

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

The importance of methodology and method, sense and sensibility: A critical review of and response to ‘Psychotherapy in the UK: Multicultural, Eurocentric, and Americentric influences on a complex field in a troubled time’ by Colin Feltham

Keith Tudor  Auckland University of Technology, Aotearoa New Zealand

ABSTRACT

This article is a critical review of and response to Colin Feltham’s article, ‘Psychotherapy in the UK: Multicultural, Eurocentric, and Americentric influences on a complex field in a troubled time’, also published in this issue. The article critiques the lack of method and/or underlying methodology in Feltham’s article, and, by contrast, offers a methodological basis for this critique of his article, which frames this response in terms of Feltham’s rhetoric (language), his references to tradition and to authority, and his lack of objectivity. In doing so, this article addresses and challenges Feltham’s use of unfounded generalisations and familiar tropes about multiculturalism, Anglo- and Americo-centrism, political correctness, wokeness, and all the other ills he attributes to ‘dominant leftist-progressive view[s]’ of psychotherapy and counselling in the United Kingdom—and, by implication, elsewhere. It also challenges what appears to be a certain obsession on Feltham’s part both with various forms and categories of Leftists, as well as with an idealised white indigenous Britishness.

KEYWORDS: critical review; methodology; method; critique of rhetoric; critique of tradition; critique of authority; critique of objectivity; post-truth psychology

INTRODUCTION

First of all, I am grateful to the editors for giving me the opportunity to respond to what I am fairly certain many readers will find to have been (assuming you have read it first) an

*Contact details: keith.tudor@aut.ac.nz

incendiary article ‘Psychotherapy in the UK: Multicultural, Eurocentric, and Americentric influences on a complex field in a troubled time’ written by Colin Feltham (2025) and published in this issue of *Psychotherapy and Politics International (PPI)*. Of course, the fact that Feltham’s article has been accepted and published in *PPI* is the first of a number of ironies associated with his article, which is that this journal was founded and has been edited by colleagues who espouse the dominant, Leftist progressive views that Feltham so despises. Based on my experience as an editor (of over 60 issues across six different journals), I consider that many editors would have rejected Feltham’s article outright on the basis that it is a highly opinionated—and, in my view, a rather badly written—opinion piece, full of generalisations and unprocessed prejudices; and is both racist and sexist, the risk of accusations of which Feltham himself acknowledges. Of course, had the reviewers of Feltham’s article and the editors of this journal taken that course and rejected the article, the author would no doubt have used that evaluation and decision as further evidence of the power of the Leftist establishment in therapy (a term I use in this article to encompass psychotherapy, counselling and other ‘psy’ activities) to cancel dissent.

At the same time, while I acknowledge the generosity of the editors’ decision to publish Feltham’s article, along with this review and response, I was—and am—concerned about his views being given the oxygen of publicity and the distress caused especially to Black and Asian colleagues and readers by Feltham’s unsubstantiated claims and complaints. I can only hope that this critical review and response will act as something of a fire blanket to dampen and, hopefully, extinguish the fires he has set.

I should also acknowledge Feltham’s courage in being willing to submit his work for publication, knowing that it would—and, indeed, should—provoke such a response. I recognise that commentators like Feltham and others, such as Jordan Peterson (see Burston, 2019), represent certain views which still others might think but not express, which need to be addressed and countered, a point to which I return at the end of this article.

So, in this review and response, firstly I take issue with Feltham’s lack of methodology and method, and, secondly and by contrast, declare my methodology and method which offers a framework by which I have organised the material in this article, which thus forms my critical review of and response to Feltham’s article, in terms of his rhetoric or language, his references to tradition and authority, and his lack of objectivity. Following this, I conclude with some reflections on the context in which such debates take place, and on the task for progressives in any beyond the ‘psy’ disciplines and professions.

