

## Antidote and the Network: Mind the Gap

published in [Network Review No 75](#)

**David Brazier, Abingdon, England**

*Not to expose your true feelings to an adult seems to be instinctive from the age of seven or eight onwards.*

*George Orwell*

I was saddened to read of the death of Author Ellison (Network 74 p36). Professor Ellison helped me through some difficult times in 1986 and I became a member of the Network shortly after - I still have George Blaker's hand written correspondence. I felt motivated to respond to his recent question, "*Should we go forward in this way towards the fulfilment of the Network's original aim?*" (Network 74 p29). In this article, I will present my personal perceptions of the Scientific and Medical Network by contrasting the aims of the Network with the aims of another charity - Antidote (the campaign for developing an emotionally literate society). In fact, there may be some membership overlap between the Network and Antidote (the latter will more likely be known to those Network members who are psychotherapists, educationalists or holistic practitioners). What's the aim of Antidote?

*Our aim is to create an emotionally literate culture, where the facility to handle the complexities of emotional life is as widespread as the capacity to read, write and do arithmetic. (Susie Orbach, Antidote Co-founder)*

Like the Network, Antidote are calling for a deeper understanding of life from a humanistic perspective. Both organisations are interdisciplinary. Both are seeking to turnaround society's romance with materialism and consumerism. Both have members who are passionately striving to implement the vision. Both are attempting to move from the fringe into the mainstream and both are seen as heretical and occasionally ridiculed by the media.

Different Wavelength?

The following table contrasts my take on the differing perspectives between the Network and Antidote. I have selected these polarised aspects to illustrate a point, and they should not be taken as representative of organisational or individual views, other than my own. However, if others can acknowledge these contrasts, and if we view the human being as four-dimensional (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual) then maybe there is some value in exploring the reasons behind these differences:

<b>Network: Emphasis on:</b>	<b>Antidote: Emphasis on:</b>
1 Rational	1 Emotional
2 Intuitive	2 Instinctive
3 Philosophical	3 Political
4 Psychological	4 Psychosocial
5 Cognitive	5 Narrative
6 Natural Science	6 Social Science
7 Esoteric	7 Economic
8 Self	8 Community
9 Intelligent Heart	9 Compassionate Heart

10 Emotional Intelligence	10 Emotional Literacy
11 Divine Feminine	11 Raging Masculine
12 Peace and Tranquility	12 Isolation & Pain
13 Masculine/Femine	13 Gender Politics
14 Cosmology	14 Criminology
15 Chaos Theory	15 Crime and Disorder
16 Karma	16 Restorative Justice
17 Telepathy	17 Communication
18 NDE's & OBE's	18 Domestic Violence
19 "All Life is One"	19 Poverty and Desolation
20 Dialogue (Bohm)	20 Dialogue (Scott Peck)
21 Science & Sacred	21 Meaning and Vision
22 Spirituality	22 Responsibility
23 Spirit	23 Spontaneity
24 Thinking	24 Feeling
25 Mental	25 Physical
26 Abstract	26 Concrete
27 Reflective	27 Active
28 Detachment	28 Engagement
29 Observation	29 Intervention
30 Enquiry	30 Service

One could go on adding to this list, but there is more than enough to synthesise a trend. A cursory analysis might reveal elements of East/West; Inner/Outer, Subjective/Objective or Soul/Personality but there is nothing new here. However, there is something newsworthy if we dig a bit deeper and look at the foundations and origins of these charities. Here we will find that the polarised rift correlates to the estrangement between the sexes. The Seeker-Scientist / Feminist divide.

