Philosophy

Dale Mathers

Though we call ourselves the British Association of Psychotherapists, we do describe our work as 'analysis', shorthand for analytical psychotherapy. Culture shifts — 'therapist' is a word now used by many other helping professions — and inevitably, issues of power, status and authority gather round professional titles. There are presently, and probably always will be, disputes about who calls themselves what. However, 'psyche' still means soul, spirit, mind. In Greek, it means 'butterfly', reminding us of the beautiful winged maiden Psyche, beloved of Eros. In the context of analytical psychotherapy, analysis means resolving a thing to its component parts, back to first principles. Is this butterfly-catching? If so, the priority is one of identification, rather than putting the psyche into a killing bottle and sticking it with a pin . . . though sometimes it can feel rather like that.

Our hope is that by exploring with one another within their combined life experience, two people — patient and therapist — may discover ways to be and function more effectively. What we call this varies between BAP sections — Jungians call it individuation, Freudians talk about moving from part object to whole object relating, child analysts emphasise attaining appropriate developmental stages. 'Growing' covers it, growing in many directions — up and down, in and out. Growth also inevitably means loss, as the butterfly loses (and may mourn?) the caterpillar.

Work takes place with two people in a room containing — usually — two chairs, a couch, and an intimate privacy. Sessions are for fifty minutes, three or more times a week, over years. Children are seen in settings with a range of toys — figures, houses, sand, paints and water. They often have a drawer or tray where things they particularly value can be kept from one session to the next. For adult patients the 'drawer' is in the therapist's inner world. Indeed, having analytic psychotherapy is like hiring a space for yourself inside someone else's head — the kind of space you might need when clearing out a garden shed, or tidying an attic . . . a metaphoric and a metaphorical space.

It is hard to define a single philosophy or a typical member in a tripartite organisation made up of highly individualistic people. Each of us sees our work, names it, and describes its 'philosophy' differently depending on personal, collective and situational factors — how we name ourselves to colleagues, to others, to ourselves on a good day, ourselves on a bad day, to family and friends. Linguistic, cultural relativist issues are inextricably bound to processes

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involving talking, listening, and the study of narrative. To privilege the view of one part — whether of BAP or of an individual — over another does injustice to the whole.

BAP actively attempts to contain divergent currents in analytic models within one organisation. This causes strain, pain and occasionally gain; for whatever divergent answers we give, they contain philosophical notions in common.

Analysis arose within late nineteenth-century empiricism. Hegel's dialectic, the idea of opposites resolving in synthesis, underpins much of Jung's thought. Jung himself did not disclose this debt, preferring to cite Schopenhauer, Kant and Carnap. Freud's work began in scientific materialism. Both men evolved phenomenological methods. Both schools struggle with the 'is/ought' controversy. Both deal with ramifications of the observer effect, for, as in quantum physics, observing alters the observed. These issues are summarised by Wittgenstein, in the *Blue Book*, on the nature of reality, objectivity and subjectivity.

'If we want to study the problems of truth and falsehood, of the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality, of the nature of assertion, assumption and question, we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language in which these forms of thinking appear without the confusing background of highly complicated processes of thought.'

Where the various parts of BAP agree is that our work centres around reality-testing, the developing ability through life to differentiate inner from outer reality. This has an intimate relationship with language, with the capacity to have, narrate and reinterpret our personal history coherently within a complex social matrix of family and society. We also look with advantage at primitive language through infant observation, studying child and adult psychological development, and the body language of patients and ourselves.

What we do begins as a simple nominative process. Note in passing that Freud was a neurologist, drawn to study the unconscious through clinical experience of hysteria and neurosis, whereas Jung was a psychiatrist and experimental psychologist, who treated and studied psychosis, invented the association test and used it to describe the unconscious as it appeared in 'feeling toned complexes'. It is no surprise that with such different theoretical approaches, not to mention profound divergences in personal history and cultural background, their languages differ. BAP includes many members who feel translation is both possible and necessary.

Dreams provide another language — a symbolic one. How symbols are treated varies between groups, and between analysts within the groups, for decoding a symbol is a unique process: not quite private language, more a language of intimacy. This intimacy, with respect for that which cannot be said yet (as there is not yet common language) is summed up by Wittgenstein's final remark in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: 'Whereof we can speak, let us speak: whereof we cannot speak, let us keep silent.'

Some see this silence as respect due to the unconscious, with its individual uniqueness, irreducible beyond understanding in depth, richness and complexity. We could talk about patterns — developmental, archetypal, familial, societal. We might squabble over a word like 'transpersonal', but could agree it may mean 'connection to other', and, as such,

is essential to life. Some of us use such a word in that simple way; for, if each of us lives in an intersubjective field, this implies there can be no privileged observer position. Some connect the intersubjective to their own spiritual vision; others, to immanent experience.

