

From Across The Pond: 1: Spring 2003

Whilst war rumbles, marchers turn out, e-mails proliferate and people put up stickers in their windows and on their cars saying "Not in My Name," in the arena of Body-Psychotherapy we have our own particular issues, which feel as if they have been paralleling some of the recent work of the weapons inspectors.

Currently, we have been having a very difficult situation with one type of 'body therapy' training. There have been rumours, fears and vague statements around for years, but more recent events finally forced us to take positive action and to instigate an investigation. The investigation has just happened, the school has been excluded and the eventual outcome will inevitably take some time to fully work itself out. I obviously don't want to go into any specific details here.

Whilst we are clearly going in the right direction and taking appropriate action, I am still not sure about all the intricate rights and wrongs of this situation. Part of the issues centered around the use of questionable (?) methods of body contact and touch, and also around how much some of these are legitimately within the field of "Body-Psychotherapy" or how much they might be an experimental form of "Body Therapy" though done in a (so-called) Body Psychotherapy training and by (self-identified) Body-Psychotherapists. This raises huge issues of what is good Body-Psychotherapy.

So whatever happens specifically, we will still have these questions and these issues within our culture. I think it behooves us to be much more clear about them. We are fairly clear and consensual about what sorts of touch are not ethical or what methods are not appropriate, though these may not have been fully verbalized or all written down specifically. What we don't have is a clear definition or agreement of what precisely ethical or appropriate body contact or touch is.

We were also not at all sure what exactly had been happening, or not: there were many different stories - so who to believe, and how much. The laws of and the practices in the different European countries also vary widely, so we also didn't have any real consensus or clarity about exactly how to proceed - no "smoking gun". We also didn't have any clear processes for investigating rumours, or concerns, rather than full-blown written-down complaints from identified complainants. We obviously want to proceed respectfully towards our members, even when countered with what sometimes feels like very disrespectful responses. Equally obviously we cannot proceed against non-members even though their work may be affecting us.

We don't have a clear and solid authority-position, which requires compliance with all our (worked-out or not) internal processes: we just have equal-voting members. Some of these members may or will inevitably resign because they don't like the actions we took, or the way in which we acted, whatever the result: for there is a lot of polarization and you can't please all of the people all of the time. Some of the practices we were concerned about, we have discovered have been spread into other schools, in other countries, and now many therapists may be using them, so there may be some very long-term problems as well - "a potential time-bomb".

Some of the people who started using similar methods a long time ago are now very respected members of our B-P “community” and almost beyond reproach. So we have a lot of unclarity about how to proceed, against whom; exactly what to do, by when, and who to do it to; and what we can or cannot say about whom.

So it might have been easier to do what has been done for many years, which is to turn a blind eye, or hope the situation will go away. However the time for such is also long gone; and not doing anything may even make us liable or complicit; and so now, even though we have a final decision and some sort of a resolution (we ‘won’), we may have to face further conflict, or perhaps a long drawn-out process in law (“guerilla-warfare”), but hopefully not a full-blown war.

The clearing-up process will probably be very costly and will certainly take a very long time. Does any of this sound at all familiar?

From Across The Pond: 2: Autumn 2004

It seems a very soggy and deep pond at present: unremitting rain has destroyed any visions of having a summer and added to the extent of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and the incidence of depression that I see in my clients. How to help them when I am wringing wet as well? My brain is going mushy and green mould is creeping across the computer screen.

In Europe last summer we had a heatwave and 15,000 people died. This year we are trying to cope with an expansion of the EU to 25 countries, heavy thunderstorms, though the rumors of floods of immigrants from the poorer eastern countries have just not materialized. Maybe they are listening to our weather forecasts! The hype over the Olympics has also been dampened by reports of drug-taking athletes.

But in EABP, we are trying to look forward to going to Athens after the squelchy games, in sunny (?) October, for our bi-annual Congress – though the last one was three years ago in the Netherlands in 2001.

I suppose it is great that you guys seemed to skip a year as well. So we are also loading up the credit cards (drowning in debt as well), struggling with travel plans, and reserving some hopeful drops of sunscreen for Tuscon, next June.