#### Doublethink

*Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them.*

*George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, 1949.*

As Chris Argyris (2000) has been championing for years, most people employ two mutually inconsistent theories of effective action: the one they espouse and the one they actually use. In other words most of us fail to "walk the talk". We say one thing, and do another, or as the Native Americans would have said "white man speak with forked tongue". According to Argyris, most of us are consistently inconsistent in the way we act and very few of us are aware of this contradiction. Argyris proposes that most of us design our behaviour in order:

- to remain in unilateral control;
- to maximise winning and minimise losing;
- to suppress negative feelings; and
- to be as rational as possible

Argyris (1994) asserts that the purpose of this defensive strategy is to avoid vulnerability, risk, embarrassment, and the appearance of incompetence. In other words it is a deeply defensive strategy and a recipe for ineffective learning:

*In studies of more than 6000 people, I have found this kind of defensive reasoning to be universal, with no measurable difference by country, age, sex, ethnic identity, education, wealth, power, or experience. All over the world, in every kind of business and organisation, in every kind of crisis and dilemma, the principles of defensive reasoning encourage people to leave their own behaviour unexamined and to avoid any objective test of their premises and conclusions.*

#### On Divine Frenzy

Over the last fourteen years I have attended only one Network event - the 20th Anniversary of Mystics and Scientists. Although this was a fascinating and enjoyable experience, it did feel very cerebral and at times very serious and esoteric. I felt a bit ungrounded at the end of it all. I wonder if other Network members feel this tacit notion that somehow Spirituality needs to transcend our emotional life? This idea that in order to be in touch with God we must somehow become inanimate and without emotion? The 15th Century renaissance philosopher, Marsilio Ficino in a letter to his friend Peregrino wrote:

*The powerful emotion and burning desire which your writings express prove, as I have said, that you are inspired and inwardly possessed by that frenzy; and this power, which is manifested in external movements, the ancient philosophers maintained was the most potent proof that the divine force dwelt in our souls.*

Ficino goes on to say (quoting Plato) that this force derives from the yearning of the Soul to return to its Creator:

*Plato thinks men never remember the divine unless they are stirred by its shadows or images. In Plato's view, this poetic frenzy springs from the Muses.*

When a person is true to their Muse and inspiration, they speak truth. Ficino concludes:

*For this reason, my Pellegrino, you will act justly and rightly if you acknowledge, as I believe you do already, that the author and cause of what is best and greatest is not you, nor indeed any other man, but immortal God.*

#### The Antidote Conference

I had never heard of Antidote until one morning in January, when I caught a clip on BBC Breakfast TV of Antidote's director James Park announcing the forthcoming launch of their manifesto at the House of Parliament. On February 3rd I attended the public launch of this manifesto at London's Brunei Gallery. Criminologist and documentary filmmaker, Professor Roger Graef, chaired the gathering of 140 or so attendees. From the outset it was stressed that this was no ordinary conference; we were all called upon to contribute ideas on how to move Antidote from the fringe into the mainstream. Antidote use the word political in the widest possible sense - much like George Orwell (1947) "*a desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's ideas of the kind of society that they should strive after*".

Professor Richard Wilkinson (a research fellow at the University of Sussex) gave a presentation on Economics, Emotions and Health, drawing from material in his recent book

(2000). Wilkinson provided compelling evidence that disparities of wealth and esteem within a society lead to chronic stress, anxiety and premature ageing in those individuals with fewer resources, or less status. He has researched the psychosocial and physiological factors of civil servants in London and found a four-fold difference in heart disease within one office alone (after adjusting for other material factors like smoking or alcohol).

Following many research programmes and data sets, Wilkinson has identified these three dominant risk factors for stress:

- low social status;
- weak social affiliation; and
- insecure early emotional development

We were told that life expectancy is dramatically improved where income differences are smaller and societies are more socially cohesive. This relationship between health and equality suggests that important social needs will go unmet without a larger measure of social and distributive justice. Wilkinson's position was strongly egalitarian.

