

gracious style and his careful thought left me with an indelible impression of his stature – and therefore the loss to the field, as well as the loss of a reliable colleague.

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John Forrester – reminiscences

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I first met John at the famous ‘Speculations after Freud’ conference at the end of the 1980s. There was a desultory discussion about mind and body, and he got up and said, ‘I am fed up with Descartes-bashing!’ It was the best kind of intellectual iconoclasm. Not many have the knowledge, standing and Chutzpah to make such interventions.

That is why there is such a sense of sadness about John’s death, as well as the huge recognition and appreciation, personal and professional, that he is receiving. I feel it, and all the colleagues and friends passing the news and talking about him – they feel it too. Reminiscences like this one are bound to be inadequate.

My main memories of John concern the weird and maverick London Psychoanalytic Forum that he and I were on, together with Malcolm Bowie (RIP), Jacqueline Rose and Sonu Shamdasani. What a mix! We had fun. He was wicked. But he was always brilliant. In fact, he was one of the most brilliant people I have known.

This grouping put on some amazing conferences, and I recall one of them delivering a strong collective riposte to Hannah Segal, who was speaking, and to other homophobic psychoanalysts. John was political and hard-nosed about it when he wanted to be.

He was generous, too, and I have some specific memories of this. Asking him for a biblio reference, or for a confirmation of something – he was quick and apropos. Some of his research into little-known aspects of Freud’s life was utterly compelling reading.

And the encouragement he gave to us in the Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies at Essex, including supporting something he was not personally connected to (the Jungian studies components), was essential to getting our Centre going. I always found his comments on Jung and analytical psychology worth listening to, and he had read quite extensively in this area. Hence, in his role as the External Assessor, he fully backed our Jungian Masters degree. At the time, this was not only the only such degree in the world, but was one of the very few places to host critical and informed discussion of Jung.

So – it has been a massive loss on the human and on the scholarly levels.

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