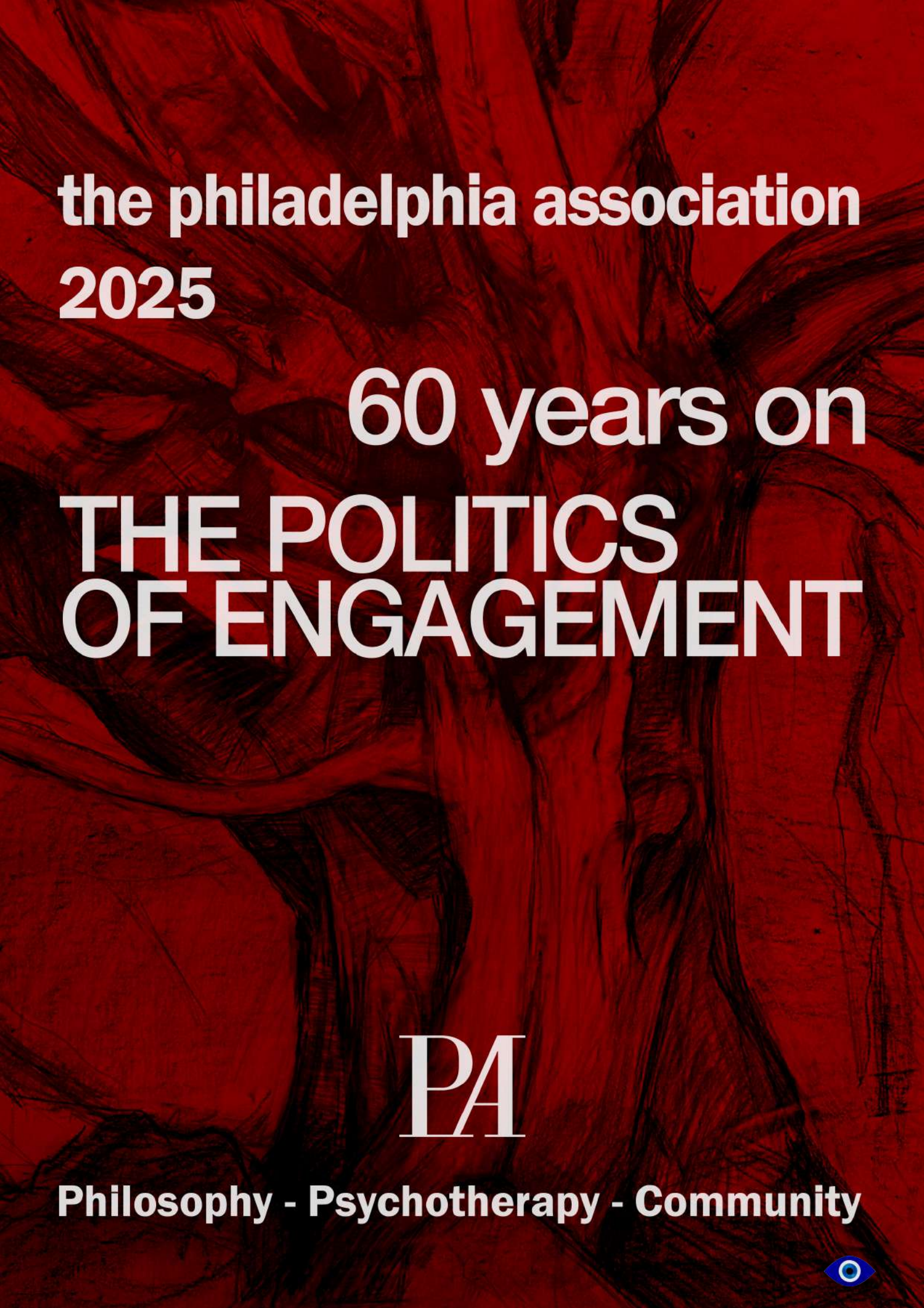
the philadelphia association
2025
60 years on
THE POLITICS
OF ENGAGEMENT
PA
Philosophy - Psychotherapy - Community

Cover Design: Alex Widdowson (former PA Artist in Residence)
Drawing: Andrea Heath

Philadelphia Association

Chairman R.D. Laing

Suppose we, any of us, come to the end of our tether, can no longer cope, break down, go to pieces. To whom do we turn? Where do we go? A mental hospital is seldom a safe place to be, to live things through.

When a person's suffering becomes insupportable, to himself, and to others, and yet persists, despite all, we may fairly say that such a person is in extreme distress.

The Philadelphia Association provides households, which, we hope, are places of refuge, sanctuaries, where people in distress can, if they choose, live through what they must, without jeopardy.

The Philadelphia Association is a network of people, whose distinctive concern is both to cultivate skilful means of helping people whose relations with themselves and others have become an occasion of wretchedness, and to contribute to a theory of personal life that is adequate to experience. In the course of this enterprise we hope to come to a better understanding of how we occasion our suffering and joy, of the ways we may lose ourselves and each other, and find ourselves and each other again.

The treatment we offer is attention to each other, for attentiveness is therapy.

'Philadelphia' means brotherly or sisterly love. Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it
(to the church at Philadelphia, Revelations III,8)

Households, Study Programme and Training in Community Therapy and Psychotherapy.

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2 Eton Road London NW3. Telephone: 01-794 0198

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Nefeli Tsakona

Introduction

Andrea Heath

> "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul."
>
> Simone Weil

Anniversaries, like dreams, have a way of disturbing the surface. They are more than moments to mark time: they constellate personal and collective memory, inviting us to pause and reflect. The past presses against the present—not for resolution, but for recognition without turning away.

This publication commemorates sixty years of the Philadelphia Association (PA), bringing together a collection of articles, tributes, reflections, and archival fragments drawn from across a network that spans more than six decades.

In a world overshadowed by devastating global violence, a psychotherapy organisation can seem irrelevant. Yet the PA's tradition of thinking against the grain—grounded in community, ethics, and conversation—offers a counterpoint to dehumanising forces. This anniversary is an opportunity to revisit and renew the founding principles of the PA: the challenging of narrow, repressive ideas of "mental illness" in the name of an openness to the fullness of our humanity.

How has the PA endured for six decades? Largely because its founders had the foresight to secure assets that provide a degree of freedom and independence from shifting market forces. Its governance disperses power through committees and conversation, allowing the work to flow and evolve organically. It holds space for new voices and for thinking that doesn't fit into neat hierarchical frameworks.

But working collaboratively under the weight of the organisation's history and ethos is not easy. The PA is marked by losses and hurts. It is the coalface of group phenomenology. Yet the enduring commitment to its ideas and work—sustained within a network of past and current relationships—has kept the organisation alive for sixty years.

So this anniversary is a tribute to everyone who has contributed to the PA over the years—not only the legends, but also the lesser-known individuals whose quiet dedication, work, and presence have left a deep imprint on its life and ethos. Many of these contributors have been women: Lucy King, who served as chair for thirteen years and steered the organisation through periods of instability, and Barbara Latham, a guiding presence in training and supervision, embody the PA's spirit. Alongside them, others—Hilary Cooper, Marie-Laure Bromley-Davenport, Miranda Glossop, Alison Davies—have shaped the Association in myriad ways. So too have many others who have served on committees and tended to the daily running of the organisation in its various forms.

It is also an opportunity to honour the PA residents, who carry the weight of daily life in the community households and whose deeper engagement continues to inspire critical reflection on the PA's ethos and practice today.

As we mark sixty years, we look toward an uncertain future, trusting that the PA will continue to renew itself as new generations take up the work.

The collection begins with Paul Gordon's piece, "R. D. Laing: A Distant Memoir", and ends with "Beginnings" from the PA book Thresholds Between Philosophy and Psychotherapy. Paul opened doors for many of us into the vocation of psychotherapy—with kindness and intelligence. He was a truly decent man.
His writing reminds us of what has sustained the PA over time.

> "The PA is not, and never has been, an orthodox training institute, nor is it a 'community' in any straightforward sense. What has kept it going, through contradictions, tensions and times of uncertainty, is not a single philosophy or figurehead, but a commitment, however faltering, to thinking and relating in ways that resist closure."

PA - Marty's Yard

R. D. Laing: a distant memoir

Paul Gordon

> When there are so many we shall have to mourn…
> of whom shall we speak?
> For every day they die
> Among us, those who were doing us some good…
> Such was this doctor.
>
> W. H. Auden

I never met R. D. Laing, yet his death in August 1989 haunted what remained of the summer. But it is only as the years have passed that I have begun to grasp the meaning of his death for me.

Even before I first read Laing as a student, he was already part of my life. While I was an infant, he was working as a young psychiatrist at the Gartnavel Royal Mental Hospital, a vast, brooding place, only minutes from where I lived, which dominated the view from our family's top-floor flat. (Laing himself would be reminded of Homer's Hades by its wards.) Against its menacing background, I would later fish for minnows in Bingham's Pond and be rowed in a boat in the colours of summer. It was there too that my grandfather would die. And it was the young psychiatrist from Gartnavel whom my mother met when he visited the Glasgow child guidance clinic where she then worked. (That, I imagine was the reason for the slim Penguin paperback, *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise*, on her bookshelves. It was, as far as I knew, unread, and seemed to be out of place. An arrogant young student, I felt it should have a better home and I borrowed it. I have it still today)

When I first read Laing — on 'The obvious' in the penguin collection of papers from the 1967 Dialectics of Liberation conference — it was less Laing the psychiatrist I met than Laing the rebel, the speaker at the Roundhouse, along with Jules Henry, Herbert Marcuse, Paul Goodman, Stokely Carmichael. More than that, he was the *Glasgow* radical, part of that rich 'alternative' 1960s culture (long before the sanctifications of the city as Europe's cultural capital) in which Glaswegians. like Laing himself, Alexander Trocchi, and Tom McGrath, played such an important part. Laing, like the others, was somewhere I wanted to be. He showed me that it was possible to come from our grim city and have something to say, not just to other Glaswegians or even other Scots, but to the world.

Reading Laing at this time was to be furnished with further evidence against the existing social institutions. In particular, of course, it was to find the evils of the family laid bare his early work, politics unmasked in the home. As Laing had told his audience at the Dialectics conference, the apparent unintelligibility of the

'psychotic' individual was intelligible in the irrationality of the family, which in turn had to be located in *its* encompassing networks, in society. This not only fuelled my own emergent sense of rebellion, but served at least for a time as an explanation for the personal discontent and unhappiness I could not otherwise account for. If I could not see in my own family the schizophrenogenic situation he uncovered elsewhere, I could see it in others. And I could certainly detect in my own world elements of the knots in which, according to Laing, our relations with others were enmeshed.

Many years later, I read Laing's account of his own childhood in *Wisdom, Madness & Folly,* the autobiography he sadly never continued. I was struck by the distance between our worlds in terms not just of time, but of social class and religion, not to mention the routine brutality of his home life. But there was too that same pervasive joylessness, a haunting bleakness of spirit that I had known and which so many of us Scots had internalised - our internationally famed dourness.

But beyond the identification and the tenuous associations, real but scarcely decisive, was a sense that it was Laing who started me on the journey, circuitous to be sure, to becoming a psychiatrist, a journey which had begun long before I even knew about it.

It was Laing, I see now, who first made sense of madness for me, that madness which had shadowed my childhood, both in the sooted grim buildings of Gartnavel and in the form of a Grandfather whose absence I did not understand and whose awkward presence in our home every Saturday perplexed me more. (It mattered little that his illness, I would later be told, was unquestionably organic.) Laing's The *Divided Self* and *Self and Others* spoke to something in *my* life, in *my* history. And that, for me, will always be Laing's achievement. Whatever the shortcomings, the unresolved problems and contradictions of his thought — and there were many, as numerous critics showed; however much he subsequently descended into mysticism or romanticism, Laing, together with his colleagues, showed me—us—that madness could be intelligible, an understandable response to intolerable situations.

At the time of my first encounter with Laing's work, I was quite unaware of the intellectual environment in which he had forged his early ideas. Reading his first books at a time when he had moved on, I had no idea of the extent to which his thought had been forged in the heartland of British psychoanalysis. It was only returning to Laing's early work much later that the names in his acknowledgements (in *The Divided Self* and *Self and Others*) meant something to me. John Bowlby, Charles Rycroft, Peter Lomas, Marion Milner, D. W. Winnicott —reading them came as both a shock and a pleasant surprise. It was to feel as if I had come full circle, to have realised that the rebel of long ago had been among those whose work I had also come to value in my own right. It was to realise too the continuity between Laing at his best and some of the best of British psychoanalytic thought. (Laing, I would realise too at this time, had been but one in a line of Scots — like Ronald Fairbairn, Ian Suttie, Hugh Crawford, Aaron Esterson, Jock Sutherland — whose contributions to psychoanalysis had been significant. They too, even if not all Glaswegians, had something to say in the world.) I felt, in other words, that Laing, the Glaswegian, the rebel psychiatrist, had helped me discover for myself the world of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. And it was fitting, perhaps, that I should do this at a training

institute which Laing himself had helped to set up, even though his involvement by this time was quite minimal.

And so I mourn a man I never knew, who was nevertheless part of my past, who helped take me where I was going, where I wanted to go. The obituarists, some of them at least, want to bury the ideas along with the man, proving Auden right when he said (of Yeats), 'The words of a dead man are modified in the guts of the living'. Yet for me, those early ideas, the thoughts of the 'old young man' as he described himself, have lost none of their force. There are few people who change the way in which we look at the world. For me, R. D. Laing - to me he will always be the initials, never the Ronnie of those who knew him or of the falsely familiar - was one, and what Auden said of Freud seems an appropriate epitaph too for Laing:

> If often he was wrong and at
> times absurd,
> To us he is no more a person
> Now but a whole climate of
> opinion.

A view of Gartnavel Royal Mental Hospital

*This article was first published 1991 in *free associations*. Thank you to David Morgan, current editor who gave permission to re-publish.

The Open Way

Barbara Latham

As the PA celebrates 60 years it seems appropriate to write something of the way it came into being.

Ronnie Laing came south to train at the Institute of Psychoanalysis and, though very disappointed the analysts showed no interest in the philosophers who mattered to him, especially Kierkegaard, Ronnie had not found anywhere else. (He was later to say several times that, though he regretted almost nothing in his life, he did regret spending seven years on analytic training because it took him 30 years to undo the bad habits.)

John Heaton, arranged speakers at the "Open Way" and invited Ronnie when "The Divided Self" was published in 1960.

Ronnie had not known such a place existed, though analysts from the middle group, including Winnicott and Rycroft, gave less orthodox papers there that they could not present at the Institute. The Open Way was started by Graeme Howe after the war, when the Tavistock, which he had set up with Sutherland, joined the NHS.

Howe said therapy had no business being in bed with government and left.

The Open Way had a wide range of speakers including Christmas Humphreys and other Buddhists brought together Jungians and Freudians

John Heaton was their first trainee.

Ronnie turned up to speak then didn't leave. He and John Heaton became friends and took over organising seminars at the Open Way, as well as reading philosophy together.

An asylum for those in crisis was planned but once Ronnie was attracting young, inexperienced Americans Winnicott and Rycroft wanted nothing more to do with it.

The 1960s sentimentality about madness helped Ronnie become famous and he attracted the banner waving anti-psychiatry, though his own position was more subtle and he called himself a critical psychiatrist.

The bigger split with the Open Way happened over LSD which was available to doctors in trays full of glass ampoules. Howe was adamant that, of course, they could experiment but should not be encouraging the troubled who were gravitating around Ronnie.

And Howe had no patience with the hours spent, especially by David Cooper, discussing putting acid in the London water supply to turn on the bourgeoisie.

In 1965 Ronnie left to set up his own place, while John Heaton stayed at the Open Way until Ronnie persuaded him to join him at the PA and set up a training programme.

Which John did and stayed actively involved with the training as well as running a philosophy reading group until his death in 2017

PA Study Programme

Lucy King

I had first encountered R. D. Laing mainly through his work with Aaron Esterson, Jules Henry and others on families, as well as his early work as a psychiatrist who wrote *The Divided Self*.

At this point, he was at the height of his celebrity status, and I was bowled over by his performance to a large, packed hall at the Friends' Meeting House on Euston Road.

I became interested in the Philadelphia Association Community Households through a friend who had a breakdown and became a resident in Hugh Crawford's house in Portland Road, and I started attending Study Programme groups.

Back then there was no unified Study Programme 'Course'. Instead, there was an array of seminars, workshops, study groups and reading groups, as well [as] social gatherings, open to the general public as well as members, associates, house residents and students on the psychotherapy and community therapy trainings, as well as people interested in training. It all felt to me very convivial. Very much in the PA spirit.

The general idea was that if you wanted to go on to train, you should be actively 'around the PA' attending things for two or more years.

The nature and scope of all these events and groups [were] not confined to psychotherapy or philosophy (in a narrow sense), but included yoga, meditation, literary texts, sacred texts, various forms of creative expression, as well as a number of things people organising the Study Programme were interested in at the time, such as pre-birth experience.

There was no single venue for all these events, but a whole variety, spread quite widely across London. This continued to be true throughout my training—most seminars and clinical [groups] were held in the house of the seminar leader. The very first seminar of my training was at Hugh Crawford's home and he tore a strip off me for being late, as I had difficulty choosing the right exit from the Hammersmith flyover. The message was clear. I had to take personal responsibility for getting to seminars.

NB: My training was also somewhat atypical, in that there was an anthropologist (Frances Huxley) on the training committee, and anthropology was a regular part of the teaching schedule.

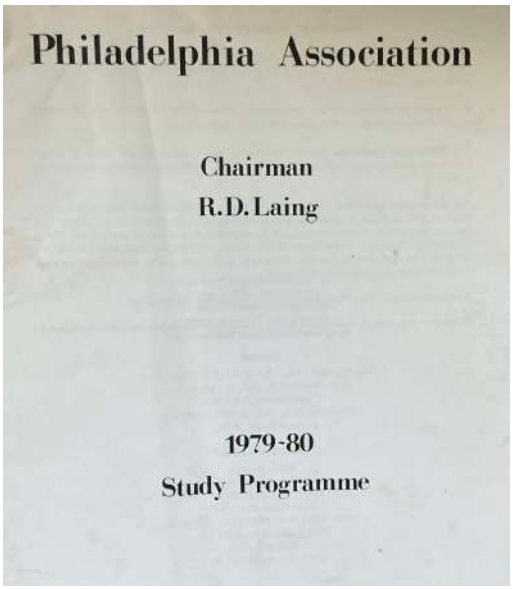
The first Study Programme event I went to was a Merleau-Ponty reading group, held in the basement of [Portland Road]. Being the early 70s, there were no chairs, just floor cushions on a deep green carpet as I recall. What really impresses me was [that] the group was facilitated by someone who made no claims [to] be an expert, but someone who struggled to understand the text alongside the rest of us. By the end of the 10 weeks, we had only got partway through the preface. Despite this, I really enjoyed it and I think the rest of the group shared this.

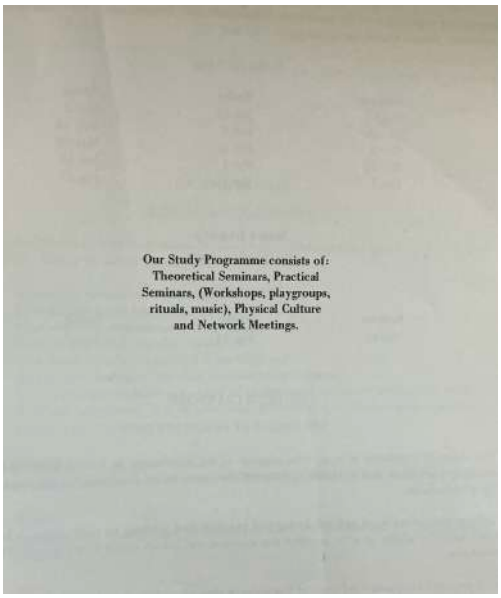
Another very different event I remember was held at a large apartment near Marble Arch. It was crowded with people. I think Leon Redler spoke but, as I recall, there was quite a party atmosphere – all very convivial. It seemed to fit with the PA desire to replace hospital with hospitality.

A PA brochure from the mid-1970s writes of the Study Programme in these terms:

“The path followed is a phenomenological one. Based on what we learn from a critique of our experience. Studies and practices include anthropology, Hatha Yoga, literature, music, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, Zazen… seeking, perhaps through indirection, to come to ourselves.

Some of the themes discussed in previous meetings are (1) Lived Space; (2) The Body Image in an Anthropological Landscape; (3) Embryological Consciousness; (4) ‘Birthing’ Workshops; (5) Community; (6) Theoretical Practice; (7) On Finding Oneself in the World; (8) The Logic of Transcendence; (9) Relations, Presence and Absence; (10) Selected Scriptures.”





My Divided Self

Miles Clapham

Introduction

I want first to say a little about what brought me to the Philadelphia Association, to psychotherapy and to psychiatry, which I continued to work in with what I wanted to be a psychotherapeutic mode. Laing was a psychiatrist as well as a psychoanalyst – both of these he critiqued partly through the lens of European philosophy especially Existentialism and phenomenology, partly through the lens of Hindu mysticism, especially the cult of Kali, the goddess of creation and destruction, and partly through LSD. I remained in psychiatry, and one of the strands of the sceptical position of the PA, for me, is its relation to psychiatry and a critical understanding of 'mental illness'. I want to expand a little on this in what follows.

I came across Laing's "The Divided Self" as a student and it was a revelation. It made me think it was possible for someone else to understand, me, perhaps everyone. Laing's writings set me on the trajectory that brought me to London, which itself was an adventure, and the Philadelphia Association. At the time I was training to be a doctor at medical school in Auckland, New Zealand. I was particularly interested in psychology – the psychologists teaching us always seemed cooler and more radical than the doctors – and briefly I was seduced by radical behaviourism which denied any relevance to interiority. I think I liked it because so many fellow students couldn't stand it, nor the arrogance of particularly one lecturer, who looked a bit like Frank Zappa. When I had to read a bunch of papers on rats in Skinner boxes for a Master's degree paper and watched films of pigeons madly pecking, I saw the light, and did History of psychology instead.

I was horrified by psychiatry, as Laing and others such as David Cooper had been. In our first year we had a visit to Oakley Hospital, Auckland's big 'bin' as it was disparagingly called, where we were "shown the implements" in a small museum of psychiatry: dunking chairs (used to 'test' witches, there was actually a chair in a glass case) and surgical equipment for frontal lobotomies, big scalpels effectively, and told gleefully by rugby player sized male nurses how before anaesthetics were used they had to pin down those who were receiving ECT. And how the psychiatrist if he was feeling off colour would himself have a dose of electricity. It all seemed weird and torturous and scary.

I came to London from New Zealand in 1979, shortly after Margaret Thatcher's Conservative party won the election, to do a three month Elective from Medical School with the Philadelphia Association. I had come to London with my girlfriend at the time, and her then 6 year old son, whose father had died in a motorcycle accident. Sadly the relationship didn't last, as a result of my inability to understand or deal with my emotional needs and desires, the needs and desires of others, or what it might look like to really care for another and the relationship with the other. They returned to New Zealand. It has taken a long time, a lifetime, to understand myself and others. A continuing project. The PA has played an important role… especially the long therapeutic relationship with John Heaton.I first met John Heaton and Barbara Latham in New Zealand, when John was visiting Barbara's family, and travelling around. I had written to Laing, addressing my letter (a paper letter!) to the Tavistock Clinic where Laing had worked. They passed it on to him, and John was assigned to be my

mentor/supervisor. The PA seemed happy for me to visit for the three months. John then wrote to me and offered to meet me when he came to Auckland. I was rather intimidated, but we had some kind of conversation about psychiatry and my limited philosophical ideas. The next time we met was in London.After some prevarication and then negotiation I came to live in the Grove, staying eventually for 4-5 months, having decided in a state of crisis not to return to New Zealand , and to start having psychotherapy with John Heaton. He supervised me for the three month Elective, and oversaw my Elective report which enabled me to formally finish my medical training. The Grove was supposedly about community, although everyone seemed to spend most of their time in their rooms. I would sometimes lie in bed writing endless screeds of a self-revelatory diary, now lost. Paul Zeal ran the Grove's community group once a week, and Laing came twice when Paul was on holiday. But Laing spent the time speaking to a woman who would not attend the community group.

At the end of my Elective I got on a plane to Cairo, the first leg of the planned trip back to New Zealand, alone without my now semi-separated girlfriend and her son. I spent a few days in a state of panic, doing some tourist things but without really knowing what was going on. I flew back to London, just having enough money for the ticket, and started psychotherapy with John. I went back to the

Grove for a while, until I obtained a junior doctor post in Harrow. Then I moved to a shared Housing Coop house in Hackney, riding a 125cc Honda to work, staying every third night in the hospital when on call. I was totally disorientated but met friends who I'm still friends with now. I had a frightening accident on the motorbike, a near miss for something very serious, once when late for therapy. I had to leave work an hour early when I had therapy, enormously annoying the more senior doctor on the ward who had to do some of my tasks when I skived off. Psychotherapy saved my life, perhaps not literally, I don't think I'd be dead without it, but in terms of enabling me to live in relation to others, and to myself. John used to say it was hard to know what helped in therapy, one patient told him it was his nice smile. When I started, I wanted to get rid of my guilt, meaning especially the guilt I felt when I was unfaithful to a girlfriend. I don't remember John's exact words, but he was pithy, and let me know clearly that was a pointless exercise. Of course I had guilt for many other reasons as well, some of which was important to rid myself of, some to look more deeply into my actions. I had to deal with a lostness I hardly knew I felt, my mother's alcoholism and descent in to early dementia – which my sister had to deal with after her return to New Zealand a year after I arrived – my father's general emotional distance, my parents' completely miserable relationship, and my father's death when I was 18, just finishing school. He was much older than my mother. Plus all sorts of other self-inflicted nonsense in the tangled life I got myself into. But some of it was fun.

The Philadelphia Association was extraordinary, and felt like coming home. There was no centre at the time, I did some of what was the Introductory year (I had to do the whole year again later when I started training as. I only attended a term or so during my Elective) and the meetings were in people's houses, sometimes houses that were community houses, and the things that were discussed were wonderful, although I think I understood a tenth of what was said. I remember Steve Gans talking about Merleau-Ponty, with a sort of beatific smile, and seeming to say almost nothing, he stood, smiling, a few words only – some spark crossed to me – perception is the thing, not an hallucination, not an inference, not constructed inside the skull. And yet a

mystery, not done away with by talking of quantum effects in the retina. And it can be uncertain. A haiku might help: “This dewdrop world, it may be a dewdrop, and yet, and yet…” It doesn’t help at all, and yet, and yet…

As Husserl has said, “we are trying to blast open our captivation in an acceptedness. We are trying to discover the point of our alienation and dissociation from the world.” (Quoted in The Visible and the Invisible, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s last unfinished work.) This I realise was my project too. Medical School was very important for me, and gave me some understanding and respect for science, which can be flawed but it is essential to living well in this world, especially at this moment of poly crisis, but medicine in some ways was a strait jacket of acceptedness, socially, in status, in practice, in self-importance, that I couldn’t stand. Hence my attraction to the Psychology outsiders, who undoubtedly had their own tracks and styles of acceptability, but they looked cool from my position. Laing and the PA, and London in the 1980s, offered a much more radical break from New Zealand rugby, racing and beer conformity, and the expectations of ordinary medical practice.

And to add Merleau-Ponty: “if we eschew thinking by planes or perspectives, there are two circles, or two vortexes [vortices], or two spheres, concentric when I live naively and as soon as I question myself, the one slightly decentred with respect to the other”. I love this man that he can say such things. What does it mean? I can’t try to answer this here.

Psychiatry

Laing was a psychiatrist although he left psychiatry for private psychoanalytic practice, along with, once it was started, Kingsley Hall, and other community houses with the hope of a different way for those otherwise oppressed and diminished by psychiatric practice as it was in the 1960s. Other doctors joined, John was an ophthalmologist, understanding that ways of seeing things intertwined with seeing life led him to psychotherapy. An anthropologist, Francis Huxley also came to the PA. A few other psychiatrists came, Steve Ticktin was living in the Grove when I moved in, Steve is still going strong now back in Canada. Steve always played the guitar at parties, with a wild man beard, a wicked but gentle soul, and his favourite Rocky Horror Picture Show songs. There was Leon Redler and Mike Fielder who sadly died. But the psychiatric strand of the PA seems to have gone, although when John was alive there were joint conferences with the Critical Psychiatry Network, and the biennial R D Laing conferences organised jointly with the Philosophy group of the College of Psychiatry, particularly with the help of Bill Fulford who is Professor of Philosophy and Psychiatry at Warwick University.

Although I was horrified by the psychiatry I first saw at Medical School there were other better examples. On my psychiatry attachment I was on Ward 10, the top floor of Auckland Hospital. The surgeons on the 4th floor made jokes about seeing people fly past the large windows, overlooking Auckland Domain, during ward rounds. Not very funny. There were some white South African psychiatrists, refugees in a sense from apartheid, privileged enough to be able to leave, who were interested in Laing, and family work. I joined family meetings with the family of a young man diagnosed with schizophrenia – I wrote them up in what I took to be a Laing style of poetic vignettes of the interchanges in the meetings. The psychiatrists were investigating Laing and Esterson’s work in “Sanity, Madness and the Family”. As Laing said, the “schizophrenese” seemed to be part

of the family style. But you can't look for cause and effect here. Psychiatry was difficult, at one point I left and was unemployed for a short time, thinking what to do with my life. But I had no direction, tried to clear an overgrown garden of someone I knew in Paris, came back to London, found a job in psychiatry, and then a bit later went back to the PA to join the Introductory Course and then train in psychotherapy.

Before I trained with the PA I worked for a while with the original Crisis Intervention team in the UK, in Barnet and Watford, started by Dennis Scott. Scott was a psychiatrist influenced by Laing, by Gregory Bateson and his ideas such as the double bind theory, as well as the systemic family therapy movement, especially the Milan group, who were psychoanalysts by training, but left psychodynamics for family dynamics. The inheritor of Crisis Intervention, which aimed at keeping people out of hospital, supporting the community and the 'patient' in the community, is the Open Dialogue method which seems very similar in its methods. When working with the Crisis Resolution Team we did home visits, at all hours, even in the middle of the night, trying to make sense of what was happening when someone had for want of a better word a psychotic break, or was suicidal. A crisis visit took three of us, nurse, social worker, and junior doctor. Many of the staff, especially social workers, were trained in systemic family therapy, and this was the preferred mode of practice. The service did effectively reduce hospital admissions, although not all local GPs were totally on board. I remember one home visit to an elderly couple, the wife every so often had a manic episode, the husband would get depressed. We arrived at midnight; I rode a motorbike and left my helmet and leather jacket at the door. The woman found them and hurled them into the garden; the couple were Jewish and the midnight visit reminded her of the Holocaust. We did have to admit her, but only for a few days.

My last psychiatric job was in Bedford with a Home Treatment Team for adolescents, from 2009, as part of the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). We too kept young people out of psychiatric hospital, although with one NHS unit in East London, when Bedford became managed by that Trust, we had an arrangement for 7 day crisis admissions to cool down situations and assess the young person and support network more thoroughly. Some young people did require a longer stay, but it was a well run adolescent unit with good staff.

