

## **Tavistok Magazine and the digitisation of publications**

### **Interview with Christopher Clulow**

**Conducted by Natalia Larraz Rábanos<sup>1</sup> and Luisa Moi<sup>2</sup>**

I (interviewer): Dear Christopher Clulow<sup>3</sup> (from now onwards C.C.):

It is a pleasure for us to have you in our Journal "Revista Pensamiento Psicoanalítico".

**I: We know that you are an active member in the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TRHR) as researcher and professor. Many of our readers may not know about you, so could you please tell us about your professional background and your work at TR?**

C.C.: Dear Natalia and Luisa, thank you for your interest in my work. It is a pleasure to have this interview with you.

Before I joined Tavistock Relationships (it was then called the Institute of Marital Studies and was part of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations until 1979 when it left TIHR to become part of the Tavistock Institute of Medical Psychology – the body that founded the Tavistock Clinic in 1920) I worked with offenders and their families as a probation officer. At that time the Probation Service, as well as supervising offenders, offered voluntary couple counseling and prepared welfare reports for divorce courts when parents who were separating contested arrangements for their children.

During my time at Tavistock Relationships I saw many couples who were having difficulties in their relationships, I undertook research into services supporting couples becoming parents and those for parents who were separating. I also researched outcomes of couple psychotherapy, especially in relation to mental health, such as the impact of depression on one or both partners. I was involved in many training programs and was Director of the organization from 1987 – 2006, when I left to develop my own practice.

**I: Taking a look at your broad professional we see that you have edited and published books on marriage, couple relationship, parent's work and couple psychotherapy, more recently from an attachment perspective, and that you are now the editor of the most important journal on Couple and Family Psychoanalysis in English language. Could you please tell us about your contributions and your findings in these subjects?**

C.C.: The work of Tavistock Relationships is primarily informed by object relations theories,

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and in my work I have applied these concepts to a range of professional settings, including some (for example, family law) where the impact of unconscious processes can go unnoticed. As a couple therapist I have always been interested in making connections between different people, ideas and professional settings, learning from the unfamiliar as well as the familiar. My interest in Attachment theory was motivated in part by the accessibility of its ideas to a broad range of psychotherapists, the evidence base on which it is founded, and the personal resonance it has for me. I was also fortunate enough to know John Bowlby, who wrote the Foreword to my first book.

Generally speaking, what I have found is that personal and professional differences provide both obstacles and opportunities for development, and that the presence of a third party has the capacity to reduce the element of threat that can drive people into retreat. Cognition and affect can often become disconnected, and my sense is that emotion is a powerful driver of behavior. Engaging how people feel, as well as what they think, is important in enabling connections to be made. One of the most powerful insights that can result from psychotherapy is the realization that how we feel is fundamentally connected to how others are feeling, that we can sometimes feel what they are feeling even if they are unaware of feeling that way, and that much communication goes on outside the province of language. In other words, despite linguistic differences there are languages we have in common that are readily recognized and easily interpreted.

**I: We know that TRHR is a non-profit organization which applies social science to contemporary issues and problems which is worldwide known and very appreciated among professionals in our country especially in research areas and specifically in couple and family work. What are the basis characteristics that you would you highlight of your institution?**

C.C.: I can't answer this question since TR has not been a part of TIHR since 1979. But as part of the 'family' of Tavistock organizations TR shares a commitment to raising awareness of unconscious as well as conscious processes affecting personal, professional and institutional behavior. In other words, we want to take insights generated within consulting rooms into the community – to connect and appreciate the mutual influence of internal and external realities.

**I: The Journal Couple and Family Psychoanalysis, of which you are the actual editor, is an international journal, with peer revision of papers, that promotes the theory and practice of couple and family psychoanalysis, it is worldwide known between English speaking countries but not so much among us. We would very much like for you to tell us more about this journal and what you would like to transmit to our readers about this excellent publication.**

C.C.: As you say, Couple and Family Psychoanalysis aims to promote the theory and practice of working with couple and family relationships from a psychoanalytic perspective. It seeks to provide a forum for disseminating current ideas and research and for developing clinical practice. As well as publishing original papers it aims to promote debate, report on important developments, conferences and events, and review books and arts that are relevant to the concerns of its readers. It is published in hard copy as well as being available online, and 15 countries are represented on its Editorial and International Advisory Boards.

**I: We know that contemporary times make it difficult for journals to keep alive along time and that changes have to be undergone and there is a need to be updated. In this sense what has you journal done to keep up with changes?**

C.C.: The key to any journal's future is to keep abreast of the concerns of its readers. We have tried to broaden the international appeal of the journal by developing reciprocal arrangements with some non-English language journals so that the Contents of issues might be published in each, providing an information resource that is otherwise not easily available. We have increased the frequency of themed issues (most recently on musical connections with family psychoanalysis, and on separation and divorce) to provide a focused resource for readers. As well as making the journal available on PepWeb we are trying to be listed on the PsychInfo database, and there are digitized references for all original papers published. We added a Spotify playlist to accompany the themed issue on music, and we aim to raise the profile of the journal through interviews accessed via the publisher's websites and those of member organizations. Most recently we have used ScholarOne software to manage editorial processes. The publisher is offering discounted rates for subscriber groups and back copies can be accessed on its website: [www.firingthemind.com](http://www.firingthemind.com).

**I: We would also like to know if authors from non-speaking countries, have a chance to publish in your Journal.**

C.C.: Yes, we publish and welcome papers from authors where English is not their first language. There have, for example, been papers providing a valuable source of information about the contribution Link theory can make to professional practice, a relatively unfamiliar conceptual framework for many of our readers. Because the journal is only published in English, and contributors have to ensure their papers meet the required linguistic standard, collegiate or professional help may be needed if writing in English is proving challenging.

**I: We would like to have one last word from you to our readers.**

C.C.: If the Covid pandemic is teaching us anything it is that the global community is small and vitally interconnected. Insularity will prevent us meeting the major challenges facing humans

as a species, and the same is true for the much smaller community of couple and family psychoanalysts. The microcosmic work we do to improve relationships can have macroscopic benefits, and I hope the journal for which I currently have responsibility can make some small contribution to this ambitious project.

**I: Thanks a lot for your kindness in giving us some of your time for this interview.**

\*The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) is a non-profit organisation of British origin that applies social science to contemporary issues and problems. It developed out of the Tavistock Clinic which had been founded in 1920, TIHR developed in 1947 as a separate entity. During the Second World War it played a pivotal role from its work in that context. It subsequently developed and continued research on human groups and organisations, interested in how the bonds between people are shaped in their day-to-day relationships. A large grant from the Rockefeller Foundation enabled TIHR to be set up as an autonomous entity.