

## **The Alliance for Counselling & Psychotherapy against State Regulation**

**ULU, London: 5<sup>th</sup> April 09**

**Key Note Speaker: Professor Andrew Samuels**

*NB this is a transcript from a live talk – many thanks to Kamalamani*

I need to begin with a bit of a confession. I'm still very surprised to find myself here today, in the positions that I'm in today, because for decades I was in favour of either statutory or state regulation of psychotherapy. I was beginning to get worried about it before the day on which I formally changed my mind. That happened to be the day in 2006, not 1996 [an aside to the previous speaker who had previously said 1996] that I was actually elected as an Honorary Fellow of UKCP, and I have to say that the negative synchronicity has caused a lot of bad feeling in UKCP circles.

I'm going to talk about this Alliance and say what I think it is. Then I'll talk about this conference – what kind of a conference is it and what is it for? Thirdly, some steps you personally can take now to enter into what we, in the Alliance, call principled non-compliance with state regulation. Fourthly, a very brief, targeted critique of HPC and lastly, some deeper issues, including the very profound one, of appealing to you for even more funds than you have given up thus far.

What is the Alliance? The short, pithy answer is that, right now, it is at least the two hundred and twenty five of us in this room. The Alliance is the broadest-based organisation I have ever encountered in the fields of counselling and psychotherapy. We have here different kinds of psychoanalysts, different kinds of Jungians, every kind of psychopractitioner: humanistic, integrative, every single kind you can imagine. Body therapists, arts therapists, apologies if I've left anybody out. This is something very, very special. I think that in addition to the passion that I hope we will be generating today and in the future, we can also say something about our representativeness; there simply isn't another organisation that addresses the tragic and sadistic hierarchy in the field of psychotherapy and counselling. It's a very important point, this.

One reason why the HPC appeals to some people is that they see it as ending the hierarchy in the mind of the psychotherapist or counsellor. They see it, if you like - to be blunt - as ending psychoanalytic and depth psychological claims to superiority. Well, I don't think that's what's going to happen at HPC. But it is also a feature of this very Alliance that, we too, are challenging the hierarchy in the field from which so many of us and our clients suffer. Now I am going to use some of my precious time to try to see who is actually here today. So would you please show hands when I ask questions, don't be frightened to show your hand more than once, and if anybody feels offended that I didn't include them, you can put it down to the fact that even I am totally mixed up with this unfortunate hierarchy that we have been sold, as resting on fact.

So, who here would call themselves a humanistic therapist or counsellor? Look around please, look around [show of hands from the audience]. Well that should make HPC sit up and take notice. Okay, look around.

Who here – and you can put your hand up again – would respond to the term integrative, integrative? [Show of hands from the audience]. Look around, don't be frightened, don't be shy. Lacan said - it's wonderful for a Jungian to begin with that - Lacan said, “style is the person you are talking to”.

Who here would regard themselves as a Jungian? [Show of hands from the audience].

Who here would want to claim the title psychoanalyst? [Show of hands from the audience]. Let's just break that down a little bit. Who here, broadly-speaking, sees themselves as a psychoanalyst doing what's absurdly called the British traditions: object-relations, Kleinian and the like? Please show. [Show of hands from the audience]. Two, three. That's also important for us to know. And Lacanians of different kinds? [Show of hands from the audience]. More, many more.

Arts-based people? [Show of hands from the audience].

Did I say body-based already, or not? Body-based people? [Show of hands from the audience].

I just would like to know, who put their hands up four times or more? I can see Nick [Totton}, yours was going up all the time! That's kind of interesting, now, who did I offend? Scream out what I should have asked...

CBT. CBT. Hi Windy [Dryden]! Hi Windy, nice to see you!

Psychoanalytic psychotherapist [show of hands from the audience]. I just would like to give a little gift to the college here, of the people who put up their hands as psychoanalytic psychotherapists, how many would also want to put up their hands as psychoanalysts? Okay.

[Comment from the audience] "Psychodynamic counsellors?" [Back to Andrew] Psychodynamic counsellors? I was really just looking for orientation, rather than that...

[Speaker from audience] "I understand, but when you use the expression psychoanalyst, considering you're trying to make a point about hierarchy, I think it's quite interesting how, if you call yourself a counsellor, then you obviously can't call yourself a psychoanalyst.."

[Andrew continues] Yes, good point, good point. Counselling psychologist?

Clinical psychologists? [Voice from audience] "person-centred?" [Back to Andrew] Oh, I meant, I was including them in the humanistic, but yes, there'll be plenty of TA people, gestalt, person-centred, I'm quite sure. We have a person-centred superstar [Brian Thorne] about to speak!

[Shout from the audience] "Existential" [back to Andrew] Existential...what? I mean, psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, I'm getting more...therapist, existential therapists. You know, I never would have thought that after thirty seven years in the profession I would have learnt something about its nuances afresh, and I did today. Can I move on now?

Other? [Someone suggests the category 'other' from the floor]. You know in the Jungian world, we often end lists like this by saying, "all of the above?" And then comes the particular Jungian one, "none of the above?!"

This conference is the second thing I want to talk about. This conference is not primarily to help you decide about whether to support HPC state regulation. It is about thinking

together concerning the next steps in opposing state regulation. This thinking together will intensify throughout the day, and the afternoon is planned to be a session that will go on with actions and organising in mind. We need activists. This conference, this gathering, this rally, is only a beginning. But it is also a place where people opposed to state regulation can have a sense of belonging.

