

There Must Be More to Life Than a Small Piece of Paper: A brief look at the European Certificate for Psychotherapy

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Forget the Euro! Forget the Common Market, and the Common Agricultural Policy, and NATO, and Strasbourg, and Brussels, and all those nice words like 'Maastricht' and 'subsidiarity' and all the rest of the Euro-gubbins; the *raison d'être* of the European Union (we are assured) is to create a free labour market — and to this end the EAP is working assiduously on your behalf.

Now, the EAP is the European Association of Psychotherapy, and these are the good guys, the Austrian ones. They really want to create an independent profession of psychotherapy in Europe. There were some bad guys, some years ago, the Dutch EAP, and they wanted to make sure that psychotherapy was an activity that could only be done by psychologists and psychiatrists. Some of them must have moved to Germany, because that is essentially what the new German law says.

And the Dutch have just firmed this up as well. However the really good guys are against all this, though (of course) not against the Germans, because no one can

really be against the Germans nowadays, they're our allies, aren't they; nor against the Dutch, because they were on our side — unless you go back to the 17th century when they weren't; but I digress . . .

The EAP is dedicated to the 1992 Strasbourg Declaration on Psychotherapy. Now the Strasbourg Declaration on Psychotherapy states that psychotherapy should be a totally independent profession. This sounds *very good* — 'In 1992 Strasbourg declared that . . .' ahem! The reality is that a small group of psychotherapists in a bar in Strasbourg in 1992 thought that psychotherapy should be an independent profession, and wrote out the main points of the Strasbourg Declaration on a paper napkin. At least that is how Freddie Pritz, Secretary-General of the EAP and President of the World Congress of Psychotherapy, told me it happened, one night in Amsterdam a couple of years ago. But we were both pretty drunk, so maybe I got it wrong.

Anyhow the EAP has just voted (in Paris in July 1999) to create the ECP. The

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ECP is the European Certificate for Psychotherapy, and if you are lucky enough to have this, then you ought to be able to practise psychotherapy in any country in Europe. At least that is the theory. The ECP is to be the European passport to psychotherapists. One of these in your pocket and it doesn't matter if you trained in psychodrama in Potsdam, gestalt in Grimsby, psychoanalysis in Paris, psychosynthesis in Sienna, or SophiaAnalysis (which does exist) in Rome — you can work in London or Lisbon and thumb your nose at the likes of the UKCP or the psycho-police: you are registered with the EAP! At least that is the theory.

But how do I go about getting one of these magic pieces of paper? Ah-hah! A good question, dear Earwig. First you . . . no, first the National Umbrella Organisation (NUO) in your country has to persuade the EAP that it is the biggest and best Umbrella Organisation in that country. Then it gets to be the National Awarding Organisation (NAO). Currently Germany — remember the situation in Germany? — has four Umbrella Organisations. The UK has two, but one is very small and snooty and doesn't count except that it includes all the psychoanalysts. However the psychoanalysts are just about to decide — or declare — that they aren't really psychotherapists at all, as this would mean having to rub shoulders with all those other people (riff-raff) who are calling themselves psychotherapists and who . . . touch the body . . . or hypnotise . . . or have 'clients' (rather than analysands or patients) . . . or . . . but I digress.

OK. So imagine you live in a country which has only one NUO (so that this can become an NAO), and which hasn't passed

a law preventing anyone other than a psychologist or psychiatrist from practising psychotherapy, and that there is no serious objection from the psychologists or psychiatrists — the French Psychological Association recently threw out all psychologists who agreed with the Strasbourg Declaration and then tried to persuade the European Psychological Association meeting in Dublin to do the same — but I digress . . . and that in this wonderful country there are a number of different modalities of psychotherapy training people.

Right. Each of the training schools in these modalities would have to make sure that it did everything according to the book of that NUO (or NAO). In addition, it would have to be registered with its respective EWO. Now, an EWO is a European-Wide Organisation in a particular modality, in that it represents all the (say) gestalt psychotherapists in Europe, or all the body psychotherapists in Europe — except of course that it doesn't. These are professional associations that have set European-Wide standards, and only a few people want to pay the extra subscriptions to allow some of their members to go dreaming in Strasbourg, or drinking in Amsterdam, or voting in Paris (just about the time of the World Cup — how surprising!).

Anyway, assuming there is only one EWO for a particular modality (did I mention that there are at least two gestalt EWOs, and that there seem to be four or five body-psychotherapy organisations with a distinctly European-Wide flavour?), then it would make a lot of sense that a particular training school in this wonderful country should be good enough to be

recognised by the EWO for that modality, so that the EWOs should have a say in awarding this ECP. Well it took a lot of in-fighting for that to happen, I can tell you. Fighting between the English and the French in Marseilles was nothing to the fights in Frankfurt and London between . . . but I digress.

So our wonderful training organisation — assuming that it passes all the criteria of the one-and-only NUO (now an NAO), and assuming that it passes the standards of the EWO in that particular modality, and assuming that that modality has been accepted as a scientific method — oh, I forgot to mention that: the Austrians can only accept psychotherapies that have been scientifically proven, and they seem to have passed a law to this effect. So this means that all the modalities have got to prove themselves scientifically. You get out your test-tube and . . . How do you prove a psychotherapy scientifically, please sir? What criteria can possibly be relevant? It took a year to get an answer to that one, and it still hasn't been tested out in practice. Anyway . . . I digress not, I am afraid.

How does psychoanalysis prove itself scientifically? (No wonder they want to play a totally different type of game.) And are the criteria the same for behavioural psychotherapy, which thinks that it can prove itself to be scientifically valid, or for body-psychotherapy, or for Sophia-Analysis??? So, assuming that the EWO (which is the only EWO in that modality) has proved itself scientifically valid, and then can validate the training school in the wonderful country with only one NUO (or NAO) and that this country hasn't already passed a law about psychotherapy that

restricts the field so that in due course all the other countries will have to put pressure on that country to change the law (can you really see that happening?), and assuming that we haven't got ourselves into such a mess that the EU is forced to pass a sectoral directive about our particular profession, which it really does *not* want to do as it has a lot of other business on its plate, then a particular graduate of that training school can apply to its NUO (or NAO) for an ECP. Wow! There will of course be quite a hefty charge, because someone has to administer all this, and since they now have nothing better to do with their spare time they will want to be paid, especially after they have been sitting in committees for four years trying to get this thing passed and it is surprising that it has got as far as it has. And anyway they are only human. But I digress . . .

So, once your training school has paid its whack to the NUO (sorry, NAO), to ensure that it has a spot in that particular country (assuming the laws of that country allow it to do so), and its whack to the relevant EWO, to get assessed that it is properly training people in Gestalt, Body Psychotherapy, SophiaAnalysis or whatever; and once you have paid your whack to whoever to get your European Certificate of Psychotherapy, then you know what to do with it, don't you!!! You can *frame* it, and it will be very rare, because maybe, just maybe, you will be one of the very few people ever to get one.

The diagram shows some of the above, and a little bit more. It's supposed to be a flowchart of how to get the ECP — for real. The numbers refer to the various clauses of the ECP Document, available from the EAP.

FLOW CHART FOR E.A.P. EUROPEAN CERTIFICATE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