There are other parallels between the two organisations. We are voting to adopt your section of the ethical code on Ethical Touch. Your work on the Academic Board parallels some of our thinking about revising our membership criteria: details are on the EABP website: www.eabp.org

Meantime, the long-term view says the sea levels are rising from the melting icecaps. This ‘pond’ is getting larger. I am now quite glad I moved from the coastal sand dunes of Findhorn. But I also don’t hold out much hope for many of our major ports and coastal towns: Goodbye Liverpool, Portsmouth and Holland ... glug, glug!

Soon the Gulf Stream will turn off, they say, and Britain will end up with a climate like Labrador. Do they need psychotherapists in Texas or New Mexico? How do I get a Green Card? Do they give them to people who are card-carrying members of the Depressive Party?

All you guys 'n gals can do to help out is not to re-elect a certain person in November, and to plant more trees. Good Luck.

From Across The Pond: 3: June 2005

This is being written during the USABP Conference in Tuscon, June 2005, partially in the middle of a sleepless night with my mind racing from a mixture of the company of good friends, jet lag, and excitement. It is a very personal view, and maybe I will get to say it some of it sometime in the next few days to some of those present, but I would also like to go down on record as having said this to the wider US collective of Body Psychotherapists as well. It is a view from someone who is both passionate and concerned about the direction of Body Psychotherapy, and our professional 'bodies', over the next few years.

Firstly I think that we are doing great as a professional association – and I include myself here, as I am also a USABP Member (as well as being a member of EABP). The USABP has these wonderful conferences – seriously they are really professional and also great fun; if you have not been to one, you are really missing out on one of the main benefits of being a member. Such conferences are essential to the health, well being, growth and professional standing of such an organization – but they are also incredibly risky financially and totally exhausting to organize for those involved. Congratulations and thanks to all those involved.

You also have an excellent journal (something that we could not achieve in Europe given the diversity of languages). The Board, the Academic Board, Training Standards Committee, Ethics Committee and other bodies are all doing really good solid work to consolidate the framework of the organization. You are honoring people whose work has contributed significantly to the field and those (few) who are doing good research as well. All this I find genuinely wonderful, so please do not take anything of what follows in any way as any form of criticism. The spirit of these remarks is meant more as a voice, a single voice, for some wider future directions or further developments, and that is their only intent and hopefully I am not alone in some of these thoughts.

I think that we need to find ways to triple the USABP membership: that we need, nationwide, a minimum of about 2,500 from registered or accredited Body Psychotherapists (Full Members) and people involved in training (Student Members) and those interested in Body Psychotherapy (Associate Members). I think there is a significant mass that needs to be reached before we are 'secure' as a 'body'. Some of this increase could be achieved by ensuring a good take-up of student memberships or associate members from all the different training schools. Maybe we can 'lock in' the schools with special deals for them and their students for cut-price rates for groups coming to conferences; with discounts for 10 or more Journals, etc. We also need to find out what they want and then give them a little bit more. This is the future of the organization. We also need, in my view, to attract people from other disciplines: social workers, academics, other psychotherapists, etc. – Affiliate Members? We probably need to organize more events that they would come to and discover how interesting we are (see later).

We also need (in my view) to double, then triple the subscription fees – and before you go into terminal shock, please read on to try to understand why I am saying this. Currently, as an organization, we are almost strangling ourselves financially; we cannot work effectively without proper resources; and I believe that we are going to need to do a lot more, and that will take a lot more resources. As a rule of thumb, the minimum (or concessionary) annual fee for a professional association should be about 3 times a full-rate therapy session, with maybe the standard fee about 5 times such a session cost: maybe USABP should consider hiking the membership rates.

