

## GUEST INTERVIEW

### From Client to Professor: A Personal and Professional Journey

#### Professor Keith Tudor in conversation with Richard House

**Richard House [RH]:** Keith, it's a great honour, and exciting too, to be doing this interview with you! Could we start with you saying something about your journey as a therapist, trainer, writer and academic. What would you see as the key landmarks (or turning-points) on that journey; and have you always seen yourself as part of the humanistic tribe of the therapy world?

**Keith Tudor [KT]:** The honour is mine, Richard – *tēnā koe*, thank you for asking me. It's good timing, too, as I am responding to your first question on my 64<sup>th</sup> birthday, so I'm in a particularly reflective mood!

My journey as a therapist, supervisor, trainer, writer, and academic began with the first step of becoming a client, a step I took in 1984, some 35 years ago. I was working as a youth counsellor and feeling somewhat overwhelmed, and probably a little burnt out, as I think at that point I wasn't sufficiently trained for the job I was doing. Anyway, after a few months of hesitation – getting the number of a therapist, not phoning her up, then phoning her up and not leaving a message, and so on – I made it to my first session. It was wonderful: I felt anxious and nurtured, and both understood and challenged. It is interesting to reflect on that, as I often say that my criteria for choosing a therapist (at least, one I see and want to work with) are: that they come recommended by

someone I trust, that they are psychologically 'big enough' for me; and that they are outside my professional and social networks. You'll not be surprised to know that I set more store by this than whether they are particularly qualified, accredited or registered!

Since then I have had a number of experiences and periods of personal therapy in different forms (individual, group, couples, family, and filial), and with therapists from different theoretical modalities (gestalt, transactional analysis, integrative, Jungian, psychodynamic and Hakomi). I begin with this point about being a client as I think it makes a difference to being a practitioner (whether a clinician, trainer/educator, supervisor, etc.), and note with some concern the more recent trend of psychotherapy trainees/students only doing therapy – and it does seem like they are 'doing' it, sometimes literally by numbers of hours – in order to fulfil the requirements of a training course or programme and/or an accreditation body.

I like your choice of words – landmarks and turning points – which I see as different and so I address both.

My first landmark is the Midland Oak, just outside Leamington Spa, and said to mark the middle or centre of England. For me this landmark represents my family of origin and, more broadly, my culture. I would say that I am

strongly rooted in my culture: a Warwickshire lad, with a love of the English language of Shakespeare and, if I am proud of being English, it is in the English socialist tradition of the Peasants' Revolt, the Levellers, the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the Chartists, and miners' strike of the 1980s: an English Republican, not an English nationalist. I learnt about being English living in Italy in the mid-1980s, and returned to the UK much more intentional about culture – and, interestingly, but not surprisingly, I became much more involved in cross-cultural work.

My second landmark is Helvellyn, in the Lake District. In te Ao Māori (the Māori world), people often introduce themselves with reference to their mountain, their river, and their waka (canoe). When I first came across this, I knew and felt immediately that my mountain was Helvellyn, on which I had often walked with my family as a child, and where both my parents' ashes are scattered. Although I am living, working and settled in Aotearoa New Zealand, these landmarks are still – if not more – important to me.

My third landmark is my father's stance as a conscientious objector in the Second World War. His objection was based on his faith (he was a Unitarian) and informed by his love of Germany, Germans, and German culture (he was a fluent German speaker). In te Ao Māori, there is an important concept, that of *turangawaewae*, which translates as the (one's) place to stand. I take inspiration from my father's courage to stand by his conscience and faith, and commitment to freedom, despite the cost. Over the years, personally, politically, and professionally, I have made a number of stands, and have objected conscientiously on the basis of faith and reason, equity and freedom, and I think that I have found my *turangawaewae*. This has been particularly important when I have taken a stand, notably about the state registration of psychotherapists and the statutory regulation of psychotherapy here in New Zealand.

Turning to turning points, of course there are many. Here I will confine myself to three.