My experience in general in the last years of practice before I retired was increasing medicalisation. There was a sudden change when consultant psychiatrists seemed to have their role defined, partly by others expectations, partly by the fact of being doctors and able to prescribe, as having their main role as arbiters of medication. When I trained in CAMHS from 1986 to 1990, we almost never prescribed medication. For example, ADHD was a known thing, but appeared relatively unusual and there was a Children's Unit at Guys Hospital where I worked that would admit children for 2 weeks to see if stimulant medication was useful. Now thousands of children are on Ritalin and co. At Guys family therapy was the main mode of treatment, with a significant amount of individual psychotherapy. Trainee child psychoanalysts were always attached to the team.

In Bedford I was happy to practice a kind of therapeutic psychiatry. I saw a few young people for individual psychotherapy, but only had time to have 2 or 3 regular people each week. I also joined our family therapist, who had a great sense of humour, for family work with many of the more complex young people. I liaised with other services, especially paediatrics and social care. Many young people were admitted to the children and

young people's ward if they had taken an overdose or tried to kill themselves, occasionally by hanging or jumping of a bridge. So I often did assessments and worked with a team of nurses, who many times did the first assessment, going to a school, family home or other community setting, the family therapist, a nurse practitioner doing what was officially CBT but was more open therapy, and a part time dietitian who was great with the anorexic ones. And a manager who too was very funny, but very effective at getting things done, and getting resources for the team. Working in a team is something that some psychotherapists manage, for me it was a big part of my professional life, allowing flexibility and being part of a group that thinks together, yet each brings their own thoughts and position.

There is something about what are the boundaries of a service. Some people want to be very professional and protect the boundaries of who they take on and how they work. Psychologists and child psychoanalysts, and some of the other psychiatrists mainly fell into this way of doing things. It's understandable in the context of overwhelming demand for scarce services. It was bad in the 2010s, and the referral numbers were increasing steadily – they have increased steadily since the 1990s while mostly resources were cut, except with the Blair government when there were no cuts, but no increases either. Now, since Covid, I'm retired, but I read and hear that demand is frantic.

But what I mean about the boundaries is something more subtle – it's about being willing to look twice at a situation, to be open with approach and style, to not stand on ceremony. One young woman I'd seen after an overdose, I promised to get one of the psychologists to see her. They were busy, and time went by with nothing happening for her – I didn't forget, she was on our list we went through every week, but she was waiting. She was coming up for 18, our cutoff point, which made it more difficult. About 3 months later she took another overdose – not too big. A reminder. I saw her again, this time with no-one else available I said I would see her. I won't tell her story, but she found it difficult to talk. I said write it down. So for some months, until she was well past 18, I saw her weekly while she wrote everything in coloured pens on A3 sheets. The GP had given her 'antidepressants' (a misnomer but that's another story), she didn't like them, we tried another, different but worse, so she had no medication and that was fine. She impressed me by her thoughtfulness, and her breakthroughs like being able to go to a music festival with a friend.

What did I take from Laing? Too much to neatly summarise, and of course it was the PA as a whole, and especially John Heaton who influenced me. Fundamentally it was to see the other as a person, as Laing talks about in the beginning of The Divided Self, to avoid language and labels that alienate, dissociate, treat people as part objects, or as an instance of an illness. Suffering is real, and emotional or 'mental' suffering takes different forms, as do physical illnesses. We haven't answered why that is. Laing was clear that one could be driven mad by one's situation, by the nexus of relationships one was tied up in. Now we have the ubiquitous idea of trauma, and I think this is important but it's how we face trauma. Deleuze in "The Logic of Sense" develops ideas around Stoicism and living one's wound, Franco Berardi in "Quit Everything: Interpreting Depression" has an understanding of the contemporary situation that drives us all mad, another take on what Laing said: to paraphrase loosely, "If you're not mad, then you're truly crazy."

Robin Cooper

Paul Gordon

Robin Cooper, who died in a climbing accident in France aged 57, was one of a handful of psychotherapists who kept alive the ideas of the radical psychiatrist RD Laing and his colleagues. Robin insisted on the validity of Laing's ideas; he embodied the best of 1960s idealism and combined this with a principled pragmatism and a fine strategic sense.

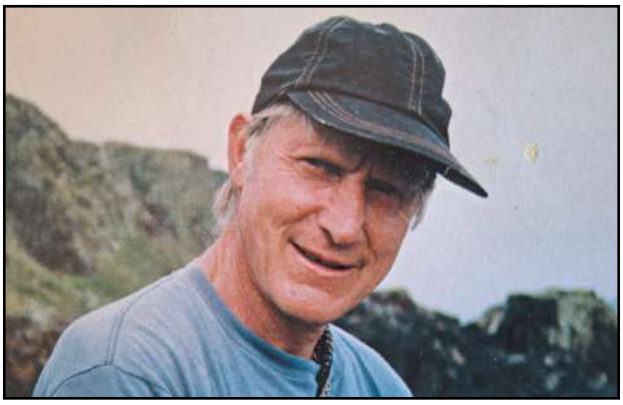
He became involved in the new Philadelphia Association household in Portland Road, in Notting Hill Gate Robin's time at the Portland Road house was later to be the subject of his PhD thesis on dwelling and the therapeutic community. He always believed that the heart of the PA was in its communities and the way they allowed people to find their place in the world.

The thinkers Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger were all important to Robin for their investigations into the detail of everyday life. It was this attention to the fine texture of an individual's being in the world that really distinguished his clinical and intellectual work.

From Hugh Crawford in particular Robin learned the importance of letting people be - not to be confused with an indifference - of providing a benign context in which people might get on with whatever they had to get on with, or get through, where difficult things in the lives of women and men might be allowed to run their course. After the closure of the Portland Road house in 1980, Robin continued his involvement in other PA houses, especially the one in Maida Vale, where he worked until the time of his death. Along with his wife Hilary - also a PA psychotherapist - Robin played a crucial role in the development of the PA after the traumatic decision in 1981 to ask Laing - by then a largely absent and erratic figurehead - to step down as chairman.

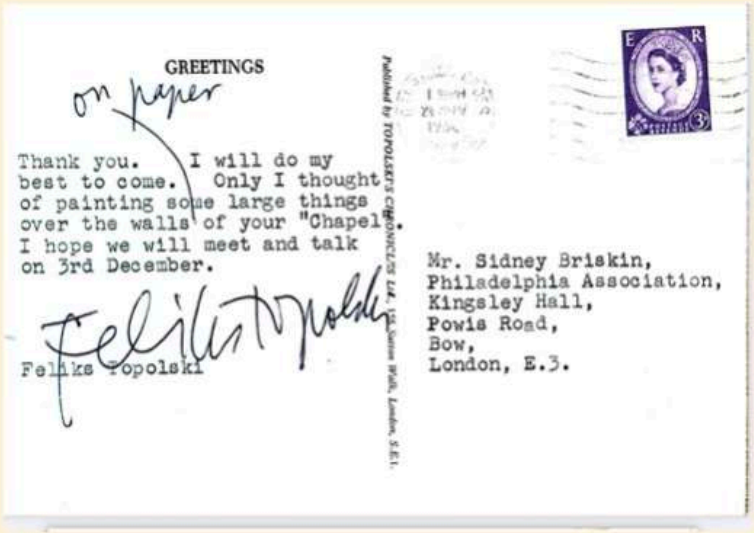
Right up to the time of his death Robin tried to keep the PA true to its founding spirits

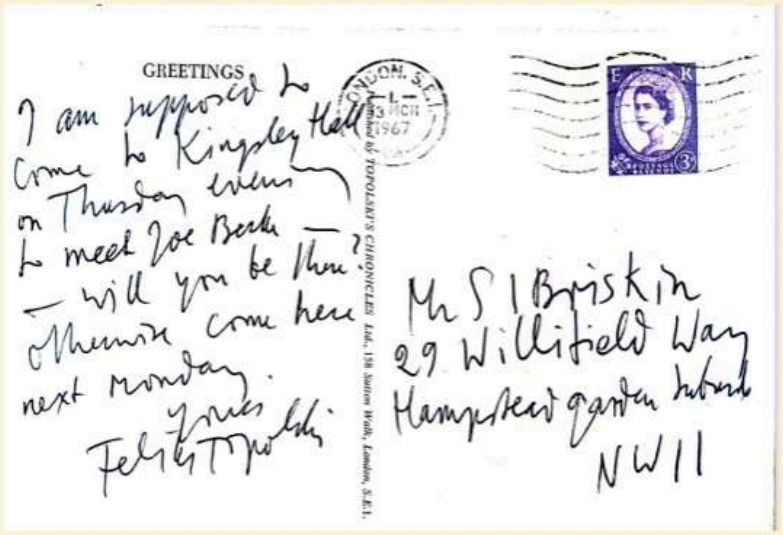
* Originally published in the Guardian. Read full article here



PA ARCHIVE

Martins Strautnieks





Some PA roots, less travelled

Paul Zeal

For the young who turn to engage with Nature other than human

Nature, wider and deeper than the human sphere, gives the ground for our being. Sapiens ignores this truth at peril. The Philadelphia Association is essentially urban in its foundation, dedicated to the human sphere, the households its signature. However, there are other roots and dimensions that some members and tutors have been aware of, and lived.

Father of them all is Gregory Bateson, a profound influence for Ronnie Laing, and for some of us in training at the time. His father was William Bateson the distinguished geneticist, and he was named after Gregor Mendel,Austrian monk, founder of modern genetics. Supposedly to be a geneticist too, Bateson was more interested in the plight of we humans, caught and often double bound in so many mires of our own making. How to be free, yet responsible for our actions.

Gregory was one of the speakers at the Dialectics of Liberation Congress, held in the Roundhouse, Chalk Farm, in the summer of 1967. It was the first I had heard of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), about the DDT agricultural scandal that was poisoning land and waterways. He elaborated the concept of biological half-life in the sense that if 50% of species are lost in a hundred years, 50% of those remaining will be lost in fifty years. That is as I understood it. But when, years later I wanted to clarify it, I found that David Cooper had edited it out of Bateson's talk published in *The Dialectics of Liberation* (1967). I remember, listening to him, feeling shocked and chilled – then his talk was over, eclipsed as the fest moved on.

But we were all living essentially as urbanites, whatever our backgrounds, studying hard and living the intoxicating freedoms of the city.

Another member of the PA was the distinguished anthropologist, Francis Huxley. Whilst his ideas for psychotherapeutic practice were often unusual, he tried to introduce anthropological perspectives into the training, welcomed by some, resisted by others. One of his initiatives was a birthing bag made of two wildebeest skins sewn together. Whatever one thinks of that, it was in the context of various strategies at that time that attempted to restage and re-enact birth experiences towards freedom from their hold. Laing was well into them. He was also a key articulator for the natural birth movement, towards de-medicalising birth when possible, and encouraging women to take more control of their own bodies when giving birth.

Francis, like Bateson, based himself in appreciation of wider Nature. He was co-founder with the explorer Robin Hanbury-Tenison, of Survival International, to respect and protect the rights and ways of life of indigenous tribal peoples living remotely from modernity.

Kingsley Hall was bleak when the PA leased it at a peppercorn, and even more so when the PA vacated it five years later in 1970. It had no garden at all, a jewel set in pavements and streets. But it had parapets open to the sky outside the cell-like rooms on the top floor. All subsequent community households had gardens – as do the remaining two, The Grove and Freegrove. The six or so short-life rentals in Archway – the first two of which took in some residents from Kinglsey Hall, including Mary Barnes, David Bell and Francis Gillett (who later lived at Ascot Farm) – de Beauvoir Square, Tollington Park, The Grove, Hugh Crawford's in Holland Park and Shirland Road all had gardens – and Ascot Farm had land.

How are these gardens lived? They were and are overlooked from streets and neighbours which gives little privacy to people immersed in fragile conditions; and overlooked also in the sense that they have tended to be neglected as living entities in themselves, and as potential healing resources.

One exception was Mike Yocum, first resident therapist to The Grove. A very able and intuitive gardener, he shaped the garden there. Andrea has shown me recent photos of the garden now, and, as is the nature of gardens, it is much changed – much more verticality and many more places to retreat to. Another exception was Tom, resident in de Beauvoir Square, who gardened there – and who also made an informal allotment on a bomb site, growing potatoes and cabbages with the help of two other men who lived there who marvelled at what they had enabled.

Barbara Latham told me the latter story, who also shared these reminiscences about Ascot Farm from the time that she and John Heaton attended there. There was a young woman who lived in a caravan and had not spoken for years. Slowly, she gradually made her way across the land to the house. Another woman, who had spent ages in mental hospital, one day asked John if she may have a goat. He agreed, and in a while there were a few goats and she was making cheese and yoghurt from their milk. When she had found the confidence to go and make peace with her mother, Barbara said she would look after the goats for her – and they promptly dragged her through a nettle patch. Overall, she felt the land itself and the space it gave, haphazardly tended, were resourcing and nourishing; I concur in that, from the visits I made.

> There is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure; this is because we become aware … that at that point there is a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unravelled... This is the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown. The dream-thoughts… cannot, from the nature of things, have any definite endings; they are bound to branch out in every direction into the intricate network of our world of thought. It is at some point where this meshwork is particularly close that the dream-wish grows up, like a mushroom out of its mycelium.

So wrote Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (p 111). Hugh Crawford spoke of the mycelium principle, as metaphor for the connective tissue through all the PA network, an underground labyrinth connecting all households with each other, and with all those who held them in mind – much as mycelial filaments connect all the roots of trees in the forest floor. Mycelium is well understood now: *Entangled Life* (2020) by Merlin Sheldrake is an astonishing read. Merlin is a son of Rupert Sheldrake, biologist and author, who proposed the idea of morphic resonance, and who was a friend of Laing's.

I adapted my title from Scott Peck's *The Road Less Travelled* (1978), who took it from a poem by Robert Frost describing the moment in woods where there is a choice to be made: the well-trodden path, or the one less travelled. Surely, we of the PA tend to choose paths less travelled.

Hot Landscape
Alison Davies
20 cm x 24 cm

The Philadelphia Association: a personal reminiscence, reflection and tribute

Jan Resnick

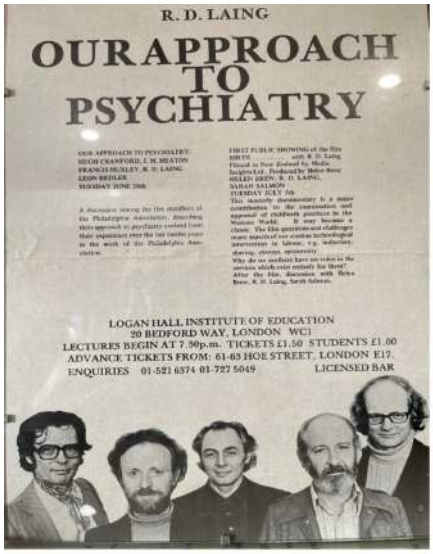
I want to tell my story, but it's not about me. It is about what I was given by the Philadelphia Association that has enabled me to have the career I've had as a psychotherapist, supervisor, author and speaker and the contribution I've made because of it.

I was involved with the Philadelphia Association from January of 1974 through October 1990 when I emigrated to Australia, and since then from abroad. In the early days, I did the study program in the basement of the Portland Road community house along with yoga with the wonderful Mena Balaskas there.
Just as I was applying for the professional training programme in psychotherapy – it collapsed.

I went to the Guild of Psychotherapists training and then a year later, John Heaton resurrected the PA Training, and I did that concurrently. This turned out to be serendipitous. The PA training presumed a working knowledge of psychoanalysis and. as I saw it, brought both a critique of psychoanalytic theory and a different perspective on therapy informed by existentialism and phenomenology. Later, it grew into a post-phenomenological approach largely informed by Lacan. The Guild gave me a grounding in the ABC's of psychoanalysis that I needed, largely informed by object relations and the middle group or Independent Group, as it was called, in England. That enabled me to better understand and make best use of what the PA offered.

I now recognise that I was incredibly privileged to have received teaching from so many inspired and inspiring figures including Ronnie Laing, John Heaton, Hugh Crawford, Leon Redler, Francis Huxley, Haya and Chris Oakley, Paul Zeal, Steve Gans and others. I had a year of personal therapy with Laing, and then I went on to have a 'training analysis' over six years outside the PA. When I started to see patients, Laing then supervised my first eight years of practice and I also saw John Heaton over 16 years for clinical supervision with many philosophy and psychoanalytic text discussions – which were always related to practice.
Those experiences were formative for my work as a psychotherapist. I am still full-time in practice, commencing my 50th year in January 2026. (I like to joke that I am starting to get the hang of it now).

I have also been grateful for the friendships that grew including John Heaton who visited me and taught in the psychotherapy training I ran in Perth, as well as Leon, Steve, and Francis. Also, my friendships with colleagues from the PA have been lasting to this day including Marie-Laure, Barbara Latham, Nita Gage and Mary Duhig who has now passed. The value I derived from the total experience of the PA is immeasurable.



rancis Huxley, Leon Redler, Ronnie Laing, Hugh Crawford, John Heaton circa 1978

It wasn't all rainbows and unicorns. There was much mischief. There were parties where Ronnie could get drunk and morose. There was gossip and not enough privacy and confidentiality – now regulated in law. I was glad to remove my personal therapy outside the PA. There were 'fights', conflicts, relationship breakdowns and break-ups – it could get messy – maybe no different from 'normal' life. Actually, the PA was not normal.

Some of the explosions that occurred were extreme. Usually, that had to do with Ronnie's combustible nature fuelled with alcohol. And while brutal, some of Ronnie's confrontations did have a therapeutic outcome. He could sniff out arrogance and let you have it. Probably, everyone who knew him had a variation of that experience. Thankfully, those were not the 'things' that affected me, unduly. I remember them though.

My focus was on becoming a competent clinician. We were told to be a 'professional' you have to profess something. What do you profess? Ronnie would answer: *I profess a competence to attend to people in states. of mental suffering.*

The PA was more than just Ronnie though and encounters there always made you think. We were not told what to think, rather we were initiated into how to think. Some discussions could be confusing. There was pressure to think through your position, and if not, you could be more than challenged, occasionally humiliated. Split-off intellectualisation that lacked heart was also discouraged. The pressure was purposeful and proved useful in working with patients. When I think of the ethos of the PA, and this is my formulation: psychotherapy is the practice of thoughtfulness and compassion.

In one supervision session from one of my early years of practice, I described a particularly gnarly problem. to Laing. A rather disturbed patient, a young woman, brought a dream. It was a long, meandering dream that took practically the whole session to recount. I wrote it all down penning furiously as she spoke. With two minutes left at the end of the session, she looked up at me, and fired point-blank: *what do you think it means??*???

I had no idea. I responded with: *I'm really going to have to give this some thought, and our time is up for now.* Not surprisingly, she looked unsatisfied and left.

I scurried off to supervision. It was a rare warm, sunny day in London, and Ronnie wanted to sit outside. We'd never done that before. He was wearing sandals on his feet and sat in the front garden in one of those canvas director's chairs. I sat opposite. I described the above and proceed to read out the whole dream as it was given to me word for word. It also took practically the whole session. I kept feeling a little distracted because Ronnie was rhythmically tapping his foot in a pile of dog shit. The Laing's had just got a puppy. I kept wondering: *should I tell him*? No, just get on with it, I don't want to interrupt the flow.

With two minutes left, I said I didn't know what it meant and didn't know what to say to my patient. Ronnie roared at me: *Why should you know what your patient's fucking dream means????* And our time's up.

Taken aback, I said: *thanks, and by the way, you're standing in dog shit.* And left.

There were so many moments that remain unforgettable, too many to detail here. There were countless training seminars, also public talks, conferences – sometimes abroad, texts, articles, books, informal gatherings, etc., etc., I went to all of them. I had moved to England from the US to learn and I was determined to learn as much as I could. My plan was to stay for two or three years. I left after 17 years – it was just too good to leave – even though I found it hard living there.

I moved with my family to Perth, Western Australia. I founded The Churchill Clinic to house my private practice and after a year, I started offering study seminars in psychotherapy. There were four terms per year of 10 weeks each. In the first year, I had four, six, eight and four people enrolled. The next year, I began a professional training programme with three other senior psychotherapists joining me in a training committee.

I functioned as Director of Training for 18 years. The Churchill Clinic became the largest accredited, nationally recognised training organisation for analytic counselling and analytic psychotherapy in Australia. We conferred Graduate Diplomas giving unprecedented credibility to psychotherapy in this country.

In 1993, I was Founding President of the Psychotherapists & Counsellors Association of Western Australia. Then, I helped create the national Psychotherapists and Counsellors Federation of Australia, where I served on the original management committee and training standards committee. PACFA now has well over 10,000 members. I spent 20 years on the Editorial Advisory Committee of the national journal *Psychotherapy in Australia* where I wrote a column called Comment in every issue.

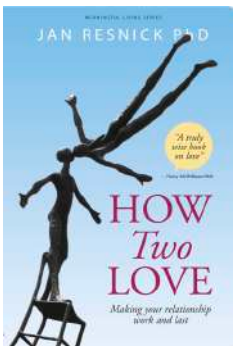
In 2000 I started teaching psychotherapy for the training programme of the Royal Australian New Zealand College of Psychiatrists and became an accredited supervisor there for registrars in the psychotherapy portion of their training. I was also invited to speak three times in the Psychiatrists' national conferences and in the 2024 I presented to over 100 West Australian psychiatrists at their state conference.

Returning to The Churchill Clinic, I can say with confidence that we produced some of the finest psychotherapists practicing today in Perth, and elsewhere as some have moved on. I taught over 2000 seminars without ever repeating the same material. All of it was based on my experience of The Philadelphia Association. If it sounds like a brag – that is not my intention (maybe a little) – it is primarily meant as a tribute and an expression of gratitude.

As I say inside the cover of my book *Meaning-Fullness, Developmental Psychotherapy and the Pursuit of Mental Health*: my immeasurable debt of learning can only be paid forward. The book is dedicated to:

John Heaton and R. D. Laing

My first book is called *How Two Love,* making your relationship work and last, and is based on my work with couples in psychotherapy. I'm currently working on a third book.



Conclusion: Now in my 70s, I am concerned with legacy of course. What do we leave behind when we're gone? I feel strongly that my time spent in psychotherapy practice, supervision, writing and speaking has been of value and mostly enjoyable. The legacy is the impact on others.

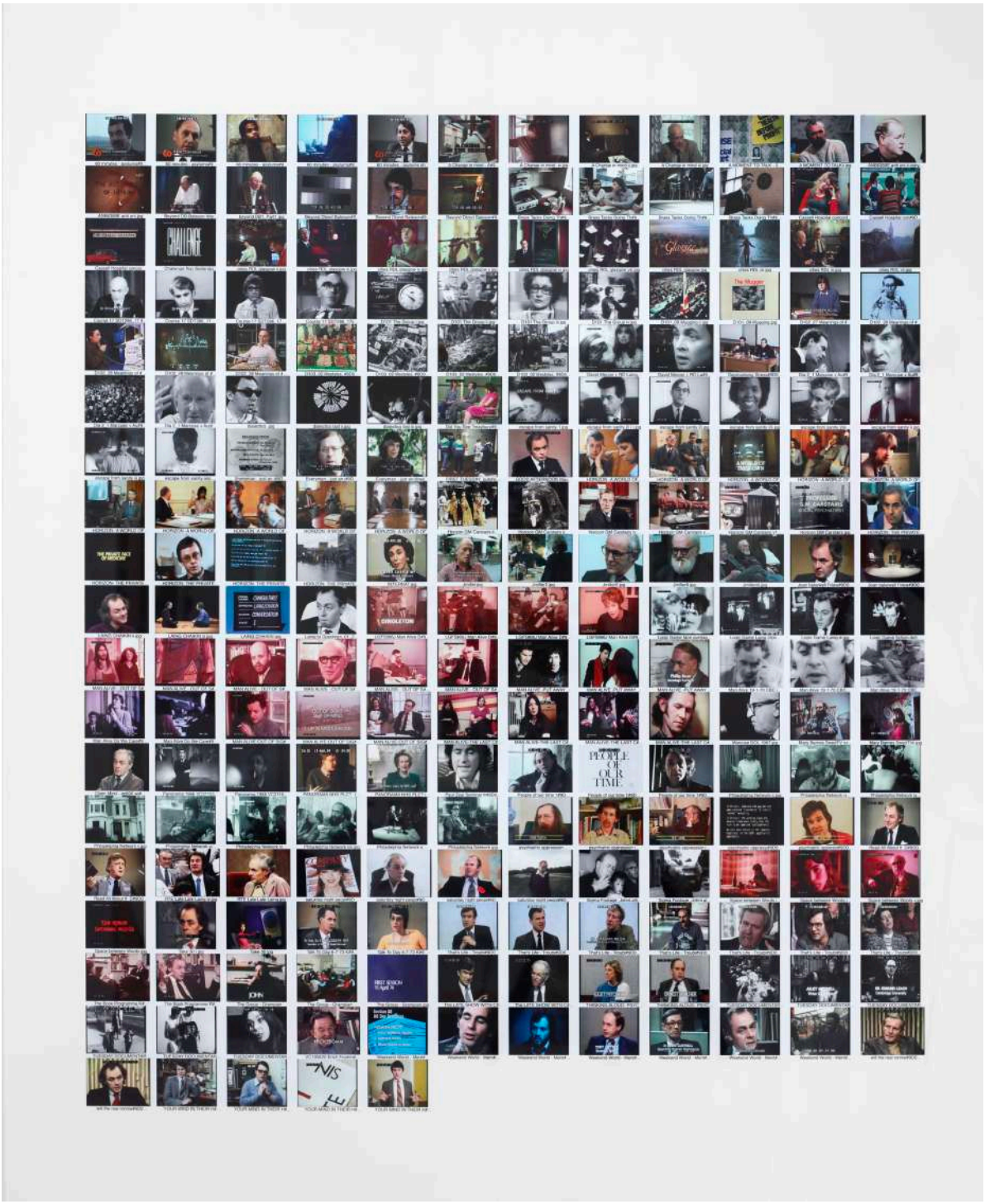
Ronnie Laing had quite an impact. A few days ago, I joined the online book launch for Mike Thompson's new (edited) book R.D. Laing in the 21st Century and subtitled Sanity, Therapy, Love. I was struck by how many of us were still talking about Laing after all these years, 36 years after his death. It is clear the person he was and his work will continue to have impact for a very long time.

For me, and I hope for others, the legacy of John Heaton also deserves to go on for a very long time. He didn't appear to crave fame. I don't think John needed limelight. He had an enormous impact on me; I loved and admired him. I do commend his significant volume of writing. His chapters on the Sceptical Tradition stand out. His published books toward the latter part of his life on Wittgenstein and language are so important for effective psychotherapy. John had a huge background in philosophy and the way he applied it to psychotherapy gave it relevance and utility.

As a group, the Philadelphia Association continues to impress after 60 years! The very first published book *Thresholds Between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (1989) had a profound impact on me. Every chapter is worthy of attention. I have returned to it many times and used it for teaching and training therapists.
Chris Oakley's chapter Otherwise than Integrity is brilliant and stands out. He examines the near universal tendency to reify a concept of 'the self' and shows how this defies an exploration of the experience of being. A subheading from this chapter gives a meaningful answer to the question so often asked about therapy: how does talking to someone help? One has to do it for oneself but one cannot do it by oneself.

The legacy of The Philadelphia Association can be summed up like this: There is a ripple effect, like throwing a stone in a pond. The PA has impacted a huge number of people, through its teachings, writings, public events, community households, therapy and supervision practices, etc. Those people, and I am one, then impact others, and they, in turn, impact the others of the others. I leveraged what I learned by paying it forward, training therapists, running a therapeutic community in Oxford, teaching and writing, and not least, helping scores of patients for going on five decades, and supporting the development of the profession in Australia.

I remain forever grateful



Luke Fowler

All Divided Selves Camera Roll 1 (Archive sources), 2011

Collage
153.5 x 103.5 x 3.5 cm, 60.4 x 40.7 x 1.4 in
Courtesy of The Artist and The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow
Photo: Serge Hasenboehle

Painting by Alison Davies

"Pathways 'through' and the balance between 'certainty and uncertainty,' together with what feels intuitively like the right direction, are the ways I think of my work. Holding a potential 'negative capability,' seems the way I try and manage not knowing the outcome during the process. When a painting or sculpture is finished, it is no longer the domain of the artist but exists in the world to touch the imagination of the viewer."

Untitled 60 X 60 cms

My time at the PA

Pat Blackett

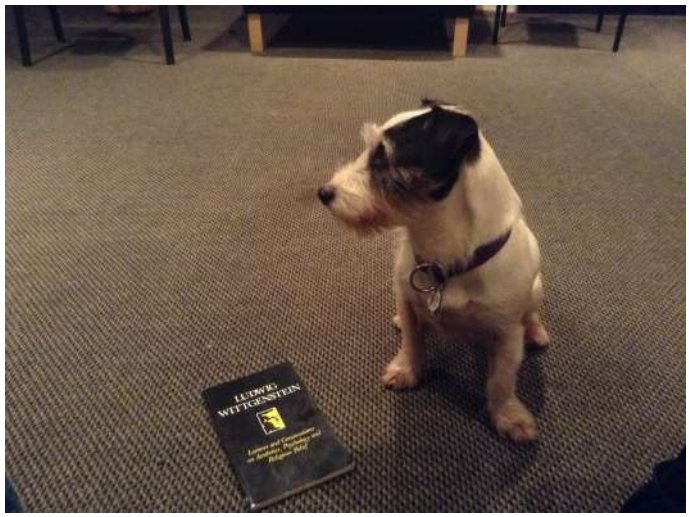
The PA found itself without an administrator towards the end of 2004 and Barbara Latham asked me if I might help out in the interim whilst they looked for a permanent administrator. At the time I had a job working at the Guardian so I only had limited hours to offer. However, destiny had other plans! It turned out that I stayed in that role until 2017! I had always wanted more time at home rather than do the 9 to 5 in an office every day and the PA job came about at just the right transitionary period for me. I was able to leave my job at the Guardian in 2005, move to a cottage in the woods in Kent and come up to Hampstead once or twice a week. I am forever grateful to the PA for enabling this to happen.

In 2008 I adopted my first rescue dog, Herbie. Again, the PA agreed to me bringing him up with me when I came to the Hampstead office and he became a firm favourite with members, students and trainees alike. He was a particular hit with some of the trainees who spoiled him rotten providing tit bits and not helping with the behaviour training at all as they just gave in to his every demand for attention and treats! But he had such a lovely disposition training wasn't really necessary. He loved everyone and everything at the PA. I have gone on to have many more rescue dogs and am now, in my retirement, doing a lot of work with a local dog rescue charity in Herne Bay. Herbie also later became a 'Pets as Therapy' dog and put to good use all the lessons he learned at the PA – he was the perfect existentialist !

