

John Rowan

HUMANISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

A recent report from a two-day workshop attended both by humanistic therapists and by psychoanalysts makes some striking statements. The meeting was attended by far more psychoanalysts than humanistic therapists, and their domination comes out very clearly in the report. (This sense of the greater strength of the Freudian contingent was reinforced by the fact that the main consultant in charge of the plenary sessions was a Tavistock man). This is what the report says:

Mention of psychodynamic training also raised the question of the relation between psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. A few of the participants were, of course, themselves psychoanalysts, but psychoanalysis was admired and envied by many of those who were not. It was seen as having a professional identity and a defined boundary. Technically, psychotherapy owed much to it. One member pointed out that the figures they all looked up to - he cited Freud, Jung, Winnicott and Klein - were none of them psychotherapists: they were all analysts. Psychotherapy had moved one step away; but it still relied on psychoanalysis for its theoretical foundations. (pp. 17-18).

More precisely, "psychotherapist" was defined by its position on a hierarchy, below "psychoanalyst" and above "counsellor". And some acknowledged an implicit hierarchy among psychotherapists, with those closest to the analytic model constituting an élite. (p.18)

These are challenging statements, and before they turn into the current orthodoxy, I would like to rebut them. It's true that I look up to Freud, Jung, Winnicott and Klein - but I also look up to Moreno, Lake, Grof, Janov, Schutz, Mahrer and Wilber, none of whom are or were psychoanalysts.

But it is more than a question of who is going to go into the Hall of Fame - to me it is much more a question of what is included in psychotherapy and what is excluded. If we take a person from top to bottom and end to end - which we need to do, because a person's problems may be located anywhere - we have to include the whole time span and the whole physical-emotional-mental-psycho-spiritual span of that person.

In terms of time, Freud is really only interested in the time when language operates - he gets more and more uneasy and unable to cope as we go further and further back into infancy. And this is true of most psychoanalysts today.

Klein and Winnicott (and Lacan and Kohut and some others) go further back, and try to reclaim more of the preverbal time - the first year of life, when many important things on an emotional level can be laid down. But they stop short at birth, and get unhappy at the idea of going back to the time when physical experiences become pre-dominant. And this is true of most of the object-relations psychoanalysts today.

Lake, Grof and Janov go further back again, into the birth and prebirth time, when some of the most important patterns of later life can be laid down. They allow the client to go into that area if that is where the client needs to go.

Taking just these three steps for the moment - Freud dealing with third-line primals (in Janov's terms), Klein dealing with second-line primals and Grof dealing with first-line primals, we can see how the classic professional deformations take place.

Because orthodox analysts did not deal with Kleinian material in their own analysis, they are very likely to stop their clients from dealing with the traumas which are located in that time-sector.

Because Kleinians did not deal with their own birth or their womb experiences in their own analysis, they are very likely to stop their clients dealing with that huge bunch of material.

It is only humanistic psychotherapists who can deal with all three of these important areas, because in our training we are not stopped from entering these areas. Instead of having one analyst, who becomes an all-wise mentor in so many cases, we go to numerous groups, more than one therapist, more than one supervisor, and so on. Faced with a client needing to go into traumatic material, we can go all the way with the client, because we have either been through that thing ourselves, or have seen people go through it, and helped in the process. There is a beautiful example of all this in David Malan's book on psychodynamics. He is talking about a doctor in his thirties, in therapy with him:

He sank into a dream-like state, and the image presented itself of his body being connected to that of his mother by a sort

of U-tube, in such a way that - as would happen in reality by the laws of hydrostatics - the fluid contents of the two bodies would find their own level, equal in the two. (p.164)

Malan goes on at length to give many other details of this case, all of which show that what the client is trying to talk about is umbilical affect - his experience in the womb - which has been written about so well by Laing recently, and in the excellent popular book by Tom Verny. But what Malan says is:

. . . these experiences were occurring in an adult, and any inferences that may be made about the distant past are in danger of what may be called 'psychological anachronism', i.e. attributing to an infant phenomena that really belong to a much later and more sophisticated stage of development . . . any reference to an umbilical cord cannot be anything other than psychological anachronism . . . (pp. 167-8)

And so Malan comes to the triumphant conclusion, so firmly that he himself underlines it, that the whole thing is really about **feeding at the breast**. And this in spite of the fact that he also sees, importantly enough to underline it again, that the "basic feeling is really about the **inside of the whole body**". This is indeed the case, and not only the inside of the client's body, but also the inside of his mother's body!

We can see very clearly in this example how, just because life in the womb did not come up in Malan's own analysis (or maybe he was talked out of it too) he is able to stop the client getting into any of this material - directing him instead into oral material, which comes much later. And so this whole area, which may for all we know have contained the real roots of the client's distress, was closed off and the way barred and bolted.

I use Malan's book, because he shares with me one of my basic assumptions about therapy. As he puts it:

What is needed in therapy is the same as in any other neurotic mechanism, namely to bring out the underlying feelings and trace them to their origin. (p. 111)

But what he is doing in the example just given is preventing a client from going back to the origins - just the opposite of his own ad

It seems to me that we as humanistic psychotherapists must not let the analysts get away with their pretensions to deeper awareness and more thorough training. It is exactly the other way round.

References

- Laing, R.D. (1982) **The voice of experience** Tavistock Publications.
Malan, D. (1979) **Individual psychotherapy and the science of psychodynamics** Butterworths.
Miller, E. and others (1983) **Psychotherapists and the process of profession-building** OPUS (10 Golders Rise, London NW4 2HR).
Verny, T. (1982) **The secret life of the unborn child** Sphere Books.

Eric J. Miller

A COMMENT ON JOHN ROWAN'S COMMENT ABOVE

A major preoccupation in the November Workshop on "Psychotherapists and Society" was trying to understand the proliferation of orientations and institutions in the relatively tiny world of psychotherapy. The individual practitioner evidently feels the need to belong to a small safe group - an "us" - but the distinctive features of the "us" are not always easy to specify. Hence "us" tends to be defined largely by exclusion and the numerous other groups that populate the psychotherapeutic world seem to serve the function of being a hostile "not us". It is as if practitioners are saying, "We're not exactly sure who 'we' are, but we do know we're different from 'them', don't we?"

John Rowan's article is a nice illustration of this phenomenon. It offers a dichotomy between humanistic psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, and presents the humanists in the Workshop as being dominated by the analysts. In fact, of the 43 participants, almost all of whom stated their qualifications, only two were self-defined humanistic therapists. Amongst the others, the variety of training was enormous: Freudian indeed, but also Jungian, behavioural and - predominantly - eclectic.

Rowan adds that the "sense of the greater strength of the Freudian contingent was reinforced by the fact that the main consultant in charge of the plenary sessions was **a Tavistock man**" (emphasis added). That's me. I don't know what stereotype is evoked in your readers by the term, "a Tavistock man", but for the record I am a social science practitioner (not a therapist) at the Tavistock Institute (not the Tav-