

IPN, UKCP & Statutory Regulation: an e-mail dialogue

Heward Wilkinson and Nick Totton

Heward sent me a copy of his piece in the May issue of *Self and Society*, 'Constitutional Process', asking for my response; and then suggested that we have a 'Guardian-style debate' on the topics raised. What follows is a salted-down version of the e-mails we exchanged, in the hope that they may further discussion of these crucial issues. All of the IPN documents referred to, as well as the full text of our exchange, can be downloaded from www.ipnosis.postle.net and www.ipnet.org.uk.

Nick

Dear Heward

Thanks for sending your paper, and for the paper itself. I will mull it over. But meanwhile, I would sincerely like to know what 'aspects of the IPN's debating style are as exasperating as are some of the replies to them'.

Love, Nick

Dear Nick

I can't understand how you cannot understand what my exasperation is about, from what I wrote already. And that also is exasperating. There is something about the whole debate on both sides that is very set piece and rhetorical and indicative of a serious refusal to consider the strong points of each other's positions. It is not in the least a pluralistic debate - on either side.

Your own contribution on complaints (S&S) is of a different quality of tone, but it also simply assumes its own utopian position about conflict resolution as if it did not need argument. And this utopian naiveté is the other thing I find exasperating. It goes with a great deal of routine contemptuous talk about hierarchies and euro-centricity, and dominance politics and so on. Such routineness is the death of dialogical thinking. These emphases of course have a great deal of validity, and so have arguments on the other side.

When the IPN denies ('Who runs IPN?' in the IPN Briefing Document) that any individual or group runs IPN this is a contradiction because this document has been issued. Therefore someone at a National Gathering was empowered to

HW: My concern is that IPN, whilst ostensibly pluralistic, is not actually in the least so with those who disagree with it on fundamentals

issue it in practice. Likewise the groups standing by each others' work will, from time to time, make sanctions decisions, as suggested by your final case in your paper. So at some level IPN has to bite the bullet on this.

Now I understand that at some level IPN may not ultimately wish to touch

UKCP with a bargepole. But is this a matter of temperamental aversion or one of principle? If the former, then is this not the same kind of self-indulgence that those Labour party members indulged in, who actually did not want to ever be out of opposition? If the latter, then should not the IPN address both its own implicit contradictions, and the possibility that it could remain anarcho-cooperative and yet authorise persons to speak for it when rapid response is required? Otherwise all we who would like to help its case to be heard have to envisage is a parting of the ways really. There is actually no ground on which we can meet. My concern is that IPN, whilst ostensibly pluralistic, is not actually in the least so with those who disagree with it on fundamentals.

Love, Heward

Dear Heward

I've read your article and supplementary emails several times now, and I have to admit that I am still struggling to grasp your argument. This is not meant to imply that there is anything wrong with it! But it illustrates very clearly your point about mutual incomprehension. On an emotional level, my reaction is that you have utterly failed to understand IPN, how can you be so dumb, etc etc - and if I responded from that place, no doubt it would start off another round in the spiral of misunderstanding.

So let's not do that. Instead, I want to acknowledge that I know there is always a great deal of careful thought and feeling behind what you say, even if I fail to grasp it; and also, I think I *may* have got a handle on some of what is being misunderstood. If I have it right, then your argument about IPN failing to grasp the nettle of authority, etc., is based on a model which says that for an IPN group, for example, to exclude someone from membership is a *sanction*, a form of punishment, which is therefore necessarily an assumption of authority. Right so far?

If so, then I think this is a misunderstanding of the actual radical basis of IPN. Unlike UKCP we have no goal of controlling or affecting people's right or ability to practice. Therefore, excluding someone from an IPN group, or breaking a link between groups, is not a punishment; it simply stops them from being in

an IPN group, or being a member group as the case may be. In other words, it is primarily a statement of fact: so-and-so's work is no longer supported by such-and-such group.

This is even clearer and less authority-like with the link between groups: for my group to de-link with yours is also for *my* group to lose a link. This will in almost all cases mean that my group no longer has full member status either, so that our behaviour in de-linking will necessarily come under scrutiny from other groups as we try to achieve a new link.