In my view (and please remember this is a purely personal view), the money is going to be needed for, or could be used for:

- (1) **A Research Fund:** as we will absolutely have to find ways of promoting proper research in the areas that we need to have proper evidence in: clinical efficacy; comparative studies and control groups; outcome studies, etc. We need masses of these to be done. We have lots of people coming through Masters and Doctoral programs now and we need to help them help us do the research that we need, in the ways that are appropriate for us, and they need us to help them in this. This can be done by ‘sponsoring’ their research: a \$2,000 grant from USABP would help them to get other funding, and it will also help us to ‘shape’ their research a little to ensure it is up to our standards and deals with the issues that we want dealt with. A Research Committee can channel this funding appropriately. [Multi-national pharmaceutical companies can and will do this, by ‘swamping’ a piece of negative research with nine or ten pieces according to their perspectives.]
- (2) **A Bursary or Scholarship Fund:** We really want to encourage new trainees: they are the next generation. Let us create a fund now so that within 10-20 years time, and with a few sizeable donations from legacies etc., we can sponsor worthy students through college programs & training schools. It doesn’t have to be huge amounts of funding (maybe 10-20% of \$12,000 p.a.) but this sort of sponsoring really helps and stimulates such students to obtain matching funding and other grants. The ‘bursaries’ (financial help without needing especial merit) and ‘scholarships’ (for those with particular merit) could be especially targeted towards people from different countries, especially for people from different ethnic and social backgrounds, or for people with different experiences in different fields. I believe that we need to offer this sort of help and stimulation to ensure the diversity and richness that such people coming in would contribute to our field. Again, colleges and training schools can be encouraged to offer (say) 1 bursary/scholarship place for every 10 fully paid-up places – maybe even as a condition of being an Institutional Member?

- (3) **A Legal Fund:** Somewhere out there, some when, someone is going to attack us or sue one of us, not for unethical work, but just for doing what we do. As a profession, we may have to defend legitimate professional and ethical touch. As a professional association, we would be somewhat obliged to defend such an attack on the legitimacy of the work of one of our members, as it may also be an attack on our existence. The failure to defend may result in a precedent that could be used in court against other members. We may not just want to leave it up to the member's own resources or those of their (relatively disinterested) professional insurance company. So we might have to consider employing our own lawyer to argue our case for us. This is going to cost lots of money. Maybe we know someone who could give us some pro bono legal advice or that we can combine forces with other modalities and build-up a set of 'case law' that can be used, if and when needed. We might have to think up some way of funding this through 'tithes' to the therapy and training centers like the NAACP did with the local colored churches in the 1960's and 1970's. Let us start to think about this now!
- (4) **A Publishing Company:** We may want to start publishing work on Body-Psychotherapy ourselves: case histories; doctoral theses; essays; symposium proceedings; reflections; in a larger volume and a more permanent style than can be contained by the current excellent USA Journal of Body Psychotherapy and the Conference Proceedings. We may want to publish stuff that is now out of print: we may also want to publish excellent and seminal work that would now not be printed commercially or work that has never been printed (like George Downing's book, *The Body and the Word*). The Bioenergetics Press has successfully reprinted all Alexander Lowen's work recently and has just published his excellent autobiography. Modern print methods mean that you can almost "print to order" and do not have to carry large stocks and have huge print runs. Material can also be put on PDF files and on CD-ROMs. Maybe we need to start off with an active Publications Committee with tie-ins to some DTP experts.
- (5) **The EABP Bibliography on CD-ROM** is now getting up to 3,500 entries, and the next version will be out in 2006. It is developing into a great research tool for authors, colleges and practitioners. People who bought the earlier version will be able to get a discount on the next version (probably by answering a simple question correctly). But I do this totally by myself, though EABP have been sponsoring it to the amazing cost of 1 Euro per entry. There is a huge amount of work involved in finding and entering material, writing abstracts, and checking for duplicates. I am now ready to offer and arrange for the various schools and colleges to have an 'administrative version' of this database for their own use and so that they can add in their own materials – on the condition that once a year they send me their new entries and will then receive all the new entries. Maybe

USABP would like to help sponsor this: they could buy a copy of the CD-ROM at cost price (maybe @ 2 US\$) for each of their members; a publishing committee could help in this work by reviewing and editing some of the material that I have chosen to put in (but maybe should not be in there); and by recommending other material, to ensure a regularity of entries, a breadth of scope, and also a continuance over time.

- (6) **Translations:** There are a great number of excellent books, articles, papers and a huge volume of Body-Psychotherapy work out there, in Portuguese, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, German, Serbo-Croat, Japanese and other languages that will not see the light of day (in English) unless we can work collectively to ensure this. EABP are doing some sponsorships for translations and will be putting articles up on the website; maybe USABP might consider something similar.

