

**PROFILE  
OF  
metanoia**



**Origins, History, People and Courses  
by Katherine Murphy**

*(The first part of this profile appeared in our March Issue)*

**metanoia** Psychotherapy Training Institute has evolved from a core of four individuals - two clinical psychologists, one psychiatrist and one educational specialist, who have been in some form of collaborative learning and practice community since the late 1960s. In addition to each one's individual academic training, all four professionals gained substantial national and international training in psychotherapy, both during their professional training and subsequently. All share a thorough grounding in academic psychology or psychiatry as well as many years' learning in psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches. In addition they have sought high-quality training in several humanistic and existential approaches.

The foundation stones of **metanoia** were set down by these four people. A young girl in South Africa called Petruska Clarkson dreamed daily about how she could one day learn to change brains, just as she longed to be able to change the brain and the heart of her mother. This childhood need and dream fired Petruska to earn a doctorate in Clinical Psychology and to become the first accredited South African Transactional Analysis teacher. For all the years of her academic study Petruska also worked for a living as well as being extensively involved in voluntary work, ranging from years of service on a telephone counselling team for the prevention of suicide to a Crisis Clinic in mid-city Johannesburg where she first discovered the usefulness of Gestalt in individual and family breakdown during the height of the high drug seasons of the sixties.

During the earliest days of multi-racial Humanistic Psychology, Petruska met a medical student, the late Dr. Brian Dobson, under a blanket at a ten-day encounter group, where they cried together for a substantial part of one of the first such encounter groups to be held in South Africa. It was at this ecumenical centre - Wilgespruit - where Petruska fleshed out her academic training in Occupational Psychology with Organisation Development trainers from the USA who were getting involved with consulting for social and organisational change. Brian and Petruska worked together at the Tara Mental Hospital in Johannesburg, and Brian remained a true friend and an inspiring colleague. Petruska recruited another clini-



Dr Petruska Clarkson

cal psychologist, Maria Gilbert, to teach humanistic and existential psychology with her, to lay-people. They have both attended a clinical psychology programme which was largely psychoanalytic and existentially oriented. It is still their belief that psychological knowledge can and should be made available to lay-people. Children are often taught at school how to brush their teeth and even how to use condoms, but do not get the 'affective education' which can help them cope better and more creatively and compassionately with failure, fear, disappointment, rejection and grief - their feelings and emotional bodies. Petruska and Maria opened a private psychotherapy practice lec-

ture and teaching extensively on psychology, Transactional Analysis, existential psychology, Gestalt and Couples counselling. In 1975, Sue Fish, as organiser of a local Behavioural Science study group, invited Petruska to give a talk on Humanistic Psychology and some months later she became the third member of their household. Sue had, besides training as a teacher, been the first student at Cape Town University to combine two full-time courses, a Bachelor of Social Science degree and a Speech and Drama diploma - the start of a vision to use enactment to help people change their lives.

From her earliest days, change was a matter very dear to Petruska's heart. The changing of certainties (whether convictions about her own limitations, such as fear of walking on fire or the barriers between nations, such as the Berlin Wall) has been a leitmotif of her life's work and of the people who share this work with her.

In January 1977, after many years of facilitating change, working with trainees, and working in programmes that invited change in the wider community of South Africa, Petruska and Sue made the decision to leave their home country. They left South Africa because they felt they could no longer live in a situation where their very existence caused them guilt. They chose not to endanger their liberty and their lives in fighting a struggle over land which they could hardly call their own. This

was a heartfelt and heart-breaking decision for them. Their friend, Brian, said at the time 'Maybe it is better to be a small fish in a clean pond than be a big fish in a dirty pond'. Of course, 'cleanliness' is also relative. Petruska and Sue came to England with a wealth of education, energy, personality, a dearth of hard cash and the despair of immigrants. They have unremittingly continued to work for social change, whether it be the mounting of an exhibition of drawings from Hiroshima survivors, the financial and professional support of a black medical student and other projects in South Africa, planetary consciousness work, Training and Consulting services to Wilgespruit (where Maria's sister and her family still work and live for change) and the personal provision of bursaries for training and reduced fees for counselling or psychotherapy services.