The major turning point in my life was meeting my wife, Louise (née Embleton). We first met in the early 1980s when I was a youth counsellor and she was a psychiatric day-centre worker, and then

again when I came back from Italy in 1987. I think it is significant that we had both had other, significant relationships in our lives, and that we met each other a little later on in our lives, when we were both more mature. One impact of this is that as a couple we hit the ground running and, relatively quickly after getting together, began living together (firstly in a collective house and then on our own); worked together (as training and development officers); and moved to Sheffield, where we started a family and founded Temenos (a person-centred education and training institute)! There's not much that I do that doesn't rely on Louise's support – which I have had the good fortune to have now over some 30 years. I would say that she is my greatest supporter and my greatest critic – which is just as it should be!

Another major turning point came in 1990 when I successfully applied for a senior research fellowship at King's College, London. This one-year, part-time position marked the beginning of my career as a researcher and writer, and ultimately led, in 2009, to my gaining employment as a full-time academic at Auckland University of Technology where I am now professor of psychotherapy, with a long list of publications! I remember having a conversation with Louise sometime in the mid-1990s, in which I said I *have to write*: it's almost as if it's not so much a choice, but a necessity; it's part of who I am.

Although we were not particularly well off, Louise was very supportive, and from then (when I was in private practice), I took a day a week to write. Between then and mid-2009 (when I became an employed academic), I published over 20 peer-reviewed articles, some 50 chapters, and 10 books, as well as other magazine articles, and so on. For four years during that period (1999–2003), I was an honorary lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University and so had access to academic journals and so on; but apart from that and despite my asking, no other university would give me access to its resources in return for them being able to count my publications towards the usual research valuation exercise. From time to time I would get a bit upset about this (especially when I came across academics who didn't write or publish), and I remember wanting to do something about it. Now I am an employed academic (and a manager), I do – by offering such access to researchers in the

community who are keen to research, write and publish.

Another moment, which, as I look back, was a significant turning point in my life, was my decision to become a trainer. After my qualifying training as a certified transactional analyst (CTA, 1994), I decided to take out a training contract as a provisional teaching and supervising transactional analyst (PTSTA), primarily so that anyone I supervised who was training in transactional analysis (TA) could count their hours as part of their training. I was happy to remain a PTSTA (rather than becoming a full TSTA) until, around 2000/2001, a colleague of mine said that she wanted to train as a PTSTA with me. I remember at the time looking around at what I recognized as senior colleagues, and realising that in many ways I was one of them – but without the status. My colleague's request spurred me to undertake further training as a trainer and supervisor, and in 2004 I took and passed the TSTA exams.

I think there were two things that were important about this. The first was the disciplined, learning and psychological journey to become and to be recognized as what and who I was and am: a trainer/educator and supervisor as well as a clinician. As I think about it, this was a process of becoming, being, and belonging – 'though belonging continues to be a challenge! The second was the development of my identity as a trainer/educator and supervisor as distinct from being a clinician. Too often, I think, these different roles are confused, with trainers acting as therapists to their trainees or students.

As for your question about the humanistic tribe – yes, I have always identified with Humanistic Psychology and its therapies. My first training was in gestalt therapy (and contribution training) with Peter Fleming at the Pellin Institute (in London and Montecorice, Italy); and my second, in TA with various trainers and supervisors (Maria Gilbert, Brian Dobson, Sue Fish, Petrūska Clarkson and Charlotte Sills) at the Metanoia Institute in London. In addition to this, I also identify, through supervision, and continuing professional development and study, with person-centred psychology.

My choice of studying within the humanistic tradition or tribe was consistent with my liberal

upbringing, my values, and my politics, the connections between which I have discussed elsewhere (Tudor, 2017b). On this basis I would say that I am thoroughly humanistic and am also viewed as such, as evidenced by a number of invitations to contribute to discussions and publications about humanism and humanistic psychology (Tudor, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2019a), including being asked to be an associate editor of *Self and Society* (from 2015), a journal for which I have twice been the guest editor (in 2006 and 2017) – and, of course, to engage in this present piece. Of course, as the third of three sons, and as Helvellyn is the third highest mountain in England, one might say that it was inevitable but I would associate with third-force psychology!

**RH:** Well we're both in our 65<sup>th</sup> year, Keith – and there are many parallels in our respective journeys in the therapy and political worlds. I was interested in your comment that, for you, a key criterion for choosing a therapist has been that 'they are psychologically "big enough"' for you. Can you say a bit more about what you mean by that?

