. *Psychotherapy and Politics International* 2005; 3(1): 47–57.

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