For herself, Petruska took support and succour from the Franciscan prayer of changing what she could, accepting what she could not change, and becoming wiser and more questioning about the difference. For her, change was the most exciting, interesting process in the whole world. To study, participate in and master the principles of personal and collective change became her life's work. (She still continues in Jungian analysis and weekly supervision.)

Alongside full-time, regular employment, Petruska began to rebuild her psychotherapy practice and Sue extended her training from remedial educational and emotional therapy work with children to adult psychotherapy. Petruska's first psychotherapy group in London met in a room in a small flat in Queensway. Every Tuesday evening they would come home from work and move what domestic furniture they had into a communal hall with a note tagged to it saying 'Please do not remove, belongs to Flat 3' in order to convert their only living space into an appropriate psychotherapy group room.

Petruska's dreams of creating an environment of change needed to lie fallow while she and Sue survived the many losses involved in leaving their home country. Although the dream may have been dormant, it was not forgotten, and in 1977 on a slow drive home to London from a training weekend in Devon in their trusty Volkswagen, they decided that they too could offer professional, ethical training and talked about establishing the British Institute of Systemic Therapy: B.I.S.T.!

In 1978 their friend, Brian, now fully qualified, arrived to join their household. With Brian they bought a small terraced house in West Ealing. All three continued to work in full-time employment - Brian as a Child and Adolescent psychiatrist; Petruska as a group work consultant to social workers, consultant to staff and senior management groups and Senior Clinical Psychologist supervisor of clinical psychologists in community psychology, and Sue as a teacher of disturbed adolescents.

Petruska followed up the Freudian analysis by a Tavistock Institute trained analyst that she underwent in South Africa by doing the Mental Health Consultation Course there, and attended the Institute of Group Analysis' Supervisors' Seminar. At the same time each of them continued to build their clinical activities - providing individual psychotherapy to children and adults, group psychotherapy and week-end psychotherapy intensives.

They tell the story of the first psychotherapy marathon they ran at this venue when, during a piece of cathartic anger there was a knock on the door. Their neighbour, a gentle vicar, had come to ask for a pint of milk. This he was given without further conversation. Later in the day, during another piece of cathartic work, the vicar returned with a carton of milk and tentatively asked if everything was O.K. He was warmly thanked for his concern and told that they were running a kind of psychological drama workshop. He left relieved and reassured.

Over the next three to four years they moved. Although the Institute had practically existed since 1981 when the first courses commenced, it was on May 4th 1985, at their latest house-warming party, that Petruska formally christened their dream-made-reality 'metanoia' which means 'a turning around or a transformation'.

At Christmas 1985 Maria Gilbert arrived, with her son Matthew to join their household and eventually she became Director of Clinical Training. In 1987 **metanoia** moved to its present home at 13 North Common Road, Ealing. Friends and trainees helped transplant both the things and the spirit of **metanoia**, Tring Avenue, to the new house.

The rooms in the institute were named after some of the major influences on their work - Freud, Reich, Alice Miller, Moreno, Perls, Rogers, Fairbairn, Berne, Jung. One room has now been named Dobson, in honour of Brian, the first medical director and the original psychiatrist in the core working team. **metanoia** currently offers Diploma and Qualification training in Transactional Analysis, Psychotherapy, Gestalt Psychotherapy, Integrative Systemic Psychotherapy Supervision, Client-centred Counselling, Employee Counselling and training in Organisational Change and Development, Couples Counselling, and Child Psychotherapy. There is still an active 'Education for Living Programme' which continues the tradition of keeping psychological knowledge available to lay-people who may want understanding, experience and skills which can help them live well and more fully, without necessarily being clients or trainees. These workshop topics include, for example: creative aggression, psychodrama, health and healing, sexuality, discovering your inner child, bereavement, workshops for children, communication skills, and working in multi-cultural settings. Continuing to run alongside these are Clinical and Consultancy practices.

**metanoia** continues to grow, develop and change. Its success derives from the enormous willingness the directors have to energise things to make them work. They have been joined by Phil Lapworth who is now Director of Clinical Services, Talia Levine- Bar-Yoseph who was associated with the Hebrew University and who is now Acting Director of the Gestalt Training Programme, and Dr. Gary Fitzgibbon - an occupational psychologist. Katherine Murphy has held the directorship of the Counselling Training Programme since Brian's untimely death. Patricia Shaw also renders invaluable service as our internal Organisation Development Consultant. Their energetic co-operation and their preparedness to do anything in the community that needs doing enables the community to function harmoniously as well as practically.

