

Glacier Reaches Edge of Town

Denis Postle

I thought I had given up resisting the psychotherapy regulation glacier, in favour of making the thing I want to have (the Independent Therapists Network). But clearly I haven't quite, because last month the UKCP published its register of psychotherapists, and this, followed by the September issue of *Self & Society*, with John Rowan's open letter to Richard Mowbray, the (curiously short) Emmy van Deurzen Smith interview, and Petruska Clarkson's ad for her services, all combined to fan the dormant embers of my concerns into flame.

First, the Emmy van Deurzen Smith interview. '[Psychotherapy] can now be scrutinised like any other profession': yes, but suppose many of us, not being proprietors of training schools, and being familiar with the hidden agendas of existing professions, want it to remain an occupation, not a profession? ' . . . Obligated to work to specific and agreed standards': yes, but you didn't ask me to join with you to set those standards, so why should I join you in the obligations? ' . . . The need for all those with an interest in psychotherapy to broker relationships involving power . . . inevitably there has been a tendency for a hierarchy to form'. Inevitably? Really? Here is a psychotherapist who appears to accept dominance as 'natural'. Isn't it one

of the fundamental tasks of psychotherapy to challenge such unaware assumptions? For instance, in the 'specific and agreed standards' to which they work, and in the organisations they set up?

The formation of UKCP has always seemed to me about the seizure of power in our field. It is intrinsically about promoting the dominance of trainers. I want to ask Emmy van Deurzen Smith how UKCP will ensure that this 'naturalness' of dominance is not reproduced down the line up to, and including, the client-therapist interaction.

'There is more choice for the public . . . With the increasing emphasis on improving training and ethical practice, the clientele will be better served.'

This is disinformation. As Richard Mowbray has convincingly shown, there is no evidence that clients will be better served by UKCP-registered practitioners. UKCP is an attempt to structure and regulate a market. It is primarily in the interests of the training schools and the multi-tiered therapist/supervisor/trainee businesses that they sustain.

What Emmy van Deurzen Smith says reinforces my view of UKCP as economically driven 'ethical cleansing', dressed up as care for clients. It needs to be strenu-

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ously resisted and if possible derailed, in the interests of clients.

Next John Rowan's 'Open Letter to Richard Mowbray'. John begins by raising questions about Richard Mowbray's alternatives to the present set-up. Then, by way of discussing the level of commitment that good practice requires, he outlines two modes of working with people. The first is psychotherapy: this requires 'commitment through holidays', 'weekly meetings for month or years', 'competence with transference'; 'observes *strict boundaries*' (my emphasis); practitioners have 'supervision', a 'therapist support group', 'ethical codes' and 'fuller and deeper resources and better and longer training'. He goes on to assert that psychotherapy is more demanding than the second working mode, personal growth, which he sees as 'short term commitment', 'one-off workshops', '*self-taught* or perhaps *apprenticed* practitioners who don't know about transference' (my emphasis) and are likely to lack 'supervision' or 'therapy' or an 'ethical code'.

This won't do. It's a spurious polarity. In my 'humanologist' practice, I sometimes work with people once or more than once a week. I often work with people once a fortnight, or once a month. With numerous people I have been holding continuity of their client issues for as long as six or seven years. With some people it is primal work, with some it is assertiveness, with others, managing the delights and struggles of coupledness, with still others, it is transpersonal work. I am in supervision and always have been. I am also in open-ended 'therapy'. I embrace both ends of John's polarities and so do many other people I count as colleagues.

John's listing of the attributes of 'psychotherapy' also suggests that it is the 'work' that is the therapist's project, rather than the client. People have to come every week, or more than once a week, or it's not serious work. How can clients hold their own against a therapist in such a framework? How can they gain significant ownership of their own development?

And transference. Does John really believe that people like me, or Juliana Brown, or Nick Totton, don't know about, or work with, transference? Of course it's ubiquitous, but is it really in the client's best interest to psychologise everything that they present as transference/counter-transference/resistance, while their interpersonal skills, or bodily armouring, or the politics of their lives remain safely off-stage? I have long suspected that the practitioners who favour this approach inhabit one of the deepest shadow areas in our field.

And then there is 'self-taught', which is one of John's indicators of the limitations of the personal growth approach. How can we avoid the implication that the only learning that counts is 'other-taught'? That the core ability needed to work effectively with clients is academic, the capacity to sit still and be talked at, and to absorb, digest and re-present expertise? By contrast, independent, self-directed learning is fundamentally suspect. And if it is suspect for the practitioner, will it not also be suspect for clients?

No, this won't do either. I don't know, but I'd guess that John himself, as with others of his generation, is as 'self-taught' as I am. I want to point him to his copy of

John Heron's 1979 *Assessment Revisited*: 'for any domain of enquiry there is a source point when its originators flourished through self-directed learning and enquiry and through self- and peer-assessment . . . these or their successors become the original unilateral academic assessors . . . they assess themselves as competent to assess others. And they assess others as relatively incompetent to be self- and peer-assessing and self-directing in learning and discovery. . . If I am among the first to establish knowledge in some field, I can use that knowledge to establish a power base in the social order . . . If I can get others, through their hunger for power, to collude with my unjust discrimination towards them . . . then I have established a new profession, a body of experts who sustain their power and perpetuate the injustice through the myth of maintaining excellence. The founding treason is that the founders, through this professional dominion, betray their own origins in self-directed learning, self- and peer-assessment.'

My awareness of what AHPP/UKCP are up to dates from around 1990. Against my deepest inclinations, which were then uninformed by the recent debate, I did try to gain representation, to have at least a voice at the table. I decided to join AHPP. I prepared all the material that AHPP required, detailed my training and experience and so on.