Does this clarify things at all? I do hope so, because if not I haven't yet managed to grasp what you are saying!

To turn to your email, you say that, 'When the IPN denies (Who runs IPN? in the IPN Briefing Document) that any individual or group runs IPN this is a contradiction because this document has been issued. Therefore someone at a National Gathering was empowered to issue it in practice.' This is untrue in ways which it may be helpful to look at. Anyone in IPN is intrinsically empowered to produce any document they like, so long as they don't claim status for it which it does not have. Hence what actually happened with this one was that Denis Postle saw a need for it, produced a draft, and circulated it to a number of people. He re-drafted it on the basis of responses received, and simply made the result of this process available for anyone to use or change as they saw fit. Thus, I have been using a rather different version of the Briefing Document in informal discussions with Brian Thorne re the UKRC. No one has had to authorise

NT: despite varying degrees of personal hostility and mistrust on the part of various IPN participants, the general consensus is that our only serious argument with UKCP (and whenever I write 'UKCP', I mean the Council rather than the members) is over its explicit goal of making IPN's existence impossible

NT: Unlike UKCP we have no goal of controlling or affecting people's right or ability to practice. Therefore, excluding someone from an IPN group, or breaking a link between groups, is not a punishment; it simply stops them from being in an IPN group, or being a member group as the case may be

me to do this. If you read the IPN Principles and Procedures which are Appendix I to the document - and which are the ONLY 'authorised' IPN statement - you will see that they are saying the same thing.

To move on to our relationship with UKCP: despite varying degrees of personal hostility and mistrust on the part of various IPN participants, the

general consensus is that our only serious argument with UKCP (and whenever I write 'UKCP', I mean the Council rather than the members) is over its explicit goal of making IPN's existence impossible. We are very willing to coexist; however, UKCP explicitly wants to be the *only* body which accredits psychotherapists, and to enshrine this in statute. Were UKCP to drop this goal of extermination, I for one would have no reason to argue with it. You may feel that it is inflammatory of me to use words like 'extermination', but I honestly feel they are the simple truth. If UKCP gets its way, I will not be allowed to work as a psychotherapist.

As for joining UKCP, as things stand we meet virtually none of the criteria for doing so. We don't have, or want, a complaints procedure or an ethical code; that is, a collective, IPN ethical code, each member group has its own. We don't use any objective criteria to accredit practitioners; and we don't fit into any of the UKCP sections since we have no allegiance to any particular form of psychotherapy. If UKCP were interested in accepting us on that basis, I'm sure we would be interested in exploring it!

Seriously, I think that our attitude towards existing bodies is shown by the fact that we have been negotiating about becoming a route to UKRC accreditation. We laid out how we work, and got the response, as expected, that in no way did we meet their current criteria. This is essentially because those criteria fail to imagine anything remotely like IPN existing. The situation seems to be much the same with UKCP.

UKCP's attitude to the whole issue of registration and accreditation, in my view, has been consistently to avoid debate. It looked as though this was going to change with the conference entitled 'Therapy Hurts?' organised last October by the Association of Independent Psychotherapists and Camden Press. I was asked to speak, together with Dan Hogan, Petruska Clarkson, Bob Young, and various other people, including a UKCP representative. Right up to the last minute UKCP would not say who was going to speak, and then finally told the organisers that no one was coming. It was clear that the conference chair, David Henderson, was extremely fed up about this, though he played a straight bat; the event had been planned for a good six months. If it had come off, it would have been the *first* occasion, so far as I know, on which UKCP debated with its critics.

It is very good to know, Heward, that you support IPN's right to be heard within UKCP. If we do misrepresent or misunderstand UKCP's position, I think that it is partly, no doubt, shadow projection by us; but also partly the result of events like the one I have just described, and of the complete lack of dialogue on every level; and also partly of the fact that UKCP's declared policy is to stop me and my comrades from practising as psychotherapists. One does tend to take this sort of thing personally.