**metanoia** graduates are founding their own training centres in Stockton, Notting-

ham, Manchester, Devon and Kent. International 'fellows' are using what they learnt here in places as diverse as New Zealand, Switzerland, South Africa, Yugoslavia and Turkey. Other graduates are choosing to work as staff as **metanoia** continues to evolve and in so doing, experiments with devolving, embracing the idea that the situation is in eternal flux.

The founder members, graduates and trainees of **metanoia** are active in a comprehensive range of psychotherapy and consulting forums nationally and internationally. According to many they have contributed to setting standards, working with colleagues from other institutes on committees and working parties, and developing an impetus for excellence in the various fields in which they work. Petruska, for example, was Chairperson of the BAC's Personal, Sexual, Family and Marital Division, and is currently co-ordinator of the British Institute for Integration of the Psychotherapies (affiliated with SEPI International) and serves or has served on committees or subcommittees of the BPS and UKSCP. **metanoia** is represented at the United Kingdom Standing Conference on Psychotherapy. It is approved as a training and accrediting institute in TA by The Institute of Transactional Analysis nationally and the European and International TA Associations, and its Gestalt Training by the Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute of Great Britain of which Petruska is Chairperson.

Both the Supervision and Integrative Psychotherapy training programmes are negotiating for academic validation.

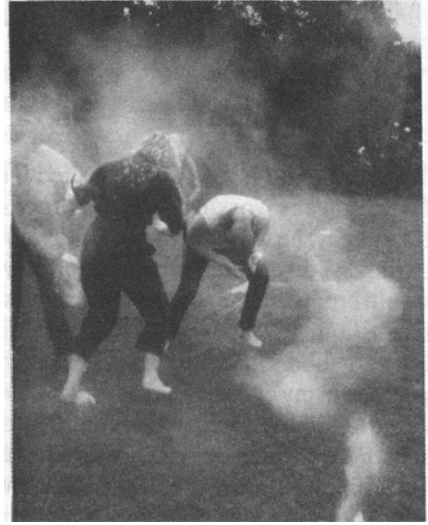
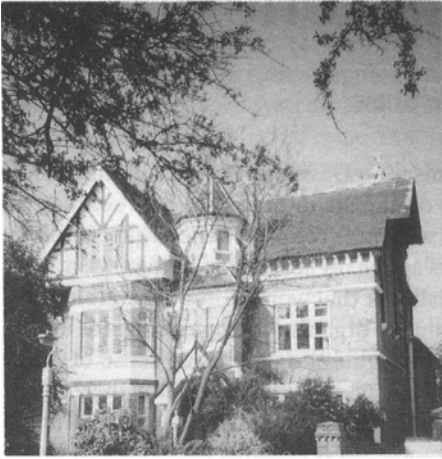
The charity branch of **metanoia** - **metanoia** Education for Living - whereas not in receipt of donations, shoulders a heavy academic, varied professional contribution programme and work on or with substantial research initiatives. For example, it has participated in what is probably the largest Gestalt therapy research project in Britain, but are still in need of finance to process its results, and the 'Education for Living' programme needs both funds and working space.

Petruska has successfully overcome a ten-year writing block to publish two books, several chapters in edited books, and dozens of papers in international journals, translated into eight different languages. In 1990 she received the European Association of Transactional Analysis Award for Contribution to Theory with her article 'Script Cure? A Diagnostic Pentagon of Types of Therapeutic Change' (1988). The next AHPP Conference is using as a basis her paper on the Multiplicity of Psychotherapeutic Relationships (*British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 1991, Winter, 7 (2) pp 148-163).

Those at **metanoia** are familiar with the Gestalt cycle in which life goes around (Clarkson, 1989). As Heraclitus wrote:

"The cycle is the compact experiential reconciliation of permanence and de-generation' (Guerreire, 1980).

What we know for sure is that **metanoia** will always be becoming different, whether bigger or smaller, more or less specialised, evolving or revolting, appearing or disappearing. The symbol for metanoia is an equilateral triangle, the Greek letter, delta, meaning 'change'.



*above: metanoia - the building*  
*right: flour fight*  
*below: supervision group*

