

# *PsyPraxis* – the Changing Context

## Research Report 46 12 March 2010, [Janet.Low@mac.com](mailto:Janet.Low@mac.com)

Do you remember the excitement of watching the milometer clicking over from 9999 to 10000? Do you remember the excitement of the supposed millennium-bug ten short years ago? Did you read those interesting books that came out then to teach us what we'd forgotten about zero? Georges Ifrah – *The Universal History of Numbers*; John D Barrow – *The Book of Nothing*; Robert Kaplan – *The Nothing that Is*; Brian Rotman – *Signifying Nothing*; and Charles Seife – *Zero: The biography of a dangerous idea*. They all reminded us that zero remains an invention very tricky to grasp *rationally*. Those who got their hands on it first were pretty unprepared for its particular power and so sacrificed members of their underclass in the hope of protecting themselves. This was especially the routine when their calendar counting system approached the moment where the zeros clicked over on the metaphorical clock.

We've come a long way since then, yet there remains a certain madness that feeds off the idea of *newness*.

In today's copy [issue 2, Spring 2010] of the BPC's new publication *New Associations* we find Julian Lousada (Chair of the new BPC, hitherto the BCP) is quoted **in bold** as saying 'in this day and age, self regulation is a dirty word' and goes on to accept the slander as fact. This is part of a three-page transcription of a conversation between Lynne Gabriel (Chair, BACP), Andrew Samuels (Chair, UKCP) and Julian on the current state of play.

Lynne is quoted as saying, quite openly, that she is "challenged by [the UKCP's] multifaceted position on regulation. I can't grasp both [UKCP's] willingness to go with the HPC and ... also ... to say we'll not go with them." Those who do manage to hold

onto the position between the alternatives, and to carry on thinking whilst witnessing power at play, already know that the prospect of this secondary legislation being passed means that they must act now in order to build positions from which to carry on acting in the future. Even if the law removes all choice but to enter the HPC you must still know plenty about the power you will have to play with, that is plugged into its routines and rituals, and you must strengthen your ethical position which will be subject to the most extraordinary challenge without the corresponding institutional mechanisms of support that you would get in a practitioner based organisation. The power that is circulating in the HPC is *exclusively political* power (and has nothing whatsoever to do with Hippocrates or Hephaestus – of which more later). There is no hard work to hold it on course. There is no-one to call it to account on an ordinary everyday basis. Only the Queen (via her Privy Council) is entitled to call it in question. The power in a practitioner-based organisation at least has the virtue of being linked to the rationality of knowledge and reality of praxis as well as to a membership that can put forward arguments, call for information, and, indeed, vote. What Lynne Gabriel seems to say here is that if you are subject to the will of a more powerful body, you must, on no account, admit it, and certainly not admit you don't like it.

This position finds an echo in Julian Lousada who has resorted several times in public to invoking good citizenship as a rhetorical device to support his particular position. For example, he is quoted as saying "The problem is that PNC [principled non compliance] is not a strategy of citizenship, it's a strategy of individualism." (p3 *New Associations*). Under what

conditions does a man of such education, experience and position, seek to short-circuit a proper debate? Earlier in the piece he is quoted as saying “My sense is that a combination of robust opposition (to the HPC as regulator) and the sustained discussions that we’ve been having with them on the same issues have together resulted in their [HPC] acknowledgement that there will have to be a substantial rewrite (of the generic standards of proficiency) in order to accommodate us. Perhaps wrongly, I trust that they are going to do that...” On what grounds does Julian Lousada place his trust? On what grounds does he reverse his opinion?

Lynne Gabriel states openly that she is pursuing HPC regulation to gain status, respectability, and money (p3). Throughout the reported conversation Lynne talks about what the HPC *will* do, is *going* to do, has *promised* to do, and ignores the fact that the process should by now be over (and that her organisation has had special privilege in the process so far, and yet failed to make much of an impact).

I think it worth noting in passing, that the word ‘modern’ is supposed to denote NOW, something happening in the moment, not the future, and much less in the conditional. The only reason the HPC is still making promises (the proposed new generic standards, the proposed new FTP process, the proposed new changes to GP statements re health etc, etc, etc) is because active individual subjects took the time, trouble, and inconvenience, to slow the juggernaut down.

There are two other articles in this BPC paper that I’m going to mention. The first is written in a very strange style and is placed (on page 9) in opposition to an essay by Andrew Samuels (which is entitled Regulation: do we have a choice? and appears on p8). It has no attributed author, but is presented under a pseudonym: INTEGRITY. Yet there is also reference to a group called Integrating Social Responsibility into Psychological Therapies (ISRPT), which is described as “a number of

practitioners [who] have recently come together to form a new group called Integrity that supports statutory regulation under the Health Professions Council”. We are not told who these people are. The mystification grows ever thicker as the text takes up the style of journalistic objectivity: ‘Integrity is a new body promoting statutory regulation ... It came from a group of practitioners who were [sic] interested in working constructively with the government ... Integrity say they want to gather voices... They want to harness our profession’s vision ... The group says that regulation will free up access to funding... They want us ... They believe that an independent regulator in is vital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century... The group point to several facts... They claim that ... ’ Etc, etc, etc. It is only in the final paragraph that the author appears to acknowledge his or her relation with ISRPT, though there is still some room for doubt: “It is the belief of INTEGRITY that if we enter into an effective partnership with HPC, they [the HPC] will become fit for purpose”. If the author is in fact not INTEGRITY, then INTEGRITY appears in the text like a kind of all knowing, all powerful presence: “It is the belief of INTEGRITY that if we enter into...” What on earth is going on here, and why does the BPC ‘welcome’ it?

Finally, CEO Malcolm Allen, whose love of the classics has not saved him from the temptations of modern political blather, writes the front-page news. He book ends his piece with two classical references. Heading his article ‘Forging a modern profession’ he begins with a quote from Hippocrates, and ends with a reference to Hephaestus, yet the bulk of the text pushes the reader to buckle under the HPC. With Hippocrates he suggests that *psychotherapy* is part of a long and noble tradition, and with Hephaestus he suggests something primal, hard working, and strong. I don’t know, I only got Greek Lit in Translation as an O Level, but I don’t think Hephaestus would have earned his reputation under an HPC regime.