Although I have emphasised the nominative part of our work, this does not mean that what we do is a subset of labelling. As we help patients to name their own feelings themselves, we notice this allows lost memories and complex behaviours to move from the unconscious to the conscious. And back again. No magic. We're short on mystic healing quests or paths of initiation. Few journeys through the psyche lack drama, but analytic psychotherapy is more pedestrian than the gripping, occasionally lurid accounts in the growing contemporary New Age literature of 'inner healing journeys'. It's often an extremely slow and undramatic process. No, it *usually* is.

We try not to overvalue consciousness. Or unconsciousness, either. We say it is the bridge between these areas of the psyche that we're on, around, about . . . Musical metaphors help: learning to play an instrument takes hours of practice and individual tuition; so with learning to be human — that is, to be, and to be ordinary. Or (saying the same thing with different emphasis, and quoting Freud), to transform hysterical misery into common unhappiness. Analytic psychotherapy endeavours to let people simplify 'complexes' — habitual, stuck and unhelpful ways of relating to self or others. That's how we become ordinary.

Change comes about in any case, just as a consequence of being alive. We tend not to use techniques — chair work, psychodrama, active imagination, free drawing, whatever . . . apart from analytic techniques, of which listening is the main one. There is a continuing attempt to be with our own self/Self — and the self/Self of the other person in the room. There are now and, hopefully, will always continue to be strong arguments within BAP as to whether 'self' is capitalised and what the word means at any given time — however, all of us place sensitivity to transference and countertransference as central, so perhaps this is itself a technique. Put simply, the idea is that what has happened before, happens again. Trauma from the past invariably repeats in the therapeutic relationship, with, this time, the chance of being observed, named and . . . sometimes understood, sometimes forgiven, sometimes lived with. It is a slow, non-omnipotent process, respecting other people and one's s/Self.

Human nature being what it is, the simple gets obscured by clouds called 'theories'. There are so many. Each BAP member in training is exposed to a wide range of theory, each makes their own choice as to which to favour. For instance, our Freudian stream recently renamed itself the 'Psychoanalytic' section, emphasising its connection with a range of psychoanalytic streams — Kleinian, British object-relations theorists including Winnicott, Bion and Fairbairn, as well as classical Freud. Similarly, the Jungian stream renamed itself the 'Jungian Analytic' section.

Analytical psychotherapy is suitable for a wide range of people with a wide range of problems. Those with severe chronic psychotic disorders usually are not suitable, but other severe problems can be helped — these might include addiction, sexual perversion, narcissistic and borderline states as well as developmental delays and the

sequelae of abuse.

Relationships between analyst and patient are voluntarily entered into, confidential, ethically and professionally boundaried and, if there is a good enough fit between the two, last for a long time. Initial assessment is often more by listening than by taking a history, though usually some points in a narrative require clarification. There will be negotiation of session times, fees and explanations about breaks and holidays.

Key points in an assessment are the person's degree of psychological mindedness, capacity to reflect on their own experience and signs of some ability to respond to the holding and containing offered by the analytic frame. And, inevitably, the ability to pay — say an average of £30 per session, three times a week — about £4,000 a year.

Many users of BAP therapists are themselves therapists, counsellors or involved in helping professions — social work, probation, medicine, teaching. It would be neither possible nor helpful to give a list of pathologies, inclusion or exclusion criteria, as each person and their circumstances require an individualised response. Who gets analytic therapy in the UK depends upon the setting — NHS, child guidance centres, social service departments, university counselling centres, GP surgeries, schools or private practice. There are geographical problems too — NW3 and its immediate environs contain a large number of members, whereas there are hardly a handful in Manchester. Though hopefully this will change.

The Experience of Training, and the Afterlife

Marilyn Mathew

Training with the BAP was certainly an experience I shall never forget. It stretched my mind, prepared me for working as an analyst, gave me a qualification and in the process took me into some thoroughly murky and uncharted areas. In those previously unexplored depths of myself I found monsters and treasures I'd never dreamed of. But on reflection, if I'd known at the beginning of the training what lay ahead, would I have dared embark on the journey? Perhaps I should start at the beginning . . .

I should make it clear that this is my tale and is a purely subjective account of training with the Jungian section of the BAP. How typical or exceptional it is, I really am not sure. A dynamic eruption of dreams and physical illness first plunged me into imagining myself as a Jungian analyst. My rational mind said 'No way! Too expensive! They'll never have you!' but the unconscious kept on sending messages I simply could not ignore. Eventually, I realised there was only one way to go. Within a month I'd found a training analyst and in

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