
ARTICLE

Competing ideologies in and about psychotherapy: An exchange of views

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ABSTRACT

Following Colin Feltham's article in this issue (Feltham, 2025), and Keith Tudor's response (Tudor, 2025b), also published in this issue, the article comprises a series of exchanges between the two authors. It encompasses some discussion—or statements—about beliefs and values; differences of ideology; the use of language; equality and equity; and the nature of psychotherapy. The impetus for the exchange was based on the hope of some rapprochement between the two authors' views but, in this sense, the project failed. The necessary unfolding of divergent views does not reach any positive conclusions but, at least, airs significant sticking points held by practitioners in the field, about both the content and process of differences, positions, and argument. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding their profound and unresolved differences, both authors hope that, together with the two preceding articles, the whole exchange will stand as a case study regarding conflict about culture and identity in the profession and serve to stimulate further questions.

KEYWORDS: beliefs; values; equity; equality; misunderstanding

THE INVITATION

Keith: Well, Colin, by now the reader of this issue of the journal will, we assume, have read your article and mine, and have their own responses.

Initially, I have to say, I was going to leave it there, but then Karen (Minikin, one of the editors of the journal) forwarded an email you sent her with the draft of a

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letter you were proposing to send to the journal basically saying how awful my response was. In it, you referred to a lack of civility, misunderstandings, hurt feelings, remote misunderstandings, and name-calling. Although my initial reaction was 'Here we go again. I'm now getting criticised for daring to respond to what appears to be acceptable to say and write these days', for various reasons, I thought that I would break the 'polarised stalemate' (as you put it in your email), by reaching out and inviting you to this dialogue—or, at least, exchange of paragraphs—to which you agreed to participate, so here we go.

You will, of course, want to make an opening statement, but I'd like to begin by asking you whether you had any sense of the possible or probable responses and/or reactions to what you wrote—and whether you considered those in writing your piece, especially for this journal? I ask as, from my point of view, I read and see all the accusations you make of me and us (slurs, insults, hate speech, caricaturing, etc.) in your piece, whereas you think it's quite neutral and reasonable. (By 'us', I refer to your caricaturing of me, this journal, and, no doubt, 'fellow-travellers', as representing 'dominant leftist-progressive views' (Feltham, 2025, p. 1). If only my views were dominant! In the profession, I'm actually quite marginal and peripheral.

THE EXCHANGE

Colin: Well, Keith, where do I start? I'm sure our politics are very different and it's likely we will never agree. However, your response here also confirms for me that our very perception of these matters is at odds. I had not expected my original article to be published. I thought it would be either rejected or submitted to a process of revisions. Had this journal rejected it, I would not have made much of it, since I am used to rejections and mature enough to accept them. I believed my article might rankle enough to be rejected by editors I imagined as 'leftist-progressive' (or similar terms) but for myself I felt I was simply trying to state a case, however challenging, that the UK and 'the West' is not the terribly monstrous, racist place it is increasingly painted as being.

Now, our differences of perceptions may be due to personality factors, class, ideology, geography, and so on. However, from my point of view (and not only mine but probably the majority of the UK population, and many in the psychotherapy professions) the 'Anglosphere' and Western Europe has been under assault since the late 1960s and has been seriously undermined for the past 20 years. I am sure you dislike the terms 'political correctness' and 'woke' but these encapsulate much of the stalemate and rancour involved. I (think I) understand that you may feel you have no dominant position but many of 'us' in my corner have felt under siege for years—

told what we can say and cannot say, been threatened, intimidated, and cancelled. Minorities have (in my perception and that of many) come to wield covert power which is now quite overt, and exercised by activists embedded in academia, the civil service, media, publishing, and elsewhere. As you know, this movement has been referred to as Cultural Marxism, or the 'long march through the institutions'. For some time, I have been trying to find a space for dialogue between the parties in this stalemate. I sometimes use the term 'psychology of belief' in an attempt to understand why we are so divided and unable to find common ground. I think of Martin Buber but also of psychotherapists whose mission is precisely to listen patiently to others' utterances and nuances. The polarisation facing us today is characterised by a notion that those who disagree must be misinformed, stupid, or evil (notably in the case of Brexit, for example, or closer to home in the trend towards imposing the ideology of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) on psychotherapy training institutions). Does this begin to shape our dialogue or am I unwittingly causing further confusion and distress?