I was privileged to work with many people throughout my time at the PA. Starting with Lucy King who was Chair at the time and Barbara Latham who was Chair of Training. Then came Paul Gordon – who was the most generous, appreciative and supportive person you could ever wish to work with. I have very fond memories of all the Chairs I worked with through those years until 2017.

I want to thank everyone at the PA for making my time there so memorable. I always felt appreciated and supported and also recall that the 50th anniversary was a great success so I'm hoping that the 60th will be even better.

Good luck with everything and good fortune for the future.



Herbie

PA 60th Anniversary

Ian McMillan

> "Psychotherapy is the attempt of two people to recover the wholeness of being human through the relationship between them." R. D. Laing

The Philadelphia Association is celebrating its 60th anniversary. A remarkable milestone and a testament to all of us who've worked together over the years and continue to do so to keep the organisation alive but, also to what the history and ethos represent; that the radical ideas and the language the founding members used to articulate their approach and shaped the organisation from its beginnings have endured, and somehow still speak to people today in a meaningful way, just as they did to me.

('Ever wonder if normal is just something we agree to pretend to be?…but, what if you stopped pretending, what if you stopped performing?
What if your truth didn't need permission?
What if you were allowed to question it all? Quietly. Honestly. Not to escape but, to finally see…')

I'd studied the work of Laing, read about Kingsley Hall and the community houses during my time at university and so, in June 1995, just a few weeks after finishing my final exams and almost exactly 30 years ago, I resolved to immerse myself in what it was, that which had spoken to me personally, and moved from Glasgow to London, to an Arbour's Association community house - St. Gabriel's Road in North London.

This being 1995 there was no internet, no smart phones (not even ordinary mobile phones) so, everything was arranged by old fashioned phone calls and in letters; that it was an Arbour's house and not PA was more down to getting a letter or call answered rather than a considered choice. I'd travelled down to London a couple of times to be interviewed by therapists; Tom Ryan, Laura Forte, Bob Grant and also the residents at St Gabriel's Road. When I got the call to say I'd been accepted and invited to move in, I wasted no time.

My room was at the back of the house, directly above the kitchen. I'd arrived a few days earlier than originally planned and the room was bare. There was an old mattress lying on the floor, a sheet pinned up over the windows, and a small chest of drawers. I'd brought with me a couple of bags of clothes, some pictures, and a ghetto blaster. I couldn't have been happier.
I'd left everything behind but, that was the whole point.

A few hours later, fire alarms rang, the smell of smoke from the kitchen underneath me, there were voices, firemen in the back garden… turned out it was just some burnt toast; a minor fire but quite the drama to welcome me, and that was the beginning of something which would change my life completely, and why some 30 years later, I'm writing this as co-chair of the PA.

I was designated a ‘live in trainee’, but for me the experience of being there was more about being just another member of the community than having a different ‘status’.That being said, part of the arrangement was that I had a place on the Arbours Introductory Course, had supervision for my ‘placement’ and started twice weekly therapy with a PA therapist - Hilary Cooper.

I’ve never written about my time in the house, mainly because it’s a deeply personal experience, and I believe that what happens between people living together, trying to make sense of themselves and their struggles and sufferings is private and should remain so but in the last session with Hilary just before my time in the house came to an end, I remember muttering, ‘I think I was wrong about some stuff…’, which I suppose was the beginning of the realisation of how little I actually knew about what’s going on in my own head, never mind anyone else’s. Hilary’s parting words, ‘perhaps our paths will cross again’.

The Arbours course had included some seminars from a PA member and I felt something about the philosophy which underpinned the approach aligned more with my own sensibilities, abnormal psychology was my favourite and best subject at uni, coupled with reading Foucault, a philosophical questioning, of everything, including psychoanalysis was the path that made most sense.
I contacted the PA and it was from there that I first met Paul Gordon, a fellow Glaswegian with whom I immediately felt at ease. Paul listened to what I had to say about my discomfort with the psychoanalytic lens’, and encouraged me to get back in touch if I felt the introductory course was for me.

One year later I did start the course at the PA.
Relocating to Brighton, and after the experience of living in the Arbours house, I again wanted to immerse myself in a different approach and found work at a local hospital in the mental health departments, working both on the wards and later in the day hospital. The contrast between my experience at the Arbour’s community house alongside the medicalised model of treatment was stark, but lent a perspective which only further confirmed my interest in the alternative thinking and community houses which had evolved from the original experiment at Kingsley Hall.

I was accepted on to the training, Prue Green was my therapist throughout that and for some time after I finished, John Heaton became my supervisor. A year after I qualified, in 2005, Christina Moutsou, who I’d first met during the introductory course, left her role as house therapist at Freegrove Road and I immediately wanted to go back to the community environment to pick up what I’d started at the Arbours.

Somewhat aptly, I was in Glasgow when I got word I’d been offerred the job. Working with Paul Gordon, the ease with which we got along made for a special time. Paul was quiet, kind and generous, both in his practice and as a colleague. Hilary’s speculation came true and I was a colleague alongside her, Paul and Jake Osborne.

My relationship with John Heaton continued, and for ten years, I was, as the saying goes, ‘living the dream’.

Working at Freegrove Road, building my own practice at Marty's Yard and in Brighton, with John as my guide was one of the times in my life I've felt most fully present and alive to the work in how I'd imagined it; the reality I was living was as close as it could get to an apprenticeship model of training, through direct experience and reflection, it really was a privilege to have the benefit of his years of practice, and his continued commitment and engagement to phenomenology and psychotherapy.

We never defined what our relationship was; therapy, supervision, tutor, mentor…? All of the above but something more.

John's presence met something in me, quietly and honestly. There's a picture of John and the other founding members of the PA in the library, where I continue to work every Wednesday, and when I'm wrestling with something in what's happening in the room, I glance up, see him and remember, a smile inside…and I'm back, present, looking for the right question, quietly and honestly. It's actually the not knowing that keeps the work alive for me.

John and Paul are gone, so is Prue. Hilary has retired. Life does pass by in the blink of an eye, I'm most grateful for the time I had with them, and the time they had for me.

Thinking back over all of this I appreciate the luxury that is spaciousness in time, pondering the changes we're living through, I wonder if the one that future generations might find hardest to grasp - in the digital revolution, the internet, our devices, social media - is the end of absence, the loss of lack and the space in between - the daydreaming silences in our lives and the space in between, the burning solitudes are extinguished. Amongst the commodification of everything, today's rarest commodity is the chance to be alone with your own thoughts.

Perhaps it's something that's always been at the heart of the project of the Philadelphia Association and the approach to psychotherapy we are concerned with; recognising our being is in time, that the time it takes matters, to give the attention that's needed to make sense of the world around us, the assumptions we carry about ourselves, our relationships with others and our place in it all - and crucially, to stay with it when it's difficult and find your own way through.

The PA has enjoyed something of a renaissance these last 5 years, in large part due to the success of the Study Programme, established and developed by Lucy King and Andrea Heath, the ethos and philosophy of PA represents something, like a crack in our digital world through which a little light could get through. That's where it starts.

For my part, as co-chair, and as this period of my involvement comes to an end, I'm grateful to Andreas Constandinos and Emma Stroker for being alongside through what has been a challenging time for all of us in different ways.

Horses, courses, winners and beginners: looking back and John Heaton

Onel Brooks

Kind, quiet, receptive, still and amusing, intelligent, well read, are ways of describing the last of the cofounders of the Philadelphia Association. However, to look back at my therapy with him is not to claim to see the whole and final truth.

'The owl of Minerva', Hegel writes,'spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk' (Hegel 1942: 13). Freud (1914/1933) tells us that we must not forget that we learn sense only through our own experience. If the flight of the owl of Minerva signifies the coming of understanding late in the day, and learning sense is also something that tends to arrive later, it still may not be the case that to look back and think about how things hang together, is to claim wisdom or sense. Perhaps dusk always falls, eventually, but maybe the dust never settles.

As well as talking about my history as it lives in me, love and work, we spoke about how play, dancing with a partner, tai chi and psychotherapy seem to involve letting go and letting be, not imposing or dominating, as well as being ready and able to change and stay with. Consequently, this glance at being with John foregrounds letting be, the other side of or complementary to letting be, and the matter of overvaluing order, control, and being dogmatic. It is also concerned with horses.

Long after John's death I began to to see that I associated my therapy with him with my relationship with that iconoclastic polarising teacher of tai chi chuan, Daniel Docherty, who, like a still and fierce storm blew through the tai chi community in the mid 1980s, beginning with London. 'Horses for courses', was one of his frequent remarks to questions and comments about who or what was 'the best'. Without any thought of transference, I spoke to John about how I went looking for a teacher of tai chi just a little after Dan began teaching and found more than I had hoped for. Not just a teacher of tai chi, not just a pugilistic but someone who could speak and read Chinese, and knew his way around the literature and philosophy from that part of the world. Someone concerned with ethics and responsibility, and fond of the Tang dynasty poet, Li Bai, who is often thought of as a drunken swordsman. In the poems Dan translated, however, I heard mainly longing, loss, saying goodbye. But who's blues, whose mournfulness? Li Bai's? Dan's? My own?

Talking to Dan Docherty about the notion of 'we wei', or 'effortless action' or 'not doing', he told me about two brothers who came to train with him. Their parents and school were worried about their drinking, staying out late at night and fights. Dan told me he did 'nothing'. Well, he watched and listened but let them be. They asked him if they could compete in the upcoming competition. He was willing to let them do as they wanted. They asked him to help them by telling them what more they needed to do to prepare themselves for the competition. He did as they asked. Because they were training so hard for the competition, they were not out late, out drinking and getting into trouble much. Their parents and the school wanted to thank Dan for this miraculous transformation. Dan said to me something like, 'I didn't do anything; that's "wu wei"'.

When about 16 years after beginning tai chi, I began psychotherapy with John Heaton, I appreciated and enjoyed his understanding of psychoanalysis, existentialism, and philosophy - both continental and analytic - as well as his grasp of some Indian and Chinese texts. However, it was his tendency not to be intrusive and not to make authoritative interpretations, not to assume that he knew and could 'tell' me, that made the most impression on me. I cannot say that his tendency and capacity to leave me alone and be quietly present, to not interfere too much but not to abandon, is what happened with everyone all the time. Nor am I claiming that tai chi, dancing with a partner or psychotherapy is exclusively about letting the other person be. Alongside of, interrelated and reciprocal with letting be in the psychotherapy I had with John was a sense of doing something with another live person, with their own mind, feelings, personality. He was quiet, but far from silent.
At times he was not quiet.

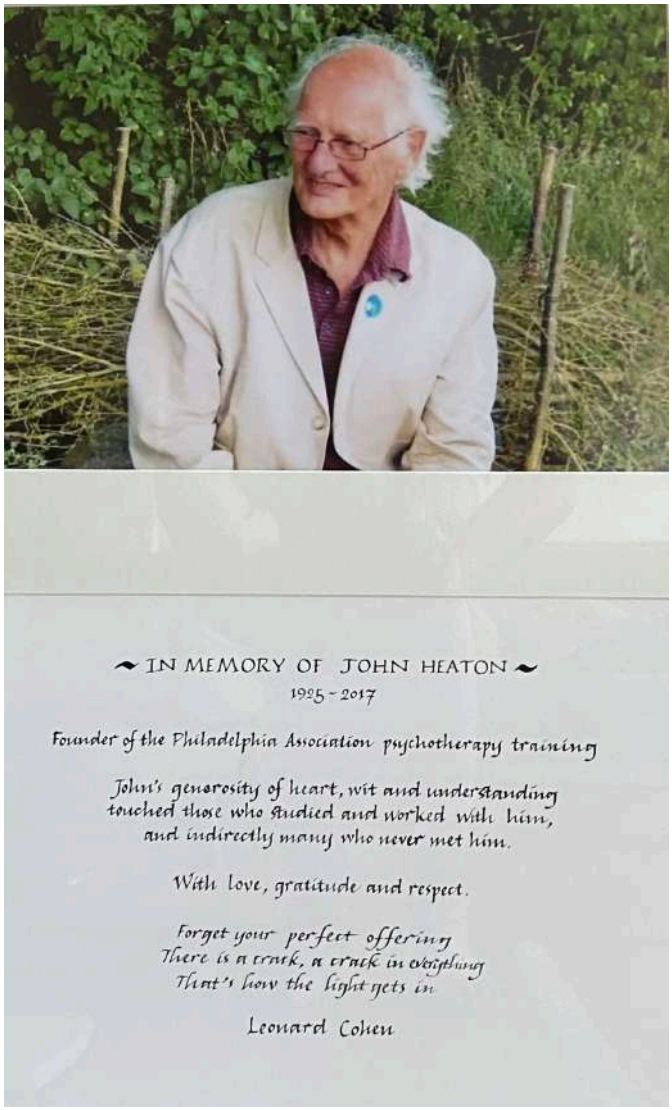
Some years after John's death, I decided that I would contact Dan Docherty again and go over with him all he taught me in the 1980s and 1990s. I was shocked to discover that he had died. I had no thought at the time about the connections between him and John.

John Heaton repeats a story in his book, The Talking Cure, (2010, p24) about how the painter Apelles repeatedly and diligently tried to paint the lather on the horse's mouth, and in exasperation at his failures, flung the sponge he was using to wipe his brush at the picture. When the sponge hit the painting, what it created was just right for the picture.

I take this to be a reminder and warning about trying to 'force' or 'hunt' a particular outcome, about thinking of ourselves as being in control of ourself, others and situations, about, for example, trying hard to change your new students into well behaved young men. It values -like the Daoist philosophy that gave birth to tai chi, like the dancers in a piece of music together that suddenly changes, and like Winnicott - spontaneous actions and gestures. It suggests that repeated and diligent efforts may fail, whereas not trying so hard may be what helps us. But it is possible to overvalue and to take a one-sided and simplistic view. We may want to insist that throwing the sponge is everything, and not understand that Apelles learned to paint, practised painting. Throwing the sponge repeatedly at the canvas is not the same as learning and trying and ending up exasperated, then not trying.

In psychotherapy, too, we might ask ourselves and others about the use of careful questioning, reflecting, thinking about, holding your tongue and waiting, and, on the other hand, when to say it, surrender to the feeling and thought that seems to come from nowhere. The balance of following and initiating, listening and talking, yin and yang, letting be and being more active may change from moment to moment. It is easy to find yourself reacting now to what was called for then. Daoism, Buddhism, phenomenology, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein may all be said to value the beginner's mind: staying a beginner rather than trying to show all that you are a winner. This is the art of having a sense of what might be possible and called for now.

Practitioners disagree. ‘Horses for courses’. John’s comments about psychotherapy came from someone who worked hard at it for years and found his own way. He might inspire us to attend carefully to what we say and do. This is more important than insisting that he was right or wrong about any particular topic



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The Scrapbook

Emma Stroker

A meditation on what gets remembered and what gets revealed….

Presently, I am collating a collection of family photographs for a large family wedding and, somewhat serendipitously, I also find myself preparing to write for the PA 60th anniversary.

So what do I include and what do I leave out? I include deceased relatives but what about those who are estranged? Can I somehow include them without showing too much – for example, a picture of five ducklings representing the photo of five siblings, though there are only four present at the wedding. Am I showing I have remembered the absent one? Will anyone notice?

So, if I was creating a PA scrapbook what would be included? I haven't got any photos to share but there are words that seem to me to represent the time I have spent with the PA. I wasn't there at its beginning but some of the words associated with the people around in those days have stayed with me over the years.

Here are three short passages that have been significant for me– the words followed by my thoughts and associations to them:

'Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning'
Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Gay Science' (1882)

I was not familiar with Nietzsche at the time I first read these words; I was caught up in a behavioural/cause and effect way of viewing the world, mainly through my previous work and studies in psychology.
The lantern being lit even in daylight seemed to be about how I was living in a world where everything was becoming too bright – not just in terms of artificial lighting – but through the increasing thirst for truth which is insatiable. This concerted quest for certainty and proof intensified during the En – **light** – enment, employing the methods of reason and science and in my world at the time was experienced as too much light. Now, with the increasing knowledge readily available through AI, these words seem chilling to me. Can we ever feel we know enough? How about remembering what we do know?

'Claudel has a phrase saying that a certain blue of the sea is so blue that only blood would be more red. The colour is yet a variant in another dimension of variation, that of its relations with its surroundings:'

Merleau-Ponty, The Intertwining – The Chiasm, 'The Visible and the Invisible (1968)

I was intrigued by these words but understanding eluded me. They seemed to speak of variation but also connectedness and possibly merging. The only way I could make sense of the words was to attempt to paint the blue of the sea, which I then did. What was interesting was that whilst painting I became distracted by the sight of a boat sailing on the water and so included it in my creation. Somehow the boat in my painting, despite taking me off course, helped me understand the words I had read earlier 'the certain blue of the sea' was created by many blues. The point of reference (the boat) had enabled me to see that there is something about sameness and difference in the way that things can appear to be the same and when we attempt to understand our experience they prove essentially different.

'A therapeutic relationship, however, is concerned with persons willing to meet in a whole context. This must include their own admitted weaknesses, and especially the fact that no two people can ever fully understand one another. How can a space understand a space except in emptiness? Acceptance of the unknowable, as well as the undesirable, is the very essence of the therapeutic relationship.'
E. Graham Howe 'Cure or Heal' (1965)

I discovered the book 'Cure or Heal' when training to be a psychotherapist – finding it full of common sense. Howe was a colleague of Laing and John Heaton (though I think that he eventually fell out with Laing).
The words remind me of my own therapy, the idea that in this world all space seems to be taken up and when we meet with the other we can so easily 'bring everyone with us'. The emptiness and space I discovered in my training analysis has been a gift to me and the idea that to let people 'be' is sometimes all that is called for.
I have heard that this allowing people to 'be' is somethings that can emerge in the community households.

I wonder if a scrap book is more like a trace of thoughts and experiences, of words and pictures shared and carried into the present and future, subtle and nuanced but experienced differently by everyone.
Walter Benjamin describes a 'secret index' ('On the Concept of History', 1940) which suggests that the past is not finished and can be 'redeemed' in the present. In a similar way my family scrap book and this collection of words that I associate with my time at the PA may be a trace, rather like Ariadne's thread; a relationship between the past, present and future and the people who have been, are there now and will arrive in the future.

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Being Co-chair of the Philadelphia Association

Andreas Constandinos

In 2020, Ian McMillan and I became Co-Chairs of the PA. We started our new roles as the world was beginning to face the unprecedented experience of the COVID pandemic and what it meant, in some parts of the world, to go into lockdown. For a profession in which one of the fundamental tenets is being in a room with another, being forced to enter and remain in the digital world for such a long time presented significant challenges. Dealing with complaints without being able to see those involved in person, the difficulties faced by our trainees having to undertake an enforced online training, keeping our houses and our residents safe and working with those referring themselves for therapy could easily be described as a baptism of fire.

I consider it a considerable achievement to not only have successfully come through this most demanding of times but also to now arguably see the charity flourishing in many ways. This is down to the commitment and hard work of those members who continue to give up their time for something that is important to them as well as the dedication of those employed by the charity.

We now have an established Study Programme that attracts fascinating people from multiple walks of life as well as an efficiently run referrals service that meets the increased demand we have seen since the end of the pandemic.

Further, our two houses are currently undergoing a series of maintenance makeovers, Ably supported by the newly created part-time role of Finance and Houses Coordinator. Initially, people were slow to return to Marty's Yard but this has slowly changed and we are on the verge of introducing a new booking system to help us manage trainees, members and externals all wanting to use our rooms. Our training is at capacity prompting the not uncontentious question of whether it should be expanded and we find ourselves in the enviable position of being in financial good health.

Despite all this positivity, as we approach our 60th anniversary, we face some compelling existential questions, the most paramount of which is how sustainable our current model of governance is. Since 1965, our society has changed dramatically, becoming evermore regulated, which means more bureaucracy. The result of this is that being Co-Chair is virtually a full-time role, involving a vast amount of administration. In addition, the huge surge in property prices makes it harder for people to live in and around north-west London, meaning greater travel to and from Marty's Yard which makes the introduction of things like zoom increasingly tempting not just as in incredibly useful option but also as an alternative, which I personally believe it should not be.
Can the PA withstand the call for greater professionalisation?

Finally, it is important to say a few words about how difficult it is sharing not just any role, but this one in particular. Ian and I are very different people and had never met prior to becoming Co-Chairs. We have spent the last five years navigating the inevitable differences that emerge not just in the day-to-day management of the charity but also in trying to deal with and often trying to understand what it means to work in what is a traumatised organisation. During these five years, I have heard many descriptions of what the dynamic of our relationship might look like and I think the most accurate is that of a bickering couple. Ultimately, the fact that I know that Ian cares as much about the PA as I do and the fact that we both view the role as a privilege, as custodians of something important, means that when we eventually step down, we will have hopefully left the organisation in a better place – ready for the next 60 years.

PA 60 Years
PA Board of Trustees

As the Philadelphia Association begins to celebrate its 60th anniversary this year we can afford to look back as well as contemplate the future. The organisation continues to address the challenges of offering a therapeutic and healing service and environment in a cultural climate that is continuously changing and which necessitates psychotherapy, psychoanalysis and indeed the PA to continue to be both relevant, innovative and effective in the challenging world in which we live.

Adapting the PA and its practice is essential in order for it to survive whilst keeping its core beliefs and practice. It will remain a challenge as we embark on the future years ahead of us.

However we never strive (hopefully) to become Laingian, Freudian, Kleinian or Lacanian therapists/analysts but to become our own therapists/analysts using certain core beliefs and so we are in a positive position in order to adapt to the requirements of the age, being an organisation that is both critical and healthily sceptical.

The PA is very different to how it was in the 60's. The PA Houses are still an important fundamental part of the organisation even though there are fewer of them and exist in a very different way to how they were originally set up.

During the period of the 50th anniversary, I doubt if many had imagined that the organisation would be running international courses via the internet or working on a regular basis with clients/patients who lived either in different parts of the country or abroad. It is an example of how the profession was able to turn adversity (which was the Pandemic) into something positive and worthwhile.

The more recent economic climate, housing shortages etc have had an impact on how the organisation currently runs. There are no easy solutions to people being rehoused following a stay in one of the community houses anymore. This has an impact on those who would consider a stay in one of them besides the value of doing so. Voluntary work within the organisation has become more difficult to find, partly because of personal expenditure needs which is causing us to have to think of alternative ways or keeping the organisation going.

Doubtless the future presents us with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and it is less obvious at present how this will eventually impact on the professions of psychotherapy/psychoanalysis and the PA. It will be a new challenge for us to make good use of it whilst maintaining the efficacy of our profession and securing the next decade for the PA

The Path

Josh Foyster

There is something about the way people arrive, not in their physical sense, but how we all have a path that we tread down, and we have arrived here at the Philadelphia Association.

I know you have heard many tales from a long line of members about how they arrived here and what brought them. I wanted to share with you a brief section of my own long journey, how I arrived here, in the hope, on a very basic level, to feel connected to you all and to your respected journeys that led you to this fascinating organisation.

When I applied to the Philadelphia Association for the role of Part-Time Administrator, that was exactly what I was looking for at the time—something I believed would be just a few hours a week, doing some light admin for a charity, so I could carry on with my own ambitious endeavours in life. How wrong I was.

Now, at this point in my life, I was at, what I didn't realise at the time, a crossroads. An epiphany of sorts: what I've done, what I am doing, and, more importantly, what I want to do with my life has all been part of a personal experience I have recently been going through.

Before the PA, I had a list of creative roles I had worked in. I had worked as a producer and put on numerous productions in London and across the UK. I had programmed and managed full festivals. I worked as a drama specialist at a SEN school, and by the time I arrived at the PA, I was also working as a talent agent, all with relative success. Not much longer after I started, that latter role came to an end.

A never-ending battle of trying to do the best for everyone around me, and trying to get them to reach their full potential. That was my only ever goal in all of these other roles—not "success," but the singular act of believing in individuals and giving them the tools and resources they needed to reach their goals.

But I reached the crossroads. I spent so much time trying to do the best for others and trying to achieve "success" that I never asked myself what it was I actually wanted to do with the time that I have.

So, here I was—at an organisation that, prior to getting an interview, I had no idea existed, or of its impact or history—sitting here as I write this, down the quiet, cobbled alley at Marty's Yard.

As my time has gone on here, I have grown to realise many things:

Firstly, the assumption that this would be a simple part-time admin role could not be further from the relative truth.

Secondly, how much my own thinking and approach to many aspects of life are in line with the ethos and beliefs of the PA and its people.

Thirdly—and admittedly the most recent—that I could genuinely make a real difference to this place and the people.

Fourthly and finally, my path has led me here for a reason.

I hope that in ten years' time, when we reach the 70 anniversary, whether I am here or not, that people will be able to look back and feel I contributed something to this place.

Trust the path.

Collages by Pierre-Yves Rahari-Jacobs

Home And Away

Paul Gurney

In 1991 I was working in a drug project in central London and coming to the end of an open-minded psychodynamic counselling training at Goldsmiths College. Wanting to solidify my engagement, I asked the course directors - both Guild-trained psychotherapists - where I might apply for further training. Without hesitation, and independently of each other, they both replied "the PA!", which I'd never heard of. On enquiring as to why, they both said something along the lines of "because you're interested in philosophy, you're working with people who are psychotic, and you might find most other psychoanalytic trainings somewhat hetero-normative."

It was true that I'd noticed spooky similarities between Winnicott's 'false self' and Sartre's '*mauvaise foi*', and Freud's 'death instinct' and Heidegger's perspective on silence during my Goldsmiths studies, and was surprised to learn that Jacques Lacan was a psychoanalyst rather than a post-structuralist philosopher (my academic background was in philosophy and politics).

I phoned the PA office and arranged to meet with Mike Fielder, then office administrator who had also trained at the PA (and was at that time a 'resting' psychiatrist). At one point in the conversation I enquired 'If I train here, will I be allowed to find my own way?' Mike replied, 'to be honest, there's only that at the PA'. I arranged an interview for the Introductory Course with Robin Cooper. After we'd been speaking for some time, Robin asked 'I also imagine you've been drawn to the PA because of the work of RD Laing?', who I'd never heard of.

My principal memories of the Introductory Course are of it being fresh and raw, like Echo and the Bunnymen's first album, which sounded like it had been recorded outdoors on a breezy autumn evening (this indeed was echoed in the album cover photo). And of the warmth and immediacy of the experiential group facilitator Joe Friedman.

In 1993 I walked into the PA building to begin the training and the first person I met, by the kettle, was Peter Nevins. I felt like I'd always known him. To this day we are close friends and colleagues, have taught together many times, and are in a philosophy reading group with other friends and colleagues. It felt like coming home, at last. And John Heaton as my tutor felt like the sort of father I might have wanted, had I the choice. ('I wish I'd had a dad like you, Maurice').The Roof Supporting Joists of this Ideal Home: Haya Oakley, Noreen O'Connor, Joanna Ryan (no House for Mr Biswas, this).

Possibly the ease of entry was smoothed by earlier, more challenging liminalities: the educational shock of moving from a comprehensive to a (state) grammar school to study for 'A'- levels (I was years 'behind' in terms of general education, intellectual confidence and, erm, grammar), and then a class- quake in the move from school to university (where I felt o'erwhelmed by the Middle England primal horde who'd been

‘privately’ educated and who loathed punk rock and disco music: The Rolling Stones, Meatloaf and Dire Straits counter-reformation triumphing over Public Image Limited, Siouxsie and the Banshees and Chic. Appalling and beguiling. ‘Let’s do the Time Warp…again!’). After weathering those storms in teacups, walking into Marty’s Yard was pushing at an open door (no entry code back then. ‘Ooh you could leave your front door open in them days! Can I borrow a cup of miso?’)

Home is complicated. ‘Home is made for coming from, with dreams of going to, which with any luck will never come true’, Lee Marvin tells us, to which Lene Lovich adds ‘Home is just emotion, sticking in my throat: let’s go to your place!’ In a life marked by continuity - my parents died in the house I grew up in, I’ve lived in south London since 1982, in my current house - in the Deep South: *Londres profonde*?- since 2000, and I worked in the same NHS clinic for twenty years, a short drive from my house, fourteen of those conveyed in the same car - when and where have I felt ‘at home’? You may well be aware that, as part of the London ‘overspill’ transplanted to Essex after The War, I felt de-racinated, diluted, a-cultural. Our Radical Contingency leads me to be in *south* London rather than the *north* and *east* of my antecedents. I don’t belong here…except, possibly, as an ur-Londoner. A stranger in a strange land, indeed! But I’m quite possibly barking up the wrong tree: as Gilles, Felix and Edouard tell us, the most important connections we make are the sideways (rhizomatic) ones, not the downward ones that reach back towards an illusory past. Shall I, like an Eagle - or a Glazier - declare myself ‘South London and Proud’, at last? South London, with its endless, seemingly identical suburbs of Victorian and Edwardian terraces. Iris tells a friend that the whole of south London is contingent (the ‘Bromley Contingent’ fondly remembered here); Ali longs to escape the ordered development of Armenia with its tarmacked roads and return to his beloved Azerbaijan, with its traces only navigable on horseback…

Home is complicated. In this city country world, many do not have a secure home, in bricks and mortar, in themselves. Is it possible, given this, to find a home in an organisation, an idea?

The door is always open at the PA (if you know the code). ‘The old house looks the same, though the paint is cracked and dry’. ‘In my father’s house there are many rooms’. The training was like breathing pure oxygen.