THE ABSENCE OF METHODOLOGY OR METHOD

Colin Feltham is an Emeritus Professor of Critical Counselling Studies at Sheffield Hallam University in the UK (and an External Associate Professor of Humanistic Psychology at the

University of Southern Denmark, Odense), but doesn't declare or define in what way and/or on what basis he is critical. For that we have to look elsewhere. In a book he wrote that presents a critical examination of *Counselling and Counselling Psychology* (Feltham, 2013), he states that he is drawn to a kind of critique referred to as 'exuberant scepticism' (Kurtz, 2010). Although Feltham doesn't define what he or Kurtz mean by this form of scepticism, the adjective exuberant appears to be an attempt to distance scepticism from its association of being negative (Kurtz, 2010). If this is the sense of exuberance Feltham is trying to achieve in his work, I have to say that, as far as this article is concerned, it doesn't work. The article, essentially comprising a list of complaints, is almost entirely negative, and contains no solutions other than Feltham's desire to see the UK return to the optimum population of 16 million, his own version of a nostalgic, romantic remedy of which he himself complains. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Feltham doesn't offer any thoughts about how to relocate the burdensome additional 54 million residents, though given his reference(s) to 'white, long-term indigenous Britons' (p. 11), there is a clear sense of who Feltham would put first on planes to nowhere. There's another irony here in that Nigel Farage, the leading proponent of Brexit (which Feltham supported), is descended from German migrants who immigrated to the UK in the 1860s, some ten years after Britain had achieved its optimum population (according to Ferguson [2009], whom Feltham cites approvingly), a fact that conjures a strange image of Feltham père (or, rather, great great grandparent, assuming, of course, that Feltham meets his own criterion of indigeneity) standing on the white cliffs of Dover with a placard saying 'Farage(s) go home'! While I appreciate this is a little fanciful, the point is that the term 'indigenous Britons' is inherently problematic, as the Celts and Picts were supplemented by the Vikings, Bretons/Normans, Angles, Saxons, and so on, all of which goes to show that the idealised population is a migrant population. A further and more profound irony (to which I am grateful to Kris Gledhill for alerting me) is that, as Great Britain and the United Kingdom exported its population around the globe, were Feltham's solution adopted by many other countries whose populations are not 'naturally' white, then the UK is going to be much more 'crowded'! The fact is that the size of the world's population, made possible by all sorts of 'progress', much of which might be 'credited' to white British folk, means that population has to be accommodated somewhere.

It is this kind of implication, as well as the general tone of this article that reveals a more serious and worrying shadow to Feltham's advocacy of exuberant scepticism which, rather like the naïve counsellor who defends the misuse of self-disclosure on the basis that that they were only being congruent, comes across as an excuse for expressing any distrust or mistrust without responsibility. More recently (than his 2013 work), Feltham has written a book on *Depressive Realism* (Feltham, 2017) in which he argues that people with mild-to-moderate depression have a more accurate perception of reality than people who are not depressed; acknowledges that depressive realism is a worldview of human existence that is essentially negative; and declares himself to have a 'depressive outlook' (p. 5) on life and experience. I mention and source this as it appears (at least to me) that the unstated but implicit

methodology of Feltham's article is a kind of depressive realism which underpins method which, essentially, is one of complaint.

By contrast, in writing this review and response, I do acknowledge both a methodology and a method.

My methodology is based on critical theory informed by non-conformism, radical social work, radical psychiatry, feminism, revolutionary socialism, critical race therapy, and disability politics (Tudor, 2018b); and, specifically, four aspects of a critical approach originally identified by Mingers (2000), i.e., the critique of rhetoric, the critique of tradition, the critique of authority, and the critique of objectivity, a taxonomy which was subsequently applied to a critical literature review by Saunders and Rojon (2011). The method I adopted in writing this article was a critical reading of Feltham's text, by which I identified a number of themes which I then organised under each of the four aspects of Mingers' critical approach, with an emphasis on the first of these, i.e., the critique of rhetoric.

THE CRITIQUE OF RHETORIC

The critique of rhetoric refers to the appraisal or evaluation of a problem with effective use of language, and the critique of language. Thus, in this part of the article, I take issue with Feltham's unsubstantiated claims, offensive statements, and problematic relationship with whiteness.

