


From Virtual to Visceral:
Wonderings, Wanderings and Provocations of returning to Face-to-Face Therapy (and back again!)

ta training organisation

 **Psychologists Protection Society**
ESTABLISHED 1974

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A Warm Welcome – and hello from Andy!

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Keeping Ourselves Self

- This is a one-hour workshop, and not therapy.
- Remain grounded and in contact with self.
- Don't overshare personal material
- Maintain confidentiality of colleagues and clients.
- It is fine to "pass" and miss out on any activity – but remain engaged in the experience and learning if possible.
- Share time equitably in small group discussions.
- Have fun! Enjoy the Process! Use chat!

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Where are we going with this workshop?

- This workshop will present some key, bite-size, theoretical ideas in and around working through the Covid-19 crisis and especially considering transitions to and from virtual working.
- Each "bite" will offer the practitioner a reflection to consider or ponder.
- The take away from the workshop will be a set of theories and associated questions to perhaps broaden our thinking and potentially strengthen practice.

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Idea No. 1 – Experiential Overlap



The diagram consists of three overlapping horizontal ovals. The top oval is green and labeled 'Client'. The middle oval is blue and labeled 'Therapist'. The bottom oval is purple and labeled 'Supervisor'. The ovals overlap in the center, creating a shared space.

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Parallel Processes in our clients, us and our supervisors or supervisees.

- A shared experience of needing or seeking security and yet finding very little.
- In TA terms – the current absence of potentially trustworthy Parents.
- Therefore – the necessity to promote healthy and courageous, dynamic, here-and-now creative Adult thinking

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What is the implication of these supposed shared experiences?

- The therapist can feel shame and exposure – as if a piece of “self-disclosure” has taken place involuntarily.
- Loss of privacy for the therapist due to the unusual shared and traumatic context with the client.
- Moments of redundancy and loss of potency by the therapist
 - For example – many clients seem to be starting sessions by asking the therapist
 - “How are you?” – how do we engage with that – at the social or psychological level?

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Recognising myself in the other’s experience...or am I mistaken?

- Work by Liz Bondi – “Feeling Insecure: a personal account in a psychoanalytic voice”
- The effacing, over-identification or colonising the other’s experience, denying their difference and thereby necessarily mis-recognising them.

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Ontological Insecurity

- Laing (1959) presents the person inextricably located in their world
- Security and Insecurity present as properties that belong simultaneously to the person – to interior experience and external environment – to the world perceived and the reality encountered.
- “Our experience of the exterior world we inhabit as secure or insecure might be understoodas produced by qualities of our interior worlds.

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Idea No. 1 – Experiential Overlap Reflections

- What is it like to be in a potentially traumatic, shared context with your client?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages in terms of potency in the shared experience.
- What might be going on transferenceally when our client asks us "How are you?" – and who are we, or who does the client desire us to be in the transferenceal matrix? Is this a straight transaction?
- How is meaning being made by the client? Thinking of Ontology – is the meaning of the outer world being made by the inner? Or the other way around? What is the client's relationship between their inner meaning making and their outer meaning making.

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Idea No. 2: Profound Alienation.

- Alienation – a state of estrangement between self and the object world – or psycho-dynamically – between parts of self.
- How might we understand the defences associated with alienation?
 - Dissociation? Derealisation? Frozen-ness? Isolated Attachment?
- Covid-19 has brought a profound challenge to what we understand to be at the heart of therapy – relational connectivity.

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Alienation...and Marx

- The loss of connection with....
- The product of labour
- The process of labour
- Others
- Self.

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Alienation – Soul, Soil and Society

- The focus on the importance of re-connection.
- Based on the premise that there is a widespread cultural, psychological and educational dislocation following Covid.
- Soul, Soil and Society.
- Soul – loss of connection with self
- Soil – loss of connection with the ground upon which we walk and exist
- Society – loss of connection with other.

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Idea 2: Profound Alienation Reflection

- How can we support our clients to reconnect to Soul, Soil and Society?
- What creative ways can we think of to promote these vital connections?
- What is the nature of the alienation that your client, or indeed you, may have suffered? – and the defensive strategies?

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Idea 3: Pluralistic Philosophy

- Pluralism can be defined as the philosophical belief that:
- "Any substantial question admits of a variety of plausible but mutually conflicting responses" – Rescher 1993.
- Multiple Truths

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Pluralistic ideas continued....

- Multiple Truths – this immediately addresses the process of “those with power get to make the meaning”
- Instead there is a deeply co-creative encounter and a variety of views that can be taken, on a wide range of issues.

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There is no right way...“this seems to reflect the multiplicity of contexts that have emerged through virtual encounters”

- There is no right way of conceptualising a problem
- There is no right way of practicing
- A both/and perspective with mutual professional respect for other.
- Diversity and uniqueness (idiosyncratic, bespoke) are prized
- Involvement of the client and the client’s resources
- Openness and a sense of spaciousness to wide methodology

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Pluralism Across Orientations, Clients & Perspectives.

Orientations	Clients	Perspectives
Multiple Understandings of Distress	A bespoke, idiosyncratic personalised approach to each client and their preferences of how they like to work.	Shared Decision-Making..... Therapist and Client together.

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Pluralistic Reflections.

- How does a pluralistic stance empower our clients as they emerge from a far more independent way of doing therapy?
- How is a pluralistic approach – and difference & diversity deeply connected.

