

Book Review

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The Turning Tide: Pluralism and Partnership in Psychotherapy in Aotearoa New Zealand.
By Keith Tudor (Ed.), (2011). Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand: LC Publications. ISBN:
1877572764; 278 pp.

[S]tatutory regulation of psychotherapy and the state registration of psychotherapists represent a battle for the minds and the hearts of psychotherapists, and for the soul of “soul healing”. (Tudor, 2011, p. 153, this book)

There has never been one way to become a psychotherapist. (Bowden, 2011, p. 191, this book)

The values of psychotherapy themselves demand that we become more socially active and socially activist, that we actively search for creative alternatives to rigid and coercive management systems that . . . lack a social conscience or any grounding in spiritual and ecological awareness. (Fay, 2011, p. 201, this book)

This book has very considerable relevance to the continuing arguments both in Britain and internationally about accountability and the regulation of the psychological therapies. At the outset I should declare an interest and a bias, in that I have campaigned for many years in the UK, both politically and in academic writings, against the statutory and state regulation of the psychological therapies. In 2010 in Britain, those activists in the therapy field (including myself) who were strongly critical of the state regulation of counselling and psychotherapy had a famous if highly improbable victory in their anti-regulation campaign, when the then new coalition government decided to drop the previous Labour government’s well-advanced plans for regulating the psychological therapies via the UK Health Professions Council.

There exists a considerable literature, dating from the late 1970s, which has consistently challenged the alleged beneficence of the state and statutory regulation of counselling and psychotherapy (just some of which is referenced below, p. x). What is unique about the book under review is that it gives us a blow-by-blow account of what happens when regulation takes effect, in this case, in Aotearoa New Zealand, where regulation took place in 2008. To the largely theoretical arguments and arguments from rationality, represented in the literature to date, we now have *actual empirical data*, much of it reported in this book, about what actually happens post regulation. As such, this book is – and should be – salutary reading for everyone, pro and anti- regulation, who has a stake or an interest in the “psy” regulation question.

The Turning Tide details the history of recent moves towards the statutory regulation of psychotherapy and the associated state registration of psychotherapists in Aotearoa New Zealand

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(ANZ). There are substantive and detailed critiques of the *Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003* (the statutory vehicle for the regulation of a number of health professions), and the activity of the “responsible authority” for psychotherapy. Arguments for and against regulation and registration are clearly set out, as is the important distinction between title regulation and the licence to practise. Part of the book’s importance lies in its reclamation of a pluralistic perspective on therapy practice, and practical alternatives for healthcare providers practising psychotherapy are explored.

This book is the latest addition to a burgeoning collection of books dedicated to the theme of therapy professionalization, all of which have argued strongly against the state or statutory regulation of the field (e.g., Bates & House, 2003; House, 2003, 2010; King & Moutsou, 2010; Mowbray, 1995; Parker & Revelli, 2008; Postle, 2007, 2012; Postle & House, 2009), and without a single published text to date making a systematic case *for* such regulation – and despite repeated calls by the critics of regulation for the pro regulators to do so.

The book is divided into three parts. In Part I, six chapters provide the background and context of regulation and registration in ANZ, with Chapter 1 (by Grant Dillon) examining the history of the move of the New Zealand Association for Psychotherapy (NZAP) towards statutory registration. In Chapter 2 Keith Tudor looks critically at the *Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003*, which prefigured a new era of regulated health professions in the country. In Chapter 3 Margaret Pouta Morice and Wiremu Woodard present challenges to the Act originating from tangata whenua (people of the land), with ethical values and principles derived from te ao Māori (the Māori world) that were originally presented to an Ethics Committee Working Party convened by the regulation Board but that were subsequently rejected. Chapter 4 consists of a fascinating dialogue between the book’s editor, Keith Tudor, and the architect of regulation and registration, Paul Bailey. Chapters 5 and 6 then focus, respectively, on sociological perspectives on regulation (Susan Shaw), and a critique of the Psychotherapists’ Board of Aotearoa New Zealand (PBANZ) (by Jonathan Fry).

Part II contains seven chapters on “Reflections on and Responses to Regulation and Registration”. Two chapters (by Evan Sherrard and Susan Green) offer personal responses to registration while, in Chapter 9, Tudor himself looks in detail at arguments for and against regulation and registration. Jeremy Younger’s chapter (10) explores the psychodynamics of regulation and why there was so little analysis of the dynamics of regulation in the profession, and Louise Embleton Tudor’s chapter (11) looks at some neuroscientific analogies for regulation. In Chapter 12, Sue Cornforth exposes regulation to searching critique from an eco-social justice perspective that explicitly foregrounds the left-critique of neo-liberalism and globalization.