Unsubstantiated claims

Feltham's article is full of generalised, unsubstantiated statements, examples of which (from the first half of the article alone), include:

- 'It is now typical to assert that the UK, USA, and other Western nations are systemically oppressive and that their psychotherapy traditions are in the same mould and in need of overhaul.' (p. 1)
- 'Mass immigration and multiculturalism are uncritically endorsed by a powerful progressive left-wing.' (p. 1)
- 'The putative evils of Brexit, Eurocentrism, and Americentrism are constantly pointed out.' (p. 1)
- 'For all our travel, vaunted intellectual ambitions and fragments of therapeutic insight, we remain fundamentally local creatures of habit and a long way from knowing how to truly harness our alleged neuroplasticity.' (p. 2)
- 'the British navy played a significant role in ending slavery.' (p. 6)

- ‘It has been standard leftist fare, however, to insist that British wealth is underpinned by colonialism and transatlantic slavery, ... [and] that modern Britons are guilty beneficiaries and should be compelled to recognise this and compensate for it by reparations and diversity, equity, and inclusion.’ (p. 6)
- ‘psychotherapists... are probably not well equipped to make sound political judgements, even if they are often impassioned by a strong emotional social justice drive.’ (p. 6)
- ‘Dramatic incidents like the death of George Floyd in 2020 are immediately televised across the world, bringing riots, protest marches, and demands that are African-American in nature but have a disproportionate impact on the UK and other countries.’ (p. 7)

While I am tempted to refute each one of these as well as the other generalisations in Feltham’s article, that task would require another article in itself (and would run the risk of giving such statements more oxygen than they deserve). That said, I do want to pick up the example of the British Navy helping to end slavery, which, as with most arguments, needs to be understood in its—or, at least, an—historical context. Briefly, this was that, having profited from the slave trade for some 250 years, by the end of the 18th century, the British were keen to prevent colonial rivals from benefitting from the same form of trade. So, in addition to the legal and moral arguments—the Somerset case of 1772 had ruled that slavery was illegal in England—there were economic and political arguments in favour of the abolition of slavery. Nonetheless, the profit had been made—one estimate this as between £2 billion and £108 billion (at current prices) (Heblich et al., 2023)—and continued to be made on the back of trade routes from the west coast ports of Glasgow, Liverpool, and Bristol to Africa and America. The economic inflows from colonial times were huge and also involved benefits to British industry, for instance, the Lancashire cotton mills were able to export cotton to India because the British had closed down that industry in India.

However, for the purposes of this present article and argument, I am simply pointing out the nature of such statements and their rhetoric which confuses—and attempts to conflate opinions with facts. This, in turn, contributes to the problem of fake news, the promotion of what I would call post-truth psychology—and, notwithstanding Feltham’s own references to motivated reasoning and confirmation bias—the fact that his article is open to the accusation that it represents precisely such reasoning and bias.

Offensive language

At one point in his article, Feltham acknowledges that ‘Even for me to point [these things] out puts me at high risk of being labelled a racist, or guilty of white supremacy or white fragility’ (p. 12), speculating that the ‘terms shoehorning, non-white, and broken English are probably signs of my alleged racism.’ (p. 12). These sentences represent another irony: that the author appears unaware that they are prime examples of white fragility. They are also offensive,

though in stating that, I am aware that, when I or anyone else asserts that something is offensive, this raises the issue of free speech and, from street corners to academies and parliaments, the defence of the right to free speech and expression. At the same time, there are serious consequences to hate speech, not least in undermining social cohesion and shared values, and in impacting negatively on people, for instance, on students' psychological state (Saha et al., 2019). In response to countering hate speech, the United Nations' Secretary-General António Guterres said: 'Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, which is prohibited under international law.' (United Nations, 2019, para. 4). In this context, I would say that Feltham's views as expressed in his article, while not meeting the threshold for incitement, are biased, and expressed in ways that are unnecessarily provocative and likely to cause offence and hurt. To be clear, I am all for conscientious objection, being argumentative (Tudor, 2016), and critical (Tudor, 2017, 2018b), but with awareness that such objection, argument, criticality, and free speech itself are not absolute rights but rather—and especially in the Western civilisation and context Feltham that extols—come with relational responsibilities (see Cornell et al., 2006). (Feltham's article contains a number of references to Western—nations, intellectual tradition, civilisation, standards of knowledge, cultural revolution, psychotherapy, medicine, medical worldview, therapies, etc.—but none to Eastern or Southern traditions, or to the fact that what he refers as Western is also a Northern tradition, for a critique of which see Connell [2008] and Tudor [2012]). Somewhat predictably, Feltham invokes political correctness and wokeness, and 'politically correct wokeness' (p. 7). Whenever I see or hear this particular language game, I am reminded of the following exchange between a heckler and the Irish comic, Dara Ó Briain:

Heckler: Fuck PC [political correctness]; let's go for it.