Keith: Thanks for this, Colin. I'd like to start my response to what you've written by acknowledging its tone, which appears much softer and more engaging than your original piece, perhaps reflecting more of the hurt than the anger that you (and other colleagues) feel.

From what you say, there's a certain irony that arises from the fact that your paper was accepted for publication. As you will have gathered, I wouldn't have accepted it as it was/is, but would have offered you the opportunity to revise and resubmit it, but then we might not be having this dialogue or exchange, so, in this sense, while I disagreed with the editors' original decision, I'm glad we're here, even though I recognise it's variously painful for all concerned. I know that one of the editors found your article so distressing that they couldn't bring themselves to read it a second time, and that I had a heartsink moment when I saw the notice that informed me that you had written your first comment—and I'm sure you've had your own moments in dealing with the threats, intimidation, and cancellations to which you refer. Nonetheless, I want to pick up on what you said about believing that your article 'might rankle enough to be rejected by [the] editors', as if you wanted to rankle them/us enough to reject it—and you. When I think about and reflect on that word—meaning to cause continued annoyance or resentment—it makes sense not only of the tone of your original paper but also of the tone of my response. As Berne (1966) observes: 'The behavioral outcome of an ulterior transaction is decided at the psychological and not at the social level' (p. 227).

I agree that our differences—and the differences we represent—are due to the factors you list (personality, class, ideology, geography) and more, but I don't agree that the 'Anglosphere' has been under 'assault' and 'seriously undermined' for the past 20 years. I would say that it's been critiqued and rightly so, but this doesn't mean you or anyone else has to discount your Anglo identity; quite the opposite. I 'discovered' my Englishness and aspects of my English identity when living in Italy in the mid-1980s; Billy Bragg (a working-class hero if ever there was one) writes beautifully and poignantly about his search for belonging in *The Progressive Patriot* (Bragg, 2007). In my view, such critiques provoke (call forth) us to be progressive and to join in levelling the playing field (Figure 1) rather than regressive and reactive. You're right, I don't like the accusations of 'political correctness' and 'wokeness' as I think they're easy ways of dismissing progressive ideas and practice and only contribute to the stalemate and rancour you mention.

Figure 1. An Uneven Playing Field



I do want to say something about diversity, equity, and inclusion values—but am aware that I have already written about the same amount as you, and, as I don't want to create an unevenness in our exchange(s), I'll leave it there for now.

Colin: Yes, I've certainly had my moments of cancellation and so on. On my rankling, I'm afraid you attribute greater malice to me than anything that went through my mind, and your reference to Berne has the quality of a remote diagnosis, or psychiatric

name-calling at one remove. My long-dead father, a plasterer and Labour supporter, would not have aligned with Billy Bragg any more than I do. I hesitate to say this but the most likely hero for today's working-class is Tommy Robinson. As for the Anglosphere, my Englishness, my 'regressive and reactive' response, this has the same flavour of rancour from you, in my estimation. I don't think we will get far in this way. Can we try another way?

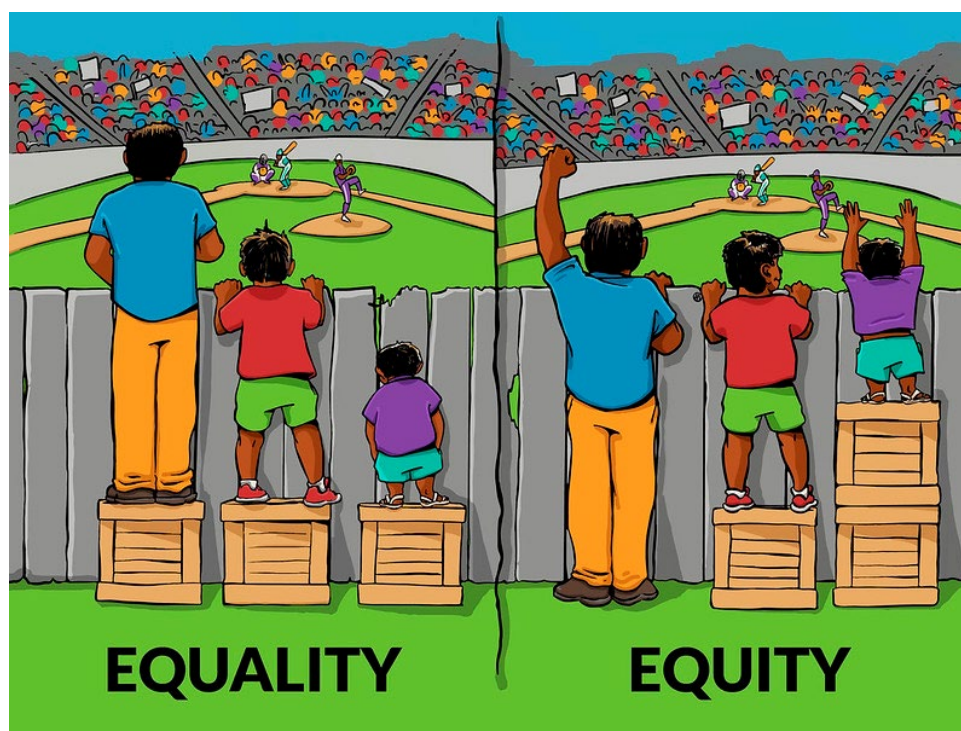
These are complex matters we're discussing in a highly condensed way. I suspect there are problems of assumptions and miscommunication beneath the surface. There isn't time to drill down into depth and nuance on many issues and instead we may fill communication lacunae with our own projections based on affect heuristics. We might too readily erect traffic stop signs in our discussion, based on linguistic objections instead of accepting provisional meanings. We are trying to be reasonable but isn't it possible we both harbour only dimly recognised emotional and visceral reactions within ourselves? We might instead try to lay out our grand but tacit, divided ideologies. Would you agree that we have a polarised choice between these two positions, which in principle are open to democratic endorsement or rejection?

