

Editorial

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This issue comprises one of the most diverse range of articles in the history of the journal. With articles about psychotherapy and politics in five countries – Israel, Iran, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), and Aotearoa New Zealand – and encompassing the subject of trauma, sexual dysfunction, the role of the individual, the ethics of regulation, biculturalism, psycho-political organisation, and inner and outer worlds, this issue is both stimulating and challenging.

In the first article, Naama Gershy, an Israeli clinical psychologist currently working in the USA, discusses her work in Sderot, a small city in the South of Israel, treating post-traumatic stress disorder in children. She places her clinical experience in the wider political context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and, in doing so, puts working with trauma “under fire” or, at least, under the microscope. It is a powerful article and one which challenges those of us who consider ourselves to be political to consider the political implications of our practice, and theories: our methods, and methodologies. For as long as the existence of the journal, my predecessor, Nick Totton, and I have wanted to publish contributions from Palestinian authors and, given the subject and context of Gershy’s article – and the current political context – this seems like a good time to reiterate this, and again to call for papers from diverse voices in the Middle East, and even to propose a special issue of the journal on psychotherapy and politics in this region.

In the second article, Babak Fozooni, an Iranian living in the UK, discusses sexual therapy in Iran with reference to two clients who are the subject of analyses based, respectively, on the work of Otto Gross (1877–1920) and of Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957). The article draws on transgender studies, queer theory, and psychoanalytic research, as well as the concept of the sexual economy to present two poignant case studies, and both to represent and critique the ideas of these early and key figures in the development of psychoanalysis – and in radical and political critiques of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Fozooni himself has an impressive collection of degrees encompassing psychology and the media, and an equally impressive range of interests encompassing working class perspectives, the sociology of sport, and the anti-capitalist movement, all of which clearly influence this article. I am also glad to see another article drawing on the theories and ideas of Gross and of Reich. The person and the work of Otto Gross is enjoying something of a renaissance at present, in no small part due to the good offices of Gottfried Heuer who the journal is fortunate to have as an Associate Editor, and who has contributed to this issue (see below). I look forward to more articles drawing on the work of these and other early and political figures in the history of psychotherapy.

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In the next article Andrew Samuels, who amongst his many roles is a Consulting Editor of the journal, appraises the role of the individual. In doing so, he draws on Carl Jung (1875–1961) and Albert Camus (1913–1960) – as well as Clint Eastwood (b. 1930)! In a wide-ranging article, which began life as a workshop, Samuels proposes new thinking about “broken” and “fractured” individuals, and, via discussion of individual political “type” or “style”, probes the limits of personal responsibility. Samuels’ explicit intention in writing the article is to open up discussion on the role of the individual, and so I very much look forward to responses to his paper, perhaps along the lines of “There’s no such thing as an individual ...”.

By contrast, the next two articles are concerned with a different interplay of psychotherapy and politics, that is, the politics *of* psychotherapy (see Totton, 2000).

The first, by Steve Gunther, from the USA, discusses the issue of professional regulation with a particular focus on the regulation of the regulatory bodies themselves. In the spirit of the Roman poet, Juvenal, who posed the question “quis custodiet ipsos custodies” (who will watch the watchmen?), Gunther considers the ethics of ethical regulation, the protection of the practitioner, and the wider issue of the quasi legal administration of justice in matters of professional conduct. The article will be of interest to those in jurisdictions where psychotherapists and practitioners regulate themselves, as well as in those in (the fewer) countries that enjoy – or suffer – the statutory regulation of psychotherapy and the state registration of psychotherapists, administered (usually) by non-elected government appointees. This article is based on research that was part of Gunther’s doctoral work, and I hope that we see more of his research published in the pages of the journal.

The second of the two articles, written and edited by a colleague and myself, with contributions from a number of other colleagues and comrades, reviews the history and development of an organisation of practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ngā Ao e Rua (the two worlds) is a group of Māori and non-Māori psychotherapists, psychotherapy practitioners, counsellors, and health care providers, (different terms which reflect different relationships with the state), who are actively engaged in discussions about the politics and psychology of biculturalism in this country, and who have a significant relationship with Waka Oranga, a group of Māori practitioners (see Hall, Morice, & Wilson, 2011). The article, which marks the tenth anniversary of the founding of Ngā Ao e Rua, describes a rich history of personal and professional development, debate, political activity, conflict, resolutions, and revisioning.

The sixth and final article in this issue is a review in which Gottfried Heuer reflects and comments on a one day conference organised by the organisation of Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility on the subject of “Occupying our Inner and Outer Worlds”. In a creative contribution that encompasses report, reflection, reminiscence, and (free) association, Heuer creatively represents both the personal and political from the day and beyond.

As ever, I hope you, the reader, enjoy this issue as much as I have enjoyed reading and editing the contributions, and I look forward to introducing the next, special issue on “Marxism and Psychotherapy”.

REFERENCES

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