Dara Ó Briain: Yeah, let's fuck the PC brigade... all those bastards with their manners and good courtesy... [but] good to have you here, my friend [and] nice to know that you're ready to get involved at a moment's notice with any kind of easy political rant that you'd like to throw out. (Ó Briain, 2016)

In another problematic passage, Feltham equates the killing of 140 African slaves in 1781 (which he acknowledges was barbaric), the ensuing transgenerational trauma underpinning the colonial exercise of dehumanisation, and the appalling psychiatric practices at the Kingston Lunatic Asylum in Jamaica at the end of the 18th century with the barbaric psychiatric treatment of King George III. Feltham writes: 'My point here is that psychiatric treatment must be viewed retrospectively as barbaric, not only towards African slaves but sometimes towards the most privileged white people.' (p. 10). This is an astonishing—and, yes, offensive—equation which reveals Feltham's lack of analysis of power, colonialism, and racism, and his misunderstanding and/or ignorance of the difference between equity (based on a critical analysis of power and oppression) and equality (based on liberal notions of

sameness). This is hugely important as such misunderstandings and/or ignorance lie at the heart of many current political debates and antagonisms in the world and, not least, the fuelling of hate (see Alschuler, 2013; Clarkson, 2003).

The third area in which Feltham's rhetoric is problematic is with regard to whiteness.

Problematic relationship with whiteness

Feltham appears obsessed with uncritical whiteness, in particular, with white Britishness, as evidenced by the following:

- 'white readers have their rights too' (p. 2)
- 'The formerly vigorous character of indigenous white Britons' (p. 5)
- 'White Britons are entreated to feel bad about ourselves: we are racists, colonialists, capitalists, and *psychotic*.' (p. 10)
- 'Where there is any communication difficulty, whites must endure it.' (p. 10)
- 'While immigrants are encouraged to complain about racism, to have their "minority stress" recognised and their mental health needs specifically catered for, white citizens must endure accusations of colonial aggression and must pay for the sins of their ancestors.' (p. 11)
- 'Never discussed are claims from white people that their mental health is affected by being "the only white person on the bus", or by struggling to understand the broken English of an African-origin nurse or Asian doctor.' (p. 12)
- 'The lived experience of aggrieved white, long-term indigenous Britons should be considered as well as the lived experience of immigrants claiming systemic racism.' (p. 13)

Again, these are astonishing statements, each of which warrants refuting and deconstructing, and all of which are based on the assumption of equality, with no analysis or appreciation of power or privilege, let alone white privilege or colonisation. This reminds me of an experience I had when participating in a Black Lives Matter demonstration in Auckland, which was large, inspiring, and, while expressing anger, was inclusive and good-natured. There was, however, one person—an older white man—standing slightly apart, and with a significant space around him, with a placard that read 'White lives matter, too'. As another older white man, I went up to him and said, "Of course white lives matter. All lives matter, but that's not the focus of this demonstration. This demonstration is acknowledging the *fact(s)* [and, I might have said, statistical evidence] that Black lives appear to matter less." Clearly, he didn't agree, but at least he gradually drifted away from the demonstration.

In his article, Feltham makes no reference to the extensive literature on critical whiteness (e.g., Giroux [1997], Green [2003], Willer-Kherbaoui [2019]), or to any of a number of articles

published in this journal on the subject, i.e., Altman (2003), Smith et al. (2021a), Denyer (2022), Smith et al. (2021b), Hunt (2022), Brown and Mousa (2023), George (2024), Hook (2024), and Whitney et al. (2024)—which I recommend to Feltham and other readers, together with my own modest contribution to this literature (Naughton & Tudor [2006], Tudor et al. [2022]). This is based on the idea of being culturally intentional (Shweder, 1990), that is, that everyone has a culture, that white is not neutral and the other ‘cultural’ and, therefore, demonised or exoticised; and that there is a critical approach to whiteness (Applebaum, 2016; Giroux, 1997) that acknowledges the social construction of whiteness against certain polarities, and that interrogates that particular construction as well as the privileges that go with it.