- (1) *A 'conservative' interpretation of human history roughly based on a Darwinian notion of 'nature red in tooth and claw' (as Tennyson [1850/2024] puts it), in which the animal world is plainly unequal and full of suffering. We are evolved animals containing both primitive reactions and sophisticated reasoning. Some countries, groups, and individuals do better than others. The winners have produced great civilisations, advanced industry and technology, life-saving medicine, and magnificent architecture. Meritocracy underpins this movement. The accompanying predatory patriarchy, racism, and capitalism are consequences of human evolution and can gradually be modified but too rapid, revolutionary changes are unwise and counterproductive, leading to totalitarian regimes that are worse than the original problem.*
- (2) *A 'progressive' interpretation of the human world that regards inequality as an anathema to be urgently overturned by any means necessary, in which the past is the past. We have known since Marx the mechanisms of the advantaged, oppressive classes and how these are perpetuated by economic self-interest, labour exploitation, property control, environmental degradation, free markets, slavery and colonialism, police and military control, and propaganda. It is immoral and damaging to passively accept this scenario—in which the chronically poor, dispossessed, and victimised are ignored or further impoverished—when correct political analysis and humanitarian decency indicate what needs to be done. Not to act is to be complicit.*

If you agree with this condensed summary (and of course you may well not agree), the next compelling question (for me) is why most of us gravitate towards one or the other narrative. Obviously, many of us belong somewhere in the middle of this. However, why we believe what we believe is an unanswered question, and indeed rarely addressed. Most psychotherapists probably lean towards 'ideology' 2, especially since the advent of DEI in the wake of George Floyd's 2020 death. However, I have spoken with trainees who say they are intimidated into compliance. Psychotherapy had a predominantly intrapsychic focus until a few years ago but has now turned into a form of 'critical social justice' (Thomas, 2023). Would you agree? I am trying to identify the most significant differences between us and to bring the focus to psychotherapy.

Keith: Ouch! How you misunderstand and/or misconstrue my intention(s). Far from attributing any malicious intent on your part, my picking up on the word rankling was an attempt to connect with something you had said, and to reflect on what had been co-created, including my annoyance or resentment. Similarly, my reference to Berne was not intended to diagnose you but, rather, an attempt to acknowledge that what happens in communication (it's one of Berne's three rules of communication) is decided at the psychological level by both parties. With regard to the Anglosphere, and Englishness (not specifically yours), again I feel that you simply throw back/reject my attempts to connect and to generalise rather than personalise the challenge—and then you raise the idea that the most likely hero for today's working-class is Tommy Robinson... (I'm sure that, if readers of the journal don't know who Tommy Robinson is, they can look him up.) As you've referred to him, I want to understand whether you're seeing him as a hero for disenfranchised, white working-class men (particularly), or aligning yourself with his views, or both? I ask this as I think it relates to the wider, polarised positions you summarise, with which I broadly agree, although, rather than '*an anathema to be urgently overturned by any means necessary*' (which appears more extreme than your summary of the first position), I'd probably frame it more in terms of '*an injustice to be corrected*', which also allows me to share another picture that illustrates the difference between equality and equity in the face of inequity (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Images Representing the Difference Between Equality and Equity