These are just a few specific ideas for spending some more money, as and when it comes available, of course and advancing the field for the benefit of the members and the work. I hope that the USABP membership might support some of these ideas, or suggest others that they want their money to be spent on. But one needs to pay the money in first, before you can spend it. I am offering to pay double my membership fee as a first step – putting my money where my mouth is. How about you?

I would like to take this opportunity – if you can bear any more of my proselytizing – to suggest a couple of other ideas as well. I also think that we have to work much more generically, as a collective, as well as supporting the richness and diversity in some of the different and very individual modalities within Body Psychotherapy. I am not quite sure how this could be done in the USA, but in Europe we are trying by bringing together all the different Body Psychotherapy organizations and training schools (Hakomi, Bodydynamic, Biodynamic, Unitive, Bioenergetic, etc.) from all the different countries into “The FORUM” and then empowering this body to “accredit” Body-Psychotherapy training courses according to the EABP Training Standards by a process of self-assessment and mutual recognition.

We are finding that some countries will not accept (‘register’) schools in different modalities of Body Psychotherapy but would register or license a ‘college’ of Body-Psychotherapy where the different methods are taught as options within the main generic training. So we may be moving in this direction.

We are offering smaller regional symposia, one-day or weekend events, organized by National Associations (often of only 20-30 people), on one particular theme, with input from many different sources, and going more in-depth – a sort of Master Class. Something like this could be offered on a state-wide or regional level in (say) Boulder, Colorado; Miami, Florida; the New York area; the Bay area. They would have the USABP’s blessing and ‘support’ and the participants could get CEUs. A training school or therapy center can host

this and benefit from it; USABP could get a percentage of any profits: but we are talking hundreds of dollars, not thousands, and the organization can be done by a handful of people, who may not burn out. However the 'body' of knowledge, experience, contacts and respectful reputation that emerges from such events is worth the effort – a hundredfold!

The new seminal book *The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy* edited by Gustl Marlock and Halko Weiss and published in German this year, needs to be translated and published in English probably by a mainstream publisher in America. This is the first real 'textbook' of Body Psychotherapy, and it needs to be followed by many others. It admirably shows the breadth and diversity of this field like nothing else out there to date. It contains about 65 chapters and has about 1,500 pages. It could not have been published without massive grants (currently about 20,000 Euros) from organizations within EABP and yet much more is needed for the translations for about half of the chapters from German into English. Any help with this, financially, with translation, or contacts with, or endorsements to, publishers would be very helpful. US\$ 'donations' are being accepted by the Board, and EABP will accept Euro 'donations' to avoid Halko & Gustl paying tax on these. Colleges and schools could 'advance order' copies for each of their students and trainees. Chapter lists are available from USABP or EABP.

We also need, as a collective, to work to support the individual. Many of us have built up a reasonably successful clinical practice over the years. What is going to happen to this practice in 10 or 15 years time? There are graduates now coming out of Naropa, CIIS, JFK and Santa Barbara who need a period of solid clinical experience, possibly 'mentored' or 'supervised'. Can we consider or devise some sort of a 'format' for an elder USABP member to give the new graduate a 'job' or position for a year or so? You, the member, would take a percentage of their earnings, supervise them, and have more time to write, research or teach; and they will benefit enormously by this 'mentoring'. Maybe they will even 'buy' your practice off you in time, or go on to pastures new with incredible gratitude for this opportunity to work with you. They have huge student loans to pay off; they are starting out 'cold' and poor; you might be able to guarantee them some regular work; you have the local 'street-cred' or professional reputation and the contacts in your town or city; and you would have the benefit of a 'sort of' apprentice for a while. It could be a win-win situation, but we need to start thinking both collectively and individually, supporting both, and not exploiting one for the benefit of the other. If it was set-up within USABP defined parameters, it might give both parties some sort of introductory contact or even a degree of security.