I began teaching on the PA Introductory Course around about 2000. It might have been Prue Green and I and Toni’s ‘Beloved’: the word made flesh. Since 1994 I’ve taught on a wide range of counselling and psychotherapy trainings. As a retired football fan (atic), returning to the PA feels like a ‘home’ match: familiar ground, partisan crowd. Teaching elsewhere (loosely speaking, ‘philosophical psychotherapy’), while often life-affirming, has been most definitely an ‘away match’, walking into the wind, shouting above the noise. ‘*Is this* psychoanalysis?’ is often their plaint. I might respond, referring to Jacques Derrida’s Archive Fever’: ‘Who gets to decide?’ and I might add ‘Who cares anyway (i.e. if it’s psychoanalysis’ or not)?’ Does the treatment fail the patient, or the patient fail the treatment? Do you want to be theoretically pure, or helpful? (Not that these are *necessarily* mutually exclusive, but one size can’t possibly fit all, surely?) ‘Philosophy is not a body of doctrine, but an activity’, Ludwig tells us in his Tractatus. And psychoanalysis? ‘On learning from the patient’:

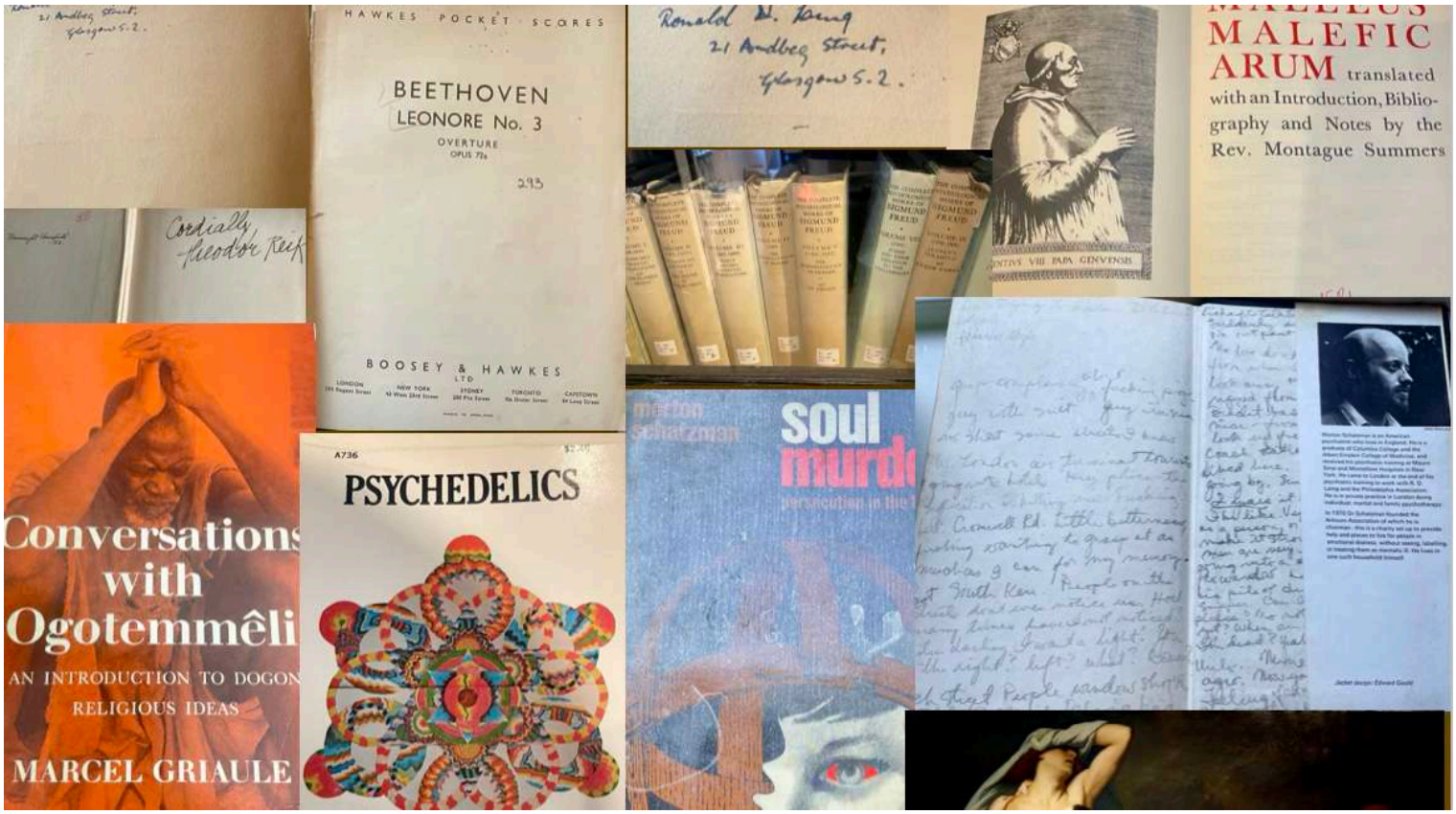
working in a GP surgery for years, I had to throw away so many books, commandments, tablets of stone, graven images.

It is often said that travel broadens the mind, and I have learnt much at away grounds. One of the most useful was teaching the same texts over and over at the Guild of Psychotherapists (their training has year groups). This has helped me to really get to grips with my beloved: *my bonnie* no longer lies over the ocean. It has also provided the building blocks for my home in 'philosophical' rather than 'psychoanalytic' text (a silly and crass binarism, I know, but I must be honest: I *did* chop down that cherry tree!), as I was invited to the Guild to augment their 'phenomenological' community. Philosophy as first psychotherapy…Confucius, Lao-Tzu, Buddha, the pre-Socratics…Butler, Zizek, Glissant. The 'infinite conversation'.

We all know that we are thrown into the world - *fallingly*- with embodied perception. We arrive at the party when it's in full swing, always already in the WHOLE-WIDE-WORLD of creatures civilisation language society culture economics, and joining the PA training reflects this tumult. And for the teacher the endless, restless creativity - the *demand*- of having to come up with something new to teach each year. *Au bout de souffle.* I have never felt that what I have chosen to teach has been viewed as unorthodox, heretical, heterodox, apostate. Gnostic, possibly. 'If you're Estuarine, come into the parlour, there's a welcome there for you!' (*Route barrée, sauf riverains).*

I am *not*, however, Pollyanna of Green Gables *resurgam*. Like every other psychotherapy organisation I have visited, some do NOT feel the welcome on the hillside, some leave, some are wounded by disagreements. Loose groupings of *entrepreneur/ses* are just that: loose (The Hampstead Federation of Small Businesses?) And who has the fragment of the true cross? Who is brainiest? The best clinician? Who abides by the letter of the law, who by the spirit? And who disregards both? Who can show kindness? Generosity? Would we treat a patient like we treat our colleagues? 'Do as you would be done by!' '*Those who live by the sword (sometimes) die by it'. 'Take the plank out of your own eye before you tell me about the splinter in mine!*' Do we have 'More in Common' than that which divides us? For psychotherapeutic homemakers, what might be the benefits of rhizomatic circumspection, restraint, tact? The Polite Society, anyone?And if these sentiments sound insufferably Holier Than Thou*, nil desperandum*: I am well aware of my own capacity for nastiness, and try to curb it, like someone who knows they need to avoid alcohol, or gluten, or gambling.

So, What Is To Be Done, (if anything)? Does our home need to be 'retro-fitted' in order to be 'future-proof'? To last another sixty years? If so, what would that look like? Blocking up air-bricks? (Say hello to a Brave New World of mould and damp!). Fit an outside source heat pump? Can Selhurst Park be 'upgraded' to be match-fit for an enticing new possible world? Or, like Highbury, will a transplant to'box-fresh' concrete and steel 'state of the art' 'pastures new' be deemed necessary? If so, what might be lost in the process?



The library of the Philadelphia Association

Nick Mercer

Trawling through the library of the Philadelphia Association is like deciphering a palimpsest of the PA, a strange cornucopia of all the enthusiasms and interests of members over the last 60 years. Part of that interest resides in the lack of a central core of orthodoxy. Other than a rather depleted complete edition of Freud and a few clumps and outcrops of philosophy a visitor would be hard-put to draw conclusions on who we are, what we believe and what we're about – indeed, even if there is a 'we'. Instead, what there is is a rich scattering of myriad interests that gives a glimpse of the underlying DNA of the association. 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins' – a key line from T.S. Eliot's Wasteland - could be an apt description of this magpie collection.

I've spent much time between patients fossicking through the books, from rare texts signed by Laing to a variety representing the history and spectrum of interests of the founders of the Philadelphia Association. These include works of poetry like Wordsworth and Coleridge's 'Lyrical Ballads' - itself a radical text in its day espousing the lives of ordinary people as fit subjects for poetry rather than a hankering after an imagined antiquity recalled in Latinate hyperbole - to philosophy from Plato to Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard, along with 60's literature from Marshall McLuhan and Krishnamurti, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Mechanics next to Zone of the Interior by Clancy Sigal, only recently permitted to enter the shelves after a long exile, purportedly because its parody of Laing stung (almost lese-majeste back in those heady days).
The first book I found signed by Laing was a treatise on Buddhism, 'The Path of Freedom' - alongside a scattering of meditation guides, rebirth manuals, curiosities like The History of the Golden Dawn, the Malleus Maleficarum, Rorschach – ink blot plates and all, Reich, Reik and more.

Reflecting on how books influence readers, Cervantes' Don Quixote and Flaubert's Madame Bovary come to mind. Excessive reading of medieval romance led Don Quixote to live in a fictional chivalric world, while Emma Bovary's consumption of romantic fiction sowed a dissatisfaction that baulked at the confines of her bourgeois rustic lot and urged her to a terrible fate. Literature's perilous influence is also seen in the Divine Comedy where Paolo and Francesca are condemned by their affair to the circle of lust, a transgression provoked by reading the romance of Launcelot and Guinevere together. On the upside, Laing's Damascene moment came with his discovery of Hegel, whose Phenomenology of Spirit he consumed in a single evening, transforming his philosophical outlook. A reminder that reading has an almost magical incantatory power to open new vistas, especially when unfettered by orthodoxy and dogma. Like any powerful medicine it can beguile and delude us – or it can enlighten us and leave us forever changed.

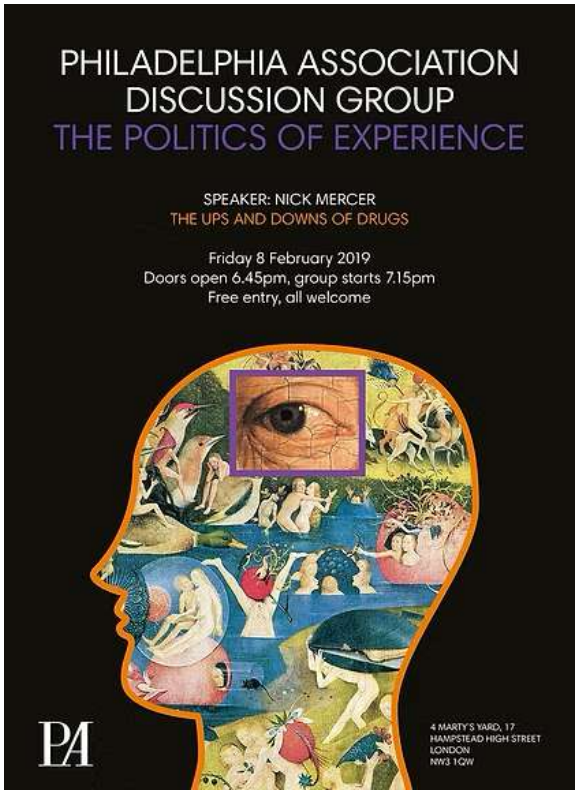
I write this because I struggle with reading in a linear sense, especially as I get older. When I was young it proved a powerful defence against the harshness of '60's Liverpool, and, like Emma Bovary, I consumed everything from comics to classics with all the discretion of a ravenous magpie. A book was a shield in any social situation from the bus to the pub to art school parties where the glimpsed Penguin in the pocket of the army surplus greatcoat could be a catalyst to conversation, an antidote to crippling shyness as effective as any narcotic – ' I see you're reading The Outsider by Camus, have you read Colin Wilson?' - This the prelude to an agonised and stilted conversation… eventually, thankfully, lent fluency and wings by alcohol and amphetamine. Many years later, when I no longer needed that shield, in fact found it an impediment to reality, I discarded it. Perhaps these days why I prefer the condensed physicality of poetry to the laborious bondage of the weighty tome and probably why I like this library. It reflects the confusing and often chaotic nature of the organisation itself.

This lack of a single doctrine is what makes the PA so unique and intriguing. It's a place where one can lose oneself in the plethora of ideas and perspectives, a labyrinth of intellectual exploration. This richness of thought and experience is what both attracts and confounds; there is no central canon to adhere to, just an optimistic scepticism that encourages continual questioning.

Here I stumble on a Theodore Reik volume signed by the author and dedicated to Wainwright Churchill; now Soul Murder by Morton Schatzman, heavily annotated by one of his patients, who - when I showed Morton this on a PA film night - remembered the patient with delight. I find a dog-eared pamphlet of sheet music, Beethoven's Leonore, owned and signed by Laing, probably when he was 11, and I fear this will all be lost, swept away by the amnesia that can affect organisations, hence this - in all honesty - ill-informed periphrastic ramble through the library, but again, my defence – more in sympathy with the library itself than a scholarly approach.

John Heaton's frequent response in supervision to my fanciful interpretations and wild surmises regarding patients – 'What did he or she say?' A sobering admonition to not be led astray. We are quick to produce reams of profound observations and speculations without necessarily attending to what was said, perhaps to defend against whatever is evoked in us. As John also said - you can't look at a chessboard and figure out how the players reached the impasse, checkmate, endgame of their current situation - but sometimes there's a mistaken belief in therapy – seductive and plausible - that we can retrace the steps of some linear journey back into the past to discover the root of what ails us and thus effect a cure. The gravitational pull is always towards presumption and a belief, a conceit, that, somehow, we are neutral, objective and free of bias, or at least unfired by the material, but this is never so.

Also, returning to the library, sometimes the pattern of the past, hidden in ostensible chaos, requires patience and empathy to emerge, and retreats from hasty conclusion – is only visible in certain light. Hence the reward of reading without prejudice, almost approaching the library as a divinatory tool, can lead to an encounter with something novel and unexpected.



Whisper from the heart

Fuad Buraimoh

This is a song of how the heart has the potential to offer something transformative and beautiful if one has the courage or desire (or both) to listen to the whispers of what it truly has to say to us, not our own interpretation of what we think our heart might tell us but what it actually speaks directly to us in only the way our heart can do…..

“Nothing or no one can speak to us as our heart does and when it whispers and we hear it, the effect is both healing and unlike anything that we could experience”

Although I wrote and originally sung this song, it was always my intention to have a female vocal in order to bring the song to its full potential. Thanks for listening.

This song was written and is dedicated to those brave enough to listen to the whisper of their heart… - Fuad

https://open.spotify.com/track/0PoDc5YwU0F0XVvO3SRQBR?si=sdDgTkcPQeGkKKjHRbfjTw&context=spotify%3Aalbum%3A367b9yE7OSosOnTLptDjRW
https://youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_lECjOEVgA86QWVasEbhW1v6ZseV1eUZsU&si=P1E2wnZVCiClk7_E

Whisper from the heart

What do you do when your heart tells you that there’s something new to follow
It whispers the truth, hear the words as you know you’ve fallen deeply in love

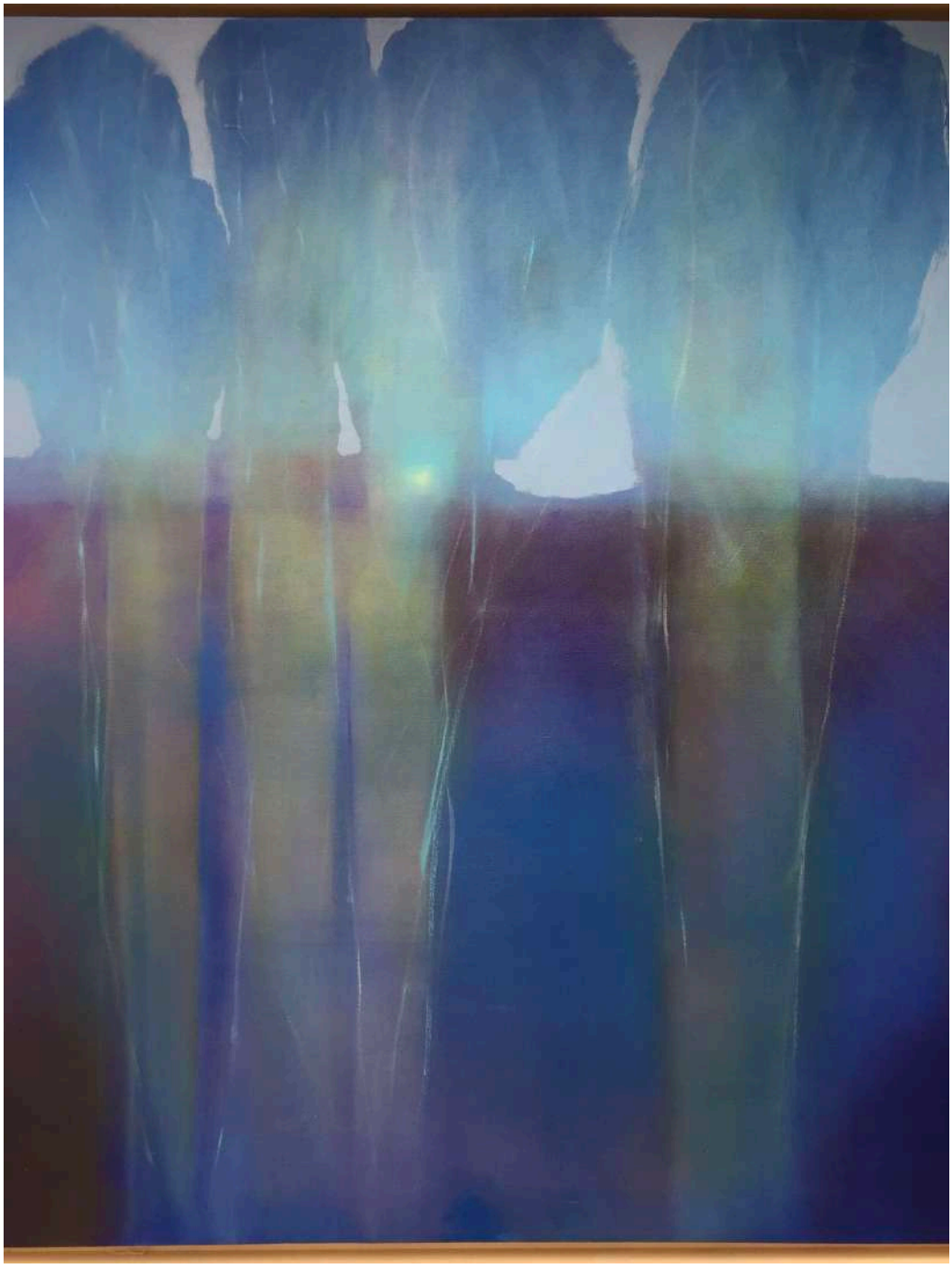
So much joy for your heart, magically captured cause it’s never felt this love before, always dreamed of this moment.

The gift of love is like crystal waves and silver waterfalls, beautiful sunrises, wonderful feelings appearing slowly, softly quickly, waking your heart to the love you found.

As your love glows bright in the sunlight, bringing dreams and hopes for tomorrow that chases the sadness away, now there’s freedom to love in a new way.
As this love stays strong in her memory as time passes by, she loves her life and the passion that’s held with desire with the courage to love,
As she listened to the whisper of her heart.

Listen to the whisper from your heart
Listen to the whisper from your heart…..

Sung by VR
Written by Fuad Buraimoh
2nd March 2025



Ghost Trees for Sandra
90cm x 100cm
Alison Davies

Paul Gordon by Graham Music

My colleague and friend, the psychotherapist, author and campaigner Paul Gordon, has died aged 70. While eschewing the limelight, Gordon was an Influential and unique voice in the world of contemporary psychotherapy. Author of over 10 books, and multiple articles, he was for many years Chair of the Philadelphia Association, originally founded by the brilliant if mercurial R.D. Laing.

He wrote a number of papers in the BJP, perhaps most notably in the early days about race and psychoanalysis, such as *Souls in Armour*: *Thoughts on psychoanalysis and Racism* (Gordon, 1993a) and *Keeping Therapy White* (Gordon, 1993b), as well as works linking psychotherapy and the arts such as *The Celluloid Couch: Representations of Psychotherapy in Cinema* (Gordon, 1994).

The papers about race and politics were part of his transition from a more campaigning early adulthood into a socially informed psychotherapy. Born in Glasgow in 1954 to Stanley Gordon, businessman, and Wilma Donaldson, speech and play therapist at psychoanalytically informed Notre Dame Child Guidance Clinic, Paul attended St. Aloysius College and then studied jurisprudence at Glasgow University. He then worked at the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties where he organised the first Scottish Conference on Children's Rights in 1978, and remarkably took the case that ended corporal punishment in Scottish schools to the European Court. of Human Rights, ending the use of the dreaded tawse (leather belt).

In 1980, Paul moved to London to work for the Runnymede Trust, where his prolific campaigning and writing, including at least six books, focused mostly on racism, discrimination and social policy. Some of his more important pre-therapy writings included *White Law: Racism in the Policy*, *Courts and Prisons* (Gordon, 1983) and *New Right, New Racism* (Gordon & Klug, 1987), and in 1992, along with Yasmin Alibhai Brown, he gave the Annual Lecture for the *Race Relations, entitled Race Equality in Europe: Problems and Potential.*

His political commitment and determination to improve people's lives led him to train as a psychotherapist at the Institute of Psychotherapy and Social Studies, and later at the Philadelphia Association. It was at the Philadelphia Association that he really came into his own and developed his philosophy. His first major work there was *Face to Face* (Gordon, 1999) in which he outlined a model of therapy deeply rooted in philosophy and literature from Merleau-Ponty to Husserl and Emanuel Levinas. While taking seriously the importance of the external world, he made a case for how authentic human presence and conversation could be transformative. He wrote 'The process of therapy and being a self is one in which people come to speak from a place of authenticity, in their own words and in their own idiom – to speak what we feel, not what we ought to say'. In Face to Face, he wrote 'whatever else we do as psychotherapists we wait, wait for, we wait with and we wait upon those who come to see us; we wait and we witness..... Waiting witnessing and naming all require a lot of effort'. Indeed, they do and he could and did make that effort.

He challenged contemporary developments in mental health, particularly the juggernaut of easy diagnosis and increasing medication, and alongside others such as Darian Leader, made a powerful case against the dangers of bureaucratisation and over professionalization of psychotherapy via state regulation. Gordon argued for a different way to engage patients, based on conversation and being present with another, a vision that is at risk of getting lost in a contemporary world of time-limited therapies based on guidelines and protocols and mass diagnosis and medication.

His beliefs aligned well with The Philadelphia Association which is an organisation with a radical mission and a uniquely questioning and philosophical bent. It has also, in classic Laingian tradition, overseen and facilitated therapeutic houses on a therapeutic community model, which aimed to be genuine places of sanctuary. The aspiration behind such work was stated by Gordon in *An Uneasy Dwelling* (Gordon, 2010) where he wrote 'we cannot make people feel at home but we hope that they may come to feel more at home in themselves and in the world'

Gordon was not only chair of the PA for many years, shepherding it into the con- temporary era with a careful eye on safeguarding its unique ethos and beliefs, but he also worked for many years as a 'house' therapist and chronicled the remarkable history and nature of this aspect of the PA's work in several books. Long before concepts of 'home' became sociologically fashionable, the PA houses were designed as literally 'homes' or places of safety and asylum. In them, people in distress could, and still can, find their own ways through suffering, in the context of a supportive and thoughtful community with the presence of therapeutic support, but without the contemporary psychiatric imperatives of over-medication and risk aversion. The houses were accessible to all, not the privilege of the wealthy, which was important to Gordon who spent many years offering low - or no - cost therapy, such as at Open Door and Freedom from Torture, and he was also one of the central figures-in the Free Psychotherapy network.

For him, as for R.D. Laing and many others, as he wrote in a Guardian letter: 'Behind every symptom and every appeal for medication. is a story, and the silencing of those stories can be as much the cause of suffering as the details of the life itself'. He railed against a symptom led medical model which could pathologise

people, and along with his friends and colleagues, the luminaries Peter Lomas and David Smail, he forcefully argued that social conditions and life events external to an individual should often be understood as the root of most people's mental health issues, rather than blaming a suffering individual. He wrote 'A task of therapy is to help people situate their suffering in a context, by helping people recognise that their lives are shaped by social economic political forces can help people feel less powerless and alone', and quoting Sartre,'can convert passivity into action'. In a book he co-edited about the PA houses, *Between Psychotherapy and Philosophy* (Gordon & Mayo, 2004), he wrote, we cannot collude with the myth that people's problems are somehow in them, in a so-called internal world he went on 'if psychoanalysis had been around at the time of slavery would it have told slaves that their problem stemmed from their internal worlds?'

Gordon's commitment to social justice burnt bright throughout his working life. For several years, he was an editor of the radical journal Free Associations, along- side its founder Bob Young. Here, Gordon ensured that psychoanalytic ideas did not exist in a vacuum but were always linked with discourses from phenomenology, political and social theory as well as literature and arts. For many this approach offered a beacon of hope at a time of inward retreat and conformism in the profession.

He also wrote regularly for the TLS and did occasional features in Guardian and Independent. He was a man of great erudition but without a pretentious bone in his body, and he could dive deeply into rabbit holes too challenging for most of us. Whether writing or talking about Husserl or Cornelius Castoriadis, R.S. Thomas or E P Thompson, he could integrate the insights of these thinkers into his own writing and professional work and had a gift for making the complex understandable.

Perhaps his most important book about his profession, *The Hope of Therapy* (Gordon, 2008), best conveyed his vision for psychotherapy, a vision both obvious and intangible, making central the power of ordinary conversation to transform. Conversation with Paul Gordon was always more extraordinary than ordinary. It could almost feel as if his decades of seeking, inner work, reading and thinking was all undertaken for the purpose of being in this very moment with whoever he was with, as was attested to by the many communications from grateful ex-patients and students since his death.

An admirer and colleague of the writers John Berger and Anne Michaels, literature and the arts infused his thinking and he co-curated an exhibition on poet Paul Celan for the Southbank Centre in 2010. His final book, *Vagabond Witness: VictorSerge and the Politics of Hope* (Gordon, 2013), paid tribute to the revolutionary writer who had greatly inspired him. He wrote 'Art, like therapy at its best, reminds us of and provides a space for the inherent complexity and ambiguity of life. It challenges any tendency to simplify, to smoothen, to flatten, to reduce.' That is a message the modern world needs to hear!

In his final decade, Paul suffered from a debilitating neurodegenerative disease. A militant supporter of assisted dying, he chose to end his own life by VSED (voluntarily stopping eating and drinking).

He is survived by his wife, the writer Melissa Benn and their daughters Hannah and Sarah, who cared for him lovingly and devotedly right to the end.

I end with a quote from *The Hope of Therapy* which sums up much of his philosophy and his way of being with others. 'All the qualities of a good friendship, a welcome, an acceptance, a letting be, a hospitality, an attunement, an attentiveness, a suspension of self-interest, a questioning, a criticism, a distance that does not yet pretend to objectivity, an engagement, a faith in the other, a commitment to truthfulness, and above all perhaps a responsibility to the other – these surely are the qualities also of an ethical therapy.' I believe he truly knew how to be a good friend and therapist and will be sorely missed.

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Paul by Melissa Benn

Sometimes a life comes into (even) sharper relief after death. This feels true of Paul, for a number of reasons. He was a notably private and modest man; many people, on attending his funeral, expressed amazement at the range of his achievements and interests as well as the affection and admiration that he inspired. 'I had no idea….' was the most common phrase uttered (to me) in the days and weeks after. Few knew, for instance, that he had had at least two 'careers' (not that he would have used that word), first in civil liberties and later. as a researcher into issues related to race, before becoming a therapist. By the time that he was thirty he had published a number of well-regarded books and numerous essays and articles on policing, immigration and race; later, of course, he wrote several books on the ethics and practice of psychotherapy including *An Uneasy Dwelling*, his account of the history and approaches of the Philadelphia Association (PA) houses. The depth, and extent of, his professional achievements were further obscured by the fact that, in the last few years of his life, he was forced through a serious degenerative condition to stop practising as a therapist and to withdraw from the world in general.

Paul was a deeply cultured man; as our daughter Hannah said at his funeral, with only a smattering of irony, 'Dad knew *everything*...'. One of my favourite photographs, because it is so typical, is of him sitting in a friend's living room, deeply absorbed in reading, while a group of children, including our daughters, dance wildly in the foreground. (This photograph also reminds me of the very 'Paul way' he had of reading a book, the volume held open almost at chest height, due, perhaps, to his poor eyesight). Paul was widely read in literature, particularly modern fiction and in his last years, when novel reading was beyond him, he turned to short stories written by women; the shelves of his study are lined with books by some of the best writers of the form - Alice Munro, Edith Pearlman, Bharati Mukherjee, Mavis Gallant. He was also deeply knowledgeable about art, architecture, philosophy, music, poetry and film. For much of his adult life, he took lessons in and played the guitar and was passionate about his motor bike. I sat pillion only once when he took me for a ride around our neighbourhood. I hated the speed and the sense of being out of control but he loved the freedom of the road and the chance to explore many parts of England, Scotland and France, often going on journeys with other motorbiking friends.

To the inattentive or crass, Paul could seem withdrawn or unfriendly. He was certainly - socially - quiet. As our daughter Sarah joked in her speech at the funeral, 'No-one would call our Dad chatty. He was a man of often *very* few words.' Yet when I read recently that Isaiah Berlin said of the pianist Alfred Brendel, 'I never heard him say an unoriginal thing' it reminded me of Paul who always eschewed the obvious or banal in favour of the considered and thoughtful. With his friends - and with me, his partner for nearly forty years - the relationship took the form of a rich, ongoing conversation down the decades - touching on politics, books, people, films, poetry, music and the connections between all these things. I learned a huge amount from him. He was also very funny and shrewd - yet the single most recurring word in the many letters and appreciations that I received after his death was 'kind'.

In his lovely obituary, republished in this volume, Graham Music has described Paul's journey from law. student (his first degree was in jurisprudence, a subject he did not enjoy) to campaigner and researcher to psychotherapist. What united all these areas was his profound commitment to social change; for him the personal and the political were always indivisible. However, he believed that many psychotherapists are the product of difficult or unhappy backgrounds, and he felt this about himself. As a young man, he was intermittently depressed. Coming to London, finding love, a settled home and becoming a devoted father to Hannah and Sarah helped him to find a sense of place in the world; from this more contented base he could pursue his vocation as a therapist and embark on some of his best writing.

After an initial training at the Institute for Social Studies, an experience he described as an unsatisfyingly ' eclectic melange of object relations theory' he found his way to the Philadelphia Association (PA). He was already an admirer of the 'anti-psychiatry' of R D Laing and other PA founders (figures of whom, it has to be said, he became more critical as time went on). I also played a small part in his turning to the PA as, in my mid-twenties, I had seen a PA-trained therapist, and Paul was impressed by what I relayed of the conversations between myself and Tamar. Describing his initial impressions of the PA as akin to encountering 'a sea breeze on a muggy day' he embarked on a training there. For many years, he felt that he had found his therapeutic home, working within one of the PA houses and serving as Chair of the organisation.

As he outlined in his two lucid and erudite books *Face to Face* and *The Hope of Therapy,* psychotherapy was for Paul an ethical endeavour. His own practice was grounded in the thinking of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, particularly his notion of our responsibility to the Other, but Paul also drew on the writings of many others including D W Winnicott, Wilfred Bion and Peter Lomas. Paul described the therapeutic encounter as. a conversation in which the patient felt safe enough to discover, and speak, his or her truths, however tangled, distressing, complex or apparently trivial. (Paul liked to quote his own PA therapist, Robin Cooper, who spoke of the necessity sometimes to make 'a mountain out of a molehill'.) Paul did not believe in quick fixes but nor was he much interested in delving into the unconscious in more conventional Freudian or Kleinian fashion. He shared the views of his friend, the psychologist David Smail, who perceived much of the distress experienced by his patients as inextricably tied to their social and economic circumstances.