Note. From *Community Eye Health* [Image], by Angus Maguire, 2016, Flickr (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/communityeyehealth/27755848262>). CC BY-NC 2.0

The question *why* we believe what we believe is an interesting one and, I agree, is rarely addressed, but I think a logically prior question (in the sense of it being easier to access) is ‘*What* do we—or I—believe?’ This also provides the basis for the question, ‘How do my beliefs impact on my practice as a psychotherapist?’ which, in turn, leads me to focusing on values. As Rogers’ (1957) puts it: ‘One cannot engage in psychotherapy without giving operational evidence of an underlying value orientation and view of human nature’ (p. 199)—which is why I think your outline of the two positions is useful. Interestingly, Rogers goes on to state that ‘It is definitely preferable, in my estimation, that such underlying views be open and explicit, rather than covert and implicit’ (p. 199). Would you agree that this is desirable?

I don’t agree with you when you state that ‘Psychotherapy had a predominantly intrapsychic focus until a few years ago’ as I think the history of psychotherapy reveals a long and strong sense of its concern and engagement with the social world. As Aron and Starr (2013) acknowledge: ‘for a long time psychoanalysis was as much a social movement, a movement for reform in education, social policy, and culture as it was a treatment method’ (p. 28). I think that this is an important point for our discussion as, if you see psychotherapy as essentially about the intrapsychic world, then I can understand your concern about it being turned into any particular social

form. However, if you see psychotherapy (as I do) as, in Western terms, an Enlightenment project, then you (one) would be fine with it being a form of liberation (as did the early radical psychiatrists), and/or anti-oppressive practice (see, for example, Lago & Smith, 2003), with an analysis of social injustice. In one piece of research, I and a colleague identified some 15 categories of radical therapy, the earliest of which dated back to the 1920s (Tudor & Begg, 2016).

Colin: About misunderstanding, generalising, and personalising—yes, it seems I have misunderstood some of your motives and phrasing here, Keith, and your explanation is helpful. I'm afraid I disagree with your analysis of (mainstream) psychotherapy as having always been concerned with social conditions. Yes, it has had components of and advocates for a sociopolitical focus (notably Adler, Horney, feminist therapy, a wave of US-based multicultural counselling, and, later, critical psychologists such as Ian Parker). I'm sure too that you are more aware of 'non-Western' models of psychotherapy than I am, such as Franz Fanon's. Of course, there have been *some* politically active person-centred therapists, for example, but in my years of practice, training, and supervision, these components have always been subservient (or marginal) to individual and intrapsychic concerns, *and rightly so*. BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) always regarded as inappropriate, indeed unethical, the intrusion of the Christian counsellor's beliefs into sessions with clients. Today we have some therapists advocating that antiracist themes be brought into work with white clients even when clients have expressed no such concerns (Drustrup, 2021).

On our beliefs being prior to why we believe them—this is complicated. Rogers is not an authority figure for me, by the way. I suspect that our beliefs (whether religious, political, psychotherapeutic, or otherwise) are inchoately formulated prior to attempts to make them explicit. It looks to me as if such strong beliefs have unconscious, visceral, and emotional roots and this may be why we (all of us) find it so hard to change or surrender them, as well as presenting blocks to dialogue. Two-party democracy is a conundrum, for example, when we pretend to respect the other party's politics but believe them to be not only wrong in terms of their sociopolitical analysis, but dangerous, unintelligent, or evil. In many current political debates, each side often accuses the other of hateful motives, and political opponents are portrayed as extremists: typically, anyone right of centre is said to be 'far-right' or neo-Nazi, and those left of centre are caricatured as 'far-left' or Stalinist. Your figures are superficially compelling, in my view, only because images, like emotions, are generally more compelling and simplistic than logical argument, evidence, and nuanced discourse. Equity might demand reparations for African Americans, for example, but that is an extremely complex and fractious debate, not at all a

straightforward ‘injustice to be corrected’. Tommy Robinson is a British working-class activist opposed to indiscriminate mass immigration. He has actively highlighted the so-called grooming gangs scandal involving the proven mass rape of white girls by Pakistani Muslim men in the UK. He is described by his supporters as a patriot and by his enemies as a far-right peddler of hateful racism. Brenton Tarrant is a sickening mass murderer who was motivated by anti-Muslim hatred, but Robinson is non-violent and currently imprisoned for ‘contempt of court’. These should not be conflated. I admire Robinson’s raw passion and bravery, and, like him, I believe the UK is being damaged by unmanageable mass immigration and a feuding-oriented multiculturalism, but I am too much of a snob to be an overt supporter of his. One person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter, as they say. Nelson Mandela had a mixed reputation on violence, and Gandhi was reported to be racist against black South Africans. Things are not black and white.