I very much look forward to hearing your response to this, and finding out whether we have yet made any progress in our dialogue.

Love, Nick

Dear Nick

My first response is that, yes, in a sense we do both, all too clearly, understand and *agree about* what we are *disagreeing* about.

Your, as I call it, 'anarchistic-co-operative' model seeks to construe what people do in these situations as interacting individual choices, and interacting group choices, to which you give no status of law, or quasi-law, and, associated with it, the notion of legitimised authority and power, of any kind. As you say, it is simply a statement of a fact, with no value or legal status whatsoever.

My response is: that is precisely the problem. IPN systematically avoids the issue of institutional legitimisation. It does so *explicitly and deliberately*, and this precisely is what you are confirming. *On this model, the disagreement is about the essence of social organisation.*

Perhaps I am wrong and IPN *can* have a position that addresses the question of legitimate authority and power. Then IPN is playing on the same ball-park as the rest of us, and the argument becomes one only about *means* and strategies; this is what I am calling the optimistic-co-operative position. In that case I would want to argue that IPN now needs to pull its finger out, and get its act together pretty fast. This alternative interpretation, the optimistic-co-operative position, again, would be based upon IPN's claims, which on that interpretation and context would be *the IPN* claims, that its process of ethical scrutiny is 'fairer and more effective', and hence more 'legitimate', than alternative models. Here it would be allied, as I had assumed, with 'left wing' (to have recourse to an old model) people within UKCP.

Within that version, there would be no problem and hesitancy about authorising individuals to speak for IPN, and having the debate; and, in practical terms, people such as myself would be able to say, 'we must include IPN in the debate, and the person who is their spokesperson is —',

which it is embarrassing not to be able to say. It is possible from that position for you to argue that it is *illegitimate*, and contrary to the principles of natural justice, that practitioners, whose sole fault is that they do not agree with the principle of State Registration of psychotherapists, should be disenfranchised and their practices, in some sense, exterminated, as you yourself argue. It would then be much more possible for those of us who are concerned to mount arguments, and suggest strategies, to support you. It would be possible to argue for something like a 'conscience-opt-out' clause - as with abortion operations.

HW: I myself believe that IPN is caught, and indeed confused, between the two positions - and that its trumpet gives an uncertain note as a consequence, with knock on effects for those of us who wish to support it

I myself believe that IPN is caught, and indeed confused, between the two positions and that its trumpet gives an uncertain note as a consequence, with knock on effects for those of us who wish to support it. For I believe the position you are occupying, though it has the excitement and beauty of purity, and of being a very distinctive political vision, which human beings have again and again been drawn by, is neither consistent in its implications, or sustainable by people occupying the middle ground, and that it is naively utopian.

On the stronger position claim, the anarchistic-co-operative position becomes self-contradictory. For it implies both that it has a principled understanding of how legitimacy could be claimed, and that there is none. It makes the authoritative claim that there is no authority; it says it legitimately claims that there is no legitimacy. Anarchism as a principle must claim it is right; and thereby it introduces a principle of law and right. Part of its very attraction, to the purist, consists precisely in this claim that it is right.

HW: The other attraction of the anarchistic position is *its effectiveness as a form of organisation*. But here we are back to the *optimistic-co-operative* rationale, and on this basis IPN could be playing, and could have played, a very active part in the creation of the culture of psychotherapy.

The contradiction, for me, comes out when you say, 'If you read the IPN Principles and Procedures which are Appendix I to the document, and which are the *only* 'authorised' IPN statement, you will see that they are saying the same thing'. It is as if, *by only having the slenderest statement of authorised principle*, the IPN feels it has avoided the

contradiction. In fact, it has highlighted it! This is the tip of a very big iceberg of contradiction. I believe the IPN is paralysed in ineffectuality, and a kind of utopian purism because of this contradiction.