Finally there is the huge issue of ethnicity. I am disappointed that I still see much fewer Hispanic, Asian, Afro-American or American-Indian faces at USABP conferences than I do on the streets outside. Maybe this is true for any 'professional' gathering – I hope not. We certainly need to work on this more in Europe as well. And I read that US white population demographics are now diminishing steadily (with an average age of 40, compared to an average age of

26+ for some of the other ethnicities). What are we going to do about this? Or are we eventually going to disappear like the Dodo or the Passenger Pigeon? We need to ensure that we are working relevantly for and with these people; we might need to ensure that we can speak and work in Spanish in certain areas; we might need to have ethnic colleagues working in our practices; we might need to do a percentage of pro-bono work; we will need to develop contacts with churches, community groups, and local programs to get the referrals that later extend the knowledge and awareness of our Body-Psychotherapy culture into these ethnicities.

Ah well, a new day is starting and people are stirring. This is a great Conference and I really love coming 'across the pond' every couple of years and seeing all my Body-Psychotherapy friends here and meeting lots of new colleagues. I now need to get some sleep and then circulate and schmooze with you all some more before we depart. This is the real richness of these Conferences.

I wish you, us, well – and, of course, All is Well and All is Very Well. Thank you for your attention.

Across the Pond: 4: March 2006

So what is going on "Across the Pond"? Quite a lot, I am afraid.

The first bit of good news from the personal side is that Laura Steckler and myself have at last managed to buy a house in the Scottish borders, about 25 miles south of Edinburgh. It has been nearly 4 years since we left Findhorn, and we have been renting ever since. So, all of you, please wish us well in this new phase in our lives. We met at the 1st (pre-)USABP conference in Beverley Mass., and both feel very connected to USABP, even though we also feel, at times, a long, long way away. We are both working part-time in the UK National Health Service - Laura as a Clinical Psychologist, doing great work in the Pain Service - and me as a Counsellor / Psychotherapist in GP (General Practitioner) surgeries. We also both have a part-time practice. Laura is getting more into 'Mindfulness' and I am still writing a lot (having a book published in the autumn: Self-Help for People with Anxiety & Depression) and still also quite involved politically in the 'profession' of psychotherapy as I have just been elected to be a Vice-Chairperson of the UKCP, the UK Council for Psychotherapy, the professional body that is the 'Brit'-equivalent of the APA for psychotherapy.

I have stepped down as President of EABP and am now (just) a reserve Board Member. I have been involved centrally in EABP for about 15 years since 1993 - as Ethics Chairperson (2 years), General Secretary (7 years), Vice-President (1 year) and President (4 years) - Enough already! Time for a new face! The new President is Joop Valstar, in Amsterdam, and I hope you will all get to meet him sometime soon.

EABP is co-producing the next Body-Psychotherapy conference, with the International Scientific Committee, in Paris in November 2008. Please make an effort and come over to a unique event and what promises to be a wonderful conference. Details are on the EABP web site: www.eabp.org

I hope that you enjoy the latest version of the EABP Bibliography of Body-Psychotherapy on CD-ROM with over 3,700 entries. I would like other people to get involved: B-P training schools can receive a full working version, make it their own (with new graphics) and add all their entries; other people can act as a publications committee and add (or subtract) entries. All I ask is to communicate with me and send me new entries. Lots and lotz! Let's try for 5,000 or 7,500 within the next 2 years.

What is also new in field of psychotherapy is the concept of "Functional Competencies." - What's that? Let me explain. Functional competencies are what a particular profession (or trade) is supposed to be able to do, wherever they trained, however they trained: thus a good plumber should be able to fix a leaky tap and a burnt-out central heating boiler, whether they are from Poland, or whether they trained as a Biodynamic plumber. The European Union, originally set up as a free labour market, uses this as its 'gold standard' between these different areas. We tried to establish the 'functional competencies' of psychotherapy several years ago, and of the various different 'branches' of psychotherapy, but the attempt got sabotaged and put on the back-boiler. Now it is back again, in force!

So - what's new is that the 'psychological' professions of Clinical Psychology, Psychotherapy and Counselling are being increasingly required to identify, establish, and discriminate between themselves as to the differences in the 'functional competencies' between these professions. This has nothing to do with orientation (Psychodynamic, CBT, Gestalt, etc); nothing to do with whether you have a Masters degree or PhD; nothing to do with whether you are licensed or not (in this country, or this state, or this canton (in Switzerland); and nothing to do with whether you have been in practice for 20 years or just 2 months. If you have (and can demonstrate) the 'functional competencies' of a plumber, then you are a plumber - by definition. It is actually quite radical.