On our dialogue—as we progress in our dialogue here, I am somewhat frustrated by the format and its limits, which for obvious reasons cannot facilitate exploration of nuances and is likely to stimulate unintentional misunderstandings. Even as I commit certain phrases to ‘paper’, I sense that you will want to add your correction, grammatical preference, or nuance! Me too! I over-use apostrophes because I am aware of the dangers of being taken too literally, for example. I wonder if I should omit the Robinson and Tarrant bit in case I am misunderstood or thought insensitive. Like some theologians, we are probably bound to an exercise akin to counting how many angels can dance on the head of a pin; or something like Jonathan Swift’s satirical debate about the correct way to cut a boiled egg. I ask myself ‘should that be African American or African-American?’ I know it’s no longer Afro-American! Linguistic fashions change rapidly, some of them fuelled by the ‘culture wars’ (a phrase I imagine you might reject).

Serious issues face us, but our dialogue is probably distorted by our own psychobiographies, journal constraints, and many other layers of complexity that limit our ability to arrive at meaningful rapprochement. For me, the most enduring crucial issue is the deep impasse in psychologies of belief. This impasse can feed into my ‘depressive realism’ (Feltham, 2017), the feeling that we (you and me but also all feuding human beings) will always remain at loggerheads; or it can feed into a rather quixotic contrarian challenge on my part (Feltham, 2008). I suspect that some ‘neuropolitics’ is involved but even in this probing domain, knee-jerk Marxism inserts itself (Yu, 2022), and humanistic psychologists tend to dismiss all arguments that smack of determinism. Note that all efforts to ‘bring politics into psychotherapy’ are leftist in nature, arguments for the legitimacy of any conservative views being scarce among therapists and academics who do not seriously believe in democracy. The attempt by some to create a pluralistic model of psychotherapy that honours many

theoretical orientations, and includes cultural and political components, is probably doomed by its overcomplexity. Or to put it differently, it taxes average human intelligence.

I think I am generally friendly and polite to everyone I encounter as an individual. My best friend is a vicar who belongs to a group called Sacramental Socialists. After decades on the left, I am a right-wing atheist. I do not welcome the influx of millions of assertive Muslims into Europe, but neither do I hate them. Living as I do in densely populated, multicultural London, I feel increasingly alienated. Being vilified as a white Englishman further alienates me. I do not agree that we are facing a return to the fascism of the 1930s; rather, we are seeing a necessary pendulum swing from the undemocratic leftism of Cultural Marxism towards the right. Governments should never go too far, for too long, in either political direction. Insofar as psychotherapy is helpful, I don't think it should be politicised. I'm sorry I have taken too much space here, but our dialogue is probably, like psychoanalysis, interminable.

Keith: Wow, that's a lot to respond to! I have many responses which, for here and now, I organise into four areas and paragraphs.

Firstly, with regard to history—I wrote that 'the history of psychotherapy reveals a long and strong sense of its concern and engagement with the social world' (p. 7); I didn't say that mainstream psychotherapy has always been concerned with social conditions. That's the point: the (conservative) *mainstream* of psychotherapy has only been concerned with the intrapsychic (and, in my view, ever more obscure speculations on the geological layers of the unconscious and their consequent influence on intrapsychic dynamics), which has tended to exclude the impact of the social world and extra-therapeutic factors, and to pathologise those who do attend to the impact of the social/political and cultural. In one way, I think we're each complaining about the mainstream and who has power. You complain about the dominance in psychotherapy of the left and I of the conservative and/or right-wing; and, no matter what arguments or references we bring to bear on the subject, and how many words we expend on this (and I suggest that we don't expend too many more), it seems unlikely that we're going to convince each other of another view or way forward. Perhaps the only—and best—outcome of this (i.e., the publication of your original article, my review and response, and this article, all in the same issue)—is that we're being explicit about what we think, believe, and value, and that we let the reader, and especially the next generation of psychotherapists, decide for themselves. Before I return to values, I do want to make one other point about history, which is to say that while you and other right-wing colleagues complain about political correctness and wokeness, I haven't ever heard or read anything from

