

Dear S&S,

We appreciate Andrew Samuels' contribution to shrinking the gap between psychotherapy and society, politics, and every-day life. His books have been worthy milestones in this direction. We also appreciate that he frequently highlights the subject of sexuality, at a time when it has almost disappeared from the psychological agenda. The interview in the last edition of *Self & Society* was a welcome introduction to the man behind the public face. However, we were disappointed with what it appears to reveal about Samuels' thinking.

What we perceive as Samuels' partisanship is easily overlooked. More worrying, however, is the tone which creeps into his responses to the interviewer - 'I am more libertarian than you', 'Absolutely typical therapist!', etc. But what is most surprising is the lack of philosophical breadth in his arguments, also pointed out by Heward Wilkinson, reviewing Samuels' new book in the current edition of *The Psychotherapist*.

Samuels is to be lauded for backing more humane tolerance and less unconscious scapegoating of marginal groups in society. He is right to bring psychological awareness to the polarisations between citizen groups 'black or white, gay or straight, Christian or not Christian'. It is vital that equality is the ground of all our social and political efforts, and that we psychotherapists, having powerful advantages through the knowledge of internal processes - as James Hillman has persistently reminded us - don't just confine ourselves to the consulting room.

We disagree, however, when he combines the notions of citizenship and sex, and we are troubled when he implies his own superior knowledge. Here he seems to be collapsing levels, and, after Ken Wilber has given us the means to determine level confusion, we no longer need make such errors from positions of authority. Samuels seems to be propounding a view which is 'translative' rather than 'transformative', to use Wilber's definitions. Sex and gender issues require tolerance and equality at a socio-political level: there can be no argument here. But they are not the same kind of polarisations as north/south, black/white, Christian/ Jew, etc., because they are not confined to this domain. For they are universal, or, one might say archetypal, as Samuels - a Jungian - surely knows.

But even archetypal does not do the breadth of these differences full justice. For the Masculine and Feminine energies are universally found in a relationship of creative polarity at all levels of being: physical, psychological, and spiritual,

both in inner and outer worlds. These realms are not interchangeable; the psychological realm, for example, takes equality as a necessary given, but is at a higher a level of contextual organisation than the physical, from which the socio-political realm emerges. There is a hierarchy of context operating here which does not yield to this kind of pluralism, or 'flatland thinking' (Wilber), which wants to make everything the same. Psychological thinking differentiates and integrates the political, and would do well to inform it, as Samuels rightly suggests; but it also looks to the Spiritual, and therefore has a much greater potential span.

Whatever social history has to say about the reasons for the dominating politics of the patriarchy, and the enlightening rise of feminism, it does not alter the basic facts of life: for example, that all creatures (except certain micro-organisms) are inevitably subject to the creative tension between male and female for their very existence, and that millions of humans revere the Divine One becoming the Many by means of the primal division into Masculine and Feminine. Psychologically, as he knows - rightly busy as Samuels is with "the Primal Scene" - if human beings fail to integrate a loving sexual couple in their Object Relations, then their behaviour, self-concept, and identity are profoundly affected.

This is why the issues of gender and sexuality demand deeper consideration, not excluding, but rather 'including and transcending' (Wilber) the socio-political level. Failure to do this results in a flat reductionism, whose danger, when it persists beyond adolescent attacks on convention, has been clearly pointed to by the Post-Jungian, Robert Bly. A 'Sibling Society', Bly has shown, is a nightmare of consumerist bonanza, free to eternally collapse levels, and void of self-evident value, and masks an unconscious revenge against the father.

This is not to dismiss the necessary dismantling of the old order. Feminism has been the most liberating force since the abolition of slavery, and social constructionism has shown the dominance of power issues in our unreconstructed thinking. But even in France, the homeland of such philosophy, therapists are wary of demoting and resolving the polarity between male and female, as a recent paper by the psychoanalyst Robert Royston explains.

Here is exactly the point: the psychological and spiritual issues in relation to sex and gender require deep consideration; they cannot be understood from the social or physical level - see any issue of *The Sun* - although the physical charge from this polarity, from which we were all born, will never be surpassed. We suspect that those therapists, whom Samuels dismisses as 'conventional', know this in their bones, even if they cannot always articulate it. While we trust that few therapists have in mind the rigid control of former days, most of us probably feel that sexual activity needs some regulation. Without such a context our endless adolescent experimentation can become a barrier to the psychological and spiritual maturity for which committed relationships can provide a forum. The regrettable susceptibility to acting-out on the part of some of us, who are vulnerable (like all humans - politicians especially!)

when the forces of sex and power are combined, simply demonstrates how badly understood sexuality still is in our society.

In the meantime, collapsing levels on such vital subjects is very disappointing from a Professor of Analytical Psychology - and particularly alarming, considering the extraordinary amount of public platform he is able to command. We hope that Samuels' dissatisfying accounts are partly caused by the difficult medium of live interviews, which can tend to portray the speaker's enthusiasm better than their understanding.