THE CRITIQUE OF TRADITION

This critique refers to the use of evidence and ideas in the literature to help question (the) conventional wisdom. As I have commented elsewhere (Tudor, 2018b), the history of psychotherapy has many examples of this. Indeed, I argue,

the development of psychotherapy over the last 200 years has been based on critique of what was then (previously) the tradition. Notable examples include Otto Gross’s work; Wilhelm Reich’s Sexpol movement; Karen Horney’s challenge of Freud’s theory of penis envy; the challenge to heterosexism in psychotherapy practice and theory from gay therapists and queer theory, and similar challenges from black and indigenous practitioners and theorists of racism in psychotherapy. (Tudor, 2018b, p. 15)

Feltham does offer a critique of tradition in his paragraphs on the influence on psychotherapy in Britain/the UK of traditions ‘largely imported from, other parts of the world’ (p. 2), though he doesn’t link this to any ideas about epistemology and, specifically, local knowledge (Totton, 1999; van der Ploeg, 1993; Wynne, 1995), a concept and perspective that has been discussed in this journal by Tudor (2012) and Fay (2013). Also, and somewhat surprisingly, given his own references to indigeneity—‘indigenous whites’ (p. 10), and ‘indigenous Britons’ (pp. 11 and 13)—neither does he refer to the articles in a special section in one of the issues of this journal on ‘Indigeneity in Europe’, i.e., Bagge & Berliner (2021), Sisalli (2021), and Van Werde (2021), with commentaries by Hargaden (2021) and Kohu-Morgan (2021). (In fact, in his article, Feltham refers to only one article published in this journal.)

In introducing his argument about the founding father of models or schools of therapy being white but Jewish (an argument I found somewhat strange and confused, not helped by the lack of structure and signposting in his article), Feltham notes that ‘the patriarchal principle continues’ (p. 3)—and then, ironically, perpetuates this principle (a) by including

Melanie Klein as one of the founding fathers, and (b) by omitting notable women psychotherapists and founders such as:

- Karen Horney, who critiqued Freud's notion of penis envy (see Horney, 1926) and, later, established the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis, and its affiliated teaching centre, the American Institute for Psychoanalysis.
- Jessie Taft, who was arguably the founder of the relational approach in psychotherapy (see Taft 1933/1973).
- Charlotte Bühler, who was one of the founders of humanistic psychology and the co-author of the first book on the subject (Bühler, 1935; Bühler & Melanie, 1972).
- Lore (Laura) Perls, who is now widely acknowledged as the co-founder of Gestalt therapy (Serlin & Shane, 1999; Stevens, 2024). (Several chapters of the book *Ego, Hunger and Aggression: A Revision of Freud's Theory and Method*, which was originally published in 1942 with Fritz Perls credited as the sole author [Perls, 1942/1947] were, in fact, written almost exclusively by Laura Perls.)
- ... as well as many women psychologists who were, in different ways, founders, pioneers, and/or firsts, including: Mary Whiton Calkins, Anna Freud, Tsuruko Haraguchi, Ruth Howard, Marie Jahoda, Mary Ainsworth, Virginia Satir, Mamie Philips Clark, Martha Bernal, and E. Kitch Childs.

These omissions are examples of what Connell (2008), writing about assumptions of Northernness, refers to as the grand erasure of knowledge and experience from the metropole, but which, in this context catches something of the misanthropic and, more problematically, misogynistic flavour of Feltham's text and its erasure of women's knowledge and experience in the field of therapy.

THE CRITIQUE OF AUTHORITY

This critique refers to the questioning of the dominant view(s) in a particular field. While Feltham's article clearly represents a critique of authority, the various authorities about which he complains, but regarding which he rarely offers any citations or evidence, include:

- Multiculturalism.
- 'A powerful progressive left-wing' (p. 1), 'dominant leftist-progressive view' (p. 1), 'standard leftist fare' (p. 6), 'left-wing practitioners' (p. 8), "'leftist-progressive" activism' (p. 9; which Feltham does attribute to Charura & Lago, 2021), 'idealised leftist narrative' (p. 9), 'The large *political shadow* of leftist-progressivism' (p. 9), 'Leftist activist therapists' (p. 10), and 'leftist therapists' (p. 12).