or by you and like-minded colleagues acknowledging or commenting on the historical cancellation of gay people in psychoanalysis; the role of psychotherapy under fascism, which was, amongst other things, designed to maintain traditional gender roles, especially for women (see Cocks, 1997); or the conservative therapists who colluded with the United States House of Representatives' Committee on Un-American Activities by reporting their communist clients to the Committee (see Schwartz, 1999); or, until comparatively recently, the exclusion of people of colour, disabled people, and neurodiverse people from training in the 'psy' professions; and so on. Again, I appreciate that the best we might hope for is that all our history—or, perhaps more accurately, histories and herstories—are made available to this and the next generation.

So (and secondly), this brings me (back) to the point I was trying to make about values. It seems to me that one of the contributions that humanistic psychology originally made as a 'third force' in response to psychoanalysis and behaviourism, was to put values on the agenda. Much of the writing of the early humanists was framed in terms of the values of humanism applied to therapy, for instance, in terms of love, creativity, self-actualisation, autonomy, freedom, and so on—see Sutich (1962), the (UK's) Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners (1998/2025), and The (US-based) Association for Humanistic Psychology (2025). In this sense, I suggest that humanistic psychology is much more open and explicit about its underlying value orientation, including its view of human nature than most psychoanalysts or behaviourists (for further discussion of which, see Tudor, 2010, 2013/2018, 2015)—and one doesn't have to hold Rogers as an authority figure (which I know you don't) to agree with or simply to appreciate his point about values. If we think about this philosophically, he's pointing to axiology, just as in defining the two positions (p. 5), you're pointing to ideologies (about history and society). I have long argued that psychotherapists need to be more explicit about their personal philosophy, more knowledgeable about the philosophy that underpins their espoused theoretical model and/or orientation, and, therefore, clearer about the practice that follows from that (Tudor & Worrall, 2006). So, I don't have a problem with Christian counsellors (or counsellors who are Christian) as long as they are open and explicit about how their faith impacts on their practice, and I wouldn't have an issue with a therapist who's a fascist as long as they, too, were explicit about it and, therefore, wasn't a member of a professional organisation whose aims, objectives, codes, and frameworks didn't support fascism. Obviously, I have fewer issues with colleagues who state that they are feminist, anti-racist, intersectional, and so on, not only because they are on the side of the angels (I am being humorous), but because, in my experience, they are generally more open and explicit about their identity—and their values align more with the values of psychotherapy (see also my fourth and last point below). By the way, I looked up the article by Drustrup (2021) you cited

and found (a) that the author clearly states that ‘A model is offered for how psychotherapists *can* bring up and work with the topics of race and racism during the course of therapy’ (p. 63, my emphasis); (b) that one of the steps of the model states that ‘*therapists must create a holding environment that validates their client’s experience, improves the relationship, and prepares the dyad to explore the racialized (and often unconscious) nature of their topics in therapy*’ (p. 66, my emphasis); and (c) that nowhere in the article does Drustrup (2021) suggest what you attribute to him. Moreover, the clinical vignette of ‘Geoff’ that Drustrup offers is full of references to the impact of the uprisings around racial injustice on him as a white man; race is of concern to the client and in the consulting room. You probably won’t be surprised about—and won’t want to read—a recent chapter of mine which takes a similar, though more theoretical perspective about working with settlers about their/our relationship with being a settler (Tudor, 2025a). Of course, as a psychotherapist, I am interested in the unconscious as well as the conscious, and, as you say, ‘emotional and visceral reactions’, but these cut both ways (McCann & Tudor, 2024); I want to help people understand, for instance, the origins of their internalised racism, and to think about this in relation to the social unconscious (McCann & Tudor, 2022). Also, a similar fact-check on your comments on Tommy Robinson reveals that he has been convicted of assault twice (for one of which offences he served a 12-month prison term)—and has also been convicted of using threatening, abusive, or insulting behaviour.

This brings me to a third point about language. As you know, one of my criticisms of your original paper was about your use of rhetoric, and it appears here, too in the reference to and image and spectre you raise of ‘millions of assertive Muslims’ (p. 10), as distinct from, say, writing ‘millions of Muslims, some of whom are assertive’. As we’re corresponding directly, I’m genuinely curious about whether, when you write that statement (and make other such comments as you did in your initial paper) whether you consider their accuracy and/or impact?