My application was a de facto self-assessment that the eclectic array of self-directed studies of facilitation that I had built up, based on self- and peer-assessment, meant that I was a competent practitioner. It amounted, as I recall, to 2,000 hours of training/experiential

learning, that built on one of the best self-directed educations in creativity available this century (at the Royal College of Art) and my two decades as a broadcast film-maker.

I remain convinced that this adequately supported my competence as a facilitator of both group and one-to-one work, both long and short term. I also believe that this bundle is at least as good as the outcome of a 'recognised' three-year part-time psychotherapy course.

My then supervisor, perhaps anticipating the outcome of my application, suggested that I tune it up by sending it to someone on the AHPP board who might point out omissions or discrepancies. So I sent it to John Rowan, with a note outlining my situation. His response was to say that the application would not be accepted because I had not done a recognised training, and that, 'anyway, AHPP has no category for polymaths'. He went on to say that when I had licked my wounds, perhaps I'd consider applying to the group leader section.

My self- (and peer-) assessment of my capacities figured nowhere in the AHPP consideration of competence, only a 'recognised training' did. When I had cooled down and made a few other enquiries, I realised that a movement was afoot in our field to create a psychotherapy profession. People were saying that 'clients had to be protected' and that professionalisation was the way to do it. In setting the goalposts where they did, AHPP, among others, were policing the boundaries of the new profession.

In other areas of commerce and trade, people openly attempt to 'structure the market': they limit entry to it through

raising the price of entry and they form trade associations to manipulate prices and suppliers; but they don't call it creating a profession, and they don't usually pretend that it is primarily in the interests of their clients.

Which brings me to another thing. One of John's criteria for psychotherapy as opposed to personal growth is that psychotherapy requires 'strict boundaries'. Do all AHPP/UKCP registered people strictly maintain the boundary to undertake no groupwork without deep and proper training? Are you all scrupulous about that? Or, as I suspect, do not many UKCP/AHPP registerable people feel entitled to run groups with little or no groupwork training?

As I understand it, a 'strict boundary' in UKCP/AHPP terms would mean 'no groupwork without a recognised training in groupwork' for the level of work you were doing. Is this a part of the ethical framework of AHPP and UKCP? I don't recall seeing it. And if such groupwork is all right without training, how does this serve the best interests of clients?

I feel that John's piece points to a lack of awareness (or denial) in UKCP/AHPP, of a fundamental contradiction in the regulatory glacier. It is this: if a practitioner is to be trusted to behave responsibly, effectively and ethically in interactions with clients, and manage their own development down the years, how come the same therapist is not capable, with peer support, of assessing this capacity for themselves? And if they aren't to be trusted, what regulatory regime could conceivably fill that space?

In my view a process which asserts the prior and fundamental value of an ability

to self-assess competence in a peer context is for our field the most appropriate and rigorous way of identifying people who are not yet ready, or never will be ready, to self-manage themselves in an ethical way.

Of course if you own or run a training school, such an approach is harder to market. The authority of top-down expertise is easier to sell, especially to the public, because it is congruent with the prevailing fundamentalist world view, that dominance expressed through hierarchy is 'natural' and 'normal'.

No doubt much of the inner life of UKCP/AHPP is locally manifested through elegant expressions of 'power-with' between caring people, but the over-arching agenda is clearly 'power-over'. And with bedfellows as dedicated to dominance as psychiatry and the British Psychological Society (look out for their parliamentary bill to capture the word 'psychologist') who can doubt that the rich meadowland of our field is in danger of losing the argument with the bulldozer.

Which brings me to Petruska Clarkson's advertisement. Here is an example of the bulldozer in action. 'PhD', 'MA', 'Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society', 'Consultant Chartered Clinical and Counselling Psychologist', 'Accredited Supervisor', 'UKCP-registered practising Psychotherapist', 'Accredited Organisational Consultant': this is how Dr Clarkson lists the reasons why we should value her. Is this really the way forward for our field, a model for the rest of us to emulate? Or to shift metaphor, isn't this a node of the national regulation grid inviting us to plug into her power and influence and expertise?

The tone of what I have said may seem sharp, or harsh, or hurt, or intemperate, but I feel that I have looked on for long enough in despairing passivity while one of the most precious developments of the second half of the twentieth century is bricked up to starve — and some of the people doing the bricking are from my own family. That hurts.

If you agree with these assertions, what can be done? I think, create or support good pieces of resistance to the idea that a psychotherapy trade association is in the

best interests of clients (Richard Mowbray's book is exemplary); create forms of practitioner/client support that do not unconsciously reproduce the deepest and most problematic dynamics of the society we inhabit (the Independent Therapists Network is well on the way to being 'good-enough' at this task); and finally, actively educate existing and potential clients in how to manage their interactions with practitioners. This is a neglected area, urgently awaiting new initiatives.

On NVQs and Psychotherapy Within the Spectacle

Guy Gladstone

The Q or clue to the NVQ conundrum is the eNVy. Those smart (younger) counsellors stole a march on the (older) psychotherapists. The psychotherapists now fear that the milk of fees and funds and jobs for the girls and boys will go to the counsellors. Where proponents of the new ideology of management have secured commanding heights in the helping professions and installed their quantitative systems to support their negation of the qualitative, these fears have a basis in reality.

In the struggle to keep abreast/a breast, some therapists are going loco, have lost

their psycho, as those damnably well-organised counsellors latch on and suck up. Others (on whose behalf?) are engaging in academic exercises that have very little to do with the art and craft of practising psychotherapy and a lot to do with its misrepresentation in dealing with brute factors of power and money.

The Gadarene rush to get NVQed will be recalled in the history of psychotherapy as a spectacular instance of capitulation to The Spectacle. The Spectacle is the form into which all appearances are organised under advanced capitalism. The task of its agents and specialists is to ensure that The

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