- ‘The decolonising and antiracist movements’ (p. 1), ‘an anti-western narrative’ (p. 6), and ‘Antifa [anti-fascist] activists’ (p. 11).
- ‘A Jungian retrofit interpretation’ (p. 2), including ‘romantic remedies’ (p. 2) (regarding which Feltham does cite Celeste, 2023).
- ‘Critical psychology’ (p. 3), the encroachment of ‘Domestic and foreign politics... on the field of therapy’ (p. 8), and ‘highly politicised therapy’ (p. 13).
- ‘Postmodern ideas’ (p. 3).
- ‘The ideology of equality [sic]’ (p. 9), which is ironic as it is Feltham who is promoting the ideology of an idealised, horizontal equality between all differences and diversities.
- ‘Imperative liberal progress’ (p. 9).
- Psychotherapists, ‘many of whom are now busying themselves on social justice causes [but who] are under the spell of an underdog hysteria’ (p. 13).

This list exposes a basic flaw in Feltham’s article which, in effect, comprises the setting up of a series of straw man arguments, a logical fallacy which attacks a distorted argument in order to prove the point the author wants to make. Moreover, given the number of unsubstantiated references to these authorities, especially leftists, anti-racists, and critical psychologists/therapists, Feltham appears to be under the spell of the very underdog hysteria about which he complains.

Nowhere in his article does Feltham question other forms of authority, for instance, the authority of Freud or of psychoanalysis, or recognise that psychotherapy (psyche + therapeia, meaning soul healing) dates back much further than the past 100 years; as he puts it: ‘Psychotherapy is little more than a hundred years old and largely a Euro-American (or at root a Jewish-Germanic) enterprise.’ (p. 5). This statement alone betrays Feltham’s Western—and Northern—mindset. Nowhere does Feltham mention how therapy was used in the Third Reich of Nazi Germany (1933–1945) to support propaganda, especially of the normative gender role of women (see Cocks, 1977); or how, in the McCarthy era (during the late 1940s through to the mid-1950s), American therapists were encouraged to—and did—report their communist clients to the US House of Representatives’ Un-American Activities Committee (see Schwartz, 1999). Nowhere does Feltham question the authorities in therapy who pathologised clients and trainees on the basis of their sexuality, which forced early LGBTQI+ colleagues to remain in the closet for the duration of their training, including their own analysis (see O’Connor & Ryan, 1993); or the British Christian counsellors who promoted conversion therapy until as recently as 2014 (see Strudwick, 2014). Neither does Feltham acknowledge the political decisions of a decidedly non-Leftist Labour government which, under the Layard happiness agenda based on an economic argument in favour of cognitive behavioural therapy (Layard, 2006), *reduced* rather than increased access to the range of

psychological therapies available to the British public (for a critique of see Dalal, 2018; Tudor, 2008/2018a).

Finally, on the question of authority, when critiquing Celeste's (2023) work on a Jungian investigation of settler psychology indigenous cultures, Feltham pulls no punches in advancing the option of simply rejecting Celeste's analysis as 'impractical and doomed nostalgia based on fetishising indigeneity' (p. 2). At the same time, he appears blissfully unaware of his own impractical, doomed—and problematic—nostalgia for some idea(l) of indigenous Britishness when he refers to 'indigenous objections into post-racial acceptance' (p. 3), the solution to which is some form of racial Apartheid; and 'the formerly vigorous character of indigenous white Britons' (p. 5), who, it is implied, have been weakened by integration and miscegenation. It would be interesting to know precisely to what point in British or English history Feltham traces white indigeneity as we know that two Roman Governors of Britain were Black: Quintus Lollius Urbicus, Governor of Britain (139–142 Common Era [CE]) and Septimus Severus, a Roman Emperor who was based in York for three years (who died in 211 CE). Given the number of Black Roman soldiers, I am pretty sure that we could safely assume there would be Black Britons as far back as the first century CE. Feltham also refers to 'indigenous whites who feel alienated' (p. 10); the 'silent majority of indigenous Britons' (p. 11); and 'the lived experience of aggrieved white, long-term indigenous Britons' (p. 13), all of which only polarises important debates and takes us further away from thinking together and across divides about social and political issues such as migration, immigration, population growth, the impact of climate change and war, as well as how therapy can help people(s) with their responses to these very real issues, something that this journal has been considering and promoting for over 20 years.

Unfortunately, Feltham's language represents what Connell (2008) refers to as a reading from the centre, or perceived centre, in this case, of the UK, and the Western intellectual tradition. This partiality offers an appropriate lead in to the fourth and last aspect of Mingers' critical approach, the critique of objectivity.