Third thing. Principled non-compliance with HPC state regulation. Many people have already said to me, muttered as they came in, “What do we do?” “What do you think we should do?” “What are we supposed to do?” Many things, and we’ll get into the detail in the afternoon. But, first, indicate as publicly as possible, to as many in your professional communities as possible, that you have an intention not to register. Even if you suspect that eventually, *force majeure* may compel you to. Show yourselves. Then, make sure that you always belong to some kind of collective entity that brings with it ongoing understanding, and scrutiny of your work whether by supervision, inter-vision, IPN or other clinical group membership. Be sure that you operate in a responsible and accountable way under some kind of ethics structure that meets good contemporary standards. And be sure, too, that any organisation you belong to makes you think about your CPD.

The truth of the matter is, and this is what the government has sought to deny, that all the organisation in the psy field meet these requirements already. If you want to stay in the Guild, the College, the BACP, IPN, any organisation that you can probably imagine, the BPS for the counselling psychologists, stay! It may not be perfect, you may want to try and improve and enhance it, but if you stay, then you can claim that you are in principled non-compliance with state regulation.

My fourth section was to be a very brief critique of HPC. And here, I’m into the rhetoric as much as the substance. You see, the HPC process has very few, genuine, authentic, passionate supporters. It has some, but it has very few. Everyone talks a language of trimming, of advantage, of realism - so called - and of pragmatism and advantage, including financial and material advantage. There’s no credibility left, but that doesn’t mean it won’t be imposed. Here are a few discussion points that I’ve found very useful.

People will say to you, “stop being so hysterical, it isn’t actually going to make any difference to the way that you practise or to the kind of therapy and counselling that your clients receive”. Well, for heaven’s sake, if it makes no difference, why do it?! And actually, the standards that seem likely to emerge out of this HPC business, are, in most respects, not only in terms of ethics, but particularly ethics, lower than the standards which all of us in this room already work to.

Then people will say, “Well, HPC is O.K. you know. We understand your concern about Skills for Health, or the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, or the Happiness system, Improved Access to Psychological Therapies. Yes, those are all a crock of shit. But HPC is good”. This is naive. The government has actually created a four-pronged drive to conform psychotherapy to what it, the government. How is it possible that three of these four planks are no good, but that the fourth is good?

Then there’s a question about who will benefit. Who will really benefit? The clients? The patients? The rank and file of psychotherapists and counsellors? Forget about it. What you’re seeing is jockeying for position. Fairly naked, power-driven attempts by the big organisations, like the BPC, like BACP, and I’m sorry to say, like UKCP, to get an ever bigger pile of the psychotherapy and counselling cake. It was the recognition on my part of this nasty truth that helped me to see that it was time to move, time to say I was wrong.

By the way, this is only a persona thing that the government is doing. But if you’re a Jungian, you’ll know that the persona goes deep. It won’t be enough, really, to get out of registering by calling yourself a psychoanalyst, an analytical psychologist, a Jungian analyst, a plain old therapist. You might not get prosecuted, but you’ll still be living in a world dominated by this HPC process.

Incidentally, for those of you that are worried, in preparation for this talk, I called two major psychotherapy and counselling insurers and there is, in my view, no risk at all that a properly qualified psychotherapist or counsellor who applies for professional indemnity insurance will not get it because they are not registered with HPC. So many people have made [comment from the audience] “it doesn’t mean it’ll always be like that” [back to Andrew] it doesn’t mean it’ll always be that way, and you know something? Whilst this

is a very important cause, critiquing and seeking to stop state regulation via the HPC, if, at the end of the day, somebody feels that their life issues require them to register, whilst in their heart, they wish they hadn't had to, then that's what will happen. But at the moment, by the way, arts therapists who are not state registered by HPC can get insurance on identical terms, so, with all due respect, the story, so far, is relatively optimistic. I'm coming to the end.

Some deeper issues here. We're going to have to mount a pretty substantial public education programme, are we not? One spin off from this is that the public may learn more about what is involved in psychotherapy, counselling, in the whole psy field than they have done up to now, despite the efforts of these big, massively funded organisations that we all pay hundreds of pounds to. The fact is that the psychotherapy and counselling community has simply not reached into the culture. It's stayed, in this country, a professional matter. The penetration into British culture and society that might occur when this Alliance starts to publish what it thinks and feels about psychotherapy and counselling, could be quite substantial.

I will just make a few, very brief, deeper points, and then I want to read you a poem. There's a lot of talk, especially in relational psychoanalysis, but I think elsewhere, of what is called 'the third' in relation to psychotherapy and counselling practice. 'The third' means something that is in the room, with the two of you, or with your group, that isn't actually, visibly, apparently and concretely of the dyad or of the group. It's a third element. Society, culture, the economic system which will become an ever more pressing third. But also the organisation and structuration of the profession. If this state regulation that we've been told we must accept because it is, quote, inevitable, unquote, comes about, then everybody's practice will be irradiated by a new third, in a new, and frankly, quite threatening, way.

Second, slightly deeper point. I've learnt, haven't we all learned, there's no guaranteed right way to do therapy and counselling. It's a private business, but above all, it's a risky business, failure is not a stranger to counsellors and psychotherapists. In fact, we work with it, explore its lineaments, probe its depths, we're artists in failure. Rumi said, the

Sufi poet Rumi said, “failure is the key to the kingdom”. Bob Dylan said, “there’s no success like failure, and failure is no success at all”, but he always was a bit perplexing.

I will conclude my fifteen, or seventeen minutes, with a poem. Now this is a holocaust poem. The point is not the holocaust, the point is about memory, absence; absence in our case of a conception, a vision of the field, because, after HPC, if that is what happens, many visions and conceptions in the field, held dearly by people in this room, will not be as available as before. It’s a Polish poem, but I’m going to read it in English, obviously.

I did not manage to save a single life

I did not know how to stop a single bullet

And I wander round cemeteries which are not there

I look for words which are not there

I run to help where no one called to rescue after the event

I want to be on time, even if I am too late

Thank you.