The other attraction of the anarchistic position is *its effectiveness as a form of organisation*. But here we are back to the *optimistic-co-operative* rationale, and on this basis IPN could be playing, and could have played, a very active part in the creation of the culture of psychotherapy. It could have grasped the nettle it has consistently avoided of legitimate power; it could full-bloodedly have actually offered, and campaigned for, an *alternative* vision of the management of the ecology of psychotherapy, which could have offered a different way of thinking; perhaps upon Szaszian, or Ralph Nader-ish, free-market lines, about the process of the delivery of psychotherapy and its implications, and whether or not it won the politics, it would have asked questions which *got heard*. But I actually think it has largely itself to blame that its position has perforce become so defensive; and I would be surprised if a significant portion of the IPN membership did not partially espouse the optimistic-co-operative rationale but unclearly and with an uneasy conscience, because of the pull of the pure anarchistic position.

I have already run on at too great length, and there seems no point in having the debate which could be had about the rationale for Statutory Registration, in terms of the destigmatising *influence for good* which an effective, non-marginalised, psychotherapy Profession could have, for all its faults and problems, *if it grasps the nettle of Professional power* or for alternative models of such power. Such an ends and means argument is ruled out, because the legitimacy of taking power for the Profession, in any form, is disallowed by yourselves in principle.

With love, Heward

Dear Heward

On the whole anarchism issue, I just want to say this: there are some people in IPN, I am one of them, who might be described as principles anarchists. But we are in a small minority, and accompanied by others who are liberals, libertarians, socialists, even I would say a number of conservatives with a small 'c' who see no need to change the way things are. I suggest that you are projecting onto IPN your own ambivalent interest in the pure anarchist position! In reality, IPN is anarchist only in the same sense as are many other practical arrangements within our society, including, as a prominent anarchist once pointed out, the international postal system.

The initial goal was to invent a system which combined simplicity, low bureaucracy, no hierarchy, and rigorous accountability. There was no serious input of political ideology into this. However, we argued then and do still argue now that IPN's approach is more consonant with the theory and practice of psychotherapy, in most of its forms, than the regulatory approach.

I want to argue with your idea that 'on this basis IPN could be playing, and could have played, a very active part in the creation of the culture of psychotherapy. It could have grasped the nettle it has consistently avoided of legitimate power ... and whether or not it won the politics, it would have asked questions which *got heard*.'

I do not understand how you maintain that IPN has not tried to do exactly this! To the best of my knowledge we have 'actually offered and campaigned', to the point of exhaustion. If we have not 'got heard' by those active in UKCP, presumably that is surely because UKCP has not been listening. I want, again, to refer to the conference in London last October, where IPN had a speaker among many others, and UKCP offered a no-show. This seems to me typical of the debate so far. To then be blamed for 'not getting heard' seems a little harsh.

What do you mean by 'wanting to support' IPN? What exactly is it in which you want to support us? If at all possible I would be delighted to make it easier for you to do so.

Love, Nick

Dear Nick

1. For myself, it has made it doubly awkward in putting the case within UKCP for IPN to have access to Lord Alderdice, that I can't say who would be the link person in such a discussion, and that there is no 'chair' or 'chief executive' etc whom one could name. So the sense of the power centre of it is uncertain. I personally think this also reflects a substantive uncertainty about exercising power, but this of course follows from your understanding of what the IPN process amounts to. But I personally have not been able to get across that IPN stands for anything positive.

2. It is also for similar reasons unclear what the representations would amount to: for it amounts absolutely to a wish that Statutory Regulation will not happen. Clearly that is not a discussible proposition within the Alderdice talks. It also amounts to an intention that 'it not happening' will prevail, which goes against the wishes of the psychotherapists who do wish it to happen.

There is no middle ground here. There might have been if there had been a powerful enough presentation of an alternative, which could only really, as far as I can see, have been a free market consumerist type model. But that debate did not get going. I recognise that there have been political realities behind that, on both sides, and also that maybe we have all only really begun to stir in our tents on all of this, in theoretical terms, rather belatedly. But that is how it is; the difficulty in communication between orientations even within UKCP has been redoubled in relation to anyone outside, except where the psychoanalysts are concerned, for there the argument did not fall from lack of mutual familiarity, but for other reasons, of course. I think this type of mutual incomprehension is only overcome when there is a sustained dialogue, and dialogue breaks down, or fails to get off the ground, most of the time, in this profession.

