

A couple of months ago CTP submitted its second application to the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario to be formally endorsed by the provincial government as a recognized training institute for our profession. Although CTP was one of only a few institutes that received mention in the final report of the government's HPRAC committee that was established to conduct the province wide public hearings that gave rise to the Transitional Council that was tasked with the creation of the college, our initial application was not given the stamp of approval we had anticipated. The fact that it takes a minimum of six years to complete our program and, I can safely say, it offers the most thorough going psychotherapy training in at least the province, did not win the day. For that first application, collectively we had spent many hours documenting what we do in our various roles as faculty members and what we require of our students. What we submitted seemed like more than enough to address the collection of competencies required for our graduates to be admitted to the college. Graduates like these four shining examples we have here this evening.

As you might imagine, the response we received to what we regarded as our carefully crafted application left us quite perplexed. Thankfully one of us, most likely our registrar, Susan Wood, knew what to do. So we hired a consultant who has a PhD in, educational theory to help us. He was a terrific and hard-working professional who was quick to assure us there was nothing lacking in our program. Our problem was more like a language barrier. To help us understand what he meant he used a Power-Point presentation, as you might expect from a person with a PhD in educational theory. In the part of the presentation that stuck in my mind there is a divided screen and on one half there is a bowl of fruit salad. On the other half the fruit that went into making that lovely looking salad is separated into several neat rows. All the cherries lined up next to a row of grapes, that are next to a row of orange pieces....You get the picture?

Then he told us that we were that bowl of fruit salad; an interesting and rich mix of colours and flavours, and textures. But the problem we were now confronted with was that the people with whom we were attempting to communicate were not at all accustomed to dealing with this kind of *mélange*. They are schooled in making sense of things when they are presented in clear distinct categories so you can readily see

exactly what fruit is present and how much of each fruit there is so that with some minor calculations one could easily speak of percentages and maybe the ratio of cherries to grapes.

Suddenly, I was left thinking that the application we had toiled over might as well have been written in crayon.

So what, you might be wondering, has this got to do with the graduation of these four psychotherapists? I'm speaking of it because it is emblematic of the two worlds that these grads will be expected to straddle. As psychotherapists who will be required to become members of this newly formed college, if they want to call themselves psychotherapists, Michele, Marco, David and Steve will now be regarded as health practitioners. Their interactions with the college will be shaped by the language it speaks and by the expectations imbedded in that language. As a modern bureaucracy it operates according to the terms and functions associated with the brain's left hemisphere. Its thinking is linear and logical; it makes sense of complex phenomena by isolating and examining their parts; it systematically gathers data and subjects it to mathematical analysis. The left brain loves to count things and to compare new findings to what it already knows to be true. Its powerful abilities are what drive scientific exploration and what distinguishes us from all other species. These left brain functions dominate the thinking and professional activities of the majority of health practitioners. And this is a good thing. You don't want your physician basing his decision to, say, remove your gall bladder because he's got a hunch that's just the best thing to do. You want him using all those analytic left brain functions to systematically diagnose, as best he can, what's giving you that pain and what's the best way to address it.

The left hemisphere is commonly referred to as the brain's dominant half because of its remarkable abilities and accomplishments. But it also has some real limitations when it comes to other important human capabilities that reside in the right brain. Because the left brain knows what it knows by virtue of its ability to use logic and reasoning, it tends to discount ways of knowing that don't rely on reasoning. So it's capable of analyzing a painting in terms of its colour spectrum and the chemical composition of its pigments, but it can't help us understand why an encounter with a particular work of art might evoke powerful psychological and emotional responses. Aesthetics belong to the right

brain, as do our capacities for relational experiences. This is why, as left brained scientific observations have recently shown us, it's the right orbital-frontal cortex that so rapidly develops in the infant's first weeks and months of life. This is the "relational brain" that develops as a result of the baby's ongoing interactions with his mother and other caregivers; that part of the brain that connects us, to varying degrees, to the human world. As growth of the right brain outstrips that of the left during those first several months of life, it is establishing the neuronal basis of a self that will develop the capacity to make meaningful connections with other selves. In the process, it also begins to use those vital connections to gradually grow the child's ability for greater self-regulation of the emotional and psychological states of her internal world. When, for any number of reasons, those early developmental processes get truncated or otherwise derailed, the individual can be left with life-long deficits in these essential self-regulating abilities.

