

President's Report to AGM of College of Psychoanalysts – UK on 31 October 2015

This year so far we have slowly begun to make ourselves visible again in the wider psychoanalytic community and, something I think is also very important, in the psychotherapy world generally. There have been some small steps, but ones that indicate that the College of Psychoanalysts has an important role to play. We have conserved our forces recently, keeping the College going as a place-holder for those analysts suspicious of plans for the regulation of our profession, attentive to the new versions of the regulation agenda, and these new versions pose some challenges.

It seems to me that there are two fronts on which the battle for regulation is now being waged. The first comes in the form of an adaptive 'self-regulation' by the registration bodies, a process which, despite the best intentions of those involved, threatens to turn them into organs of the state. The College of Psychoanalysts does, of course, take very seriously questions of ethical practice, and this is why our EGM running alongside this AGM has been tasked with agreeing our Code of Practice. We do this to build an ethos within the College and a sense outside it that we are at the centre of current debates, not a pressure group. But we don't do this in order to operate as a 'regulatory' body which plans to take disciplinary measures against our members. Instead, we need to engage actively with groups of therapists and users of services, to argue for the importance of a space in which people can talk without fear of censorship; that is, we defend psychoanalysis, while recognising this is impossible, as an enterprise organised around the ethos of 'free association'.

The second front on which the battle for regulation is being waged is in the agreement being brokered between the disparate existing registration organisations, those now willing to also function as regulatory bodies (of which the announcement earlier this month of coordination between the UKCP, BACP and BPC is the latest stage). Some of the grounds of agreement we also would endorse, but we should appreciate that this coordination also risks reducing one of our strengths in the past battles against state regulation; that strength lay, at least in part, in the diversity of practice, and the very disputes between the different registration bodies made it clear to government that they could not negotiate with leaders of all psychoanalysts, psychotherapists and counsellors at one and the same time. This is at least one good reason now that we should continue to assert our existence as a player in the state regulation debates, and be ready for future attacks on our profession.

There are indications that this diversity of practice is, at the very same time as the threat of enclosure of the profession by those who will claim to speak for us all, being expressed in a number of different organisational forms. In these last few months the College has been visible in these, and over the next year we need to ensure that we are actively involved. I believe it will be on that basis that we will be able to retain our existing membership and increase our numbers.

The first is the formation of a Union for Psychotherapy and Counselling agreed at the end of last month at a meeting called by Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility and the Alliance for Counselling and Psychotherapy. Some of the key players in the past battles against state regulation were at this meeting, and I spoke as a member of the

College about how this initiative should make it possible for us to organise together across institutional boundaries which enforce an atmosphere of concern with status and power. This is just one initiative where I think we need to connect psychoanalysis with the broader field of psychotherapy and counselling, for there are effectively members of what Freud called 'our mad horde' there among those who do not, at the moment, declare themselves to be analysts.

The second initiative is in the formation of the Free Psychotherapy Network that has been organising meetings in these months around the country. I have been in contact with activists in this network, and will attend at least one of the regional meetings next month, making it clear that psychoanalysis has its own history of providing free clinics, and making it clear that we are willing to participate in discussions about how to make our practice accessible to the broader public. For Freud, we should remember, psychoanalysis should be part of free public welfare provision, and the argument was the centre-piece of his 1919 Budapest speech.

It is with these two initiatives in mind, and also with an eye to the activities of the larger registration bodies that would rather pretend that we are marginal enough to be ignored, that we should also be making use over the coming year of the videos produced by the Freud Museum, videos that the College helped to fund. Whether or not they present exactly the image of psychoanalysis that we individually would endorse, these short videos will provide the opportunity in local gatherings of psychoanalytic practitioners and users of services and in many other forums to put on the agenda once again the role of psychoanalysis in our society. They are tools for debate, and if we are visible as an organisation at the heart of that debate, then we will be able to defend our own practice and take forward the other linked initiatives that are important in their own right.

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