

BEYOND PLEASANTVILLE AND ON.....

This piece is a distillation and rewrite of two previous articles. It is intended to provide a context - necessarily limited as are all contexts, by its own horizons - for the thinking about psychoanalysis and its attributes for which we hope to provide a space on this website. It refers in part to a slice of history, of events within UKCP which on the surface may seem irrelevant now, as things have "moved on" in one sense, but in another way very much have a bearing on the present. It is not intended to be a dreary reiteration of the struggles within UKCP and between UKCP and other organisations, nor is it a comment on whether or no UKCP should include psychoanalysis within its regulatory field, but rather a setting of the scene, a backdrop to the current position.

Disagreements within the psychoanalytic movement (whether culminating in "splits" or uneasy alliance) have notably located themselves around the question of authority and where it lies. To name but one or two: Jung questioned Freud's authority with regard to accessing the unconscious, the Freud-Klein controversies raised (amongst others) the question of who determined entry into the profession, Lacan questioned the authority of prevailing theory and approaches within the International Psychoanalytic Association.

In the summer of '99 the Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic Section of UKCP debated a motion concerning the use of the term psychoanalyst, and on the basis of theoretical and clinical argument and majority vote, decided to notify the Registration Board of the Section's wish to use, amongst its multifarious labels, the term psychoanalyst. At that time, the procedure for registering labels was that the Registration Board checked its viability for the Section concerned on three grounds: that it described the relevant mode of treatment, that it was not in use by another Section, that it was not offensive (ie racist, sexist, etc). The Registration Board initially agreed to the Section's use of the term.

Of course, this act was not without its "political" ramifications, however rational it might seem to have been. Indeed, the timing of it was determined by political considerations - considerations for those organisations who were being pressured by the BCP to leave UKCP (under threat of their membership of BCP being withdrawn). Once those organisations left UKCP - however willingly or reluctantly - the Section felt itself free to "defrost" the issue of designation, which had been held in abeyance, albeit recognised as important, for a long time.

However, in response to letters from organisations both within and from outside UKCP, the Governing Board proposed a moratorium on the use of the term in the Register pending "wide-ranging discussions" - calling upon all and sundry both in and outside of the field of psychoanalysis to make their bid for how, where and why the term should be used. The confusion of course - never clarified - was the assumption that the label "psychoanalyst" confers upon the practitioner the golden circlet of a title - rather than describing the circumference of their practice and work. Further confusion locates itself around the difference between requirements and standards. The argument from the BCP, both then and now, is to do with what they think is required of a psychoanalytic training, which has little or nothing to do with standards. This has yet to be debated with any logic or sense.

UKCP is still addressing this issue. Meanwhile, in order both to take the heat out of the issue within the generic umbrella of UKCP and to bring it into the arena of psychoanalytic theory and practice, the College was established.

The film Pleasantville tells the story of two teenagers who are drawn into a soap opera society set in the 1950's, which exists only in black and white, lacking any complexity of story, ideas or character. Add to this complete predictability of act and conversation, and fertile ground is laid for the assumption of unthinking authority and unquestioned master narrative. The entry of the teenagers opens up (in a number of interesting ways) possibilities of other dimensions, different emotions, imaginations and lack of predictability, so bringing colour into a black and white world.

Well, this world in its black and white form is nothing if not predictable. There is an angry backlash, located most powerfully in the "men of the bowling alley", establishment figures who rely for continuance in positions of power upon the unthinking (thus un-symbolised and imaginary) consensus of the black and white world. Further, a fundamental threat to their well-being is posed by their wives (those handmaidens of the status quo) gradually becoming "coloured" and beginning to question their duties and roles.

The analogy hardly needs further elaboration. Those of us who have trained with non-IPA psychoanalytic organisations bring, potentially, some colour into what seems to be a black and white psychoanalytic world in which it has been asserted, without widespread challenge until now, that use of the term psychoanalyst - in the UK - belongs solely to the BP-AS and has a particular meaning. An assertion, it must be said, of de facto that

seems by some leap of illogic to arrive at *de iure*. Any questioning of this assumption elicits a violent backlash from the "establishment" and its un-reconstituted "handmaidens" alleging all manner of perfidies from "confusing the public" to "passing off" (as the establishment). It seems not to occur to anyone involved in making these allegations that the term psychoanalyst need not necessarily apply only to those trained at the Institute of Psychoanalysis, or indeed that the use of the term might be an attempt to question the assumptions of meaning rather than wanting to emulate or be seen as identical to the "establishment".