**KT:** Your reference to being 64 reminds me of the Beatles song 'When I get older', which talks about losing hair, knitting sweaters, digging weeds, and being fed, 'many years from now', and it's a bit salutary to think that we are both there now! However, although we might have lost a bit of hair along the way, and certainly some of mine is turning white, I suspect that there is still more psycho-political life and activity in us old dogs!

In terms of the criterion and quality of my therapist(s), and, for that matter, supervisor(s), consultant(s), and mentor(s), by being 'big enough', I mean, essentially, that they can 'hold' me. I want such people to be able to see me for who I am, and, of course, warts 'n' all. I don't want them to be in awe of me or overwhelmed by me. The people I have chosen to work with in this way and certainly those who have been most helpful have been varied – older and younger, male and female, straight and gay, white, black (Asian), and Māori – and all have been able to see me, and to see through me in a way that has been helpful: supportive and challenging, soothing and stretching. Does that answer your question?

**RH:** Yes, Keith, that's very clear – thanks. I was interested to read of your concerns about trainee therapists only entering into therapy 'in order to fulfil the requirements of a training course or programme and/or an accreditation body'. I've often wondered whether trainers could come up with a creative response to this issue, whereby the freedom of trainees can somehow be preserved by leaving them free to pursue a therapeutic journey that feels right for them, rather than imposing an essentially arbitrary hoop-jumping rule – while at the same time holding a line about the importance and *expectation* that those aspiring to be therapists have a responsibility to embark on their own personal development journey. Any thoughts on this from your experience as a trainer?

**KT:** Certainly! Over the years, I have experienced a significant difference and a big change with regard to personal therapy during training. When I trained, initially in the early 1980s, everyone in the training group had been and was still in therapy. Nowadays, it is much more common that people apply to psychotherapy training/education programmes with no personal experience of personal psychotherapy. One consequence of this is that, whilst in the 1980s and 1990s, there was almost no need to make personal therapy one of the course requirements, now it generally is. In my view this creates an unfortunate situation in which personal therapy is somehow seen as 'just' another course requirement or, as you put it, another hoop to jump through; and worse, we now have situations in which personal therapy is quantified and thus trainees/students have to complete a certain number of hours. I say 'worse' because, in my view, this contributes to an audit approach to therapy (in this case, therapy training/education), literally, therapy 'by numbers', rather than seeing personal therapy as a journey.

At Temenos, I remember saying to applicants, 'personal psychotherapy is too important to be a course requirement'! In this sense, I think I'm echoing what you're saying when you refer to it as an expectation: why wouldn't a therapist want to undertake personal therapy? Some time ago I came across an article by David Murphy on his study into the experience of mandatory personal therapy for therapists, in which he identified four themes – and benefits – of personal therapy for therapists: reflexivity, growth, authentication, and

prolongation (Murphy, 2005). However, I am concerned that by making this mandatory during education/training, we set up students/trainees to 'do' personal therapy from an adaptive position which they resent.

One creative response to this I have instigated (both at Temenos and at Auckland University of Technology) and promoted elsewhere is to make personal therapy an *entry* requirement rather than a course requirement, a perspective which shifts the responsibility back to the applicant – in other words, that they have already demonstrated a personal interest in therapy by having experienced it, *before* applying to a training/education programme. In my experience, those trainees/students who enter in this way very often remain in therapy, and have a more open approach to engaging further in therapy – for instance, trying different approaches, rather than seeing it as something that they have to do in order to fulfil a requirement. I see this approach as one that reflects 'right-touch regulation', which, in my view, should always be a light-touch regulation, based on high trust, that, ultimately, people regulate themselves.

**RH:** It's great to hear about the personal, political and professional stands you've taken in your career – finding your *turangawaewae*! And that's a very creative response to the trainees' personal therapy issue you've outlined, one I hadn't considered. It certainly helps to counter those who wish to see therapy as 'just a career', to be pursued like any other career. Many if not most of us in the humanistic 'tribe' view therapy/counselling as far more akin to a 'calling' or a spiritual practice, than a conventional career (cf. Totton, 2011) – and in my view our training practices urgently need to reflect this. Though I've personally and professionally left the therapy world now, it's very reassuring to hear that people like yourself are struggling to keep the core values of the work alive.

Shifting gear somewhat, Keith, you kindly asked me to make a contribution to your book on statutory regulation in Aotearoa New Zealand (Tudor, 2017c), and I'm wondering how you feel now about your stand on state registration and the statutory regulation of psychotherapy, and your latest thinking on how best to resist the march of

those determined to centrally regulate the work of therapy?