Yours sincerely,

Helena Løvendal and Nick Duffell, The Centre for Gender Psychology.
Replies to: info@genderpsychology.com

References

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From Ruth Williams:

The language used by Andrew and me in our interview surely reflects a good-humoured familiarity with each other which itself enabled an open and revealing dialogue to take place. This was actually commented on by the Editor of the in-house journal of Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility which also published the interview. The manner in which Andrew called me an 'absolutely typical therapist' and the other issues raised were so far from being patronising that it had not even occurred to me that these phrases would be read as any kind of 'put down'. (And, trust me, I'm never slow to pick these things up!) I included these more contentious passages (at the risk of revealing my own thinking) because I thought that they showed a rare glimpse into the man behind the writings.

From Andrew Samuels:

The general feedback I've had about this letter is that there is a degree of vituperation in it that cannot simply be explained by its going over much familiar ground in the debates about how fixed and universal ('essentialist') differences between men and women in terms of psychological and social

functioning might be. Why not wait for the second part of the interview, or read the book which occasioned it? But, as I don't know what is really going on, there isn't much more I can say about it. I look forward to reading Nick and Helena's forthcoming article.

I found it very odd that people representing a Centre for *Gender Psychology* would be so sure of the essential differences between men and women. The term 'gender' is almost invariably used to describe those differences that can be ascribed to culture and socialisation and which may change over time and according to context. It is used in contradistinction to 'sex', which is regarded (though not uncritically, one hopes) as the unchanging biological substrate of 'gender'. So 'gender' would indeed be a constructed category and the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' could appropriately be placed in opposition like 'Jew/Christian' or 'Black/White/' or 'North/South'. I find the traditional Jungian usage of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in an exclusively metaphorical way to be a total cop-out that hinders reflection on the lived experiences of women and men in their societies and tends to favour an espousal of all that is traditional as good.

My stuff on the 'gendered citizen' is gone into much more deeply in my book *Politics on the Couch: Citizenship and the Internal Life*. As the interview made clear, this book was intended to be an accessible book which is why there isn't nearly as much philosophy in it as in previous works like *The Political Psyche* (London: Routledge, 1993) and *The Plural Psyche* (London: Routledge, 1989). And, incidentally, the reason why I didn't cite many conservative thinkers (such as Machiavelli), which is what disturbed Heward Wilkinson, is that, in this new book, I didn't cite many thinkers at all - unlike in *The Political Psyche*, which contains a whole chapter on Machiavelli - not to mention two chapters on Jung as a particularly problematic political thinker.

As far as collapsing levels is concerned, I tried to explain that I am interested in the connections between levels and in the way in which the sexual and the social inter-relate and can co-symbolise. I also said that this is very difficult to do. (In fact, much of the criticism I hear is that I am insufficiently 'holistic'). I had an unfavourable reaction to Helena and Nick's non-negotiable statement: 'These realms are *not* interchangeable'.

I don't think introducing Ken Wilber and Robert Bly as *ex cathedra* sources of authority is very helpful though I guess it does illustrate what happens when people go for vertical (hence authoritarian and hierarchical) models of thought and social organisation, rather than the much more demanding sibling, sharing models that I advocate in my book (and which Bly, in particular, argues against). As an example, who says in a way that must not be contradicted that 'the psychological realm ... takes equality as a given, but is at a higher level of contextual organisation than the physical/political'? Is it a rule, or something?

By the way, *The Political Psyche* contains a long critique of Bly's work and I suppose this whole exchange reflects a lot of post- Jungian in-fighting. Sorry to inflict it on S&S readers.

Dear S&S

Tone Horwood, writing on your AHPP page (29.2) states that Lord Alderdice's Bill, now shelved, will be used as the basis for an Order in Council by the Government to regulate psychotherapy, psychology and counselling. Firstly does this imply that it will not go through parliamentary scrutiny?

Lord Alderdice, a psychiatrist from Ulster, was quoted in an Observer article during October, as saying that 'psychotherapy is a branch of medicine and should be regulated as such' (from memory). Referring to your summary of the draft Bill showed that all the main proposed committees are to be chaired by doctors (psychiatrists?)

As subsequent letters to the Observer said, this looks very much like empire building by the psychiatrists.

Either I am misreading the situation, or will this become catastrophic for any practice of both counselling and psychotherapy, if not approved within the medical orientated model?

Yours sincerely

John Ridpath
Teignmouth, Devon

Dear Self & Society

Re Jon Ridpath's letter.

In the sense that the work done by the Alderdice Bill was to establish that the full range of psychotherapies were represented John Ridpath has got the wrong end of the stick - this is what the Government wants - that all parts of the psychological therapies world are speaking to each other and working together and the Bill did achieve some success in that.

The Order in Council is a different parliamentary process (i.e. Commons not Lords driven) - and not in the control of Alderdice therefore - but still subject to parliamentary procedures - in fact the Order in Council will include counselling whereas the Alderdice bill did not. As far as I can see it will be just as difficult to get an equal voice for the humanistic approaches whichever way - but that is what the section is fighting for.

Tricia Scott.

