

INTRODUCTION

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Annie: Oh, you see an analyst?

Alvy: Y-y-yeah, just for fifteen years.

Annie: Fifteen years?

Alvy: Yeah, uh, I'm gonna give him one more year and then I'm going to Lourdes.

Woody Allen, 'Annie Hall'

Therapy is fertile ground for the comedian. It is a quirky, idiosyncratic phenomenon riddled with contradictions and inconsistencies.

Psychotherapy is, by its very definition, concerned with working with the soul, a scientifically unverified concept, yet the 'profession' seeks acceptance as scientific. Therapy is about listening to clients, yet its exponents don't seem to wish to listen to clients' opinions about therapy itself. Therapists want to help clients individuate and find their selfhood because that's the cultural and socio-political imperative of our time. Therapists want clients to trust them yet they impose an arguably alien, rigid set of boundaries and other ethical mandates, typically without explanation, that they have unquestioningly imbibed and passed on from their occupational/training bodies.

And here we are, the editors of *Ethically Challenged Professions*: we want to challenge the academic expropriation of counselling and psychotherapy, yet have produced a book full of academic chapters, academically supported and referenced, written by a host of distinguished doctors and professors. We want to challenge the orthodox scientific, modernist paradigm, yet need to be within it in order to be taken seriously enough to have our book published.

Postmodernism is a tremendously exciting, empowering and liberating concept. In its disputing of universal truths, it affords everyone's experience equal validity. There are huge areas where postmodern philosophy, humanistic psychology and feminist theory overlap — for example, equality, co-operation and mutual respect. Yet, sadly, at least for the present, postmodernism tends to be a cultivar in an academic cloche: writings on the subject are nearly always scholarly, at varying levels of inaccessibility, and off-putting to many people — and certainly to the vast majority of non-academics! Postmodernism, the approach that allows for the opinion of an unschooled person to be equally valid and *valued* compared to that of a professor, is the secret of an academic elite.

The editors and authors of *Ethically Challenged Professions* do not possess or profess easy solutions to ironies and contradictions such as these. What we have tried to do in this volume is to face up to them in many different ways. Perhaps wrestling with such dilemmas is, in any case, what is important, rather than resolving them. If so, we hope that this represents a step towards a truly postmodern or '*transmodern*' way of looking at therapy, that it is a book which

will appeal to all counsellors and psychotherapists irrespective of their level of academic interest, and that it will provide a forum for the voices of clients to be heard by an increasing number of practitioners, and for the crucial dialogue between the two to gather pace.

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ANTHOLOGY

The book falls into two parts. In Part I the contributions are concerned with challenging the assumptive base of what we, the editors, term 'professionalised' therapy. By 'professionalised' or 'profession-centred' therapy we are referring to the form that therapy has increasingly taken as the therapy professionalisation process in the UK has proceeded apace, and with increasing momentum, since the early 1990s. For us this is quintessentially an *ethical* issue (hence the title of the book) — but not, however, in the usual sense of codes of conduct based upon unquestioned assumptions of the 'profession'. Rather, the contributors to Part I variously challenge the very ethical base of therapy *qua* therapy itself. In the process, nothing is taken for granted, and profession-centred complacency and self-satisfaction receive very short shrift. As a result, the contributions to Part I serve to open up *a creative and innovative mental space* in which the reader, liberated from the constraining assumptions that dominate mainstream thinking in the field, can embark on the kind of 'clear-blue-sky' thinking about the fundamental nature of 'the therapeutic' which we believe to be essential for the long-term viability of counselling and psychotherapy in late-modern culture.

Part II moves on to consider ways in which the various challenges from Part I are beginning to influence thinking about and actual practices within the therapy field — influences which, we believe, are exciting, innovative, creative and, above all, enabling rather than subversive of all that is best in empowering therapy practice. Finally, two distinguished and influential radical commentators have contributed our Foreword and Afterword — namely, John Heron and Professor Ian Parker respectively.

In collecting together the following readings, we have tried to assemble the most incisive, intelligent writings available in the critical therapy tradition. Our initial searches revealed enough material to fill at least three volumes of this length, and we spent many hours of negotiation before finalising the contents of the current anthology. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the wealth of high-quality writings which we have — very regrettably — had to leave out due to constraints of space.

It is our hope and intention that *Ethically Challenged Professions* will make a significant contribution to the deepening and maturing of the debate about the place of therapy in modern culture; and to the extent that it does so, it will have more than served its purpose in the evolution of ideas on which the future healthy development of our field ultimately depends.