I believe that Paul was a very good therapist: attentive, attuned, sensitive, independent in opinion and action, all qualities that were also on display outside the consulting room - plus a dash of sometime infuriating stubbornness! Like many of his friends, I appreciated his complete, quiet attention, benefitting from his sympathy as well as his refusal to offer easy bromides. Of course, he was not always 'successful' in his work. What therapist is? While he did not speak to me about individual clients or disclose confidential information, he did talk about what he was trying to do, in more general terms. Many of his patients moved him profoundly, particularly those who could find their authentic voice, who could share their pain but also their humour and sense of enjoyment in things. For him the challenge was always with those who spoke of what they *ought* to feel. For Paul there were no rules, no social norms, just an ongoing, patient conversation that was infinitely

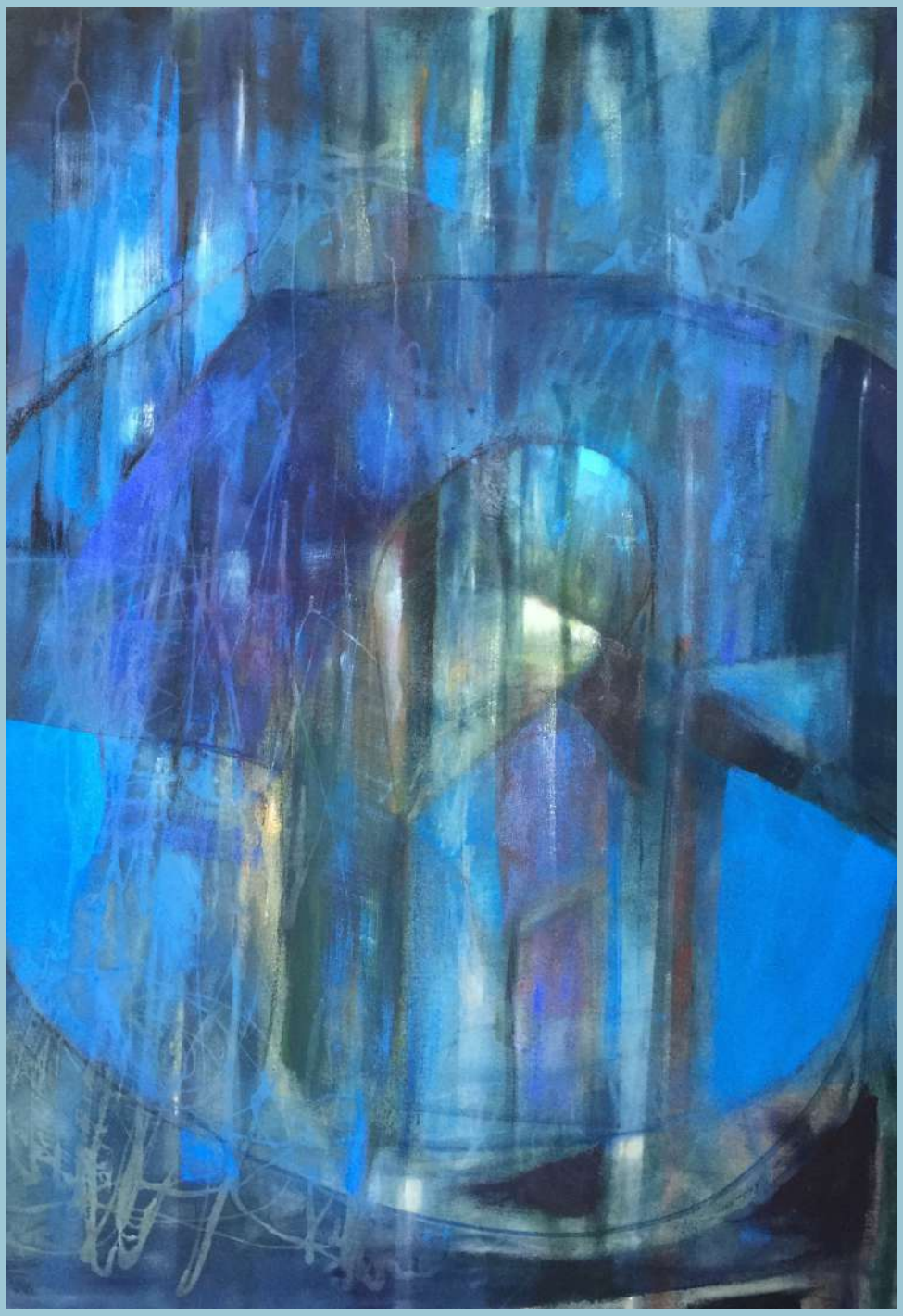
preferable to medicating away difficult feelings or reaching for the cheaper, easier comforts of approaches such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

Paul was both an existentialist and a realist. Yes, he believed that individuals had the power to change their lives and he certainly rejected the idea of any set script as to how a human being should live, but he also recognised the myriad pressures on others. In his own life, Paul continued to make clear choices within the constraints that bound *him*; he left the PA, for so long his professional home, when he felt that certain members within it longer showed him the care and respect that he needed (and surely deserved). He lived his years of severe illness as fully as he could, continuing to enjoy music, poetry, film, food as much as he was able. When his suffering became too much, he chose to end his own life on his own terms although this brought him, and our family, almost unbearable distress, particularly in his final weeks, days and hours.

Let me end with a passage from Face to Face, in which Paul tried to capture that ineffable mix of pain, sadness, pleasure and contentment that most of us are bound to experience in the course of a lifetime:

'It is not that disappointment, unhappiness and tragedy do not exist. That they do and on a terrible scale cannot be denied and no psychotherapy worthy of the name can ignore them or play down their importance. But it is equally true that happiness and enjoyment exist. There are so many things in life that give us pleasure - our lovers, children, friends, books, music, films, places, drinking, eating and so on…. They are life, just as much as death, illness and suffering'.

As I reflect on how much Paul quietly achieved, how much he was appreciated and loved, how brave he was, particularly in his final years, I feel tremendous pride in him, and such gratitude to have spent the larger portion of my life in his rare and sensitive company.



Christina by Rachel Milroy

I first met Christina in 2019 through a therapy network we were both involved with, and quickly discovered that our professional lives were quite similar. I had trained at The Arbours Association, and we had both been closely involved as House Therapists with our respective therapeutic community organisations. We connected over a shared scepticism about mainstream mental health services and a desire not to suppress emotional disturbance, but to be curious about it and seek to understand what lies at the heart of such distress.

It was Christina's idea that we might be well matched for peer supervision. She was right; we were indeed a good match, and we developed a close professional and personal bond that lasted until her death in December 2023.

I came across an interview Christina gave about her clinical work, in which she said:

> I see therapy as a form of intimate relationship. The therapy space is, in my view, a space where one can begin to think more freely about their lives and to start articulating the thoughts that felt unacceptable to themselves and others before. It takes a lot of trust and courage to begin this dialogue with a therapist, and in this sense, I feel very privileged to accompany my clients on their journeys.

In our clinical discussions, Christina often described herself as "porous"; she was never cut off or defended against the plight of those she worked with. She felt things deeply, and within the emotional bonds she formed with others, healing took place. Our conversations weren't lofty or intellectual; rather, they were spaces where we could be together, feel together, and think together. We also cried a lot together.

I met with a number of Christina's patients to offer support, first when she let them know she was unable to continue her work due to ill health, and then again after she had died. It was clear that Christina's capacity as a psychotherapist had a transformational impact on those in her care.

My admiration for Christina is enormous. I continue to hold her wisdom and generosity of spirit dearly. Christina was a spectacular feminist, strong-minded and also incredibly tender. In our last conversations, we spoke about the significance and importance of love.

I miss her.

Impromptu Community & The Philadelphia Film Club

Lakis Georghiou

We've always traditionally had conversations at the PA which now also include film evenings.

However, back in 2009 whilst I was a fairly new trainee showing a film at Marty's Yard was rare. I asked the then CofM whether I could hold a regular Film Club on the first Friday of each month. The idea was that I would have our main downstairs room made available for the evening, when I would choose a thought provoking film to project using a fairly basic projector, DVD player and small speakers. I had to apply for a License to show the films to a group but it would be a free event with voluntary contributions for those who felt financially able. Some gave £20, others £1, some just came in and sat down. All were welcome. Cash raised over months would go to the PA Community House's residents to buy something they wanted for their home. There were refreshments and 'cinema snacks' always and I provided small paper bags to be filled before the film started. No tickets or reservations were required. The door to Marty's Yard was left open for anyone to enter from the street, local community or further afield. I would publicise the event with a small laminate poster on the outside metal gates and email the Consortium Training organisations that the PA was connected to, the PA membership/trainees and of course the residents of the PA Community Houses. Some evenings we would have up to 20 people and at others just 3. There was one occasion when I watched the film alone! It was always a very diverse cross section of London residents including some with no home and with varying states of wellbeing.

Our first film was 'Ordinary People', a directorial debut from Robert Redford. A film dealing with a middle class American family's complex grief, guilt and emotional unavailability. At the end of the film and once the credits had rolled to completion, we would have a conversation. It was at this point that people would offer their reflections on what had come up for them. It proved a hugely formative experience for me, as I found

myself unexpectedly having to facilitate a group of different and unfamiliar people each week. Over the 5 years that the Film Club ran, regulars emerged who would attend with the expectation of the shared experience that would emerge. Making space for the varying opinions and reflections (at times emotional) became the culture of the Film Club. A welcomed silence would often prevail. I tried to support everyone's voice, from the more outwardly confident to perhaps someone whom I sensed struggled to speak but might have had something they wanted to contribute. Some would stay on and help me pack up, extending conversations often into other areas of their lives.

One evening our film depicted a son's mourning of his father.
There were 5 people present, including a very elderly and much younger man. Both it transpired had experienced the loss of their fathers; one through war and one through illness. Gradually and tentatively two strangers, a generation apart, united by a similar symbolic loss, welcomed each other's experience. It was a privilege to witness. It left a profound impact on my thinking as an apprentice psychotherapist of how such a sense of community can emerge in such an ordinary human encounter.

I recently reviewed all the 52 film posters I had saved on my laptop over 5 years. My experience of committing to the Film Club and seeing it through until I undertook my Pass proved to be one of the most formative experiences of my training. I believe my desire to facilitate groups on our PA Introductory and Community Courses and take up the opportunity to be a House Therapist in the Freegrove PA Community, was very much informed by those post film conversations.

The Philadelphia Association at its best, allows us to critically navigate what we mean by Community and how we might welcome ourselves and others. We all derive meaning here in our own unique way. The Charity endures I feel because members often have a fondness for what they have learnt of themselves whilst here. It gives us this opportunity if we take it up. For this reason, I hold what I have experienced very closely, with loyalty.

Welcoming

Ceramics made by Ian McGregor

"One of the things often found at the boundary of welcoming is the humble cup of tea or coffee, which so often embodies an invitation."

FREEGROVE

Kay Holmes

> We cannot make people feel at home, but we hope they may come to feel more at home in themselves and the world. The two are subtly and complexly. linked. One does not follow the other, but they take place together
>
> Paul Gordon, *An Uneasy Dwelling*

The PA houses are a paradox. In some ways they are the most public aspect of the Philadelphia Association. They're a big part of what the organisation became famous for, they have persevered long after other therapeutic institutions have had to give up on this model of care and respite without medicalisation. But few people even in the PA get to visit a house, let alone attend the meetings which are at the heart of the organisation's ethos.

That can be frustrating for house therapists because just as we ask ourselves on a regular basis: "What are we doing here?" it's quite natural for others to wonder that too. But that not-knowing for outsiders is also unavoidable because Freegrove is a home. I wouldn't wander into your house just to have a look around and criticise your cornices and similarly nobody, including the house therapists, should come inside without agreement and invitation.

Not knowing is at the centre of what we all do at Freegrove. People come to the house sometimes in extremis or distress, often in hope of something different and better. The process of joining the community is long - as well as meeting with (fellow Freegrove house therapist) Nina Shores and I, the prospective resident attends four house meetings over four weeks during which they may witness the conflict, the mundanity, the desultory chatting or the high emotions of a normal gathering as well as being asked and asking potentially very personal questions. Residents understandably want to know who is going to be moving into their space and potential residents similarly want to parse the moods, background and relationships between a group of strangers with whom they may have nothing in common except needing the kind of space Freegrove offers. It's not easy for anyone involved and the process is sometimes abandoned on both sides.

And we don't know how people will be when they move in. Some people thrive, some people deteriorate (depending on how one wants to see that, we also think together a lot about the idea of going down to get through).

As house therapists we don't know from week to week how people will feel about each other or us. There's something about the ordinary not-knowing which I think is essential in therapeutic practice - to listen not assume, to see the person as they are in front of you rather than to squeeze them into an archetype - which is magnified in Freegrove. We not only don't know what's going on for each person or ourselves but also none of us can anticipate or even sometimes fully grasp what that person feels in relation to four or five others.
Can we help each other? Can we even see each other?

House therapists can be tyrants, parents, generalised authority figures, putative plumbers and handywomen, idiots or financial advisors (not a great projection in my case) all in one meeting and sometimes without a word being spoken. We all signify something to each other at different times and a big part of the work of the house

is to try to see that. To see the other and their distinctness from you as well as who they might actually be beyond their captivity in your own fantasy, projection and history.

It's hard work. When people really engage with the meetings and the ethos of the house (and people who don't tend not to stay long) it can be painful and exhausting and even frightening. None of this is for the faint of heart. It can also be eye-opening and bonding and heartening and hilarious.

There's a lot of talking. There are also a lot of silences. And there's a fair bit of talking about the silences.

I can breach confidentiality and identify one resident. His name is Dorito and he's an extremely good-looking Ragdoll cat who was adopted by one of the residents. He came from a home full of dogs and was traumatised and terrified when he first arrived, refusing to leave his room and fleeing whenever he saw another person. The resident fretted over him and talked about him with the group and fed and groomed and cared for him and now Dorito comes to a lot of the house meetings and is unafraid to greet a roomful of people and even newcomers. The affection of the resident, the gentleness and acceptance of the others and the calm of the house have helped Dorito relax a little, take a breath and step outside his trauma and be with others. He's not 'cured'. Neither he nor we know what that would even mean. But he's safe and loved and he has a place of his own.

So looking from the outside, what can I tell you? Freegrove is a big, terraced house in Islington, with a brand-new kitchen and lovely new internal decoration thanks to the hard work and ingenuity of the PA's houses coordinator Sophia Raja. Inside it's a well-kept, calm and comfortable home and outside it looks like all the other houses on the street. Although in the past there have been some dunderheaded protests about the 'type' of people living there, that time seems hopefully to have passed. The residents are on good terms with their neighbours, and they use local businesses and participate in local events. Inside you have the kind of conversations you just never have anywhere else. Of course, we have days when small talk is all we can face or all people want. Or when nobody feels like uttering another bloody word. But most of the time it's the kind of big talk you dream of having, where the possibility of really knowing someone and of us understanding each other and of something real being heard and said and felt by a group of human beings is right there in front of our faces.

On days like that I never want to leave. But it's not my house, so I have to.

Dorito

Photo: Daniel Corcodel

Journey Through The PA

Naseem Aiazi

The conversation has taken half an hour and points are still flying in the air. There is a pause. After a while a housemate brings something else up for discussion. There is a visitor coming to the house on Friday, and there are a lot of questions to be asked. There are naturally some other issues to be discussed by the end of the meeting. This is an insight into the meetings at the PA.

My friend once asked me what we talked about in the meetings, and I said: “just about anything. Someone brings something and we discuss it.” He then asked me to give an example, and I said: “it is confidential. I cannot talk about it.”

I found the PA (Philadelphia Association) at a very dark point in my life. This is the sentence I have heard many times from my fellow housemates, and I couldn’t agree more. I was at the end of my stay at the St. Mungo’s accommodation having stayed there for a few years and I did not know where to go after that. I suffered from what I was told is a ‘Treatment Resistant Schizophrenia’ and although I had studied physics in University, the nature of my distress meant that I couldn’t take up any employment. I had finished my degree but had been jobless for years.

From the outside, the PA seemed like a lottery to me. I was interviewed by the therapists for the house at the Grove, but they told me to wait for the Freegrove Road accommodation. The next step was to be interviewed by the residents.

Traditionally there are four interview sessions (known as visits). Being interviewed four times on four weeks was arduous for me. Later I realised every visitor found this hard. After the four visits, the house delivered their verdict. Happily for me, they said yes to me moving in to the house. There are however those applicants who don’t get accepted by the households and those who don’t want to carry on with the process.

I understood later that this process was arduous for the residents as well. Although there are exceptions and there have been conflicts in the house, I found the house to be the most friendly house for the mentally ill I have ever known. This is a result of a combination of the zero tolerance for violence by the PA and the four interviews in which the households get to know the newcomer. I have heard the house being described as a community many times.

The main issue for those who come to the PA houses is getting used to the meetings. Three meetings a week seemed achievable to me while applying, but it felt much more onerous while I was here. The mere fact of coming to three meetings a week is not for everyone. I got used to attending the meetings after a while. The meetings run for one hour and thirty minutes, three days a week.

The two therapists and the staff of the PA have been very friendly and helpful. Although attending the meetings has been hard, it turned out going to the meetings has helped me keep mentally fit. When I finally could attend activities outside, the meetings helped me get used to them faster.

PA Communities

1 Kingsley Hall, 1965-1970
2 Archway, 1970-1978/1979
3 The Grove, 1972-Present
4 Portland Road, 1971-1980
5 Tollington Park, 1973-1978
6 De Beauvoir Square, 1974-1978
7 Ascott Farm, Stadhampton 1977-1988
8 Mayfield Road, 1978-1982
9 Bradley Gardens, 1982-1985
10 Holland Road, late 1970s to early 1980s
11 Shirland Road, 1983-2006
12 Maygrove Road, 1983-1990
13 Freegrove, 1996-Present

Reference: An Uneasy Dwelling by Paul Gordon

Photos compiled by Sophia Raja

Collage by Pierre-Yves Rahari-Jacobs

The Philadelphia Story Sixty Years On: Living Next Door to Madness and Meaning

David Morgan

Abstract

This piece offers a personal and psychoanalytic reflection on the legacy of the Philadelphia Association House, as witnessed by someone who once lived next door and later worked in therapeutic communities, including with Murray Jackson on Ward 6. It considers R.D. Laing's revolutionary influence, the therapeutic experiment with Mary Barnes, the profound ambiguity of institutional "freedom," and the legacy of this in current mental health.

While acknowledging the complexities and contradictions inherent in Laing's work, I want to celebrate his fundamental contribution to humanising mental health care and his courageous challenge to psychiatric orthodoxy. I conclude with a call to integrate structure, reflection, and ethical maturity into the next generation of psychoanalytic and therapeutic practice, building upon rather than abandoning the essential insights Laing brought to our understanding of human suffering and healing.

Neighbours

I once lived next door to a Philadelphia Association House in Holland Park. Not metaphorically, but literally: my windows looked directly onto its back garden, its windows, and its life. For decades, those rooms held people on the edge or in the depths of psychic collapse, trying to live, think, and sometimes begin again.

I remember the strange mixture of late-night voices, distant weeping, manic shouts, the clatter of a door, and sometimes laughter, music, or deep, companionable silence or someone in the street shouting out that they were the Messiah.

Something was happening there that could not happen elsewhere something that challenged the very foundations of how we understand mental distress. And in retrospective reflection, part of my idealising observations revealed that something was also on reflection not happening that perhaps should have been, yet this does not diminish the profound courage of what was attempted.

On one memorable evening, my bedroom window, two storeys up, was prised open from the outside. A resident had ‘escaped’ through an upper window, crossed the roofs, and entered our flat en route to the pub across the road. My girlfriend and I woke in shock as she bounded through the room, apologised mid-mania, and vanished down the stairs. The incident, comic and uncanny, captured something of the permeability, both literal and psychic, of the House's ethos. There was no boundary between inside and out, madness and meaning, self and other. Perhaps there isn't, and perhaps Laing's genius was to recognise this fundamental interconnectedness that conventional psychiatry had worked so hard to deny.

Later, I worked in several therapeutic communities myself. Looking back, I see how these genuine forms of asylum relied on the stamina—and idealism—of the young. Who else but twenty-five-year-olds can sit up until 4 a.m. discussing florid psychotic phantasy or holding vigil with addicts wrestling inner demons? There was a wild hope in those early days: that presence, tolerance, and shared humanity might do what drugs and coercion could not. This hope, however naive it might seem now, was not misplaced—it was revolutionary.

The Revolutionary Vision

The Philadelphia Association, founded by R.D. Laing and others in 1965, was not just an anti-psychiatric experiment. It was a profound challenge to the very idea of illness, of sanity, of the medical gaze itself. What if madness was not to be cured, but listened to? What if the institution was not to suppress disturbance, but to think with it? What if the person labeled "schizophrenic" was not broken, but breaking through? These were, and remain, radical questions that continue to reverberate through contemporary mental health discourse although in the current climate the only services that are expanding are forensic, I'm sure you can understand why. Laing's vision was fundamentally humanistic. At a time when psychiatry was becoming increasingly biologised and impersonal, he insisted that madness was meaningful, that symptoms were communications, that the person behind the diagnosis mattered more than the pathology.

His books—The Divided Self, The Politics of Experience, Knots*—spoke to a generation hungry for authenticity and suspicious of institutional authority. He gave voice to the voiceless, dignity to the dismissed, and hope to the hopeless.

For a time, this vision brought together philosophers, poets, patients, doctors, mystics, and dropouts in a shared refusal of psychiatry's cold orthodoxy. The PhiladelphiaAssociation became a beacon for those seeking alternatives to the medical model, a place where the language of illness gave way to the language of experience, where the consulting room opened onto the lived world of human suffering and meaning-making.

Around the same time, I attended Francis Huxley's seminars on shamanism. There, too, the conversation turned to altered states, visionary experience, and the role of the wounded healer. I soon realised I was the only participant who hadn't been diagnosed with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. I wasn't a "seer" or a "patient," just a curious young man struck by how close the figure of the shaman resembled Laing himself: venerated and vilified, gifted and lost.

But unlike the traditional shaman, Laing had no tribe to restrain him, no elders to bring him back. His brilliance was often unaccompanied by structure, or by an awareness of transference's gravitational pull. His persona—the Trickster, the prophet, the drinker—may have been unsustainable. At times, one wonders if the alcohol was a symptom of the impossibility of his own myth, like that of rock stars who don't quite believe in their own hype? Yet perhaps this very impossibility was part of what made his contribution so vital—he took on the unbearable contradictions of his time, embodied them, and in doing so, opened new possibilities for understanding human distress.

The Therapeutic Revolution: Mary Barnes and Beyond

For a brief period, I consulted at an Arbours House and came to know Joseph Berke. Joe was a quieter figure than Laing, steadier, more grounded, but no less committed to the idea that madness could be meaningful. His therapeutic relationship with Mary Barnes, recorded in *Mary Barnes: Two Accounts of a Journey Through Madness*, remains a remarkable testament to regression as creativity, to the possibility of breakdown as breakthrough.

Barnes entered a state of profound psychic collapse, spoke in baby language, smeared faeces on the walls, and later painted her way back to a fragile form of selfhood. She was not "cured," but she was held heroically by Berke. The therapeutic team's willingness to accompany her on this journey into the depths of psychosis, to stay present with her at her most disturbed and disturbing, represented something unprecedented in psychiatric history.

Psychoanalytically, it raises difficult questions: is presence without interpretation enough? Can containment without insight still transform? Yet perhaps these questions miss the point. Barnes's journey was not about insight in the traditional sense, but about the restoration of a capacity for symbol formation, for creativity, for relationship. Her paintings, emerging from the depths of her psychotic breakdown, testified to the transformative power of being held in one's madness rather than being forced out of it.

The therapeutic team's approach embodied Laing's core insight: that madness is not meaningless, but rather meaning in extremis. Barnes's regression was not pathology to be eliminated, but communication to be received. Her primitive behaviours were not symptoms to be medicated, but expressions of a self trying to find its way back to life. In holding her through this process, the therapeutic community demonstrated that healing could happen through relationship rather than through technique, through presence rather than through interpretation.

Yet in reflecting on the story of Mary Barnes and Joseph Berke, and the almost mythic quality it has acquired in the annals of therapeutic revolution, I am reminded of the psychic burden carried by the figure of the heroic therapist—a theme I have explored elsewhere in relation to forensic work. Berke’s steadfastness was extraordinary, but even this profound act of accompaniment risks becoming over-idealised. In Kleinian terms, the therapist may be unconsciously positioned as a reparative, all-good object—one who must absorb

unprocessed projective identifications without limit, remain boundlessly available, and sustain the hope of total psychic restoration.
This idealisation can offer comfort to both patient and clinician, but it also risks becoming a manic defence against depressive truth: that not all damage can be undone, that mourning must replace magical repair, and that even the most devoted therapist is not immune to retaliatory feelings or psychic fatigue.

Here, Bion's work offers a vital counterweight to the fantasy of therapeutic omnipotence. His conception of the analyst as a container, not a saviour, insists on the disciplined act of receiving raw beta elements, metabolising terror and fragmentation, and transforming unthinkable experience into something representable. But Bion also warned of the cost of this process. In Learning from Experience, he makes clear that the analyst must cultivate negative capability—the capacity to wait without memory or desire, to tolerate uncertainty without fleeing into action or interpretation. This stance is the opposite of heroism; it is closer to humility, to forbearance, to emotional honesty. The real labour of psychoanalytic work lies not in rescuing the patient from madness, but in surviving the patient's need to make the analyst feel mad, empty, hated or useless without evacuating those feelings or retaliating in kind.

Bion also recognised that when the container is overwhelmed, the analyst may unconsciously enact what cannot be thought. The heroic stance can then become a mask for a failure of reverie—a collapse of containment disguised as devotion. In the face of psychosis, we may reach too quickly for care, for closeness, for solutions, rather than staying in contact with the emotional truth of the encounter. What looks like courage may in fact be a refusal to think. The true challenge is not to become the ideal object the patient longs for, but to survive being the failed one—the object that stays, reflects, and does not retaliate, even when love cannot be immediately restored.

Seen in this light, the legacy of Kingsley Hall and places like it must be read not only as a political and existential revolt against psychiatric coercion, but also as a clinical experiment in the limits of psychic containment. Some of what was achieved was extraordinary. But the cost, for both patients and clinicians, when containment gave way to enactment or omnipotence, reminds us that holding madness is not a matter of heroic will but of psychic discipline. Without adequate structure and the capacity to mourn, the analyst risks becoming a participant in a delusion rather than a container for its transformation.

The Shadow and the Light

Some of what was possible in Kingsley Hall was profound. But much was on reflection left unthought. Boundary breaches were tolerated in the name of spontaneity or love. For me, such enactments confusing dependency, care, and power in ways that remain unanalysed. Today, as we mark sixty years of the Philadelphia Association, we must ask not only what was achieved, but also what was evaded.

These patterns of boundary confusion, of charismatic leadership unchecked, of the refusal to mourn idealisations—perhaps continue in the organisations that followed. Yet to focus only on these shadows would be to miss the revolutionary light that Laing brought to our understanding of mental distress.

His insight that madness is meaningful does not require the abandonment of therapeutic boundaries; indeed, it requires their thoughtful construction. His recognition that the person matters more than the pathology does not necessitate the collapse of professional roles; it calls for their ethical refinement.

The tragedy is not that Laing was wrong, but that his insights were not adequately contained within structures that could hold them safely. The therapeutic communities that followed, in their commitment to pluralism and theoretical openness, have at times replicated the Laingian blind spots: an analyst too implicated, too intimate, too unwilling to name the incestuous pull of certain enactments. The rejection of hierarchy too easily becomes a denial of difference. The protest against authority becomes a theatre of seduction, and the dream of freedom, when unmoored from thought, becomes repetition compulsion in a therapeutic key. Yet these failures do not negate the fundamental validity of Laing's vision. They call us to do better, to build upon his insights while learning from his mistakes. The answer is not to abandon the humanistic revolution he initiated, but to complete it.

The Continuing Revolution: Ward 6 and Beyond

Later in my career, I worked alongside Murray Jackson on Ward 6, where they attempted to do something quietly revolutionary: offer psychoanalysis, not medication, as the primary mode of engagement with psychosis. It was some of the hardest out patient work I've ever done. The depth of contact required, the sheer exposure to psychic pain, demanded everything. The wear and tear on staff I observed, and to a lesser dimension on me, was immense. But the work was also luminous, and I remember one patient, previously thought unreachable, speaking for the first time after weeks of silence. He simply said, "I thought you would leave." The statement was small, but it came from a chasm. We had waited, endured the storm together and no drug, still used judiciously, could have done what the therapeutic relationship had made possible.

On another occasion, I witnessed the remarkable psychoanalyst Dr Henri Rey reach a severely catatonic patient, a priest who had torn down the cross in his church, and before his congregation asked to be united with his father in heaven. His father had died at the hands of the IRA when he was small. The priest's apparent madness revealed itself as a profound expression of unresolved grief and trauma, a symbolic enactment of his desire for reunion with his lost father. Through patient, psychoanalytic work, this seemingly incomprehensible act became a doorway to understanding and healing.

Or consider a talented author I saw who was waiting patiently for the second ice age to be announced on the shipping forecast, to which she listened daily for many years. When it did occur—at least in her mind—she had the delusion she would cut her wrists and the ice would melt and save the world. A reversal of her own need to be saved from a frozen, post-puerperal depressed mother. Here too, what appeared as pure delusion revealed itself as a complex symbolic communication about early trauma, maternal failure, and the desperate wish to repair what had been broken.

These experiences taught me the necessity of holding, of structure, of time. The human mind cannot survive too much contact without containment, nor can the clinician. But they also confirmed Laing's fundamental insight: that madness is not meaningless, that behind every symptom lies a human story, that the person in distress is not a collection of pathologies but a suffering subject deserving of our deepest attention and care.

The Enduring Legacy

What remains valuable in the Philadelphia Association's legacy is its commitment to listening to what is unbearable, unnameable, unclassified. It tried to dwell beside madness, not above it. Laing's great gift was his ability to see the person behind the patient, to recognise the humanity in the most disturbed and disturbing presentations, to insist that madness was not the opposite of meaning but meaning in extremis.

His influence extended far beyond the therapeutic communities he founded. He helped to shift the entire discourse around mental health, challenging the medical model's hegemony and opening space for more humanistic approaches. His work contributed to the development of family therapy, to the recognition of the social roots of mental distress, to the understanding of psychosis as potentially meaningful rather than merely pathological.

The emphasis on trauma-informed care, on the importance of the therapeutic relationship, on the need to understand symptoms in their social and historical context—all of this owes a debt to Laing's pioneering work. His insights about the family as a potential source of madness helped to establish the field of family therapy. His recognition of the social dimensions of mental distress contributed to the development of community psychiatry and social psychiatry.

Even his failures were instructive. His personal struggles with alcohol and depression reminded us that healers too are wounded, that the therapeutic relationship is a meeting of two subjectivities, each with their own vulnerabilities and blind spots.

The Path Forward

But if we are to carry this work forward, we must also integrate what it resisted: thought, ethics, responsibility. We must reintegrate form without authoritarianism, authority without omniscience. The container matters, and freedom without structure becomes invasion; analysis without self-analysis becomes intrusion.

