

Editorial

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Keith: Following the last issue on “Austerity and Neoliberalism”, I am delighted to introduce this special, themed issue of *Psychotherapy and Politics International* on Global Transformation.

The issue has been inspired by and based on an international conference/event, organised and hosted by John Wilson of Onlineevents (www.onlineevents.co.uk), an event which began at 9:00 am on Friday 29th May 2015 Greenwich Mean Time and finished 24 hours later on Saturday 30th May. The format of the day was a series of talks with speakers either giving a talk or having a conversation with John, or doing both, enhanced by a lively online chat room facilitated by John. I was so impressed by the discussions (and John’s stamina in facilitating seven speakers in 24 hours) that I was keen to reproduce some of the content as well as the aspirations and enthusiasm of the event, as well as to keep the original voice of the presenters and the sense of dialogue and chat. Given Jonathan’s participation in the event and interest in the subject (see, for instance, Fay, 2012), I invited him to be the co-editor of the issue; I then contacted John to ask him if he would be interested in *PPI* constructing a special issue based on the event; he agreed and Jonathan and I contacted the presenters. As a result, we have four of those talks as articles in this special issue.

Jonathan: We live in exciting and terrifying times. The pace of change is fast, and getting faster. At times, it seems we are destined to have to relinquish all our certainties and cherished assumptions. New technologies bedazzle us with their amazing potential. New political realities test the limits of our capacity to remain sane and humane with those with whom we disagree. There are new threats to our security and new opportunities to engage fully our creative responses – but not everything changes. The need for good attachment – to ourselves, to each other, to the natural environment, the greater sum of which we are an integral part: these things remain as true today as they ever were. We (still) need a solid ground on which we can stand and steady ourselves, a safe place to love and be loved without fear of interruption, and a spacious place for our imagination to cultivate the dream of a world in which the safety and well-being of our children and their children will be assured. We need a society that is fair and equitable, a culture that is diverse and vibrant, and a planet that is intact and whole. We need peace, in our hearts, and in the world, and we need the values and principles and techniques and practices of psychotherapy on a broad scale, transposed and transformed so as to become capable of getting its arms around our entire species and all the other species that now depend on us. We need psychotherapy for every culture and ethnicity, for the poor as well as the middle-class, for the tough as well as the

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tender-hearted; and not for the individual alone, but for families and groups and communities and *peoples* as well as people.

Psychotherapy in the 21st century is faced with the challenge not only of perfecting its art – and science – but also of expanding its scope and scaling up its efforts. The world will not wait for us as we continue to attempt to save the planet one person at a time. We can teach each other how to nourish more effectively and in larger numbers the human capacity for contemplation and pragmatic action. We can learn how to kindle more effectively the human appetite for empathy and autonomy. We can seek how to develop more effectively the qualities of authority and confidence and humility, the capacity to direct and manage as needed and the wisdom more often than not to refrain from this very impulse to manage and direct. We can cultivate the skill of listening to everyone, the courage to speak truth to power, and the moral fortitude to decline the Pied Piper of privilege: a sweet shop of appealing opportunities to feel special in ways that only separates us from each other and corrupts our capacity for empathy and justice and participatory engagement. At every level of the social world, at every size of human organisational life, as psychotherapists who are, if only by default, spokespersons for human health and well-being, we are charged with the responsibility to discover more about the practical means by which the rainbow of human equality in diversity may be realised and shine forth: a vision of human potential which adequately expresses our understanding of the human community's potential to become the thoughtfulness of the earth and the stewards of its future.

Keith: The articles in this issue represent and address this analysis and vision. As the conference/event itself began with Jonathan talking about “Psychotherapy and Global Transformation”, so this issue leads with Jonathan's article in which he identifies the potential for psychotherapy to contribute to global transformation. He begins by summarising the contribution of the first three forces of psychotherapy, and then reflects on what psychotherapy has learned and what it needs to do if it to be of relevance to the 21st century. Like others in this issue, he distinguishes between globalisation and thinking and *being* global. He concludes by highlighting the importance of indigenous consciousness, and of the possibility – indeed, necessity – of a partnership between indigenous and modern (or postmodern) understanding. Jonathan's argument and voice is passionate, persuasive, and poetic.

