

EDITORIAL

There could hardly be a more appropriate time to launch this journal. Global politics demonstrates with chilling immediacy the relevance of concepts from across the whole spectrum of therapeutic approaches – trauma, denial, dissociation, splitting, projection, the shadow, dreaming up and many more. Questions about the nature and origins of human destructiveness, and about what nurtures creativity and peace, have never been more urgent. At the same time, the internal politics of the psychotherapy world are also intense: the impact of political, social and economic factors is generating new regimes of regulation and control, which in turn set off cascading struggles for hegemony between different interest groups of trainers and practitioners. Furthermore, the practice of psychotherapy is encountering profound political challenges: psychotherapists are having to examine their own racism, sexism, and attitudes to economic and personal power.

It is also arguable, however, that almost any other time in the last hundred years would have been equally appropriate. The world has always been in deep trouble, and psychotherapy and politics have always had a deep historical relationship – from Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents* onwards, at least, psychotherapists have both offered to 'put culture on the couch', and have wrestled with political critiques of their own practices and institutions. One interesting

question, therefore, would be 'why now?' Why has it taken so long for psychotherapy and politics to emerge as an identifiable area of study and interest?

Part of the answer clearly lies in the indefatigable expansion of scholarship into new areas of specialization, paralleled by the birth of new specialist journals! But we hope that there is more to it than that. The development of psychotherapy and politics as a field of exploration seems to reflect two factors in particular. Firstly, politics itself, in the sense of what politicians do, is increasingly and unmistakably bankrupt. More and more people feel a basic contempt for its exponents, who are visibly confronting events over which they have little control, and about which they have equally little useful to say.

The second, and linked, factor is that psychotherapy emerges more and more clearly as, actually or potentially, *a practice of truthfulness*. In a world where politicians are seen to lie without remorse or consequence, there is a great hunger for any source of truth. Psychotherapy is intrinsically concerned with truth and its consequences, untruth and its consequences, and how to distinguish the two. It is by no means the only such practice; but unlike science or philosophy, the truth it studies is not only rational but *emotional*. And unlike religion, for example, it also tells us, truthfully, that no truth is absolute –

that truth is not singular but plural and contingent, and therefore subject to construction and negotiation.

At this point we need to stop, however. The first issue of this journal is not the place to lay down some final editorial position about its subject matter: our intention is rather to use the journal to gather material that helps us to *find out about* psychotherapy, politics, and their various relationships. The hope is to build up a body of knowledge from which conclusions might eventually be drawn. Thus although there are a number of topics on which we intend to publish papers – for example, political activism by psychotherapists; the psychological roots of racism and sexism; sexuality and gender; therapeutic approaches to conflict resolution; the institutional politics of psychotherapy; ecopsychology; power in the therapeutic relationship – we will be particular excited to receive contributions on subjects about which we have not thought, subjects that we have not yet identified as relevant to our field.

There is at least one way in which PPI itself is taking an active psycho-political position: the journal is not wedded to any single account of the psychotherapeutic process, and will publish material drawn from all schools of psychotherapy. There are startlingly few journals that draw equally from the psychodynamic and humanistic worlds: the split between the two is in some ways equivalent to the Cold War between West and East, and equivalently destructive in its effects. We hope to publish material on this theme.

Similarly, PPI will strive not to limit the political orientation of its contents. We expect this aspiration to cause us pain and difficulty: we may well fail to sustain it, since it is easy to imagine submissions we will not want to publish because we disapprove of

them politically. This parallels important and difficult questions about clinical practice – what does a psychotherapist do when she deeply disagrees with a client's politics? Ignore them, pathologize them, or argue with them? To the best of our ability, in any event, we welcome controversy to our pages as a vital element in the creative development of our field of study.

We are delighted with the contributions to this first issue, which epitomize much of what has been said above, and tackle many of the themes and issues outlined. Emanuel Berman's paper on the responses of Israeli psychotherapists to the ongoing conflict is particularly timely (and this is written four months before publication, in the knowledge that 'timeliness' may have become an understatement by the time these words are read). Berman insists that psychotherapists have a right and duty, both as citizens and as specialists, to intervene in the political process; while indicating the appropriate limits on such interventions. He also takes a strong and closely argued line on the importance, in the right circumstances, of bringing politics into the consulting room.

Two other short papers address issues of conflict and terror (in both senses of the word). Janine Puget and Julia Braun draw on their experience of living and working in Argentina to develop some ideas about how continuous violence and the breakdown of civil society affect individuals. Arnold and Amy Mindell – in a piece written not for academic publication, but for concrete and immediate use – suggest an approach to processing our response to events like the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York that is not only 'therapeutic' but potentially feeds back into the political process.

The paper by Luise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach represents another of PPI's major concerns: to track the *history* of the relationship between psychotherapy and

politics. Both Marx and Freud argued in different ways that an ignorance of history dooms us to repeat it; yet psychotherapy is bizarrely ignorant of its own history, in particular its own political history. Eichenbaum and Orbach summarize their own substantial contribution to the relationship between feminism and psychoanalysis and argue that this is part of a wider cross-fertilization between the two fields – indeed, that the rise of the relational approach in psychoanalysis corresponds to, and in part stems from, a feminist vision.

Janice Haaken's paper is also historical in orientation: ambitiously and effectively, it examines the unconscious as a political concept, and how it has been deployed in wider political and ethical arguments. Haaken ends by grounding her discussion in her own practice, looking at its relevance to a film that she made with women in Sierra Leone about the brutal civil war there. This relationship between theory and practice is exemplary for the material that we would like to present in PPI.

Hilary Prentice's paper presents a relatively new and potentially very important expression of 'psycho-politics': the ecopsychology movement, which attempts to find therapeutic tools for addressing the global ecological crisis, asking the questions 'how can we understand the psychological mechanisms that can let such a thing happen?' and 'what can we do about them?' The paper is introductory, because we expect that many of our readers will be unfamiliar with the field; and this in itself says a great deal about why ecopsychology is important and necessary. This issue closes with two reviews that demonstrate the broad definition of 'politics' that we are using and the wide range of subject matter PPI addresses.

It seems to us that this array of papers in itself justifies our project, demonstrating that psychotherapy and politics is a valid and creative field of exploration. We look forward to developing that exploration in many more issues of PPI. Our thanks must go to Whurr Publishers for their boldness in supporting this venture.