3. So what might IPN want, apart from that it, SR, will go away, as far as I can see, but I may be wrong. Please advise me some kind of opt out clause, or conscience clause. I understand the former only would apply to existing statutorily regulated professions currently only psychiatry. I don't know the mechanics of a 'conscience clause'

4. If I were now in the IPN instead of having backed the UKCP horse, but, *per impossibile*, with my existing political antennae, and secondly if I were afraid of disenfranchisement, I would recommend IPN emphatically now! not later! to apply 'en bloc' to become a section or some other formal part of AHPP, and begin negotiations to achieve this. I think this would make a dramatic impact, even to begin this process, in a way which IPN has totally failed to do so far.

5. From my own point of view, if IPN did this it would introduce into UKCP a healthy necessary leavening of a kind of anarchism which is only partly present in the HIP Section now as it exists. I think it would also immediately acquire a voice and a presence, which it simply has not operated so far in a way to acquire. But all that, or analogous strategies, would mean that IPN would have to stop sitting on its hands and get into the political arena. And the 'how' of that, of course, is where we, you and I, would continue to have fundamental disagreements.

6. When all is said and done, if SR comes in, then you could call yourselves 'psycho-practitioners' or whatever, and continue to practice it would be up to market forces then whether this was sustainable. But if, via AHPP or some other way, you were all part of UKCP the future of anarchistic modes would be more likely to be protectable.

7. Bluntly, I think IPN has played the Achilles and sat in your tents to the detriment of the whole movement but I don't expect you to agree with that. Your numbers run into the hundreds, who are not where you could exercise real influence. I wish it could change. But I think your decision-making processes are even more cumbersome than those of the BCP's about the definition of psychoanalysis, and that's saying something.

HW: I could well believe you have no interest in being 'in' at all. But then it will go on without you all, in some sense. And I personally have little ammunition to do much with on your behalf if you have anxieties, and the word 'exterminate' suggests you do have

I hope I'm wrong.

Well I leave it with you, what you make of all this. I could well believe you have no interest in being 'in' at all. But then it will go on without you all, in some sense. And I personally have little ammunition to do much with on your behalf if you have anxieties, and the word 'exterminate' suggests you do have.

With love, Heward

Dear Heward

For myself, it has made it doubly awkward in putting the case for IPN to have access, that I can't say who would be the link person in such a discussion. It would be Denis, I presume! Did you ask him? I think you are making a back-to-front assumption that because IPN tends not to formally delegate, it is hard or impossible to identify the responsible person. The responsible person is the person who takes responsibility. In this case, Denis would clearly be it; and if he felt the need, he would consult with or draft other IPN participants to help him. Certainly he would have to go back to the whole Network over any major decision, but the same thing would surely be true for UKCP, say. And IPN has a National Gathering which can make binding decisions, subject to repeal as with every democratic body every four months. Where lies the problem?

NT: I think you are making a back-to-front assumption that because IPN tends not to formally delegate, it is hard or impossible to identify the responsible person. The responsible person is the person who takes responsibility

There is no 'chair' or 'chief executive' etc whom one could name. If this is really a big deal *in itself*, rather than for practical reasons which I have dealt with above, then it reminds me of the British problems with Gandhi: how can we possibly take this funny little man seriously, he doesn't wear a morning suit.

It is also for similar reasons unclear what the representations would amount to: for it amounts absolutely to a wish that Statutory Regulation will not happen. Clearly that is not a discussible proposition within the Alderdice talks. Why not? Why is it not acceptable to suggest to Alderdice that he is mistaken in his view of the situation, that a substantial number of therapists don't want SR, and that SR will not in fact protect anybody? How can you say that this is 'not discussible'?

It also amounts to an intention that 'it not happening' will prevail, which goes against the wishes of the psychotherapists who do wish it to happen. Yes; but what implication are you drawing from this? That these psychotherapists will therefore not want IPN to be heard?