It is said that when the white settlers came to North America, they offered to buy the land from the Native American Indians. The latter responded with either bewilderment or laughter. They did not own the land, rather they might have said that the land owned them, in that they had to tend and care for it in order for it to allow them to live from it. In the parallel universe which the white settlers inhabited, however, it was only too clear that land could be bought and owned, and they proceeded to do just that. Of course, the native Americans bought into this so to speak, by accepting the barter - initially at least. In their world, if land could not be owned the "buying" and colonisation of it was logically impossible. They were, as we know, proved to be sadly mistaken, being overcome by the materially more powerful universe, and ending up with tribes and families torn apart, their culture decimated and having little or no part to play in the community of North America. Attempts to rectify this resulted in "Reservations", where the remnants of culture might be preserved, but at the expense of confining and "differentiating" them in what might be considered to be unwholesome ways. Moreover, we could also speculate that the triumph of this owning and colonizing culture has resulted not only in the decimation of the native Americans' way of life, also of the natural resources of the land which they tended and protected.

Simplistic as this brief analysis is, it nevertheless might serve a purpose, of helping us think about and understand some of the dynamics surrounding the use of the terms psychoanalyst and psychoanalysis in this ongoing debate and it is important to establish some of the questions and issues this debate should be addressing.

It does seem that we are faced with two parallel worlds. In one, psychoanalysis can be "owned" and we might say colonised by a particular institution, which holds the title deeds to the property, and by that token, its definition. In the other world, we might say that there is a notion that perhaps rather than owning it, we belong to psychoanalysis, that we have an obligation to tend and care for it, by thinking about what it is and means, and reviewing, questioning and creatively reassessing theory.

This poses a problem which needs to be addressed before any meaningful debate can take place, which is that by definition, parallel worlds cannot meet. Thus, discussions so far, in the main, have tended to consist of two lines of argument which go along their own paths, with little interaction or creative engagement. I have no easy solution to propose to this. Those in the "first world" (interesting how metaphors unfold themselves as ever more cogent to the subject they are illustrating) cannot, it seems, conceive of the possibility that the equivalent of money or material goods (frequency of sessions, length of treatment, genealogy of the training analyst, role of the training analysis) cannot in any meaningful sense buy or colonise psychoanalysis. It is difficult perhaps from this position to recognise that, as in the equivalent political context, the first world view is not necessarily one that should or could prevail, and that its perspective on progress and development is up for question. The other world, equally, finds the notion of ownership and colonisation of the body of theory representing psychoanalysis if not exactly laughable, perhaps rather delusional. (Although this attitude alone, of course, does not prevent the imposition by the "first" world of its values, and insistence on differentiation and reservation upon the British psychoanalytic world in general. It is difficult to know in this case though, to whom the metaphor of the native American compound applies).

Perhaps erroneously - I am beginning to think so, but that is for another discussion - psychoanalysis has been conceptualised by many as having the aim of subverting both silence (giving voice to symptoms) and the status quo. To the inhabitants of the "second" world it appears that by trying to own and confine psychoanalysis to one institution and closely circumscribed ways of doing things, we are in danger of stilling the voice and decimating the resource.

Well, what do we do about it? Imagine a "third" world? Perhaps we do almost literally have to step back, and re-enter the debate almost as if no (or little) "development" in terms of the history of psychoanalysis has taken place - at least temporarily. In one way of course this is impossible. In another way, we might be able to persuade ourselves to think about definition; to begin to talk about what psychoanalysis is, what psychoanalysts think they do.

And this "third" world is the space that the College hopes to provide - for discussion and debate. We have yet to engage in any serious discussion about whether there is a difference between psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, what that difference might be. The Consortium for Psychoanalysis - a group of organisations

engaged in conversation with each other about psychoanalysis - has so far mounted two very successful conferences, one examining issues of the transmission of psychoanalysis, the other two of the "shibboleths" - training analysis and the "purity" of the transference, and these explorations could and should be carried further. Perhaps our engagement in broad and specific issues such as these will allow for a re-examination of all our thinking about psychoanalysis.

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Jan 2004