**KT:** Thanks for this – and, again, thanks for your generous endorsement of the book. To be honest, when people ask me about registration and regulation, I feel tired and somewhat despairing about it, especially living as I do in a post-regulatory society and working in and with a post-regulatory profession. Many of us, including you and me, have written extensively about this, and I have to say that I think we are on the side of the angels on this – or, perhaps it is more accurate to say that the angels are on our side! Either way, it is clear where the logic of the argument lies – that is, *for* self- and co-regulation, and *against* state registration and statutory regulation; but it is equally clear that the vast majority of our colleagues don't or no longer care about it.

Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, I feel a bit like Cassandra, the Trojan princess who was given the gift of foreseeing the future with accuracy but cursed with not being believed! Almost everything that I and others predicted about registration and regulation has come to pass.... Moreover, in a post-regulatory society and profession (such as New Zealand), if you don't register with the 'responsible authority', you can't call yourself or advertise as a psychotherapist, and I can understand that colleagues, and particularly new graduates, want and need to be able to refer to themselves as psychotherapists. I would, however, like to see and be part of a much more radical profession of soul healers.

So, to answer your question, I feel fine about my stand and, as far as the situation in New Zealand is concerned, my only regret is that I didn't emigrate/immigrate here two or three years earlier when I might have been able to have a greater influence on the debate that led to the New Zealand Association

of Psychotherapists applying to the government to be registered – on the basis, I may say, that psychotherapists were so dangerous that the public had to be protected against them!

In terms of my latest thinking, I believe all we can do is to continue to resist, to protest and to find ways of surviving, and, in my case, to continue to tell the story from a post-regulatory landscape, not least *pour encourager les autres* – and, on that note, I was both touched and heartened by the responses to the book from international colleagues including yourself and Bruce Wampold. Kia kaha! Stay strong!

**RH:** As I'm no longer up to speed with these regulation issues, it's a bit disheartening to hear that the professionalizers have prevailed in your adopted country. But also most heartening that you are advocating for 'a radical profession of soul healers'. There's a title for an article there, Keith!

Regarding your words on writing – 'I *have to* write: it's almost as if it's not so much a choice, but a necessity; it's part of who I am' – they really struck a chord with me. I wonder whether you have any sense of whether you'll ever get to the point where you've written everything you need to write?

**KT:** Thanks, Richard. It sounds like that's true for you too? I can't imagine a point or a place where I wouldn't write or want to write. For me one piece of writing often leads to another or others, and I can now see more connections between my writing. When I was preparing my introduction to a book I wrote with Graeme Summers on co-creative transactional analysis (TA) (Tudor & Summers, 2014), an approach to TA which we have been developing for some 20 years, I was reflecting on some of these connections and came up with the following diagram (Figure 1).

