From Virtual to Visceral: Wonderings, Wanderings and Provocations of returning to Face-to-Face Therapy (and back again!) ta training organisation Psychologists Protection Society

A Warm Welcome — and hello from Andy! Andy Williams TSTA(P) — Director of TA Training Organisation Registered Member MBACP (Snr Accred), BABCP Accred. UKCP, CTA, MA, MSc,

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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!

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

- A shared experience of needing or seeking security and yet finding very little.
- ${}^{\bullet}\,$ 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

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.

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 transferentially when our client asks us "How are you?" and who
 are we, or who does the client desire us to be in the transferential 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.

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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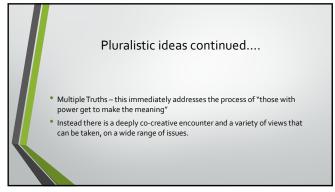
Idea 2: Profound Alienation Reflection

- 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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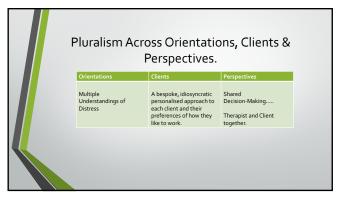
Idea 3: Pluralistic Philosophy

- 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



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



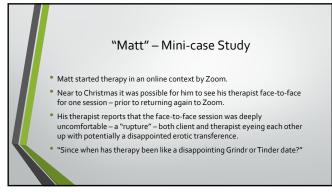


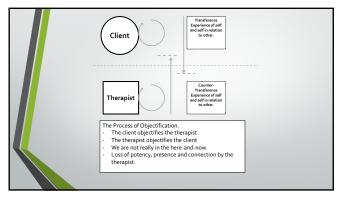
Idea 4: The therapeutic model and landscape have changed. Good Old Days! Therapist is in charge of the therapeutic space. Solidity Contact and Connection Representations in the virtual of the authentic Client comes to us. Clearly Geographical Mutuality of meeting. Physical Transerence Physical Presence Physical Transference Physical exchange Object constancy He's involved with virtual exchange.

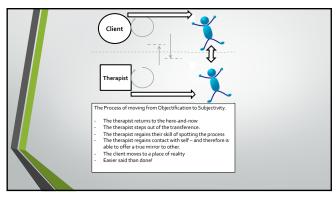
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Idea 5. How do we consider Transference Phenomena? • Many of our clients are entering and exiting therapy in different contexts. • What is the meaning-making of seeing the client in the original context? • What happens when the clinical work continues 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.







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

Idea 6: therapy moving from being a goaldriven product to <u>an encounter.</u>

- ${}^{\bullet}\,$ 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

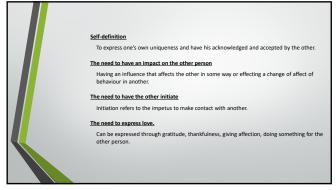
- An existential experience
- A dystonic experience
- Arrival and then being disturbed by the therapist and the therapy process.
- The original meaning of "Encounter" refers to confrontation, the arrival of an adversary.

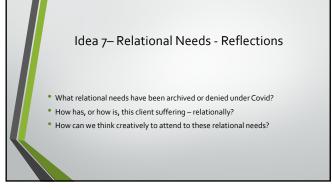


Idea 6 - Encounter Reflections? * What would it mean to so the therapeutic engagement as an encounter-rather than a process of production from point A to point B? * How would it support our Zoom-weary clients to engage in encounters rather than therapeutic productions of mass.

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Idea 7 — Richard Erskine's Eight Relational Needs 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.







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