Finally, some of what we’re disagreeing about is connected to one of the broader issues of our times, that is, of identity politics, which I want to touch upon very briefly, keeping the focus on psychotherapy. Rightly or wrongly, most psychotherapists still undertake training in a specific therapeutic orientation (a term which, for present purposes, I use synonymously with modality or ‘school’) and, therefore, identify, at least initially, with their chosen orientation. So, I am puzzled that, on the one hand, you identify as a humanist—and, therefore, presumably hold humanistic values—and, on the other hand, you say what you do and write in the way that you do. You’ll be familiar with what you wrote seven years ago:

Probably some of my opposition to Humanistic Psychology—and all things bright and beautiful—results from deep incurable attitudinal pathologies of my own, as well as

my aging process. Not for nothing have I been attracted to writers such as Schopenhauer, Camus, Cioran, Becket and Houellebecq. Temperamentally I am somewhat more Freudian (pessimistic) than Rogerian. I do not accept Rogers' concept of an actualizing tendency... Neither can I accept Yalom's warm, American, optimistic portrayal of therapy as an answer to Schopenhauerian pessimism. (Feltham, 2018, p. 47)

I appreciate your openness in writing this, especially in declaring your opposition to humanistic psychology, but am again puzzled (and especially as you're not a pluralist) that you place yourself outside and opposed to humanistic psychology and, at the same time, as an Associate Professor of Humanistic Psychology at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense, still identify with this force of psychology. Surely this is an example of philosophical incongruence? Just as you have acknowledged your shift from 'the left' (which I didn't realise) to being 'right-wing', I wonder whether you would also describe moving away from humanistic psychology to something else—or do you consider your right-wing views as consistent with the values of humanistic psychology?

Colin: So many accusations and so little space! My immediate reaction is that I don't know whether to think of you as a pantomime angel or prosecution lawyer (I tend to think the latter). Am I conscious of the words I use? Yes, very much so, but it feels to me that you take things very literally, pretending that there aren't implicit, humorous, innocent nuances and half-spent beliefs beneath explicit current or seven-year-old statements. Fascists like me (this is humour but bring Freudian defences into this if you wish) have used the term 'offence archaeology' for the common woke practice of digging up anything from a person's past they can use as ammunition. Robinson is no more violent or racist than Mandela or Gandhi respectively. I could respond with many 'gotcha' courtroom tactics like your own, but want to focus on more salient issues.

Keith, you challenged me to address various historical injustices, and this is daunting because (a) we don't have anything like enough space for this large topic here, and (b) it seems you want to hold me (and my phantom 'right-wing colleagues', whoever they may be) responsible for historical injustices. Perhaps I can best (if inadequately) respond as follows. I believe deep evolutionary trends explain why men, 'Westerners', heterosexuals, and able-bodied and neurotypical people have held most power until relatively recently. We can argue about history being written by the 'victors', about the 'erasure' of women, gay, and lesbian contributors, and so on, but I am not responsible for the past, just as you dislike geological-psychoanalytic theorising.

You want to portray these oppressed groups as uniform, I think, when you must know that they are politically diverse. Many women do not identify as feminists beyond the second wave of equal pay feminism. Some radical queer theorists reject bourgeois marriage and monogamy, not to mention some transgender claims, and there are a few right-wing gay people. The current British Parliament contains about 10% of LGBT Members, which is an *over*-representation of power and influence. There are many black conservatives who oppose DEI, reparations, and other leftist demands. The Nazi mass murder of gays alongside Jews, like the ongoing Islamist hatred and persecution of gays and Jews, also brings another perspective. Your progressive colleague protesters are scarce in present-day oppressive, patriarchal regimes where extreme homophobia, flagrant misogyny, human trafficking, and myriad human rights violations are rife.

You do not mention ageism among your oppressed groups. Perhaps like the white working-class, old (and often partly disabled-by-age) people are regarded as marginal anachronisms, and often unpalatably conservative? Some bitter 'Remainers' after the 2016 referendum commented that at least old Brexit voters would soon be dead (thank God!). Despite expressed fears that, with Trump and many European populist politicians, we are marching back to the 1930s, there is every chance that crypto-Marxists will continue to assert themselves. If so, while you might welcome a form of Maoist levelling of the playing fields, many of my contemporaries meanwhile express gratitude that they won't be alive to see it. You can call this my paranoid fantasy or depressive realism if you like!