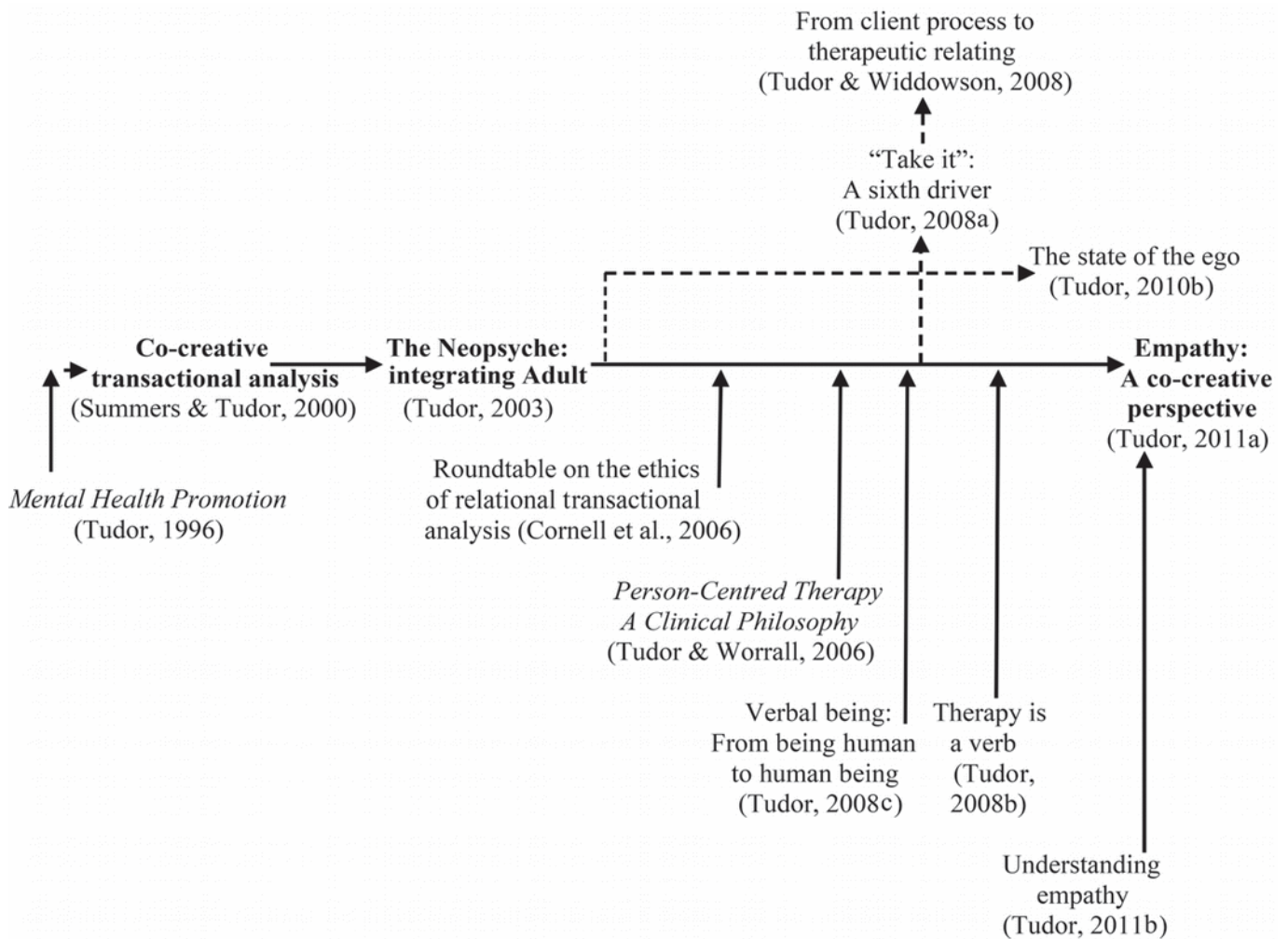


Figure 1: The co-creative transactional analysis literature and Keith’s related publications

I thought this exercise was interesting, not only to me, but also hopefully to others, in terms of seeing the influence and development of ideas. Of course, a lot of this is clearer in retrospect, in that it is only in looking back that you see a certain commonality and consistency in how one has moved forward.

While there are certain themes I have developed and pursued and, no doubt, will continue to do so, I also like being open to new things. I think this is because, essentially, I am curious. I went for a walk in the day with the purpose of walking (I am currently committing to doing 7,500 steps per day) – and getting a coffee, and something came to mind which I thought I must write about. I’ve actually forgotten what it was(!), but I remember laughing at myself and thinking that I’ll never be short of something to write! For instance, in recalling this incident, I’m now curious about

forgetting – which could and might lead me to writing something about that! On a serious note, that’s actually quite a good way of developing a discipline of writing: pick or stumble across a subject and write about it.

**RH:** Yes, I think we’re in the same ball-park on writing, Keith! – at the moment I can’t ever envisage not writing.

It’s interesting to hear of your ‘thoroughly humanistic’ identification. I don’t think we’ve ever spoken about transpersonal psychology/therapy. I certainly self-identify as having a transpersonal worldview (however we might define that!) and as ‘humanistic’, too. Is it the same for you, or is the transpersonal not a worldview that you associate with? I know humanistic and transpersonal are often bracketed together – perhaps rather lazily and

uncritically at times; and yet I know some humanistic folk who would strongly object to a ‘transpersonal’ label.

**KT:** Your reflection and question is most synchronous as I was just talking about this the other day! You’re right, you and I haven’t spoken about this, so let’s rectify that!