The second article is based on a conversation between Keemar Keemar, Colin Lago, Peggy Natiello, John Wilson, and Carol Wolter-Gustafson, who, earlier in the year, had facilitated a residential large group learning experience, titled “Going Global”. The residential, which took place in Sidona, Arizona, continued Carl Rogers' legacy of creating constructive change by broadening the focus of empathic and (individual) therapeutic work to and in a large group setting. Participants in such groups have experienced the potency of this transformational approach and, as a result, have reported living more authentically and compassionately, and feeling more empowered to use their creativity to challenge prevailing social and political systems and structures. This was also the focus of much of Natalie Rogers' work, which I especially want to acknowledge in the light of her death last year (see Rogers, 2000, 2004).

Jonathan: There is an interesting tension in this article which was also reflected in the flyer for the event (Going Global, 2015). The group's energy appeared to remain largely centred on the cultivation of interpersonal intimacy between group members and attempts to heal individual participants' emotional distress about our civilization's trajectory. John declared himself the most optimistic member of the leadership group, yet noticed that group members struggled to engage in thinking critically about the fate of the Earth. Few participants availed themselves of the rich resources that the facilitators had made available pertinent to the Going Global theme. Perhaps the greatest challenge for any large unstructured group, whether person-centred or group analytic, is to be able to love and work at the same time, rather than sacrificing one for the sake of the other.

Jonathan and Keith: In the next article Clare Slaney questions the universalism of empathy against the background of the monoculturalism of the psychological professions. Similarly, mutuality and egalitarianism is compromised by classism – and other “isms” – and state-sponsored therapy which encourages therapists to be and to see themselves as experts. Drawing on a number of examples in the literature, Clare takes issue with a number of empathic failures with regard to structural issues and inequalities and, in doing so, provides a commentary on some “hard realities of our profession”.

In the final article from the Global Transformation event, Maureen O’Hara (who also concluded the event itself) discusses how humanistic practice makes a critical difference to humanity’s future. Whilst Maureen acknowledges that there’s no shortage of bad news, she maintains that the world can be better and that psychotherapy and other social practices aimed at human growth and existential freedom have a role to play in creating a sustainable and humane future.

The final article in this issue is an interview of Andrew Samuels by Tom Warneke. We have included it in this issue partly because Andrew was another participant in the Global Transformation event, but more so as we think it represents one way in which psychotherapists can transform the world – by transforming their practice to encompass relational approaches to political and social issues in the consulting room. The interview, which is based on a webinar which was recorded in October 2014 as part of a series on relational psychotherapy, was initiated by the organization Psychotherapy Excellence (www.psychotherapyexcellence.com), to which we are most grateful for permission to reproduce this interview.

As editors, and especially following on from the previous issue on austerity and neoliberalism, we are only too aware that this issue could be viewed as an overly optimistic antidote, and it may be that some readers find some of the articles less than critical of the benefits of new technology and of material solutions to psychological and ecological problems. We note that the benefits of social media need to be balanced by a caution about surveillance and social control. We also take note of the social and cultural limitations and cultural embeddedness of psychotherapy itself. Growing our sanity and our humanity may require more of us than remaining in our comfort zones being psychotherapeutic. Whatever your response(s), we hope that this issue stimulates reflection and welcome submissions that take up the themes presented for further discussion and debate.

The issue concludes with two book reviews: the first of Andy Fisher’s *Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life* reviewed by Jonathan Fay, and the second of Dominic O’Sullivan’s *Indigenous Health: Power Politics and Citizenship* reviewed by Heather Came.

Keith: The next issue (October 2016) is a generic one, for which we already have a number of interesting articles. We are planning further special issues on “The Politics of Psychotherapy Research” (May 2017), the deadline for the submission to which is 31st January 2017; and “The Politics of Psychotherapy Training and Supervision” (October 2017), the deadline for which is 31st May 2017. As ever, I hope you enjoy this issue.

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