The challenge is to preserve Laing's essential insights while providing them with the ethical and structural frameworks they require. This means maintaining his commitment to listening to madness while also maintaining clear therapeutic boundaries. It means honouring the meaningfulness of psychotic experience while also providing the containing structures that can hold such experience safely. It means recognising the person behind the patient while also maintaining the professional roles that make therapeutic work possible.

The next generation must learn from both Laing's successes and his failures. They must preserve his humanistic vision while providing it with the ethical sophistication it requires. They must maintain his commitment to the meaningfulness of madness while also developing the structural frameworks that can contain such meaning safely.

This is not a betrayal of Laing's legacy but its fulfilment. His vision was not anti-structural but pro-human. His goal was not to eliminate all boundaries but to create boundaries that served human flourishing rather than institutional convenience. His dream was not of chaos but of a new kind of order—one that could hold both madness and meaning, both breakdown and breakthrough, both the individual and the community.

Living Next Door to Meaning

Living next door to the Philadelphia Association House, I learned something essential: that listening can be revolutionary—but only if accompanied by reflection. That the most radical act may not be to abolish institutions, nor to embrace the fantasy of "care in the community," but to transform them. That psychoanalysis, if it is to survive, must learn to live not just beside madness, but also beside its own limitations and blind spots.

The Philadelphia Association's great achievement was not that it solved the problem of mental distress—no single approach could do that—but that it changed the conversation about it. It insisted that madness was meaningful, that the person mattered more than the pathology, that healing could happen through relationship rather than through technique. These insights remain as relevant today as they were sixty years ago.

Laing's legacy is not a perfect one, but it is a vital one. He showed us that it is possible to approach mental distress with curiosity rather than fear, with respect rather than condescension, with hope rather than despair. He reminded us that behind every symptom lies a human story, that behind every diagnosis lies a person deserving of our deepest attention and care.

The Philadelphia Association House may have closed its doors, but its windows remain open.
The conversations it started continue in therapeutic communities around the world, in the consulting rooms of psychoanalysts who still believe that madness can be meaningful, in the work of all those who refuse to reduce human suffering to mere pathology.

As we look back on sixty years of this remarkable experiment, we can see both its achievements and its limitations. But perhaps its greatest achievement was simply this: it dared to imagine that things could be different, that madness could be met with meaning, that the most disturbed among us could be welcomed rather than warehoused, understood rather than simply managed.

That vision, however imperfectly realised, remains as necessary today as it was when Laing first articulated it. In a world that still too often responds to mental distress with fear and rejection, the Philadelphia Association's legacy reminds us that another way is possible—a way that honours both the reality of human suffering and the possibility of human healing.

The house next door has taught us that the most important boundaries are not those that keep madness out, but those that can hold it safely within—not to eliminate it, but to listen to what it has to teach us about the human

condition, about the price of civilisation, about the courage it takes to be fully human in a world that too often demands conformity rather than authenticity.

In the end, perhaps that is Laing's greatest gift to was the recognition that madness and meaning are not opposites but intimates, that the capacity for breakdown and the capacity for breakthrough are two sides of the same coin, that in learning to live beside madness, we learn to live beside the full range of human experience including our own.

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Former PA house therapist Amy Ison interviews PA handyman Danny Arno

AI: For the purpose of this interview are you okay to be called a handyman?

DA: Well, I don't really have a title. Originally, I was called up to do odd jobs that the house residents can't do, but you don't need to bring in a trade for, but it has graduated. I've done some big work there, usually with people who are from outside.

AI: How did you come to be involved in the PA?

DA: I helped a member of the PA move out of her workshops and then I heard they needed some work doing, some decorating. So, I went over. How long ago was that? I don't know, it was about six, seven years ago now.

AI: Can you conjure up a particularly memorable house encounter?

DA: When you work in the houses, you are privy, if you are accepted, into some of the residents' rooms, and you're allowed into some private space, and you'll see what work they're doing, art mostly. And it never fails. I don't want to say impressed, that's the wrong word, but I always enjoy the art and the creativity of the residents, when you're allowed into that space. It's hard to explain, but you would not believe, you would not know what they're doing, unless you're allowed into their private space. If you're given that privilege, because it is a privilege, it's quite impressive to see what some of them are creating, and some of them are... there's some great artists in the PA, in the residents.

AI: Yes, agreed.

DA: And there's also, you know, certain residents who are suffering. And you can see that as well, you can see when certain people that you see one week, and they're in a certain space, then you'll see maybe a month down the road, that they can be more withdrawn and insular and different, and they don't want to share anything. And so, it's tricky to navigate sometimes, but I'm always blown away, just talking to some of the residents, let alone what art they do, what they actually create. It's hard to put into words, actually, Amy.

AI: I know you recently participated in the *PA's Diploma Course in Community and Psychotherapy*. I was wondering if it changed or informed your feeling about the work, when you go to the houses?

DA: A good question. I really enjoyed the course. I thought it was very helpful for me. I will readily admit that I felt very out of my depth academically during most of the course, but that was partially because I was working full time and had little time to study. Having said that, I think what I felt more was that I understood the PA better, where they were coming from. I felt like it was a much more organic organisation and much more, dare I say it, kind of anarchic in the sense that they had space for individual approaches and I didn't feel that there was a right and wrong, especially with psychotherapy. That became apparent when certain members of the PA were facilitating the courses because we had such a mixed group. In a way, the group makes the course with each session, with each facilitator, with each input and discussion. I think some of the people on the course found that hard to understand at first. They wanted more of a direction, you know, they

wanted to be more directed or more academic in their direction.
When you go into the houses, I think I generally just felt more equipped, my approach is very informal, it's just being, trying to be myself, but I think I did understand the language a little more and many of the residents - we've got 10 residents - some of those residents have also done some of the courses. So that's where it helped because I used to talk about the course with them and that was good because suddenly, I felt like I could interact with them on that level.

AI: I was thinking about social change, about the housing crisis and back to when Laing was working and how madness occupies a very different space in the collective psyche, now that everyone seems more steeped in the language of suffering, diagnosing through YouTube, consulting AI therapists via an app! What do you think all this could mean for the future of the houses?

DA: Well, I have thought about this a lot because when I first entered the houses, I felt some of the residents weren't in great need and I didn't know what they were actually getting out of being in the houses except for some kind of secure housing, which everybody should have the right to and needs. But as time's gone on, I have seen the, what do you call it? Not the fallibility, but how delicate some of the residents are and I've seen how some are really suffering. And so, to answer the question, the houses are absolutely very much needed. I know because where I live in my flat, I've had one friend down on my own floor who's had mental health issues and had to take daily medicine and he jumped out the window, that was about four years ago. His best friend, Ben, the poet who lives on the top floor is another person who has a serious psychosis. He's very anxious and sits outside smoking all the time. That was his best friend and he wrote a beautiful poem about losing Dan and stuck it up in the lift because we live in a block of flats. Anyway, these two people were totally isolated in a way. They had each other, but they were essentially totally isolated. I wasn't there when it happened, but Dan apparently jumped when he felt that he was being chased and he was being chased by the way, there were people physically chasing him, police and carers, but he hadn't taken his medicine and the concerned residents of which there were two or three, and myself, always said is he getting support? Is he in a situation where there are people close by who are caring for him apart from ourselves? Have I got the time to answer the door when he knocks on my door every day? I know I hadn't and often I'm not there because that happened about three or four years ago and I was working at the houses so there was an understanding of both situations. There was great comfort in knowing that some of those residents who need support, they need a perspective, they need an understanding of where they're at in their close environment. When you live in those housing conditions, when you're isolated and you don't have that, you don't have anybody close by who's going to be outside your door, then I think you get these situations that poor Dan passed away and so I really started appreciating the whole idea of the therapeutic community. I didn't really understand it as much before these situations occurred and I still think it's important that all members at least try to get something from the community and get exposed to it because I think given the choice, a lot of people are insular, and inwardly looking, but kind of refuse that option and I think it's important that they do partake because I think discussion helps and just having that feeling of support helps. Yeah, I also kind of have a background with three people who have been diagnosed with mental health issues. People who, two of which had to be committed and so I feel like I

do see it a lot and where I lived nearby, I beat myself up a lot about not recognising certain signs. You look at the people, like Dan, who lived on my floor and I just, I think the houses are a great thing. You know, I've seen residents going through psychosis and they don't talk to me, they stare right through me. It's quite disconcerting, sometimes they might seem cold and unfriendly but they are struggling and at least they're in a safer environment.

AI: If the people whose belief and efforts resulted in the setting up of the community houses were to visit now, do you think they'd find that the original spirit remains?

DA: I'm not knowledgeable enough about the original aims but as therapeutic spaces I think yes, they are functioning well. I think they're great spaces for people who are in great need. If many of the residents were in isolated accommodation, I think they'd be in a darker... it wouldn't be a good set up. I might not be right but I think I am.

AI: And finally, is working for the PA good for your mental health Danny?

DA: No (laughs). You feel a certain anxiety or responsibility… there are things that aren't always easy to navigate. But you've got to remember the other side. Being involved with the PA can lead to lots of other positive things… you go to certain events... originally, I was involved with the PA discussion group and film club - I was amazed- people off the streets, residents, therapists, administrators, all sorts, showing these really interesting films relating to mental health, with really comprehensive discussions after and I thought this is great, I love it, really interesting. That was a good gateway for me.

AI: Yes, bring back the film club!
Thank you, Danny, much appreciated.


P.A.
PAST
EVENTS
NOTICE
BOARD
DIALECTICS OF LOCKDOWN
7 - 8.30pm
2 July 2021
CAPITALIST REALISM
On Mark Fisher
PHILADELPHIA ASSOCIATION DISCUSSION GROUP
THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE
SPEAKER: LUCY KING
THE CULTURE OF BLAME
Friday 1 March 2019
Doors open 6.45pm, group starts 7.15pm
Free entry, all welcome
PHILADELPHIA ASSOCIATION DISCUSSION GROUP
THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE
SPEAKER: JEREMY CUTLER
EMPATHY
Friday 15 February 2019
Doors open 6.45pm, group starts 7.15pm
Free entry, all welcome
PA ONLINE DISCUSSIONS
Friday 19 Feb
7-8.30pm
Life Drawings
Email office@philadelphia-association.org.uk for the Zoom link
ALL WELCOME
Thursday 1st October
7.00 - 9.30 pm
Revisiting the Maternal
Seminars: Matricide and
Maternal Subjectivity
THE LIFE WE ARE LIVING
Facilitator
Paul Atkinson
Time
7 - 8.30pm
May 7 2021
Nature - is it human?
June 18 2021
Democracy in your dreams
July 16 2021
Covid in the summer — how are we doing?
Free, Online, Zoom
Friday 2nd October
7.30 - 9.30pm
50 years after the opening of Kingsley Hall in 1965 where is RD Laing, now?
ASYLUM
R.D. LAING
DISCUSSION GROUP
THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE
SPEAKER: NICK MERCER
THE UPS AND DOWNS OF DRUGS
Friday 8 February 2019
Doors open 6.45pm, group starts 7.15pm
Free entry, all welcome
PHILADELPHIA ASSOCIATION DISCUSSION GROUP
THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE
SPEAKER: ANDREA HEATH
THE AFFLICTED
Friday 29 March 2019
Doors open 6.45pm, group starts 7.15pm
Free entry, all welcome
SOUTH KENSINGTON (PEOPLE'S) ART MOVEMENT
Discussions about Art and Politics
15 April 2022
7-8.30pm
Facilitator:
Joohyun Lee
DIALECTICS OF LOCKDOWN
7 - 8.30pm
Facilitator: Rob White
Introduction followed by a discussion
RELIGION OF HEALTH
On Giorgio Agamben
CAPITALIST REALISM
On Mark Fisher
DOUBLE BIND
On Foucault, Bateson, Laing
LONGING TO ESCAPE
On Janet Frame
ASYLUM POLITICS
On Kassy, Rosenhan
HOSPITAL WORLD
On Ivan Illich
THE DIGITAL WASTE LAND
On Byung-Chul Han
ART INSIDE
PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSIONS
Facilitated by
Kevin Ball
Time
7 - 8.30pm
December 11 2020
Laing & Existentialism
R. D. Laing (1927-1989)
January 29 2021
Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995)
Vulnerability and Responsibility
February 26 2021
Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986)
Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980)
March 26 2021
Simone Weil (1909-1943)
Paying attention - Gravity and Grace
April 23 2021
Michel Foucault (1926-1984)
May 28 2021
Frantz Fanon (1925-1961)
Racism and Psychoanalysis
Free, Online, Zoom
PHILADELPHIA ASSOCIATION DISCUSSION GROUP
THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE
SPEAKER: KEVIN BALL
THE POLITICS OF THE COUPLE
Friday 15 March 2019
Doors open 6.45pm, group starts 7.15pm
Free entry, all welcome
Friday 22 March 2019
Doors open 6.45pm, group starts 7.15pm
Free entry, all welcome
SATURDAY DROP-IN
Weekly meeting beginning Saturday
November 28 2020 11am - 12.30
If you would like an opportunity to meet others and talk about issues which might be affecting you during the current pandemic, or as a consequence of the pandemic, you are welcome to come along to a Drop-in, hosted by PA Psychotherapists.
To access the zoom link please contact
office@philadelphia-association.org.uk
www.philadelphia-association.com
Philadelphia Association
19/12/15
Christmas Gathering
Food & Drink
Film Screenings
Discussions
Premier of the PA 50th Anniversary film by Tom Clatworthy
Animated documentary screening by Alex Widdowson
7-10pm
Saturday 19th December 2015
The Philadelphia Association
4 Marty's Yard
17 Hampstead High Street
NW3 1QW
PHILADELPHIA ASSOCIATION FILM GROUP
DARK NIGHTS OF THE SOUL
DOORS OPEN 6.45PM. FILM STARTS 7.00PM
FOLLOWED BY DISCUSSION. FREE ENTRY
MAD TO BE NORMAL
DIRECTED BY ROBERT MULLAN
FOLLOWED BY Q&A WITH THE DIRECTOR AND DISCUSSION
SUNDAY 23 JULY 2017, 10.00 A.M.
EVERYMAN CINEMA, HAMPSTEAD NW3 6TX
TICKETS (IN ADVANCE) £15
LIMITED NUMBER OF CONCESSIONS £7
TO BOOK PLEASE EMAIL:
OFFICE@PHILADELPHIA-ASSOCIATION.ORG.UK
The Philadelphia Association
50 years - a celebration
25th September - 4th October 2015

ASYLUM POLITICS.

text and photo by Rob White

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest depicts the act of escape as paradoxical and even a mystery. The.rowdy Randle McMurphy is in truth only half-hearted about running away. The hospital irritates and fascinates him equally: for all his defiance, he is more ensnared by the institution than at first appears. He is captivated. And this is the iron law of asylum politics: the environment is always more powerful than it seems. It calls the tune. The seeming Pied Piper and Lord of Misrule isn't so much a liberator as a puppet in a perverse institutional drama of brinkmanship and collusion. Chief Bromden (the novel's narrator) alone perceives that McMurphy is the least autonomous of all the patients, a follower used by the group not its leader:

We couldn't stop him because we were the ones making him do it. It wasn't the nurse that was forcing him, it was our need that was making him push himself slowly up from sitting, his big hands driving down on the leather chair arms, pushing him up, rising and standing like one of those moving-picture zombies, obeying orders beamed at him from forty masters. It was us that had been making him go on for weeks, keeping him standing long after his feet and legs had given out, weeks of making him wink and grin and laugh and go on with his act long after his humour had been parched dry between two electrodes.*

The ward is a performance space, theatre of projection and gladiatorial arena. McMurphy's combat with Nurse Ratched is a lethal game of provocation and retaliation which shows the assembled spectators that full-scale revolt isn't worth the trouble. In effect McMurphy is *not* a threat to the hospital regime: he serves rather to steady the system by bringing its iron law to light. His sacrificial fate unmasks the violence of asylum power sufficiently to convince everyone to stay within the limits of *safe* disobedience.

Everyone, that is, except Chief. Considered a hopeless, mindless case, he is the only one who eventually breaks the institutional grip. In the novel, he is also unusually sensitive to oppression of an overwhelming kind. When he was a boy he watched crooked businessmen cheat his tribe. Ever since then he has built upon the faith foundation of his ancestral traditions an esoteric theory of the world, incorporating what psychiatric jargon labels ideas of reference, which makes him both cautious and insightful. He believes that the hospital is just one branch of a mysterious conglomerate: "it's not just the Big Nurse by herself, but it's the whole Combine, the nation-wide Combine that's the really big force, and the nurse is just a high-ranking official for them."** The character of Chief suggests that contained in "mental illness" — even in the alarming, alien subjectivity termed schizophrenia — is the potential for true resistance wherever the background iron law applies.

A deep spiritual strength lies under Chief's muscular strength and it is the combination which enables him to get out. Throwing the supposedly unliftable tub-room control panel through the ward's reinforced window is only the fruition of his escape, not its entire expression. Without the years of waiting and silence which he calls being cagey, his pronounced and humble feeling of his own smallness, his love for McMurphy and understanding that his friend's downfall has ended any hope of companionship in resistance, his capacity ultimately to act without succumbing to the groupthink of masochistic ambivalence — to act in earnest, in full noncooperation with institutional power — without all of these elements and more, Chief's getaway would have been impossible. It might be said that it took him his whole life and all his strange thinking to be able to do what he did when the time came. And it is only by understanding how much else went into Chief's flight apart from muscular strength that any real lesson can be learned from Ken Kesey's great novel about what resistance and escape might mean in a world where the architecture of capture is no longer clearly visible.

* Ken Kesey, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1962; London: Penguin Classics, 2005), pp. 274–5
** Ibid., p. 164 5.

On Curative Reason: A Political Vignette

Iain Strong

I was having the time of my life; I was in the grip of an acute crisis. The small hours of March 8th, 2024 I was staying at my father's house. I had downed several cans of Stella and got to work on uncorking a bottle of red wine, which occupied a clumsy thirty minutes or so. I am ordinarily a teetotaller. I began to gulp directly from the bottle, then glanced at my phone, sensing another opportunity. Who would it be this time? Ah, why not. 'Sir, may I advise you to send an email to the address I provided you with?' insisted the receptionist at the White House, following my own insistence that she put me through to President Biden, immediately. He was mere minutes away from delivering the State of the Union Address. My father duly woke up, came downstairs, and confiscated the bottle from me. He wasn't amused. Perhaps I'd accomplished nothing more than a regression to thirteen years old.

About a year later, I wrote an email to my father. I felt obliged to apologise for my past behaviour and convey my gratitude for his support. At times, I wish I could realistically do the same with everyone I've harmed or upset or inconvenienced. Nothing ever seems to quite add up, though. Such is the quintessence of extreme mood disturbance, the kind I've been diagnosed with, oscillating between triumph and dismay, equally hollow and inauthentic in their respective ways.

Buoyed by relative lucidity and stability, I managed to articulate a question within that email that will structure this vignette: 'to what extent can anyone claim to prescribe a "good" or "healthy" existence?' My aim is to examine how we might arrive at a tentative reframing of our understanding of psychological distress by switching the polarities of emphasis on what might be qualitatively considered 'wrong' or 'deviant' in suffering against the inherent inadequacies of curative reason and desire. I will draw upon my own experiences to support my claims.

On both individual and collective levels, we have at best, a vague and flimsy conception of a good or healthy life. How can we expect ourselves to live according to principles we struggle to conceptualise? To be sure, this does not prevent us from trying to live 'up' to a complex array of intrinsic and extrinsic expectations. Frequently we find ourselves at the whim of hucksters and charlatans. Perhaps we are conscious that their remedial claims are fraudulent, but our stubborn beliefs prevail. What inheres is a curious will to subordinate ourselves to the learned, charismatic, and ultimately, powerful healer.

As a result, curative reason is violently dialectical. When the sick person submits to the healer, the healer gains control over the sick person, if not quite the sickness. Sickness becomes a *mode* of structuring a relation; any concept of health is only required to structure a crudely *negative* dialectic. In psychiatry, as in all other branches of medicine, the house always does and doesn't win, simultaneously. In the long run, both sufferer and healer are locked in a tailspin towards the inevitability of death. On either side of the equation, failure to acknowledge the failure of curative desire is a failure to live on good terms, with death or otherwise.

I spent two years in Canada during the early 2000s. While purportedly enrolled on a college program, I passed the bulk of my time roaming about on Greyhound buses and watching American television. Back then, Donald Trump was captivating viewers on *The Apprentice*. As a child of a police officer, and as a failed boarding school scholar, I had already fomented profound suspicion and resentment towards the powerful – and yes, I loathed Tony Blair and George W. Bush equally, too. I recall a conversation with an expat businessman. 'Trump's a con man'. '*Some* con man', came the reply, which seemed to encapsulate everything that was sketchy and unsettling about the phenomenon, unchecked success in fraud and confidence trickery as the ultimate American Dream.

In hindsight, the fundamental logic of Trump's *Apprentice* is viciously pornographic. How else to explain the frenzied mock-Machiavellian antics of uniformed corporate wannabes, desperate to placate a sadistic overlord who will in turn satisfy the demands of his audience by sternly aiming an index finger at the loser *du jour* and barking 'you're fired!' at them in a boardroom that is in fact a television studio? In one stroke, an obscene and fascistic eroto-thanatoid political ethos becomes actualised, somehow palatable once again. At night, viewers will dream about commanding a business empire from the top of a gold-plated skyscraper. By morning, they will resume their roles as mere cogs in the machine, even more anxious to please their line managers and maintain job security within cutthroat economic parameters.

In Adorno and Horkheimer's conception of Enlightenment what counts for progress is primarily defined by humanity's increasing capacity to immiserate, confine, or destroy other human beings. We might formulate a dialectic of Trumpism along similar lines, albeit with a twist of the old Marxist adage, as we struggle to determine whether tragedy has preceded farce, or if indeed both are simultaneously parading themselves around the Oval Office in some Janus faced manner. What we do know is that, within the space of two decades, we have proceeded from a pantomime of corporate power (the firing of people who, one guesses, weren't even formally employed), to a tragifarce of political power, in which the presidential index finger is poised to banish the unwelcome and unworthy – migrants, dissidents, minorities and impoverished and vulnerable groups of all

persuasions. In essence, anyone who hasn't lustily imbibed the Trumpian Kool-Aid.

We ought to look beyond Nietzsche here and examine a Sartrean rejoinder to nihilism, namely, nausea. A thought experiment, of sorts: what is our most accurate or relatable conception of health but the statement 'nothing's wrong?' Answer: it depends where the emphasis lies. Of course, a good Nietzschean may suggest that the concept of nothing, or a resultant belief in nothing, is inherently illogical and immoral. Human beings are equally privileged and condemned to perceive, regardless of our best intentions. Nothing *is* wrong, indeed, and what manifests in its stead is the embodied motion sickness of our ordinary lives as we traverse space and time. For this, there can be no great cure.

Trumpism is not so much a weaponisation of nihilism, as it is of nausea. Just look at the man, a grotesque caricature of Western virility, and look at the grotesque things he does, as though living proof that physiognomy is real. We might enquire, in mild empathy, 'does he *suffer*?' In superficial terms, Trump does not appear to suffer, much as Elon Musk does not appear to suffer. Their lives are hallmarked by unbridled *enjoyment* of wealth, influence, and outright power. Some semblances of hedonistic freedom, too. Who cares if such people are running everything into the ground? At least they're having a good time of it. Yes, they may share our mortality, but they do not suffer as we must suffer. Perhaps if we worship them ardently enough, we will be granted our salvation.

We require a carefully constructed theory of suffering in relation to our political subjectivities, one which takes appropriate account of our inability to attain complete health or some totalising form of consciousness – embodiment, too. That is not to say that we should take ourselves for granted or develop byzantine hierarchies of grievance. On the contrary, we should remain mindful of our agency and in particular our capacity to cultivate scepticism towards those who would claim to heal us, not least those whose trenchant disavowal of suffering comprises an alarming estrangement from truth. We should recognise that sickness inheres in a potentially immobilising dialectic – ultimately, between *people* and power differentials – and, when presented with such archaic prescriptive truisms as *mens sana in corpore sano*, we might reasonably substitute *in sanitate vanitas, in dolore verita*

The Cheese Grater

Andrew Royle

I once travelled to the South Coast of England

And stole a great object from the house of my artist father

He was sculptor, raising bodily forms upwards

Taking years and years to shape his touching art

He didn't touch me, but he gave me a piece that he had touched

And worked over,

That he kept in his line of sight for decades

Three figures: two female and one thin male, by the shore

On the edge of the land

There was nothing of me in it.

He wanted my mother and his new partner

He would have been happy with both

His ambition was to retire, to bow out

Is that not all our ambitions, all our anxieties

To enter into the great swarm of molecular continuity?

Nobody would miss it,

This object I stole,

I chose it carefully and emotionally

It was something we shared, before he died

It was great, but not great in the 'he's so great' sense

More grate as in the I want to crumble his phallic creations into bits sense

My anger is like mute steel

And you have put me through the mincer

I have nothing left to give, to grind, to destroy

So I took the object, the one that exceeds it all

The object lives because he does not.

It was inevitable

It came to pass

I feel no deep sorrow and do not give me your lousy ethics oh healer

I don't need your moral teaching, I am here to teach you

Of thievery

Of a destabilised truth

Of fuckery

Of a relational aesthetics giving way to objects

oriented to thingery

I took his object inside my place

Don't get excited analysts

Get out, have some fun

My parents did and so did I

My place has expanded – it's a gas!

Sin against the father, the mother, the child, the brother

You can repent after all, if that's your bag

You can tell all and lift the burden

But I choose to grate, I choose the great.

Painting by Laurie Fitzgerald

What Will Be, Will Be

Helen Hewitt

What will be, will be
What will be, will be
Tried to shape my own destiny
But what will be, will be
What will be, will be

Shaping a life under tyranny
Living a life for every eye to see
Running around for them
Or trying to flee
Every day spent just trying to be free

From the day you're born
Till the day you die
You better learn fast
You're not meant to fly
Just know your place
And show your face
When called to do so
Or feel the mace

Keep your head in a screen
Keep your mind in a dream
Cover your ears
When you hear the screams
Cover your eyes
When you see the crimes
Cover your mouths
When you tell the lies

You better run for cover
It's the lover of lovers
And I'm here to recruit
The best sisters and brothers
To build a team
To build a dream
To chant down Babylon
And sew the seams
To end the cages
And to end the tricks
And kill the illusions
And kick down the pricks
Who'd loan their own soul
To buy their own greed

The need to control
Combined with profligacy

Just what and who does it cost
To fund the one per cent?
Try them and fine them
It won't make a dent
So the wheels within wheels
And the dirt and the deals
Continue apace in the land of the blind
The one eyed man
Is king of that kind

But there's loads of us
And barely any of them
They know that's the danger
So they rig the game
So things stay the same
The same wrongs remain
And the people wonder why they feel the pain
Of a system designed to be not for their gain

But we'll have our cake
And we'll eat it too
When the zombies chance upon their Waterloo

And the walls that came tumbling yesterday
Will have crashed to the ground
By the end of the day
And we'll say
What the hell was that all about?
Did that ever need to happen
Why didn't we shout?

So bye, bye system
You're the ho we don't love
And my statement's
Endorsed by the Lord above
Cos I've got an objective
And my vision is Zion
Fighting battles with words
Hear me roar like a lion.

IMAGES BY NATALIE ASHWORTH

Emergence

A return to one's self, not to what was, but a transformation through what's been lived.

Type to enter text

In Pieces, In Place

Exploring personal fragmentation.

Title: In the quiet pool.

Exploring healing through introspection.

Angles Through Towards Blue
60cm x 60cm
by Alison Davies

I am not your scapegoat !

Alia Butt

As psychotherapists, we are largely preoccupied by interrelational dynamics. Many of us acknowledge the cocreated nature of our own identities, personalities and ways of being. We hold value in the suggestion that who we are is somewhat reliant on who we are with. We transform, learn and grow through our interactions with others. This is also true of our communities. The power of our species, one that separates us from others, is our social and connective capacity. Our progress is centred around our ability to communicate, delegate and organise and without these collective strategies we would be an entirely different species.

Sadly, the desire of a small amount of the population to hoard wealth and power has meant that the rest of the humanity suffers. We have been encouraged to live as individualists when we are experientially aware that this is not natural nor existentially beneficial to us. Public Health and education systems have been dismantled and devalued through marketisation and privatisation; central to the much of the world's social infrastructures are models of profit, at the cost of efficient and effective provision.

Nowadays, we are all kept busy in the race to survive. Much of our time and energy is focused on finding a way to pay for the privilege of living on Earth, a planet that is otherwise sufficiently resourced for all creatures that inhabit it. The drive for profit and power possessing the wealthiest and greediest in society, has led to disturbing levels of inequality, poverty, homelessness and sickness in almost all communities, near and far.

Yet, in times of struggle, we can see how human beings instinctively band together in order to maximise potential. This was particularly clear during the covid pandemic, when we suddenly changed much of how we organised society. Low paid workers were needed to continue working throughout the pandemic and were rightly (though briefly) recognised as providing the highest social value. Society survived through communities coming together and supporting each other, with a particular emphasis on helping those most vulnerable, to not only prevent suffering but to also prevent further destitution and sickness in the rest of the population. We saw the homeless housed immediately (though temporarily), demonstrating how easy it would be to make the lives of some of the most disadvantaged among us more liveable, should that be a priority of any kind.

Since then, in Britain, levels of inequality have continued to increase exponentially, with no indication of this being addressed. In fact, the government continues to champion 'austerity' and cuts to the public sector which impact the most economically vulnerable in society, in order to continue lining the pockets of those who need it least - the already obscenely wealthy. The rest of us are busy trying to survive, put food on the table, heat and light up our homes and keep our children in education. We have no time for others; we are so busy trying to get by, we barely have time for ourselves.

We have been encouraged to move away from supporting each other, through modern relations of production and socialisation. But it is not only individuals and families that are at war with each other battling for

resources, low paid work and a semblance of power in our own lives. This is very much the case when we look at the bigger picture. It is hard to deny we are currently living at a time with particularly frightening international relationships. The global political situation is strained, scary and unsettling - almost everyone experiences significant levels of anxiety, whether we pay attention to what is going on in the wider world or not. Though on one level, what we are experiencing - impending nuclear war, Western Imperialist attacks on the Middle East and other parts of the world, state mandated-violations of human rights all over the world - is shockingly inhumane and existentially frightening, it is nothing particularly new.

Why is this relevant to us?

As psychotherapists, much of our work is focused around making things clearer. We tend to move toward acknowledging the experience of those we work with and allowing that experience to be genuinely considered and made sense of. Acknowledgment of our experience is important and something we practice in therapy - we aim to provide a space where patterns of relating and behaviour that are preventing us from feeling comfortable and lovable can be recognised, acknowledged and learned from.

Many of society's problems around power, inequality, oppression and control are as old as time itself. There is a clear reason and advantage for those in power to refuse to acknowledge the issues that allow for an unfair and unsustainable society. However, this denial of reality is reflected in swathes of the population, including those who are directly impacted by failing economic policies. Instead, we see blame and disdain being passed to those who are even less fortunate and even more exploited en masse. We are now used to the various political parties waxing lyrical about migrants and the burden they place on resources, though when we look at the statistics, we see that migrants place a relatively small strain on public spending. On the other hand, tax evasion and avoidance from the wealthiest in society is a huge issue that continues to exacerbate inequality and struggle for the rest of us, particularly the most economically vulnerable.