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Idea 4: The therapeutic model and landscape have changed.

Good Old Days!	A Covid-19 Landscape
Therapist is in charge of the therapeutic space.	Client now defines the therapeutic landscape.
Solidity	Liminality
Contact and Connection	Representations in the virtual of the authentic
Client comes to us. Clearly Geographical	Mutuality of meeting. Physical Transference
Physical Presence	Physical Transference
Physical exchange	Virtual exchange
Object constancy	He's involved with virtual exchange.

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Idea 5. How do we consider Transference Phenomena?

- Many of our clients are entering and exiting therapy in different contexts.
- What is the meaning-making of seeing the client in the original context?
- What happens when the clinical work continues in a different context?
- How does the meaning-making change?
- The relief of reality? – Or the shock and insult of virtual experiences changing to face-to-face encounters.

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"Matt" – Mini-case Study

- Matt started therapy in an online context by Zoom.
- Near to Christmas it was possible for him to see his therapist face-to-face for one session – prior to returning again to Zoom.
- His therapist reports that the face-to-face session was deeply uncomfortable – a "rupture" – both client and therapist eyeing each other up with potentially a disappointed erotic transference.
- "Since when has therapy been like a disappointing Grindr or Tinder date?"

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Client

Therapist

Transference: Experience of self and self in relation to other.

Counter-Transference: Experience of self and self in relation to other.

The Process of Objectification.

- The client objectifies the therapist
- The therapist objectifies the client
- We are not really in the here-and-now.
- Loss of potency, presence and connection by the therapist.

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Client

Therapist

The Process of moving from Objectification to Subjectivity.

- The therapist returns to the here-and-now
- The therapist steps out of the transference.
- The therapist regains their skill of spotting the process
- The therapist regains contact with self – and therefore is able to offer a true mirror to other.
- The client moves to a place of reality
- Easier said than done!

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Objectification and return to subjectivity

- What is being re-enacted through this chopping and changing of context?
- What are the implications of the chopping and changing of contexts

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Idea 6: therapy moving from being a goal-driven product to an encounter.

- I have noticed in my supervision practice that there is a change in clinical focus.
- Locked-down clients are often experiencing very little happening in their lives – making experiments in the home context difficult
- Prior to Covid-19 the therapeutic endeavour has often been goal focussed in terms of goals, personal development or person growth or liberation.
- The clinical work often appears to be about a move away from isolation to clinical joy.

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An Encounter

- An existential experience
- A dystonic experience
- Arrival and then being disturbed by the therapist and the therapy process.
- The original meaning of "Encounter" refers to confrontation, the arrival of an adversary.

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An encounter with a new "framing story" –
Work by Brian McLaren

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Idea 6 - Encounter Reflections?

- What would it mean to see the therapeutic engagement as an encounter – rather than a process of production from point A to point B?
- How would it support our Zoom-weary clients to engage in encounters rather than therapeutic productions of mass.

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Idea 7 – Richard Erskine’s Eight Relational Needs

Security
The experience of having our physical and emotional vulnerabilities protected which includes the experience that our needs and feelings are natural. The absence of real or anticipated danger.

Validation, affirmation and significance within a relationship
To have the significance of our thoughts and feelings/process validated by another. That our relational needs are natural and ok.

Acceptance by a stable dependable and protective other person.
To need to look up to and rely on parents, elders, teachers, mentors. In therapy this may mean idealization by the client and a seeking of protection from the internal Parent ego state’s impact on the vulnerable Child.

Confirmation of personal experience.
Shared experience of personhood/humanity. Being in the presence of someone who is similar.

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Self-definition
To express one's own uniqueness and have his acknowledged and accepted by the other.

The need to have an impact on the other person
Having an influence that affects the other in some way or effecting a change of affect of behaviour in another.

The need to have the other initiate
Initiation refers to the impetus to make contact with another.

The need to express love.
Can be expressed through gratitude, thankfulness, giving affection, doing something for the other person.


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Idea 7– Relational Needs - Reflections

- What relational needs have been archived or denied under Covid?
- How has, or how is, this client suffering – relationally?
- How can we think creatively to attend to these relational needs?

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Final Idea for This Workshop – Idea 8. Eco-logical Self



Earth, Elemental, Encounter, Eco-TA
Moving from an Indoor Mind to an Outdoor Mind
Eco-therapy is not doing "indoor" therapy in the outdoors
Moving from Ego-logical to Eco-logical self.

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Idea 8. – Eco-logical Self

- Has the external wall of the therapy room dissolved?
- How many of us have worked with clients who can find no solace or space to conduct calls – and so they enter the outdoor space?
- What is the cost of this? And what is the joy?
- What does it mean to be a body, embodied, in the outdoors?

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The ideas we have touched today.

- Overlap of our experiences?
- Alienation
- Pluralistic Philosophy
- Change of the Therapeutic Landscape
- Transference Phenomena
- A Therapeutic Encounter
- Relational Needs
- Ecological Self

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Informal References to follow-up

- www.ecota.dev – more information about Eco-TA
- Giles Barrow & Haley Marshall – Eco-TA writers
- Feeling Insecure – paper by Liz Bondi containing Laing’s work
- Encounter – work by Giles Barrow – Teaching as a Creative Subversion
- Richard Erskine’s 8 Relational Needs
- Brian McLaren – types of Framing Story

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