Various European governments, including the UK, are getting behind this schema and are now beginning to apply it to the various 'psychological professions'. In the UK, the government (Department of Health) wants to put all the psychological professions under the same umbrella body (Health Professions Council) as the physiotherapists, dieticians, chiropractors, paramedics and radiographers etc. The art therapists and the speech and language therapists are in there already and are not very happy, by all accounts.

The Clinical Psychologists (state-registered APA?), psychotherapists (UKCP) and the counsellors (BACP) are increasingly unhappy about having to go in - but ... here is the news: for the first time EVER, they have been co-operating together in their resistance. It is like USA, Iran & North Korea working together against a common (alien) invasion.

Yours truly is - heavily - involved, of course. Having fought long and hard to get Body-Psychotherapy accepted as a legitimate form of 'psychotherapy', we will not now give up an inch of sacred ground won at the cost of so many of our glorious whatever. So, watch this space!

Oh, yes. One thing more. The horrendous ethics case that 'touches' our special

interests in Body-Psychotherapy and that I spoke of several months ago is, at last, now coming to open court in Holland. There are reports about it on various web sites - if you can speak Dutch or German. Don't watch that space ... please!

Across the Pond: 5: July 2006

As our 'pond' gets gently warmer and the whole caboodle starts to heat up, not just with the gentle zephyrs of summer, but with the remorseless onset of global warming; and as our world seems to be becoming more political, more violent and more extreme every day; I sometimes wonder what we are doing as a profession. As psychotherapists or as psychologists, and as people with considerable awareness of the body, is it sufficient to focus on trying to resolve (say) an individual's issues of attachment in an extended one-on-one therapy? Valuable work as this is, maybe – just maybe – we could be contributing something more.

Maybe we need to consider how to change the paradigm within our profession(s) to become more widespread (by running groups); more proactive (by going into primary schools); more political (by speaking out); more culturally relevant (by offering low-cost options closer to where the need is - offered by people from those cultures); by becoming more efficacious (by using brief therapy techniques); and by becoming more socially significant (by disseminating some of our 'precious' theories and techniques more widely in self-help formats and to other professionals and lay-people)?

I was at a Biosynthesis conference in Lisbon recently with David Boadella, Allan Schore and Antonio Demasio: it was great, but these thoughts kept intruding into my consciousness and 'spoiling' my equanimity. When I asked the above (sort of) question publicly, people seemed to get a bit defensive and 'announce' that they do 'this' and they do 'that'. This project and that development are marvellous, and I don't want to challenge them in any way whatsoever. And I don't have any real answers myself. I am just asking whether we need to start thinking about adapting some of the primary tenets or directions of our profession towards coping with changing world circumstances.

By the way, many thanks for the recent USABP Journal issue (Vol 5, No 1) dedicated to Biosynthesis and to David Boadella's work. It was wonderful and it meant a lot to people at that conference to have that professional recognition.

EABP's conference in Askov in Denmark approaches in mid-September: the theme is "*Bodies of Knowledge: Resources for a World in Crisis*" and we hope that some of you will make it across (details on www.eabp.org). Remember please to plant some trees to compensate for the CO₂ usage and also to claim EABP member's prices: there is a reciprocal arrangement.

For myself, I am stepping down as EABP President as I have been too central in EABP for too long. I hope that I will be able to continue to contribute in various ways, but maybe more from the margins than from central stage, but I hope at the conference to be able to launch the 2nd version of the EABP Bibliography of Body Psychotherapy on CD-ROM with over 3,500 entries. We will

now be asking training schools and colleges to join in and add even more entries, so please get in touch if this project interests you.

Our next conference in 2 years time in France in 2008 will be combined with the International Scientific Committee for Bodypsychotherapy's triannual conference. We hope for a great turnout and that this won't clash with any USABP conference plans. Have a great summer and don't forget the sunscreen!