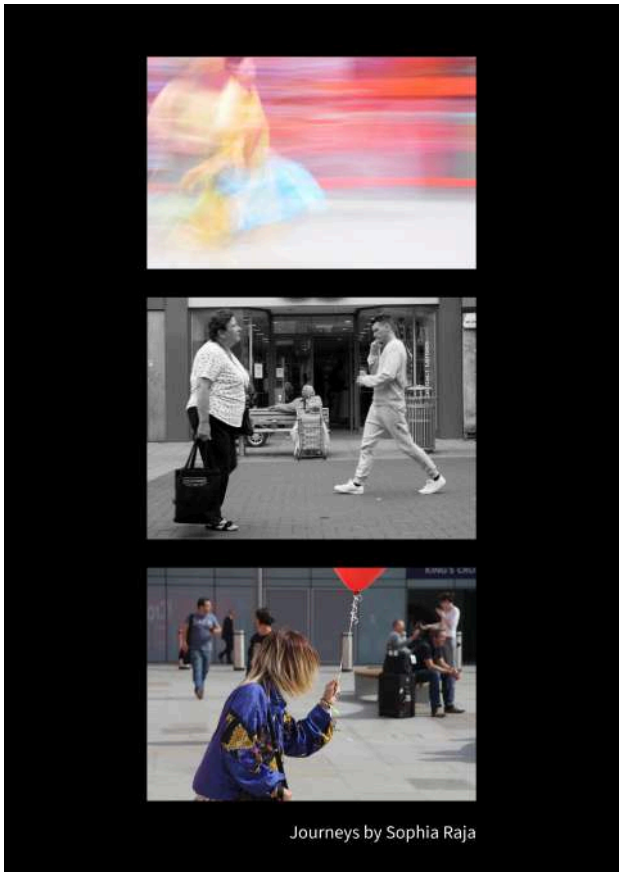
We are used to women's health and safety being so dangerously undermined that the-dehumanisation of women and girls has become hypernormalised. We have still not managed to challenge the epidemic of male violence towards women and girls, with men continuing to kill a woman every three days in the U.K.; erectile dysfunction has 5 times as much research than premenstrual syndrome, which affects 90% of women; girls continue to struggle to be taken seriously despite outperforming boys in education systems, and now face a new wave of familiar misogyny which is rolled out through social media and general popular culture. It is sadly unsurprising to read in a report by the UN that 90% of people globally undermine women.

The device of scapegoating continues to be utilised by those who hold more power in society, to divide and control those who are left picking up the slack while trying to make sense of their experience. Laing, amongst others, highlighted a phenomenon of scapegoating that was particular to dysfunctional families, in which an individual is essentially chosen to hold and grieve the troubles of the family, subsequently falling into sickness. It is not difficult to notice how wider societal dynamics demonstrate this act of scapegoating and how this plays

out in smaller groups within society as well as being internalised by individuals.

In a way, I am suggesting that as psychotherapists, we have a responsibility to acknowledge these inconsistencies in society and the danger associated with replicating them in our communities and groups as they will always adversely impact those who are most systemically disadvantaged. Openly acknowledging these inconsistencies with an aim to prevent replicating them was certainly something that those who set up the Philadelphia Association 60 years ago were unable to do. We continue violence by refusing to acknowledge someone's perspective or listening to what they have to say, particularly individuals or groups that have been scapegoated. Whether it is a drive to marketise the care we provide others, or the way we neglect the experience and value of women or other minority groups, we are still failing to learn from the obvious.

The solutions have always been the same, but the will to act in the knowledge of what we might be doing wrong is yet to be observed.



Going Astray

Robbie Lockwood

> ‘If psychoanalysis was seen to be compatible with traditional religious belief it would lose both its scientific credibility and its apparent originality. But one is only absolutely original, of course, until one is found out.’
> Adam Phillips[1]

Occasionally – and it is an occasion – the Philadelphia Association’s (PA) 50th anniversary bookmark falls from a book I’d forgotten about, the completion of which has been avoided. I used to take for granted that I’d stopped reading a book for boredom. Over the last ten years or so this bookmark has taught me otherwise; more often than not I’d return to a page with a line that I’ve not stopped thinking about, words that stopped me in my tracks; stopping reading for going on thinking, ripening, or lying fallow. Or savouring, for just a moment there I was complete and so the book mustn’t be.

The bookmark has an image of R. D. Laing along with the quote:

> ‘There is a great deal of pain in life and perhaps the only pain that can be avoided.
> is the pain that comes from trying to avoid pain.’

Repetition is the aphorism’s playfulness, four times pain leads the way in its mission to be not avoided. Paradoxically, by repeating like a tongue twister, it begins to slacken pain’s smart – so-called semantic satiation. Aphorisms are an art of pithy exaggeration, like a joke, they’re not to be taken literally but literarily as it were. Literarily as in R. P. Blackmur’s title, language as gesture (Winnicott would add the modifier ‘spontaneous’ as a minimum for making the act therapeutic). In the gesture of film, the aphorism works like Charlie Chaplin’s dance in Hitler drag.

This aphorism’s origin also avoids being easily found (not a disaster); perhaps you know where, but other than popular internet memes I cannot find it published in any of Laing’s books – perhaps he was known to speak it aloud?

It doesn’t, however, pain too much to find the aphorism from which it was adapted. It is Kafka that Laing quotes for an epigram to chapter 5 of The Divided Self:

> ‘You can hold yourself back from the sufferings of the world, this is something you are free to do and is in accord with your nature, but perhaps precisely this holding back is the only suffering that you might be able to avoid.’[2]

One of the best things about Laing's book are the quotations.[3] The longest and bravest goes to Lionel Trilling about Kafka, from a chapter on Keats. Bravest because so brilliantly written it makes you want to bookmark Laing to go and read Trilling, who's book happens to be called The Opposing Self, and seems to be able to capture in a few sentences, comparing Shakespeare and Keats to Kafka, everything that Laing has to say about his ungainly term *ontological insecurity*. Is it a kind of insecurity, what Robin Cooper will call a lack of nerve, that pushes psychoanalysts to coin such diagnostic extravagances and diagrams? Kafka, for Trilling, invents characters who cannot take anything for granted, they have no common ground.

Trilling quotes from Keats' letters that '[Coleridge] will never come to a truth so long as he lives; because he is always trying at it.'[4] This seems to me very close to what Robin Cooper uses Wittgenstein to say, to say something about a potential philosophical common ground at the PA. But first, back to Kafka's aphorism.

You can't avoid, you can only hold back – indeed presumably it's very difficult not to hold back, seeing as holding back accords with your nature. You are free to act in accord with your nature, and perhaps you are free not to, in so doing avoiding further self-created suffering… perhaps. Suffering the world is unavoidable, suffering yourself perhaps less so. We may perhaps suffer ourselves less when relinquishing our holding back from the suffering world. There is some optimism for the self smuggled in here.

The first thing you might notice, along with its more quotable concision, is that the aphorism attributed to Laing has substituted key terms; life for world; avoided for hold back; and pain for suffering – the last of which takes Kafka's aphorism head on, it conspicuously avoids suffering. Suffering is something we bear, pain is inflicted, and we suffer our pains. Suffering perhaps casts a wider net and lends itself more naturally to world.

Avoiding the world's suffering, it avoids the world. The "Laing" quote is perhaps more in step with a kind of individualism that Kafka's is free from. Kafka's is a drama about an individual's resistance to the world's suffering, resistance to the world because it suffers, which inflicts unique suffering on the so-called self – if "Laing's" cuts its nose to spite its face, Kafka's spites the world thereby cutting its face.

It is to Heidegger's phrase *being-in-the-world* that Robin Cooper, in an essay written for the occasion of the PA's 30th anniversary, wondered what we might take for granted at the PA, wondered too if he might be taking this fact for granted. Recently I read again a comment from Heidegger from the Zollikon Seminars that dreaming is also a form of being-in-the-world, albeit a different being-in-the-world to waking life. A helpful clarification that perhaps makes it less easy to take for granted what it means to be-in-the-world; waking world is no more solely "out there" than dream world is merely "in here".

Beginning with equivocation as to whether he has the right to take for granted some kind of 'common ground' about the PA's philosophy, Cooper ends with some critical comments about psychoanalytic therapeutic communities (in the guise of Tom Main who apparently coined the term):

> ‘We witness a failure of nerve. And whilst it would be churlish not to acknowledge the wide diversity of enterprises which come under the heading of therapeutic community, I think that this sort of failure of nerve is typical.’[5]

Robin Cooper was too tactful to say it explicitly, but his unequivocal criticism about the typical therapeutic community, acts as a coda to be read back to the beginning of his essay, towards his equivocal question for the PA, have we too already lost our nerve? The ‘common ground’ for Cooper is a philosophy that hasn’t lost its nerve, which risks becoming an institution that has. What is implied by this philosophical nerve? Cooper quotes Wittgenstein sounding very much like Keats:

> ‘The truth can be spoken only by someone who is at home in it; not by someone who still lives in falsehood and reaches out from falsehood towards truth on just one occasion.’[6]

While it’s a little too pious for my tastes I don’t disagree with it. It is in the spirit of Kierkegaard’s quip that turning up regularly and on time for Sunday service is not the making of a good Christian; it’s too easy, too much learning to follow a rule, not enough reckoning. The implication from Cooper is that we psychotherapists perhaps too often reach out from falsehood when we make an interpretation or write a paper. In English perhaps honesty rings a clearer and wider resonance than truth, but regardless, Keats and Wittgenstein (and Kafka) are canny in their observation about the paradox of overreaching.

I would have first seen the memorial plaque for Robin Cooper on the stairs at Marty’s Yard around the time of the PA’s 50th anniversary. I was surprised to read on the plaque such an apparently sincere quotation from Beckett:

> 'A bright light is not necessary, a taper is all one needs to live in strangeness, if it faithfully burns.'

This quotation moved me to read the trilogy of novels from which it belongs during my training. I had first known of Beckett when young: dragging my heals between offering and actually realising a cup of tea for us both, my dad had the habit of mock-complaining, *it’s like waiting for Godot ‘round here!* He couldn’t have told me anything else about the play of course. I was surprised that Beckett had written a novel at all, thinking him solely a playwright. Do the novels hold their nerve? They certainly live in strangeness. I take it as some of my fondest hours of reading, traipsing home to Hackney after the training, or from my own therapy, on the platform with an inevitably late or cancelled train, tickled by the trilogy, thinking *it’s a shame that being intimidated by how clever it is apparently, people seem to have forgotten how funny it is actually*.

Bleakly funny it is actually and hard to find any sincerity burning through, other than in its existing at all it is a kind of optimism for what more literature could be. In citing only this section from Malone Dies, it's not so much optimism smuggled in, as optimism smuggled out; it can only be read optimistically by being displaced from its surroundings. It is within our rights to wrench a quote from its home, its world within the novel, it is perhaps in accord with our nature to do so…

Sincerely put, Beckett is saying that a bright light is, like a searchlight, not only unnecessary but overreaching. Of course we can't take for granted who if anyone wants to live in strangeness, but a taper, a candle, is necessary not to be simply in the dark, and a bright light makes night too much like day. However, the religious connotations are hard to take at face value from someone like Beckett, and so a satirical reading must be included with the sincere. Beckett may be satirizing a philosophy of strangeness, the philosopher who creeps about with a taper in the dark, searching for strangeness – after all if anyone could apprehend living in strangeness in broad daylight it was Beckett.

Coming back to Cooper's essay from the occasion of the PA's 30th anniversary, reading it at this time, the PA's 60th, I was moved to find at the very end these lines of Beckett's, but attributed to a PA resident, Keith Musgrove – that is, not misquoting him, but that Musgrove cited Beckett as an epigraph for his own writing for the PA's 25th anniversary. And so it must be acknowledged that smuggling something good for us out of the mess we find ourselves in, like avoidance, can be one of the best things we can do for ourselves.
Sincerely.

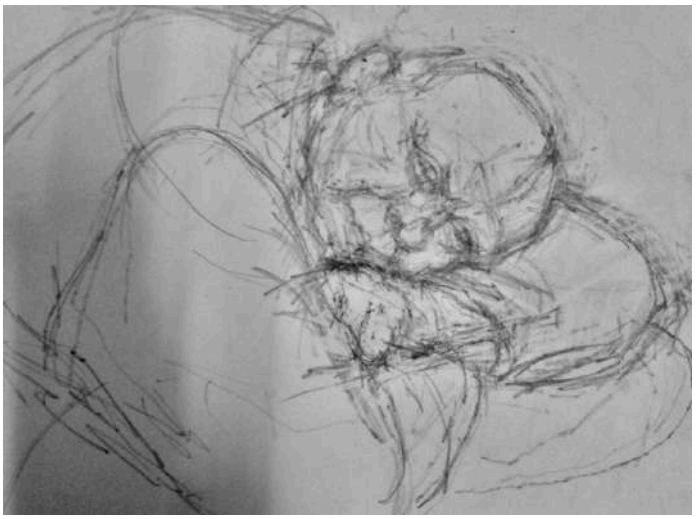
Coda:

> '– And don't you think that "I love you," by itself, is already a citation?
> Listen to Valery: "To say to anyone *I love you* is to recite a lesson. It was never invented!" Recitation for citation, you might have risked that. You might have risked playing at losing the distance of discourse.'
> Jean-Luc Nancy[7]

i https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v15/n05/adam-phillips/i-feel-guilty
ii Laing quotes from a translation I do not have, mine is found here and is slightly different:
Franz Kafka*, The Zürau Aphorisms*, trans. Michael Hoffman, (London: Harvill Secker, 2006), p. 102
iii The Divided Self itself is an unacknowledged quotation of William James, taken from one of James' Gifford Lectures of that title in Edinburgh from 1901-1902. Like James' lectures (collected in The Variety of Religious Experiences)
iv Lionel Trilling, *The Opposing Self*, (California: Harcourt, 1979), p. 30
v Robin Cooper, What we take for granted, in, Paul Gordon and Rosalind Mayo, *Between Psychotherapy and Philosophy,* (London: Whurr, 2004), p14
vi Ibid, p. 5.
vii Jean-Luc Nancy, Shattered Love, in, *The Inoperative Community*, (London: University of Minnesota, 1991)p.108

The London Postman

Peter Dixon



Should Psychotherapy start with the Individual: Psycho, psycho-socio, or socio-psycho?

Del Loewenthal

Are most Psychotherapists Thatcherites?

'. . .there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbours'. (Thatcher, 1987)

Certainly, very few would see themselves as Marxists, though at least some might agree with:

'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.' (Marx, 1970, p. 21)

Regarding 'the politics of involvement' most psychotherapists do seem to focus on 'individualism', as in the above 'There are individual men and women', which some describe as starting with our psycho 'inner world' rather than a socio 'outer world'. This is despite those such as the existential psychoanalytic psychotherapist/ psychiatrist R.D. Laing writing:

'The situation here described is impossible to see by studying the different people in it singly. The social system, not single individuals extrapolated from it, must be the object of study.' (Laing, 1967, p. 79)

For Laing, 'The situation here described' was 'when one person comes to be regarded as schizophrenic' (Laing, 1967, p. 79). But could the social system also be fundamental to our therapeutic work with clients/patients in general? (Interestingly, Laing seems better known these days in family, rather than individual, therapy).

Again, Mearns and Thorne in their seminal handbook on the humanist CarlRogers' person-centred approach are in some ways similarly critical for whilst they elsewhere enthusiastically endorse Rogers, they write:
' . . . in terms of Rogers' theory, the defensive and judgemental position in relation to social influence inhibited its development . . . '. (Mearns & Thorne, 2007, p. 23)

Such calls for us as psychotherapists to be more socially aware seem far from abating. For example, recently published, there is Cooper (2023) *Psychology at the Heart of Social Change: Developing a Progressive Vision for Society* and Hinshelwood's (2024) *Unconscious Politics: Alienation, Social Science and Psychoanalysis.*
I have also attempted to explore some of the effects of culture on our work, for example, Exploring *Transcultural Histories of Psychotherapies* (Shamdasani & Loewenthal, 2021) *Diversity, Inclusion and Culture Wars in Psychotherapy* (Loewenthal, 2024).

Yet, has anything significantly changed in practice for the majority of psychotherapists/psychological therapists? This is despite such organisations as:*Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility (https://www.facebook.com/PCSocResp/)* having been formed many years ago; and a long history of psycho-social as well as anthropological approaches to psychotherapy. I have also been particularly interested for psychotherapists, in working with their clients, considering Levinas
(1961) 'our responsibility for others' responsibility' with his putting the other first' enabling a decentring of the self. Yet, aside perhaps from some family and systemic therapists (and such topics as ecology appearing in some psychotherapy training), why have the social dimensions never really taken off in one-to-one therapy? We do have group psychotherapy, but we don't have community psychotherapy – why not? How many of us can give case histories where our interventions have been informed by societal perspectives?

As a consequence:
Is psychotherapy primarily in danger of just enabling our clients/patients to tell another narrative - too often at the expense of others, the world, and ultimately themselves?

I would therefore like to explore, drawing on Gaitanidis (2015) and particularly Brooks (2016), how as psychotherapists we might avoid, or be made to avoid, thinking more societally.

'A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, and his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress'. (Benjamin, 1968 in Gaitanidis, 2015; Brooks, 2016).

Are we therefore conditioned to think that there are only isolated disasters, blips that stop us 'making progress' in 'moving forward'? And, can we really get away from, let alone help facilitate, the catastrophic effect of history only being written by the victors?

Do you give any credence to the statement:
"There is a direct correlation between a society's (and its interrelated political, economic, social and cultural processes) ability to critique its failures and for the individuals within that society to mourn. It is now generally accepted amongst historians of collective memory that collective and individual memories are social constructions . . . and that what is remembered is dominated by the discourses created by 'elites and counter-elites' of a society who advance their agendas through these processes (Lebow, Kansteiner & Fogu 2006 in Brooks, 2016)?

For as Brooks (2016) then retorts:

‘Madness ensues when an individual’s experience of loss or the effects of absence is disconnected from the spirit of mainstream public discourse in the polity, the media, literature, academia and education’. (including psycho- analytic institutes!).

This madness can also come about through our psychotherapeutic concepts for as Adorno argues in the face of the aforementioned ‘history only being written by the victors’:

‘Objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder; they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy’. (Adorno (1973[1966], pp. 5-10 in Brooks, 2016

So what are, if any, the social roots to psychotherapy?

For some, the social roots of psychotherapy might be seen to start with Hegel at the beginning of the nineteenth century bringing history and society to philosophy as a dynamic changing fundamental. This was when social change was taking place with the industrial revolution. If so, then how has psychotherapy lost its social roots? What happens to our consciousness and could the notion of ideology help? In order to start to examine such questions, I would like to briefly consider what happened to the social roots of Lacan, currently the most famous post Freudian.

Lacan, along with Aron, Bachelard, Bataille, de Beauvoir, Breton, Levinas, Marcel, Merleau Ponty, and Sartre attended the famous lectures by Alexander Kojeve in the1920s and 1930s on Hegel. At one time, Lacan was so steeped in Hegel and Marx that his famous seminars were organised by the Marxist, Althusser (who saw ideology as essentially practical). But as Lacan developed his ideas, he can be seen to become more influenced by the individual perspectives of Heidegger. Hence, Lacan took us away from the Marxism of Althusser. But Lacan then did give us ‘the real’ where we are faced with an absence of putting it into words or even imagining it. Yet here with Lacan it appears we might again consider not only inner but outer forces. Lacan refers to the emptiness at the centre of the real as being neither exterior nor intimate, but both as ‘extimacy’ (Lacan, 1992, p. 130, 139 in Brooks, 2016). As we can never directly access this place that is empty, we are continually existentially plagued by a margin of discontent. But, unlike loss, there is no working through with absence.

So Lacan appears to potentially open up societal perspectives, but does he? Similarly, we could take, for example, the humanism of Rogers with the therapist enabling the client to mobilise their own resources to help themselves. But, there we are in that Roosevelt era of the New Deal of ‘help out rather than hand out’. This nimbly avoids raising any questions about the redistribution of wealth; however, it would appear to simultaneously stress the importance of the right environment. Indeed, could the same even be said of Winnicott’s (1990) ‘facilitating environment’?

Ideology, radical negativity and subjectification

So is:
'Each of us is a psychic Petri dish containing what is estranged from real world history in our everyday social discourses'.? (Brooks, 2016)

Does:
'Ideology (including psychoanalytic theory) serves to maintain a certain distance from collective or individual encounters with radical negativity in order to avoid a kind of constitutive madness that is fundamental to subjectification'? (Brooks, 2016)

Here are two more concepts 'radical/negative dialectics' and 'subjectification' and I hope you will bear with me whilst I attempt briefly to unpack them. 'Negative dialectics, in contrast to Hegel's dialectic 'thesis, antithesis, synthesis' which assumes over time that the negative will become positive, comes from Adorno:

'Negative dialectics is a phrase that flouts tradition. As early as Plato, dialectics meant to achieve something positive by means of negation.This book seeks to free dialectics from such affirmative traits'. (Adorno, 1973)

Thus, 'Negative dialectics rejects the idea of a final synthesis or reconciliation.

The other notion 'subjectification' was developed by Foucault and subsequently Butler:

'The more a practice is mastered, the more fully subjection is achieved. Submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and it is this paradoxical simultaneity that constitutes the ambivalence of subjection. Where one might expect submission to consist in a yielding to an externally imposed dominant order, and to be marked by a loss of control and mastery, it is paradoxically marked by mastery itself the lived simultaneity of submission as mastery, and mastery as submission, is the condition of possibility for the subject itself.' (Butler, 1995, pp. 45–46)

The great danger is that unless we can achieve subjectification by not thinking that we can incorporate everything into something progressively good:

What is not conceived (uncritically held) becomes estranged in the individual and remains other to the utopian gaze and vulnerable to societal processes of elimination (genocide, ethnic cleansing, exile), marginalisation (of otherness – queer, disabled, etc.) and or disempowerment (slavery). (Shuster, 2010, p. 231 in Brooks, 2016)

Yet is it then too easy for psychotherapists/psychological therapists to consider they give a priority to diversity and inclusion by ignoring those such as Shuster and only at best in practice paying lip service to anything beyond individualism?

What is progress in psychotherapy?

Perhaps one of the important related questions raised is: What is progress in psychotherapy? Perhaps, we could start at least by re-examining the apparently individualistic, psychological, sometimes drug company inspired, measurements such GAD7, PQH9, CORE, etc. However, if the above sounds too much questioning our ideology ('Reds under the couch!' A naming labelling device used to associate societal/ community perspectives with failed totalitarian communism) then could we at least replace Adorno's 'Negative Dialectics' with Keats 'Negative Capability'?

'Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertain- ties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'. (Keats, 1899).

Such negative capability might take us beyond ourselves but with the danger of only changing, but not diminishing, an individual perspective.

Otherwise, regarding an answer to 'What is regarded as progress in Psychotherapy' and following Rozmarin (2011):

Is one possibility the extent to which we can work through not only our own individual constrictions but those of our family's and society's brought about by our and their unthinkable violence, present and past, to others, animals and our planet. For isn't it through our, and our ancestors', annihilating actions that we have come to exist?

Psychotherapy was at least once thought of as a place where a conversation could take place which wasn't possible elsewhere. Doesn't this require psychotherapists to be able to be in and outside ordinary socialisation? Perhaps it requires the psychotherapist to know from the outset that 'there is such a thing as society'; and, it is not an add-on to our various 'Psycho' approaches of individualism. Perhaps, we will always return to individualism if we start with 'Psycho' even with psychosocial approaches. Instead, perhaps we first need to start with the 'Socio' and only then the 'Psycho'.

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Collage by Pierre-Yves Rahari-Jacobs

Commodification of the Jester, the Saint, and the Human Experience

Alexander Niculescu

Should we know what compromises have been made on our behalf?
Is there a moral responsibility to maintain agency and self-awareness?
Are artificial constructs really to blame for all this, or has it always been this way?

While psychoanalysis traditionally focuses on gathering and integrating fragmented internal objects into cohesive wholes, it does not fully address the external pressures of our hyper technologised society. Here, roles and functions are no longer embodied—they are projected back onto us through media, advertising, and cultural production.

The Saint: The Cult of Perfection

Seeing and projecting goodness onto deities, exemplaries, or role models has been modernised. Influencers and media personalities have replaced the saint archetype, perpetuating unattainable ideals of beauty, morality, and success. Through filters, steroids, and curated opulence, these figures distort our sense of self-worth. Worshiping these synthetic saints chisels away at our psychosocial abilities, alienating us from genuine connection and growth.

Yet, this commodification did not appear out of nowhere. These figures are the heirs to religious iconography and idealisation, merely replacing stained glass and divinity with Photoshop and product sponsorships.

If I were to draw parallels, imagine a potter in the 1500s named Guy who has a realistic drawing of a saint in his pocket, drawn by a master painter, who made the icon to Guy's likeness. A picture of a saint that looks like Guy but holier, younger, healthier, and kinder. And every time he would feel pain in his arthritic hands from

mixing clay or remember his brother who died of an unknown illness, Guy would press his hand against the icon in his pocket. Whenever his hands were clean, he would take this image out of his pocket and stare at it, the incessant need to see the good guy - The Guy he could never be during such moments of despair.

Media and Emotional Displacement

Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* foresaw a society where media characters replace genuine human relationships. Today, sitcoms, reality shows, and online personas have become emotional surrogates. We sit between Phoebe and Joey, laughing with the cast of Friends, waiting for the laugh track to confirm our feelings.

Can we regard this occurrence as a displacement of genuine emotion?
Do we forget what it feels like to cry from laughter? Do we forget the stomach cramps from laughing too hard? -- And does it weaken our psychic muscles, leaving us depraved for a dopamine hit of diluted representations of emotions?

Should it matter how synthetic fear, love, or humour seem in contrast to authentic emotional experiences?

The Problem of Synthetic Emotions

There's this TV drama series called *Octopus Games*. In it, people are killed when they fail objectives.
My friend and I watched a reality TV reenactment of this show. In this reenactment, people were not killed, nor was their pretend death meant to mimic a real-life death as it would in the actual drama.

Somewhat humorously, contestants melodramatically flail their arms and collapse dead when they fail objectives.

However, the tension in the scenes, the music, and the memory or anticipation of what happened in the actual show are fresh in my friend's psyche - he becomes increasingly irritable and tepid. In a very removed or uninterested manner, he exclaims, *"Oh wow, I'm super scared now; this is tense."*

I sat and thought, ' My, I can't understand what he's experiencing at all, but this would make a great start to a story.'

Would I feel a similar sense of existential dread - if I were a caveman returning from a hunt? And in the cave, I see our cave historian painting a wooly mammoth. And I see our tribes' coward - Urf. Urf is too scared to leave the cave and weak to hunt. Yet I see Urf flinch and cower when he sees the crude drawing of a wooly mammoth. And my prehistoric self winces and thinks, *'That's not even what mammoths look like. How can Urf be so scared? Surely our society is doomed!'*

Proposed Solutions

What if we had Media Warning Labels:
Like food or medication warnings.
Warning: *"This show may evoke a strong synthetic fear response, potentially weakening emotional resilience in some viewers."*

Could we have Therapeutic Integration?
Where healthcare professionals include media consumption habits in evaluations and patient intake questionnaires. Perhaps, at this point in space-time, belief systems are ingrained in media consumption patterns.

Does intentional Consumption Exist?
Encourage individuals to consciously engage and question synthetic experiences, for instance, through therapeutic or Socratic dialogue. Encourage teachers to ask young kids if they know why they like to shoot enemies in games like Tent-night or doom-scroll apps like TimTom.

And of course, just as eating in moderation is the bane of existence for the obese, Going outside without a phone and touching Grass is probably the antichrist of modernity.
Our trivial antidote to most sensory deprivation or existential, hyperreality problems...

Conclusion
Does the commodification of roles like the jester or the saint reflect a broader detachment from authentic experiences?

Does it matter whether or not we lose the ability to wear the personas ourselves?

Should we strive for greater awareness?
Would this nurture emotional depth and create intentional symbolic pathways between our inner and external worlds?

Ultimately, the solution lies in recognising the synthetic for what it is—a tool, not a replacement for reality—and engaging with it on our terms. Doing so creates space for intentional consumption, self-awareness, and, ultimately, a deeper connection to the human experience.

To paraphrase Shrek -
'Ogres are like Onions.'
And just because something is or has a layer
doesn't mean it must be peeled.

Art Therapy Doodles

Laurie Fitzgerald

For the past year my creative practice has been undergoing a shift in focus and execution. For a long time my ways of making images was to sit with an emotion or concept that had been emerging in my life and from this meditation an image would come to me. Not always but usually fully formed, and the work was then to bring that image into reality on a canvas. Using the female form, nature and colour as my tools.

Now this was not always so clear cut - sometimes the image would be more of a sense and in the making process new decisions or directions would emerge - the background colour of a part of the composition or the skin tone of a subject, a technique I saw and wanted to try for example. Sometimes works would flow unhindered but often I would get stuck at each juncture waiting for that inspiration on a decision to come once again.

Recently I have found it incredibly hard to access this way of making art. As I have reflected on the ways it allows me to distance myself from these feelings, to beautify them, to make figurative, concrete, "real" and bind them in a sense of knowingness and certainty. But something shifted and I have a sense of not being able to go back to some way of doing things as before. It has been amongst many things frustrating and scary.

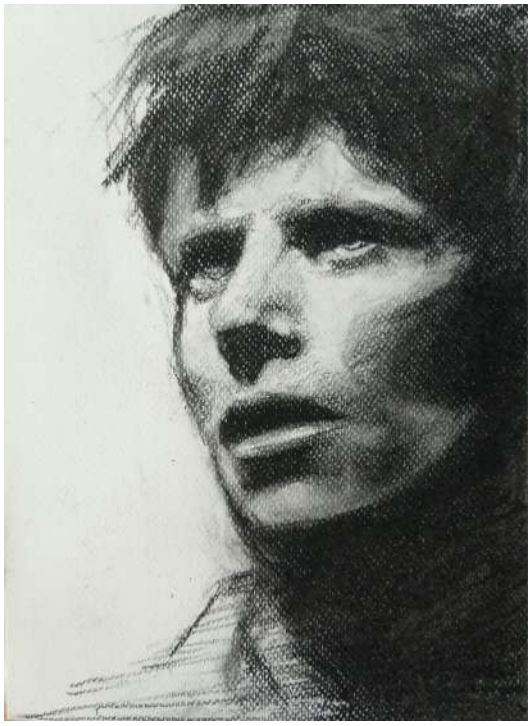
Because what next? I had no idea.