THE CRITIQUE OF OBJECTIVITY

This critique refers to the recognition that neither the knowledge nor the information under discussion is value free, and, more broadly, that it is not possible or desirable to be objective, especially in the human sciences, of which both psychotherapy and politics are prime examples. I suggest that the nature, i.e., the partiality of Feltham's critique of authority as demonstrated in the previous part demonstrates precisely his lack of objectivity.

Feltham claims to hold the moral high ground when he associates himself with 'Darwinian gradualism... Freudian pessimism... [and] objectivity, science, [and] commonsense' (p. 10)

and, in a particularly bilious passage, complains about those who, he asserts, have little or no patience with these (his) perspectives and qualities:

Today's largely American-origin therapy activists promote a programme of imperative liberal progress for both individuals and civilisation. This programme is Marxism-inspired, dogmatic, and not open to reciprocal dialogue. We are told there is no truth, only truths, yet only the truths of the 'oppressed' should now be heard and acted upon. Foucault's *parrhesia*—'speaking truth to power'—is an over-used and disingenuous meme. Britain, and Europe, is [sic] a very old civilisation compared with the USA, yet America is succumbing to the populous, vigorous, aggrieved emotional forces of African-Americans and other groups self-styled as oppressed. (pp. 9-10)

Apart from the non sequitur ('...', yet America...') (of which there are a number in the article), the racism (the 'emotional forces of African-Americans'), and the dismissiveness ('self-styled' oppression), again, Feltham doesn't seem to recognise that his own writing in this article is dogmatic; certainly not dialogic; dismissive (of any analysis or form of oppression); and disingenuous (as he only refers to privileged oppressors who are, according to him, the real victims) of Leftism.

Of course, Feltham's promotion of Darwinian gradualism, Freudian pessimism, objectivity rather than subjectivity especially phenomenology, science rather than human science (Rogers, 1985), and commonsense or pragmatism, places him further away from the humanistic psychology he espouses, no doubt, ironically—or, more accurately, cynically.

There are other examples of Feltham's lack of objectivity, such as his dismissal of atonement without exploring what the word means, i.e., at-one-ment (see Aulén, 1970), and of microaggressions without reviewing any of the literature, both of which are also beyond the scope of this review and response, but which need to be noted and, at some point, addressed further.

At one point in his article, Feltham gets defensive about 'Little Englanders' (p. 1), but, later, in his somewhat depressive conclusion, comments: 'However, all things must pass. England blended into the "United Kingdom" in 1927' (p. 12). He then references calls for Scottish independence and claims the United States of America is losing its position in the world. Unfortunately for Feltham, his claim of blending is simply inaccurate. Historically, after the departure of the Romans (in 410 Common Era), England and Wales reverted to being separate countries. Later, first the Normans and later the English invaded Wales, and the two countries were 'united' by the *Statute of Rhuddlan* 1284 which aimed to replace Welsh law with English law. This was consolidated in the 16th century when Wales was annexed by England by means of the *Laws in Wales Acts* of 1535 and 1542 (note the preposition). So, if anyone's feeling blended—or, more accurately, annexed—it's the Welsh, not the English. Fast forward to 1603 when, following the death of Elizabeth I of England and Wales, James VI of Scotland inherited the English (and Welsh) Crown. In 1706 both parliaments agreed on a *Treaty of Union* and passed two separate Acts which created one parliament of Great Britain. So, no blending, but,

rather, union. Finally, following the independence of the Irish Free State in 1922, and its recognition in British law in the *Irish Free State Constitution Act* of 1922, in 1927 Great Britain and Northern Ireland became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. So, again, no blending, but another union. However, while that's the history, I acknowledge that Feltham and others *feel* 'blended'—and overwhelmed, overcrowded, othered, etc. (all words Feltham uses). Nevertheless, it's important to distinguish fact from feeling and for people to own the subjectivity involved rather than to project unresolved feelings as pseudo-objective realities.