In Part III, chapters look at different models of regulation, registration, association and organization. In Chapter 13 Roy Bowden reviews NZAP’s system of professional peer regulation and registration, based as it is on *knowledge through relationship*. In Chapter 14 Jonathan Fay outlines the recent history of a developing critique in the country, focusing in particular on the organization of the Independently Registered Psychotherapy Practitioners (IRPP). Finally, the collectively authored Chapter 15, written by the IRPP’s Steering Group, suggests some strategies for resistance and action, in a move towards pluralism and freedom. There are also several appendices, including three afterwords: two appreciative commentaries from the UK Independent Practitioners’ Network (IPN) participants Denis Postle, and Anne Martin and Coinneach Shanks, and a third one from Seán Manning, recent Past President of the NZAP.

I was especially drawn to Chapters 4, 7, 9, 10, and 12–15. In Bailey and Tudor's dialogue, we read (from Keith Tudor) that "there is little international support for the state regulation of psychotherapy: most countries in the world do not so regulate" (p. 83); that there is a common but fallacious conflation/elision between regulation and registration; that if one wants to make a service more widely available, regulation is by no means essential, only state funding is; that the Psychotherapists' Board is not interested in any dialogue with the profession; and, most poignantly, that "once the state gets its hands on a profession or a field such as psychotherapy, it tends to intervene" (p. 92). In his chapter Evan Sherrard also writes of the regulatory framework's bureaucratic values which "seriously clash with the values and culture of the profession. The rigid ethos and culture of bureaucracy is antithetical to the living practice of therapy" (p. 124) – with the Ministry (of Health) founded on the medical model, which is inappropriate for psychotherapy (cf. Mowbray, 1995).

Tudor's substantial and erudite Chapter 9 lies at the heart of the book. He points out the irony of the lack of any evidence base for regulation and registration in this age of "evidence-based practice" (p. 130); and he further shows how, over the course of some 115 years of psychotherapy, "advances in the training and supervision of psychotherapists have been adequately addressed outside [of] regulatory schemes" (p. 134). We also read how there simply exists no evidence that lack of registration is a causal factor in client harm, and that medical model values and practices have started to infiltrate therapy trainings, with the way in which the Act functions, severely limiting practitioner identity.

Jeremy Younger's brief chapter on psychodynamic psychotherapy and regulation is a gem. For him, the great concern is that dynamic therapy will "lose its teeth" as a result of state regulation, with therapy

sanitized and man-handled . . . with little space for unconscious processes . . . emptied of subjectivity, with no place for the embracing of what is unknown . . . [and] the "baby" of this precious work [being] lost in the contaminated bathwater of regulation. (p. 165)

In her chapter, Embleton Tudor writes of how legalistic means for solving disputes generate defensive practices, with the result that that "gloriously disparate group" (p. 174), i.e., psychotherapists, trust themselves less, and "The greatest sacrifice is the creativity and flexibility needed to identify and to allow the usefulness to a *particular* client at a *particular* time of an action which is unusual or exceptional" (p. 170, original italics). She soberingly quotes Wilhelm Reich's poignant, telltale view that in the process of the professionalization of psychoanalysis, "Form eclipsed content; [and] the organization became more important than its task" (Reich, 1942/1973, quoted on p. 174).

There are the inevitable typos and some unevenness in the book, which is pretty much inevitable in a complex and lengthy, self-published book. Yet what for me is most valuable about *The Turning Tide*, apart from its clear and diverse range of contributions, is that it reveals in all its gory detail just what can happen to the field of the psychological therapies when state regulation, and all that goes with it, is uncritically and undemocratically imposed on the field. To give just one chilling example, we read (on p. 137) how some therapists are reporting their (unregistered) colleagues to the Board, which is then pursuing and threatening them, *even though they are practising within the law*. If this book had been available in the UK a few years earlier, it might well have saved us all the angst and trauma of being dragged by both government and professionalizing practitioners to the very brink of regulation under

the UK Health Professions Council, until the new coalition government saw sense and, at the eleventh hour, dropped “psy” regulation. More generally, in relation to the literature on professionalization and regulation, even accounting for the fact that it is commonly easier to challenge than it is to write in support of the conventional wisdom, the dramatic lack of balance in the literature addressing the crucial arguments in this book is surely symptomatic of something very important. When looked at in any conceivable way, the extant literature on the professionalization of the psychological therapies comes out unambiguously and resoundingly against the supposed beneficence of the kinds of professionalizing developments and political manoeuvrings, often driven by economic and institutional interests, that still, alas, strive to dominate the field in many countries. This welcome book makes a significant contribution to flushing out such power- and interest-driven processes, wherever they manifest.

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