

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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Spectacle infiltrates everyday life. One or two places still withstand the intrusions of The Spectacle. In the session room, as in the bedroom, dreams and the free play of imagination can withstand the dead hand of the commodity economy.

Faced with this diversionary muddle, both the psyche and the body politic of psychotherapy strain and split. A new breed of psychotherapists, doubling as psychopoliticians, is detaching itself from the body of commonsense and previous consensus on the nature of psychotherapy. For example, the Chair of UKCP reports: 'We are therefore proposing to ask a media consultancy firm to work up a plan for a fairly modest campaign'. These would-be specialists within The Spectacle are assigning to themselves regulatory and presentational roles. Some, maybe, are inviting us to admire their sacrifice, as do most politicians. Will future trainees, however, be forced to lie in a Procrustean bed of NVQ-defined training? Then they would truly be in the shit. It's time for some present-day psychotherapists to take the piss.

Looking at the body-language in the photographs selected for the UKCP *Newsletters* 1-3, the keynote is a cheery, even self-congratulatory collaboration. In the recent fourth edition, however, the body-language is noticeably more preoccupied, heavy and doleful. Is this an unconscious lapse on the part of the UKCP's image-makers? Does involvement with the Lead Body lead to a leaden body? Are remarks like these welcome, printable, or must they be sunk out of sight? Perhaps success is not so assured in this NVQ matter and may carry with it a heavy cost in terms of integrity, independence and authenticity.

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The Editor of the UKCP *Newsletter* had agreed to publish the above paragraphs as a letter, adding as editorial comment, 'There is no mystery about the photos. At first I used "watch the birdie" prints I was given. Later, I took my own. Which is not to say Guy has got it wrong'. He was overruled by the Chair of External Relations when the text was spotted already in galley form. According to the Editor, the Chair 'thinks that the tone of the letter is unfair and would be hurtful to a lot of generous people who are working on the Lead Body. He mentioned the comparison of the consulting room and the bedroom, but there were other bits he found offensive, too. 'We can't print it without discrediting both the *Newsletter* and yourself.'

Oh dear, it seems that in this particular corridor of power, sacrifice and respectability, not to mention asexuality, must prevail over the free exchange of feelings and opinions. What is most dismaying is the notion that the 'generous people who are working on the Lead Body' (psychotherapists please note) have feelings that are to be protected from ungrateful comments. As if the 'generous people' would be unable to speak for themselves in reply, or controversy might ensue. Equally dismaying is the patronising presumption that I, the writer, must be protected from myself, can't choose to 'discredit' myself, can't perceive my own best interests. Like a 'patient' I suppose, but that's another topic.

As if too, I couldn't tell for myself that my tone was 'strident'. The rejection slip implied that, put more moderately, they would like to print my warnings. I decided not to water them down and indeed to add

this analysis of the editorial second thoughts. The whole point of the letter was to sharpen awareness of the contradictions between the practice of psychotherapy and the performance-oriented culture of public relations and NVQs. In the Reichian model, this contradiction is represented in the tensions between the levels of personality known as the mask and the core; and much anger and pain is understood to lie between these two levels.

I grow tired of the mystification that the UKCP exists for the protection of the public, its professed professional rationale. The UKCP, like other professional interest

Explanatory Footnote

Despite great misgivings, in January 1994 the UKCP elected to join the Lead Body for Advice, Guidance and

A Response from UKCP

We asked Tom Chamberlain, the Editor of the UKCP *Newsletter*, if he would like to respond to Guy's article, which he did in the following letter.

Dear S&S,

In reply to your query about Guy Gladstone's letter, may I ask you to print the following?

Certainly I listened to Paul Zeal, but the decision not to print was mine. Perhaps I was fainthearted, but I do not regret it. The *Newsletter* is not *Private Eye*. Besides, if dissent is to be respected, so is evidence, which has gone astray among the fire-

groupings, exists to protect its own practitioners' interests, with rather less honesty than the guilds of the Middle Ages. Thus it seems too, from this brush with the Chair of External Relations, that the UKCP *Newsletter's* anodyne pages must also be protected — from any radical critique, from serious *visible* dissension, from any tongues other than mouthpiece *politesse*. It would be so nice to hear your views, but not if you say that, or talk in that tone.

Dear Chair of External Relations, I'm so sorry to be muddying the pitch for lobbying and string pulling, but I must protest — er, I mean protect . . .

Counselling, set up by the National Council For Vocational Qualifications, itself set up by the Government in 1986.

works. It is possibly true that the UKCP gives precedence to professional interests over those of clients, but Guy offers no reason to believe it. What chiefly matters to clients is competence, which is precisely the basis of NVQs. NVQs no longer rely on courses the therapist has followed or what clubs they belong to, each with its own definition of psychotherapy. Indeed, Guy himself suggests a Standard for the Lead Body to note, one which ' . . . encourages dreams and the free play of imagination'.

Tom Chamberlain