In his book on depressive realism, Feltham (2017) acknowledges that 'Like most [depressive realists], my personality and outlook has always included a significantly depressive or negative component.' (p. 4). When I read that in the context of undertaking the research for this article, it made more sense of the approach Feltham takes in his present article. He then goes on to assert that he is someone with a 'depressive outlook' (p. 5) and that this should not be thought of in pathological terms. While I totally agree with Feltham's perspective on not pathologising a depressive outlook or depressive or negative views about life and experience, equally a depressive outlook shouldn't stand as an excuse for parading a litany of untheorised complaints about life and other people, based on what I would call a depressive *reactivity*.

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

I agree with one point that Feltham makes in his article when referring to history, colonialism, slavery, economics, guilt, compensation, and reparation, which is 'that patient scholarly analysis is required to tease out all nuances.' (p. 6). Unfortunately, his article is neither patient or scholarly, nor nuanced or professorial. I note this not to suggest that Feltham gets cancelled but, rather, that he takes responsibility for the consequence of what he says or writes—and, indeed, for how he votes. At one point in the article, he complains that, as a result of voting for Brexit, he 'found friends dropping away and pieces of paid work disappearing.' (p. 8). So what? It's as if Feltham thinks he has the unalienable right to sound off and make personal, professional, and political choices—with no consequences.

Feltham's piece does, however, raise some important issues beyond the specific content, which reflect wider debates about the nature of truth, fake news, the confusion of feelings and facts, and the privileging of feelings over facts, free speech, and so on.

In this context, Feltham's piece is emblematic of the emergence and now trend in nationalist, right-wing, anti-woke rhetoric and writing in which speakers and authors feel free to say the most heinous things in the knowledge that it will, first and foremost, enrage progressive thinkers and force them to respond. We see this in the attitudes and arguments of men—and they are predominantly men—such as Donald Trump, Nigel Farage, Steve

Bannon, Jordan Peterson, Victor Orbán, and others. Dave Nicholls (personal communication, 10th December, 2024) offers the following analysis of this:

In the face of this provocation, the right winger knows that the progressive writer has little choice but to point out the factual, scholarly, stylistic, or substantive errors, if they're being charitable, and/or, or call out their naked bigotry. This leaves the right winger free to claim the moral high ground (once the sole privilege of the intellectual), and shout that this is just more evidence that the leftist is an elitist pedagogue, out of touch with the experience of the common people.

This, of course, is deeply ironic as left-wing political parties and movements are—or were—viewed as the natural home for the tired, the poor, the huddled masses, and the homeless, the oppressed and alienated—and of the critical thinking to right such wrongs:

Welfarism, affirmative action, social insurance, comprehensive education, and the like were meant to address... inequity, by making everyone a critical thinker. But the right is now—perhaps rightly—pointing out that this has been [the left's] own project of advantage, privileging some at the expense of many others. (Nicholls, 2024)

This is a problem that has been faced by white well-educated radical feminists, by post-colonial critics, by much of the European left, and is now being faced by the Democratic Party in the United States of America, following the recent election—and it's a problem I face(d) in responding to Feltham's piece. I am glad he wrote it, and I wish he hadn't; but, thinking more broadly, I wish the state of the world was such that people didn't think and act in terms of such rhetoric and solutions. Equally, I'm glad I've responded to it, but from a meta-critical perspective, I'm wondering if, rather than dampening the fire (as I intended), by responding in the way I have, I'm just adding fuel to it and to a bigger fire that's now burning down the progressive house? In some ways, the old left slogan "No platform for fascists—and racists" was easier.

In a lovely turn of phrase, Deleuze (1992) writes that 'There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons.' (p. 4). If pieces like Feltham's do or provoke anything constructive, they will be to force progressive thinkers to *be* progressive and to find new 'weapons' to remind people that difference and inclusiveness *has to be* the goal for life, including psychotherapy and politics, internationally.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Keith Tudor is a qualified social worker and psychotherapist, and professor of psychotherapy at Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. He is a past editor and co-editor of *Psychotherapy and Politics International (PPI)* (2012–2022), and the author of a number of critical publications in and on psychotherapy, including *Conscience and Critic: The Selected Works of Keith Tudor* (Routledge, 2017), *Psychotherapy: A Critical Examination* (PCCS Books, 2018), and, most recently, *Transactional Analysis Proper – and Improper: Selected and New Papers* (Routledge, 2025). He is particularly keen to support open access publication and, to that end has brought three journals (including *PPI*) onto an open access platform, on which he has also published four books: Tuwhera Open Access Books (<https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz/publications>).