'So what might IPN want, apart from that SR will go away?' Yes, first choice. I still think it may, though you obviously think this is absurd on my part.

NT: I haven't been sitting in any damn tent for the last few years, I've been out there trying to generate debate with anyone who would listen, in any available forum

'As far as I can see, I may be wrong, please advise me, some kind of opt out clause, or conscience clause.' Doesn't this amount to the same thing as SR going away? If I can still work as a psychotherapist, then as far as I am concerned SR has gone away, hooray.

'I would recommend IPN ... to apply en bloc to ... AHPP'. You seem to be assuming that IPN is a humanistic psychotherapy organisation. It isn't, although perhaps some 85% of current participants would identify as humanistic (guess). This sums up one of the immediate difficulties of any such application; IPN is not oriented around any particular model of therapy (see Principles and Procedures).

'I think this would make a dramatic impact ... in a way which IPN has totally failed to do so far'. This again is a matter of opinion, but in my opinion IPN has made a very dramatic impact in many quarters. We evidently move in different spheres, however.

'I think [IPN] would also immediately acquire a voice and a presence.' Again, you seem to mean 'a voice and a presence *within UKCP*'. I have heard this several times: 'I like what IPN stands for, but simply can't be bothered to make the effort because you're not part of UKCP and UKCP is where the action is.'

'Your decision-making processes ... cumbersome ...' What is your evidence for this? Our decision making processes seem to me a great deal simpler than those of, for example, UKCP, and obviously this is partly a matter of relative size. Anyone who wants to, takes an initiative, and this gets looked at by a National Gathering every four months. What could be simpler and less

cumbersome? Yes of course I overstate, but only in response to your overstatement!

'I think IPN has played the Achilles and sat in your tents to the detriment of the whole movement'. This I truly resent, Heward. What on earth do you mean? I haven't been sitting in any damn tent for the last few years, I've been out there trying to generate debate with anyone who would listen, in any available forum. As I said before, UKCP as an institution has consistently refused to talk. What do you think I and the rest of IPN should have done? apart from applying to join UKCP, which you surely must see is not much of an answer; and, by the way, what 'movement' do you mean? Do you think in terms of a 'psychotherapy movement'?

To sum up. You seem to be saying: 'I would like to support IPN, but only as a tendency or grouping within UKCP, which is and should be the only game in town'. My response is that I, and I think IPN generally, have just two fundamental arguments with UKCP, and this is one of them: the idea that a trainer's club should be the *only* organised body in the field of psychotherapy. The other one is that state power should be used to enforce this situation. If you disagree with us on these two matters, then exactly what is it that you want to support us about?

Love, Nick

Dear Nick

Just a final comment on your question, 'exactly what is it that you want to support us about?': 1. to just help you be heard in putting your case; 2. to find a way, if possible, and I am not hopeful on this, to give you a recognised space, or designated niche, to continue to work; 3. to find a way to provide a lifeboat, for those of you who want to use it, if Statutory Registration comes. I would also want it to be clear that UKCP is *only one* of eight parties to the Alderdice talks.

Other than that, obviously we could both go on debating till the cows come home! But I feel our respective positions are reasonably fairly conveyed by this dialogue as a whole, which I have much enjoyed.

Love, Heward

Heward Wilkinson is a UKCP Registered Integrative Psychotherapist, and an elected member of the Governing Board of UKCP. He is a senior trainer at the Minster Centre, and at Scarborough Psychotherapy Training Institute and is also involved in training work at University College Cork and with the Karuna Institute. He is senior editor of The International Journal of Psychotherapy, *Journal of the EAP*, and enjoys walking, following football, and reading both 'grave and gay'.

Nick Totton is a psychotherapist, group leader and trainer in private practice, based in Leeds. He is the author of *Reichian Growth Work*, (*Prism*), *The Water in the Glass* (*Rebus*) and *Psychotherapy and Politics* (*Sage*).

Is there anyone you would like to dialogue with on these pages, or any issue you'd like to argue? Let us know ! Eds.