From a personal point of view, I was brought up in the Unitarian faith and attended chapel until my early twenties, and my first degree was in philosophy and theology. Fast-forward to recent years and, as an academic supervisor, I seem to be attracting students interested in exploring religion, spirituality and psychotherapy (Stewart, 2012; Florence, 2015), and I have recently published on the subject with one of those students (Florence et al., 2019), as well as on my own (Tudor, 2019b).

From a theoretical point of view, I am aware that the transpersonal speaks or points to something across or beyond the personal and, from a critical humanistic perspective, I don’t have a problem with that. I am aware that humanism can be viewed as – and claimed to be – anti-religious and transpersonal, but I disagree. The Enlightenment, whence humanism, challenged scholasticism – that is, the dominance of the church and especially religious orders of monks as the source of all knowledge, and monasteries as the principal depositories and repositories of knowledge and learning – but this doesn’t mean that humanism cannot address the nature of what lies, or might lie, outside the human or the person.

However, I think that the relationship between humanism and the transpersonal, and any (false) polarities and/or (perceived) exclusions in the scope of humanism, may suggest a more fundamental problem in understanding what constitutes humanism, Humanistic Psychology, and humanistic therapies.

**RH:** I must read this 2019 paper, Keith! This is such a vast issue that it really requires an interview all of its own – and that may be an offer! It’s heartening for me to see that you don’t have a problem with the humanistic and the transpersonal sitting alongside one another (and any resulting tension is OK, of course) – after all, as William Blake observed: ‘Without contraries is no progression’.

I have a sense we could easily make this into a timeless interview (a bit like the timeless Test match); but alas, space constraints dictate that I can ask you one last question. It’s a rather boringly predictable one about how you see your – and our collective – future. Perhaps I could make the question a little more interesting by asking you whether you’re someone who sets goals and makes plans, or whether you’re more of the ‘live from moment-to-moment and let things emerge’ persuasion – and that doesn’t have to be an either/or, of course. And to the extent that you’re in the former camp, how would you like to see Keith Tudor’s personal–professional journey unfolding in the coming years?

**KT:** Wow, I make that three questions, Richard! I rather like the idea of another timeless Test match – perhaps we could organize one?!

Firstly (in answer to your second question), I do have goals and plans, both for my remaining career and for my writing, but I also live from moment-to-moment in that I take opportunities as they arise and, as I commented earlier, as one piece of writing often leads to another, I am open to following lines of interest and enquiry that emerge. In this sense, while I do have a writing schedule and a number of book projects in the air, I am also open to working on something that I haven’t planned and, rather like an air traffic controller, having some writing projects in a holding pattern while concentrating on bringing others in to land.

As for my journey in the coming years, this includes personal plans to travel more with Louise (as both our children have relatively recently left home); professional plans, especially those involving positions of leadership at the university, but which, to a large extent, depend on opportunities that present themselves; academic plans to focus on supervising more doctoral candidates, and to reduce the amount of editing I have been doing but to continue to write and publish my own material.

As for your first question about my – and our – future, I am less sure. In many ways I feel more despairing about the world (Brexit, Trump, Bolsonaro, Johnson, poverty, violence, misogyny, racism, etc., etc.). I was brought up with the idea that we should leave the world in a better place than when we found (or were born into) it; and in

many ways, I think it's in a worse state. Then again, maybe it isn't? Perhaps exploring that will become one of my next projects?! What do you reckon? Perhaps that's a joint venture for House and Tudor?

In any case, I do want to end with my sincere thanks to your Richard for this invitation and the opportunity to reflect on my work and life, and for your considered questions and skilful editing. Tēnā koe e hoa – thank you, my friend.

**RH:** Thanks for that final answer, Keith. It's great to know that you have both focus for future projects and also openness to new possibilities that come your way. A balance that perhaps we could all usefully aspire to! And yes, I've had some interesting conversations with friends about how Trump, and all that comes with him and his worldview, might be in some sense a *necessary* development – not least, in waking up and spawning all the counter-movements that are springing up the world over. And with a British general election quite possibly fast approaching, let's keep our eye on how we might begin a conversation about the massive paradox that 'welcoming Trump' (and, possibly, Boris Johnson) would surely constitute for radicals like us!

I'm sure our readers will really appreciate this interview, Keith, and your openness to sharing your personal and professional journey. Thank you so much for engaging so fully with this conversation – and for all you do in carrying the humanistic flame in the therapy world.

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