But what has emerged from this limbo of artistic practice has been these, referred to often as my "Art Therapy doodles". Working in water colour, the first instinct here was to decentre "pre-forming an image", through both composition and subject; simply starting with whatever colour or mark I felt drawn first to make and allow the thread of an idea to emerge as it wanted. Sometimes these would be more abstract, more about the feel of making a mark sometimes a line or shape would become something more recognisable.
I notice when I would be feeling most challenged more refined and controlled images would emerge, This sense of order feels very soothing to me. But when feeling more ... Or something else.... I could play with a loss of control more freely. Allowing marks, words, pictures emerge as it felt right to. Allowing things to not be "well done" or technical but more present, more relaxed maybe.

This practice has been difficult to share, and for a long time I haven't even considered it "ART" and I know it's not technically art therapy in the traditional sense. But recently I have grown a respect for what this way of making asks of me. To let go of a certain "refined-ness" and "realism" to feel amateurish, childlike, and to let my subconscious say something of it's self with far less interference from other parts of my mind.
Before painting felt like a moment of inspiration followed by a long process of tinkering and re-packaging before completion and sharing online. With these it feels like far more a process of discovery in which I cannot fully control the outcome, sitting with whatever comes of that, and then flipping a new page.

I have a sense of what may come next - can I take this experience onto canvases; developing new ways of painting with old mediums, expanding it off of these small journal pages and maybe out into my life?
It's uncertain work but I am feeling a call to do it. And I am intrigued if not a little terrified of what this next chapter of creativity may bring.

Here II (2024) By Nawaf Alkhalifa
Medium: Coloured pencil and lead on slate board
Dimensions :(26 x 18.7cm)



Drawings from The Grove

Eileen Ly

In the house of my (absent) fathers

Kit Zinovieff

Today I had a session with someone who was wearing a PA ring. A ring for his pa, his father, who is dead. The PA - the dad. Funny! I thought, to not have thought of that association before.

What I have thought of before is that lots of us who find ourselves at and around the PA have complicated relationships with our fathers. Of course, who doesn't! And yet. The charismatic figurehead of Laing and his band of brothers is around the house, in pictures, in stories, in myth. And it attracts. My dad was a charismatic bastard too, and he was also absent. Maybe Laing was famous for his presence, 'once upon a time'.

Apparently the PA training is unusual in attracting a higher proportion of men than women than other trainings do. Perhaps I am here because of my masculinity. The thing that is striking to me about Andrea's introduction to the 60th publication is her acknowledgment of the many women who have been involved in the PA, often less credited or memorialised than the men. We can add to that the gays and the lesbians. When I hear stories about this organisation getting to where it has got to they are often about who isn't here any more and the many who have left for many reasons.

So, here's to all of us! And our mothers, and our fathers too. Absent and present, scrunching our faces up with the tools of our masters' houses clenched in our fists.

In the House of My Father
1996/1997 Donald Rodney

Beginnings

ROBIN COOPER, with STEVEN GANS, J.M. HEATON, HAYA OAKLEY and PAUL ZEAL

"...I have set before thee an open door, and no. man can shut it."

- Revelation 3:8

"It is our concern that [the] households be asylums, sanctuaries, and places.of hospitality.

Philadelphia Association leaflet, c. 1976

The PHILADELPHIA ASSOCIATION, founded in 1965 as a charity, took as its objective the relief of mental illness of all descriptions, in particular schizophrenia. Its first Report, however, four years later, emphasised that these aims had been set out in terms appropriate to the association's formal existence as a charity, and outside these constraints it became possible to state a more radical intention: 'We aim to change the way the "facts" of "mental health" and "mental illness" are seen.'

The original members of the Philadelphia Association were a diverse group of forward-looking individuals, all with some organic connection to one another, and all with strong feelings about mental-health issues. One could almost speak of a yeast formation. Some were radical intellectuals or writers, some from the helping professions, some artists. There was Raymond Blake, a psychotherapist and group analyst; Sidney Briskin, a social worker; Joan Cunnold, an artist; Clancy Sigal, the expatriate American writer and political radical; the psychiatrists David Cooper and Aaron Esterson; and the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst R. D. Laing.

Then there was a formal group of advisers, made up of people already prominent in their own field, who included Dr Maxwell Jones and Dr Tom Main, both significant figures within the emerging 'therapeutic community' movement; Dr Jock Sutherland, Medical Director of the Tavistock Clinic; Marie Jahoda, later to be Professor of Sociology at Sussex University; and Professor Eric Trist, a founder member of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. Undeniably, however, the two people most central to the founding of the Philadelphia Association were R. D. Laing and the late David Cooper. And of these it is the name of R. D. Laing with which the Philadelphia Association is most indissolubly linked.

R. D. Laing was born in Glasgow in 1928, and subsequently took his medical degree there. Artaud, Hegel, Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger were then, as they would be today, unusual reading for a medical student; at any rate they were powerfully to influence, from the beginning, his development as a psychiatrist. Following graduation and subsequent psychiatric experience, first in the British Army and then in a Glasgow hospital, Laing moved to London where he trained at the Institute of Psycho-Analysis:

> When I left Glasgow to take up a job at the Tavistock Clinic and to undergo four years of training at the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, it was becoming clearer to me where my interest lay. It had to do with mental misery. What were the necessary or sufficient conditions to occasion mental misery of any kind? … The psychiatrist–patient rift across the sane–mad line seemed to play a part in some of the misery and disorder occurring within the field of psychiatry. Maybe this loss of human camaraderie was the most important thing. Maybe its restoration was the sine qua non of 'treatment' … Could an understanding of communication, miscommunication, non communication and excommunication contribute to the problems of Western psychiatry? (Laing, 1985, pp. 145–6)

Laing was on the staff of the Tavistock Clinic between 1957 and 1967, conducting research into the families of schizophrenics with the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. This proved to be a period of extraordinarily fruitful co-operation between Laing and his colleagues, both inside and outside the Tavistock, and led to the publication of *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (Laing and Esterson, 1964), and *Interpersonal Perception* (Laing, Phillipson and Lee, 1966). At the same time, the first of a number of books which were soon to bring Laing considerable fame in the intellectual and popular culture as a whole had already been published. What was widely recognised about *The Divided Self* (1960) was Laing's originality in bringing together two fields hitherto thought by the Anglo-Saxon mind to be equally unintelligible — schizophrenic expression and existential writing — and awakening a more widespread understanding of both.

David Cooper was a South African psychiatrist who had come to England in the late 1950s. Courageously and uncompromisingly critical of institutional psychiatric violence, he started Villa 21 at Shenley Hospital, in

London's northern green belt, in 1962. In this ward for young male schizophrenics, hierarchical differences between patients and staff were eliminated to a considerable degree. This departure from tradition gave rise to much controversy both within and without the hospital, and the 'experiment' was stopped in 1966. But its work, which went far beyond the then innovative institutional 'therapeutic community' model, became widely known through Cooper's first book, *Psychiatry and Anti-psychiatry* (1967).

Cooper, like Laing, was profoundly influenced by phenomenology and existentialism (especially the writings of Sartre), and by Marxism: the two men jointly wrote a presentation of Sartre's major (and then untranslated) work of the fifties, published as *Reason and Violence* (Laing and Cooper, 1964). Like Laing, Cooper was to become a successful and controversial writer, addressing himself particularly to the politics of psychiatry: psychiatry seen in a broader context, embracing, for example, family life and its vicissitudes.

If the visionary passion of Laing and Cooper was inspirational in the founding of the Philadelphia Association, there were other figures who remained more in the background, but were also of importance during the early years. One such person was Dr E. Graham Howe. Howe - whom Laing was later to refer to as. a 'master psychologist' — was a distinctly original voice within psychotherapy and psychiatry, who had for many years been making clear and bold statements about the nature of 'schizophrenia' which were very close to Laing's own views.

Howe began his career as a psychotherapist as a member of the original Tavistock Clinic in 1928. He worked with Krishnamurti in the thirties and after the war studied Buddhism in Sri Lanka with Nyanaponika Mahathera for a year. The author of nine books, of which the best known is probably Cure or Heal? (1965), his work is distinguished by a blending of psychoanalytic psychology with authoritative readings of Eastern and Christian texts. His writings are the subject of a study by Henry Miller, and he was also an influence upon Alan Watts, the populariser of Eastern philosophy. In some ways simplistic, but written in the voice of plain common sense spiced with a dash of Gurdjieff, the idea that psychiatry had more to learn from the schizophrenic than the schizophrenic from psychiatry was representative of Howe's thought; his interest in religion was to be a great influence on Laing.

Laing met Howe in 1960, when Howe was Chairman of the Langham Clinic in London. The Langham offered low-fee psychotherapy and trained psychotherapists, with teachers from both Freudian and Jungian schools. Two future members of the Philadelphia Association, Raymond Blake and John Heaton, had already trained there, and Laing was invited to become chairman of the clinic in 1962.

These first years of the Philadelphia Association, especially between 1965 and 1967, were characterised by regular informal discussions amongst a small group of psychotherapists and psychoanalysts interested in philosophy, including Laing, Aaron Esterson and John Heaton. The evening gatherings were held at the Hampstead home of the psychoanalyst Paul Senft, now probably best known as founder and editor of *The Human Context*. This book-length journal, published in London every four months between 1968 and 1974, was of bold scope, if somewhat uneven quality; its aims were 'to explore the conceptual and methodological links between the sciences of man … in their implicit philosophical assumptions … from a mainly European vantage point'. Paul Senft provided academic rigour, an atmosphere of being kept on one's toes intellectually. This was especially important in the case of Laing, whose understanding of phenomenology is recalled, by one member of the early group, as wayward.

Senft had studied phenomenology in Prague with Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. Husserl had a profound influence on thinkers like Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, as well as psychiatrists such as Freud's friend Binswanger, Medard Boss and, later on, Jacques Lacan. But it was perhaps Merleau-Ponty who addressed most clearly and explicitly the relation between phenomenology and psychoanalysis. In an article whose first English publication was in Senft's journal (Merleau-Ponty, 1970), Merleau-Ponty spoke of the two disciplines, despite their different idioms, as 'both tending towards the same latency'. In phenomenology this latency — or potential, or generative source — was opened up in terms of language and intersubjectivity, embodiment, incarnation in the lived world. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology thus offered a powerful corrective to the prevailing psychologism of psychoanalysis, whose latency (the unconscious) was understood more restrictively, in terms of inner drives or object representations.

Both Graham Howe and Paul Senft were to break with Laing within a few years. One of the issues which came between Laing and Howe — and culminated in Graham Howe asking Laing to resign from the Langham Clinic — concerned the therapeutic use of psychedelic drugs, into which Laing was 'conducting research'. Although Laing did not take up the view that psychedelics should be used in psychiatry, Howe believed that LSD could be dangerous, even a cheap con, and that Laing's interest in it was misplaced. Paul Senft, on the other hand, disagreed with Laing more over his understanding of phenomenology and its interpretation within psychoanalytic discourse. Senft thought that Laing was not prepared seriously to think through his rather populist blending of phenomenology and psychoanalysis — nor to acknowledge the implications of phenomenology's critique of psychoanalytic psychologism, with its stress on 'interiority'.

In the beginning, in fact, the dialogue which the Philadelphia Association opened up from this phenomenological perspective was more with psychiatry than with psychoanalysis. The works already mentioned — as well as the later work of Esterson, *The Leaves of Spring* (1970), which goes in more detail into one of the families described in *Sanity, Madness and the Family* – were important contributions to that dialogue. The Self and Others (Laing, 1961), however, directly questions some of the assumptions within psychoanalysis, and rethinks intra-psychic defences and unconscious phantasy, for example, in terms more appreciative of their interpersonal nature. Laing's critique of Susan Isaacs's classic paper 'The nature and function of phantasy' (Isaacs, 1952) illustrates this disinclination to use the term unconscious experience, 'because I cannot resolve satisfactorily in my mind the contradiction between the two words' (Laing, 1961, p. 30).

> One source of confusion is the particular dichotomous schema in which the whole theory is cast . . . [entailing] a distinction between 'the inner world of the mind', on the one hand, and 'the external. world of the subject's bodily development and behaviour, and hence of other. people's minds and bodies', on the other . . . A person may experience himself in terms of this set of distinctions . . . However, it is quite another matter to take such a form of self-division as one's theoretical starting point. (Laing, 1961, pp. 23, 24)

Indeed, running through the Philadelphia Association's history is the attempt to respect the person against all

odds, against invalidatory, pejorative psychiatric diagnoses, or psychoanalytic reductions of the patient's problems to a conflict of their inner world. This has made for awkward kinships being claimed in various quarters: in, for example, the movement of anti-psychiatry, a term which David Cooper proposed and Laing rejected (ineffectually, to the extent that Laing continued to be associated in the public mind with it); in the various patients-against-psychiatry projects that blossomed in the seventies; and from some of the new Gestalt, humanistic and encounter psychologies and psychotherapies, not least those which invoked the terms 'existential' or 'phenomenology' in their self-descriptions. These kinships were made awkward, not because there were no patches of common ground, but because conceptual, ideological and stylistic differences all but ruled out their cultivation. Again, under 'awkward kinships' one might mention Laing's adoption as darling of the New Left, bound, as it was, to culminate in the sorts of misunderstandings and disillusionments which are vehemently described in Peter Sedgwick's critique of conservatism in anti - Psychiatry. Psychotherapy Politics (1982, pp.69, 73, 89, 94 - 95)

The story of the Philadelphia Association remains, in large part the story of its household communities. These communities started from a recognition of the need for places of sanctuary,
asylum, refuge, or dwelling, felt by some people who find themselves in extreme mental distress. The very first Philadelphia Association households, set up in private houses in the late sixties,
made clear this distinction between hospitalisation and hospitality. One, in Granville Road, Finchley, in a house owned by R. D. Laing, was looked after by Ben Churchill, a psychotherapist; another was in the home of Sidney Briskin. But the one which set the course for a controversial future was Kingsley Hall.

Kingsley Hall was built in the 1920s by the philanthropic socialists Muriel and Doris Lester, to serve the local community of Bromley-by-Bow in the East End of London. It was a large building and, although well known for Gandhi's stay there during his negotiations with the British Government in 1931, by 1964 it was under-used. In that year the Kingsley Hall Trustees, encouraged by Muriel Lester, were prepared to lease it to the Philadelphia Association for a peppercorn rent. It was a building eminently suited to its new purpose. Kingsley Hall was to be a place where people could live together, and where behaviour that would be intolerable in most places might be feasible. The ground floor included a games room with ropes from the ceiling and a full-sized snooker table and table-tennis table; on the second floor there was a parapet open to the sky around a number of cells or bedrooms. The basement was a large cavern, in which Mary Barnes lived for a while in a tin trunk.

Amongst those who have ventured their opinion about Kingsley Hall — and there has been no shortage — Mary Barnes is one who speaks for herself. This former nursing tutor who had been hospitalised, and had the typically poor prognosis of a chronic schizophrenic liable to psychotic episodes, gave her own account of her 'journey through madness' in a celebrated book which included her therapist Joseph Berke's account of it too (Barnes and Berke, 1971). Dr Berke had arrived from New York to work under Laing's supervision in 1965, bringing to bear some of the wilder ambitions of the New York counter-culture (see Berke, 1969). He was soon followed by three other colleagues, also from Albert Einstein Medical College, including Dr Leon Redler (later to become a member of the Philadelphia Association) and Dr Morton Schatzman.

The success of *Mary Barnes: Two Accounts of a Journey through Madness*, and of the play *Mary Barnes* which David Edgar adapted from her story – with their evident interest for so many people almost as a 'model'

of how to go mad – have given Mary Barnes an incontestable place within the psychotherapeutic Hall of Fame. Kingsley Hall itself – with its reputation for psychedelic and literary happenings – was one of the crucibles of the 1960s. It seemed, to many people, to appear in the guise of 'Meditation Manor' in Clancy Sigal's novel *Zone of the Interior* (1976).

Kingsley Hall was not to everyone's taste, whether they were personally involved or not. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, for instance, criticised Kingsley Hall for what they took to be its latent structures of bourgeois, oedipalized family life, 'familialism' (1972). At the end of the day, they believed Kingsley Hall was far from radical: deeply conservative, it embodied all the conventional hierarchies of power. Guattari returned to the theme in an article in Le Nouvel Observateur in 1973. 'No one', he wrote of Kingsley Hall,

> could escape the simplistic reduction of all things to the same old triangle (father, mother and child) that confines all situations that exceed what are considered the bounds of normality within the mould of oedipal psychoanalysis . . . Familialism means magically denying the social reality, avoiding all connection with real fluxes. All that remains possible is dreaming
> . . . or even, in moments of intense crisis, a little urine-soaked
> corner to retreat to, alone. [Guattari, 1973, pp. 52, 54]

How ironic that David Cooper, writing The Death of the Family at around that time (Cooper 1971), should equally have been criticised to privilege the autonomy of the individual saw the Philadelphia Association s interests in regressions, which (to him) epitomised the households, as evidence of a perpetuation of a mystifying 'myth of mental illness'. If there was no such thing as mental illness, Szasz's view went, why was Kingsley Hall 'treating' people in a community set up for a therapeutic purpose? To him there was a contradiction in the idea of an anti-therapeutic therapeutic community.

The ensuing debate, polarised around Szasz and anti-psychiatry, centred upon Kingsley Hall and was conducted in a literary magazine some years after the event. There were contributions at considerable length from Szasz and the psychiatrist and broadcaster Anthony Clare; and from Aaron Esterson and Joe Berke (Berke having now left to start the Arbours Housing Association). From the Philadelphia Association there were Leon Redler and another American, Steven Gans. The debate was described in the Observer of 10 April 1977:

> For months now an astonishing debate about the uses and abuses of psychiatry has dominated the pages of the literary magazine The New Review. In its way the acrimonious attack on the unorthodox views of R. D. Laing by his fellow psychiatrist, the American Dr Thomas S. Szasz, is as important to psychiatry as the famous Leavis–Snow debate of the 1960s was to literature.

At the height of Kingsley Hall's vitality, in the summer of 1967, an unusual gathering took place in the Roundhouse, London (at that. time a primary venue for the counter-culture). For two hot July weeks the Congress of the Dialectics of Liberation, convened by the Institute of Phenomenological Studies under the aegis of the Philadelphia Association, drew together some of the threads of the peculiar PA weave. Looking at the jacket of the book, which compiled some of the principal addresses (see Cooper, 1968), one is reminded

that the Dialectics of Liberation was 'a unique expression of the politics of modern dissent, in which existential psychiatrists, Marxist intellectuals, anarchists and political leaders met to discuss — and to constitute — the key social issues of the next decade'.

At any rate, it was an extraordinary experience to hear — over a fortnight — R. D. Laing on "The Obvious" ("To state the obvious is to share with you what (in your view) my misconceptions are"), Stokely Carmichael on Black Power, Herbert Marcuse on "Liberation from the Affluent Society," Gregory Bateson on "Conscious Purpose Versus Nature," and other talks by the sociologist and anthropologist Jules Henry on preparation for warfare, the philosopher John Gerassi on imperialism and revolution, and the economist Paul Sweezy on the contradictions of capitalism — and by David Cooper on "Beyond Words." Alongside the formal talks, other gatherings took place with the likes of Allen Ginsberg, Emmett Grogan of the San Francisco Diggers, and Burmese monks. The experience was memorably described by Sheila Rowbotham in Woman's Consciousness, Man's World:

> "It was a peculiar collection of the incompatible and divergent forces of liberation. The revolutionary left - or bits of it - encountered the mind-blowers… It was more of a two-week-long trauma than a conference. I experienced a severe sense of dislocation throughout… [but] the idea of taking hold of your own definitions stuck. So did the tortured delicacy of Laing."
> Rowbotham (1973), pp. 22–23

Kingsley Hall, the Dialectics of Liberation, and the establishment and flourishing of the Philadelphia Association became the backdrop to R.D. Laing's rise to fame. With the phenomenal success of *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise* (1967). Following two American tours, Laing had become an international figure. At the height of this success, he left to spend a year in India, to meditate with masters of the Hinayana Buddhist tradition (one of them that same Nyanaponika Mahathera, with whom Graham Howe had meditated many years before) on returning he packed London's largest meeting halls and regaled audiences with accounts of his personal odyssey to resolve the epistemological splits of the Western world. The desire for continuity beyond the Dialectics of Liberation Congress - not hard to understand - led initially to the Anti-University of London, which took place in Old Street and provided an energetic forum for discussion of radical issues. In due course, the Anti-University gave way to the PA's study programme, which now runs as a three-term course titled 'Introduction to Social Phenomenology'.

Meanwhile, its lease having expired in May 1970, Kingsley Hall was given back to its trustees. The same weekend, the Archway Community was started by Dr Leon Redler, Paul Zeal and Michael Yokum, in short-life housing by arrangement with a housing association. It was there that the documentary film *Asylum* was made directed by Peter Robinson with hand-held cameras and minimal intrusion by the film crew. Asylum brought vividly to light the issues raised by David Mercer's earlier work, *Family Life*. Mercer's drama, initially a stage play and later adapted for television, followed the deterioration in the mind of a fictional nineteen-year- old girl whose parents subject her to a series of contradictory messages and double-binds. Eventually hospitalised, she is wheeled on for medical students as a 'case' of catatonic withdrawal. Asylum, by contrast, gives us a series of

vignettes of community life, this time concentrating on the responses of the parents who visit their sons or daughters in the household.

Over several years, the Archway Community extended to eight houses in neighbouring streets, all derelict and due for demolition. In 1973 the first long-term home for the community was set up in Tollington Park by Paul Zeal and Haya Oakley, therapists to the Archway Community during its last five years. But of all the houses stretching from Archway to Crouch End, only one remains, The Grove. It is actually owned by the Philadelphia Association, thanks to the energetic fund-raising labours of Sid Briskin and the actress, Suzy Kendall (the down payment for the mortgage was raised at a cabaret with many rising stars, including the actor, Michael Caine). During that time there was also a brief revival of our presence in the East End of London in the shape of the community in De Beauvoir Square, set up by Chris Oakley between 1974 and 1978.

Other forms of change were inevitable in a small organisation. Joe Berke and Morton Schatzman, without having become members of the PA, left to found the Arbours Housing Association, also based in London. Arbours was without doubt inspired by aspects of the PA's work and culture, for example its concern with psychoanalysis, critique of psychiatry, and the Kingsley Hall experience, did not initially address the deeper questions raised by phenomenology.

In the early years, training in psychotherapy or community work was a contentious issue. It was one of the reasons for David Cooper's eventual departure, despite strong mutual feelings of friendship and kinship. Cooper, whose brilliance and compassion had inspired the Villa 21 project at Shenley Hospital, in which patients had unprecedented say in their treatment, believed institutional forms of training should be resisted on political grounds. He was concerned more with undermining the bourgeois state than continuing its structures.

Training programmes had nevertheless begun, by 1969 and were on increasingly traditional lines for psychoanalytically courses, involving, personal analysis, supervised training practice, and the study of classic texts. The reading lists for students however, compared with those of other organisations was, and remains distinctive. Along with the usual psychoanalytic texts were works of phenomenology and existentialism. anthropology was on the curriculum and there was also a keen interest in the relevance of Buddhist and Zen meditation, and Hatha yoga. Central to this combination of practices was the view that the psychoanalytic tradition could be seen as a form of meditative tradition, or Heidegger's put it that meditative thinking was a form of thinking. In the study courses the emphasis was a philosophical one - on the texts themselves, and : knowing how to read them. There were no 'basic' texts followed by 'specialised texts'. As a way of encouraging students to develop skill a critical thinking, interpretative practice. This was in keeping with the PA's understanding that in training there is no beginning and no end.

Another phase in the PA's evolution began with Dr Hugh Crawford's return to the United Kingdom in 1968, after twenty years working as a psychiatrist in Canada and the United States. Hugh Crawford had known Ronald Laing since their days as medical students at Glasgow, and the Philadelphia Association was a first port of call. Crawford, now in his early forties, was straining on a leash. While in North America he had made a solitary excursion into phenomenology, having found his American psychiatric experience a lonely one. The two men were very different: Crawford's charisma was that of the sailor, a little reminiscent of Hemingway. Laing's was more that of the arabesque, the fashionably chic. At any rate, within a few months of his arrival Crawford was elected a member of the Philadelphia Association, had started his psychotherapy practice, and had become closely involved with the concerns of the Association.

Two years later Crawford secured a property and founded a new PA community household in Portland Road, a shabby but newly fashionable street in Holland Park, London. This house had spawned three offshoots by the time that it closed in 1980, one of them a smallholding in the Oxfordshire countryside. Portland Road was to fulfil a vision which Crawford had been nurturing in isolation and frustration during his years in orthodox psychiatry and it was to occupy a position of considerable importance until his death in 1980. The house closed soon after, already weakened by prolonged legal battles with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, over issues of planning and use.

Portland Road's importance derived from Hugh Crawford's original conception of principles and practice, which helped revitalise the initiative the households had already been taking. This revitalisation was not only inspired by his uncompromising presence, but informed by his searching reading of the phenomenologists, in particular Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard, and Freud. What was distinctive about Hugh Crawford's approach to the households was his ability to show, in ordinary but memorable language, the issues that emerged around hospitality, conviviality, being at home, and their central importance to any sort of well-being. For Crawford the dimension of dwelling represented the next step for psychoanalysis to take, to move beyond a conception of the therapeutic 'hour', and think more deeply about the roots of the therapeutic.

The sense of Portland Road as simultaneously an ordinary household, a 'therapeutic community' and a place of learning was enhanced when the study programme in social phenomenology found its home in the basement, alongside the Philadelphia Association offices. Then there were the visits from students, trainees, Academics, prospective members of the household and those occasional roving spirits who might only a few years before have been drawn to the Dialectics of Liberation.

Although it is true that the reputation of the Philadelphia Association households may rest on their ways of approaching psychotic episodes, such as Mary Barnes's experience, it is quite misleading to suppose that the whole focus of the Association is upon psychosis, or that their capacity to contain such episodes is the sole raison d'être of the households. People have always come, and will no doubt continue to come, to the households for a multiplicity of reasons. It is true that from the first, Kingsley Hall, the households had an interest in offering asylum to individuals who were acutely psychotic. And certainly during the time of Portland Road a number of highly disturbed individuals were seen, to varying extents, through their episodes, or, as they were then called, "freak-outs". This was not because of some ideology which privileged psychotic experience. The concern for asylum has to be understood first of all in the context of available alternatives. Laing, Cooper and later Crawford approached the households from their experience of working in mental institutions, and having emphatic reactions to this experience: they felt there had to be some other way.

Yet if these households started off as 'reactions,' as alternatives, they did not remain so. The discipline became honed; there was space too, for those whose unfinished business took the form of the long hard slog. By the time of Portland Road, it was very much the significance of the ordinariness of dwelling which was opened up, illuminated, sometimes very starkly and hellishly, by those more extraordinary occasions of acute psychosis.

Portland Road and its offshoot houses had always been associated with one powerful individual, and the uncertainty and sense of disorientation that emerged during Hugh Crawford's long illness culminated in chaos and confusion following his death. This loss, felt throughout the whole network, was of more than the man: it was the absence of Crawford's presence in the Philadelphia Association. He had a "holding" function,

accommodating and containing, at times extravagant intellectually and emotionally. With Hugh gone, the balance was disturbed. What had been a healthy tension collapsed. It became increasingly difficult to work with Laing in any committee structure, for he no longer seemed answerable to the company. Laing became more and more the absent chairman, appearing to have lost interest in either doing the work of the organisation or enabling others to do it. The Philadelphia Association could no longer grow or develop its ideas in this atmosphere.

Laing resigned his membership of the Philadelphia Association in 1981. It was a sad loss of a long partnership, conceived and inspired throughout by his ideas. Most of them, especially the idea of the intelligibility of madness, and the importance of asylum and hospitality, are still very much at the heart of the Philadelphia Association's work, and inform some, though not all, of the pieces in this collection.

The break with Laing reverberated throughout the Philadelphia Association and its immediate network. Allegiances of social, intellectual and transferential natures were questioned, and people whose primary attachment was to the charisma of Laing felt they had to leave. This was also the occasion for the Philadelphia Association to part company with some of the network whose concerns were more to do with yoga and natural childbirth than with phenomenology or psychoanalysis.

One major parting of the ways that was already in motion concerned Laing's continuing flirtation with humanistic therapies, which had begun in the 1970s with his rediscovery of the writer and therapist Francis Mott. Mott's work on the notion of, and clinical evidence for, pre-natal consciousness (1949, 1959) informed Laing's *The Facts of Life* (1976), and was being widely taken up within the organisation. This was adding an exciting new dimension to the analytic work in the network, for it seemed to contribute to the intelligibility of certain pathological structures, particularly when working analytically with psychosis. Some therapists were finding that there were patients for whom the idiom or metaphors of intra-uterine life proved to be the most mutative and powerful.

At this time too, however, an interest in birth and pre-birth experience was spreading throughout the humanistic movement, and rebirthing workshops — where various techniques were practised to release unresolved birth traumas — mushroomed throughout Europe and North America. Whilst Laing appeared captivated and inspired by this, the idea of rebirthing 200 people at the Inn on the Park on a Sunday afternoon seemed to many to be a negation of the psychoanalytic, phenomenological, and even common-sense understanding of what it is to come into the world. Tensions as fundamental as these could not be resolved.

When Laing left, the PA chose not to replace him with a new chairman, a decision which has remained part of the culture of the Association. Those who stayed on, now the senior tier, found a renewed strength in a structure less dominated by personality. The training for psychotherapists and community therapists continued, new Philadelphia Association households opened just as others closed. Most notably, with Laing and Crawford's sometimes justified and sometimes unfounded fear of 'others now removed', a greater exchange of ideas between the Association and other organisations began to take place. It is not our desire to present a united front, and our differences are exemplified by the chapters in this book. We meet where psychoanalysis and philosophy cross paths. It is where this book begins.

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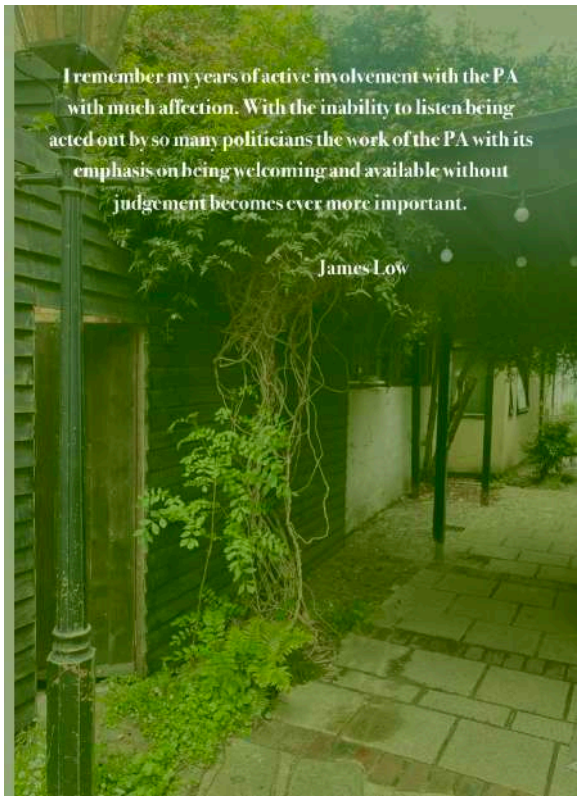

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