I dislike your conflation of 'humanist' with 'humanistic', the former always having referred to religious non-believers. You have a need for 'putting things in neat boxes' when life is far from neat in most domains. Linguistic uptightness and correct labelling do not advance this dialogue. It doesn't really matter to me, or to most clients in therapy, which terms are used. What matters is the flawed but well-meaning, struggling human being within the outward encounter.

Keith: I guess I should have expected a final barrage but, as we agreed that we will end this exchange at this point, I will honour that agreement and won't respond to it, but simply ask you to write a final reflective statement that focuses on the whole process and is directed both inwards (to ourselves) and outwards to the reader (rather than to each other), and will follow that with one of my own.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Colin: I thought this would be an interesting and possibly fruitful exercise, but it has mostly felt unpleasant. At least it has aired some of the salient points. I don't expect to come out of this with any benefit personally. If anything, I may be further demonised and cancelled. It confirms for me that, contrary to its own blurb, *Psychotherapy and Politics International* doesn't really welcome views from across the political spectrum! Rather than any rapprochement between Keith and me, I think the gulf has deepened. Rather than two representatives of empathic therapeutic values, we have been like two schoolboys fighting in the playground. The inauguration of Trump occurred while we were doing this, which also deepens rancour, heightens mistrust, and prolongs the cold war between left and right.

At my lowest moments, I can start to think I am a terrible person. However, I remind myself that 'the poor will always be with you' (Jesus). I think of Freud's famous downbeat lines about psychoanalysis moving patients from hysterical misery to common unhappiness. Let's recall the Dalai Lama's statement in Sweden in 2018 that Europe should welcome refugees, but they should return to their countries of origin when it is safe to do so, because Europe belongs to Europeans. If I am a bad person, perhaps so are they! I think of all the clever, knock-out things I could have said, but at the same time I sigh at our shared human folly. We are about 10,000 miles apart geographically and perhaps a similar distance ideologically. *C'est la vie*. Words from the 1964 song (by Benjamin et al.), popularised by Nina Simone pop into my mind:

I'm just a soul whose intentions are good

Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood.

Keith: For myself, I am left frustrated, angry, disappointed; also feeling the unpleasantness to which Colin refers; and sad. I have not enjoyed this and have only hung in with it because of my positionality as an ally, informed by identity politics (see Big Flame, 2025; Farrar & McDonald, 2025), and because of the support of some good colleagues and friends, one of whom wrote that my original response was 'proportionate, fair... [and expressed] in... a detailed, reasoned, structured, forceful and convincing way', an assessment that supported me during the week it took to write this article—and, as Colin acknowledges, the week in which the 57th president of the United States of America has been inaugurated.

Clearly, Colin and I have been fighting (which I don't mind), though my image is less of the playground but more of two old (or elderly) men locking horns, and also fighting about who started the fight. I think this is not insignificant as the intellectual

fighting in which we've engaged is representative of the disagreements we and others have at the political level with regard to culture, identity, nationality, migration, invasion/war, the climate crisis, and so on; the debates and disputes about the status of the experience, knowledge, and facts on which we draw; and the language we use in talking with—or past—each other, and in having such fights or arguments. I make little apology for my attention to language and rhetoric as, like sticks and stones, I think that words can not only hurt people, but also lead to broken bones and worse.

I genuinely hoped that we might get somewhere in terms of accepting and/or understanding something about each other's arguments, but it appears from the exchange that there was too much in the way; too little of addressing each other's points or questions—maybe because they felt like points or (closed) questions; and too many misinterpretations. Of course, I think that Colin did more of this, and, no doubt, he thinks that about me. In any case, I think this was epitomised in the shift in tone from what we hope would be dialogue to what quickly became an exchange. Reflecting on this, I am reminded of stories one hears from peace talks of breakthroughs coming as a result of the protagonists sharing details about their respective families, including showing pictures of children and grandchildren—significantly, the next generation. Perhaps we should have done this—and perhaps one lesson I (and maybe others) can learn from this exchange, is that simply reaching out with good intentions isn't good enough or sufficient, and that what's necessary is that any and all participants in such an encounter need to set clear ground rules—or, in terms of Berne's (1966) definition of a contract, to make 'an explicit bilateral commitment to a well-defined course of action' (p. 362)—before embarking on this kind of engagement. That might just be the way forward.

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