This is where our graduates, like the four we are celebrating this evening come in. Though they have been required to use their left brains in the ongoing study of a variety of psychodynamic theories, what is truly unique about their training is how much it has focused on these right brain relational functions. In their psychotherapy training groups, their years of individual and group supervision, and virtually all their seminars they have been training the relational, intuitive and creative capacities of their right brains so as to enhance their abilities to meet their clients where these deficits originated and now reside, and present as symptoms of psychopathology and disorders of the self. In other words, Steve, Michele, David and Marco are a rich and colourful fruit salad. Collectively they know lots of theory but what makes them most effective as therapists is their hard-won self-knowledge that has been the central focus of their years of training at CTP.

In his book, **When the Sun Bursts**, Christopher Bollas writes, "to be a child is to endure a prolonged situation in which the human mind is more complex than the self can ordinarily bear". (p.4) The way the child's self survives this situation is for it to be consistently met in a caring and responsive way by the authentic self of the parent. When, for any number of reasons, there is consistent failure in that meeting, the child's self can manage to survive, but survival usually means making adaptations that limit and distort its natural development. These

limitations and distortions manifest in a wide array of what we might call, for the lack of a better single term, symptoms, that the individual might carry for a lifetime. Sometimes these symptoms, say the symptoms of depression or an anxiety disorder are manageable, maybe with the help of pharmaceuticals. And sometimes a person experiences “symptoms” which feel unmanageable, or she has a desire for more than just managing things, and so seeks professional help. If that help comes in the form of a psychodynamically trained therapist, this therapeutic engagement will usually result in the person eventually re-visiting experiences and situations from her early life in a way she’s never quite done before. Being a “good enough” psychodynamic therapist means that the therapist is able to accompany her there without pre-conceived notions of what she will find and what it might mean. If repeated failures within the early relational environment constitute those aspects of the person’s past that continue to trouble and limit the present, we can’t pretend to change or undo what has happened or not happened. But we can contribute to the process of her converting her past into her history. In other words, making new personal meaning of that past. However, for it to play a significant part in loosening the grips of past trauma, its meaning can’t be imposed from the outside; it is a subjective awareness that she arrives at internally. What we can provide is an informed, empathic and patient relational environment that might facilitate the process.

What our four graduating therapists are trained to provide is more or less the same as it has been since CTP’s beginnings back in the mid 1980’s. What has changed is that they are now required to engage in an ongoing formal dialogue with a college, a governmental organization that thinks and communicates in a language system that is quite different than the one that shapes the therapeutic discourse in which they have been immersed. So, for example, the college will ask therapists to provide statements describing their plan for the treatment of a given client. Such a question makes perfect sense in the language system familiar to administrators and employees of the college. But if a therapist were to point out that being guided by a specific and pre-conceived plan might actually undermine the therapeutic process, this would not make sense to the college’s representative. If the therapist were then to explain that for many of the clients she sees, living their life according to someone else’s plans has a lot to do with why they are in

therapy in the first place, the college official might think she's being cheeky or purposely opaque.

And so here we are, back at fruit salads vs. tidy rows of discrete fruit units. Left brain vs. right brain. What's to be done?

Well, I think it's safe to say that there's no going back to the way things were; the college is not going to go away. So the best way for us to carry our rich psychodynamic tradition forward is for us to become functionally "*bilingual*", to speak our language as well as the college's. The left brain, with its love for systematic linear thinking, is powerful and very influential in our culture. We all have one and would be lost without its abilities. But the right brain, that hemisphere that's so active in the moment-to-moment interactions with our clients, is "bigger". Our left brains have brought us technological advances that are the stuff of science fiction, but our right brains imagined and conceptualized those advances before their development was possible. And maybe what is most important is that our sense of humour, that human capacity that is essential to a sense of proportion, also resides in our relationally oriented right brain.

So I say to you Marco, David, Steve, and Michele, the good news about the college you will be joining, if you haven't already, is that it *is* a college of psychotherapists, which means that in some important ways it is ours. Thus, the possibility of being subsumed by an existing college, such as the College of Psychologists, where we might have been regarded as less qualified and so assigned to the position of hand-maidens who should look to them for direction and supervision, is not going to happen. Also, thanks largely to the tireless efforts of our own Philip McKenna, at least one "Trojan Horse", upon which we might gradually build, has been planted in the college's language system. So, in our various reports we can speak of how we safely and effectively use our "*self*" in our work with our clients. Thus as you go forward into your profession you can continue practice what you've trained so hard for, to "*use the Force*" but speak occasionally to "*the Empire*", in the only language that it comprehends.