Professor Beatrix Campbell gave a talk on *Crime, Community and Communication*. The issue centred on violence in society and the perpetrators of violence - who are overwhelmingly men. Campbell explained that while there has been an exponential explosion of curiosity in books on 'masculinity' over the last decade, the behaviour of poor, socially-excluded men tells us more about masculinity than 'mainstream masculinity' would like us to know. Those things, which make life too hard to bear, domestic violence, illuminate the whole. Campbell argues that the things that excite young men include: being seen to have power, having an audience and being noticed. "*Violence then is not about losing control - men's usual excuse - it's about taking control.*" Men secure this control by whatever means they have access to (e.g. their community, their street). Campbell asserts there is a shared culture between the mainstream and the marginal; between the police (or the Army, Masons, Cabinet Ministers) and young men hanging around a bus stop. "*There is endless political rhetoric on 'getting tough on crime' but there is a refusal by government to say anything sensible about the perpetrators of crime*". In essence, Campbell believes that men are the 'problem'. Criminology then, is nothing, if not what men do. But Campbell is sensitive and compassionate about the causes of violence. *What can men do with their pain?* she asks. The punitive, nasty, control systems (prisons) are an expensive way to make people worse.

Antidote's other co-founder is Andrew Samuels (Professor of Analytical Psychology at the University of Essex) a Jungian analyst and author of *The Political Psyche*. Samuels gave a talk on his recent book *Politics on the Couch (2001)*. He explained that conventional politics is the culture of the "hero" and top-down leadership, which is one-sided, patriarchal and wastes our collective imaginative political energy. So we end up feeling demoralised and cynical.

*That Feeling*

*When you sit*

*On a chair*

*And the chair's*

*Not there*

*That's the feeling I mean -*

*That's the Blair.*  
(Adrian Mitchel)

Samuels (1996) believes there is a lot wrong with the way therapy is organised in this country and that it is wrong to try to analyse society directly. He stresses that conventional politics is breaking down and there is now a growing movement towards 'good-enough' leadership. His experience of clinical practice reveals there is much valuable insight to be shared in political thinking and he noted that feminine ideas on leadership have already found their way into conventional business practice. Samuels calls this movement '*transformative politics*' if and uses terms such as '*democratic spirituality*' and '*resacralisation*'.

Samuels (1996) has studied a selection of direct-action campaigners shortly after the Los Angeles riots. He asked them to recall and record their emotional, fantasy, dream and physical responses to the riots:

*People said that they had often reacted in a bodily or other highly personal way to political events. For example people felt strange pains in specific parts of their bodies, or suffered from general symptoms such as nausea or giddiness, or found themselves mysteriously falling asleep... Many people who do inner work on themselves run away from politics as being 'dirty', just as many activists cut themselves off from the radical imagination by pouring scorn on introspection. It is time to do something about this silly and wasteful inner/outer split.*

Many bodywork practitioners within the Network will undoubtedly recognise the validity of these observations. Our physical and emotional lives are not taken seriously in everyday political discourse, where only the rational is important. And even then, only providing our message is presented using acceptable behaviour, where people behave in an objective, empirical, reasonable and common sense way. Let me be clear - Antidote are not advocating more direct action - they are calling for *Emotional Literacy*:

*Emotional literacy means being able to recognise what you are feeling so that it doesn't interfere with thinking. It becomes another dimension to draw upon when making decisions or encountering situations. Emotional expression by contrast can mean being driven by emotions so that it isn't possible to think. These two things are often confused because we are still uncomfortable with the idea of the validity of feelings.*

Two one-hour dialogue sessions were scheduled into the conference programme, where participants congregated into sector-specific groups: Education (31%); Families (16%); Business (13%); Communities (9%); Health (10%); Government (10%); Criminal Justice (6%) and the Environment (5%).

Feedback from the education group revealed that most school staff-rooms feel like 'emotional graveyards' where teachers feel they are privately going mad. The business group revealed that typical employee attitude surveys are ineffective, with management responses to such surveys always based on compromise - which meets the needs of no one. The family group found that once families started to talk about their emotional issues they encountered painful barriers that prevented continued communication and there was generally an unwillingness to face up to the pain that had not previously been discussed. Conference chairman Roger Graef stated that 'pain' was the root cause and driver behind a

lot of aggressive behaviour - men hitting others or women hitting themselves or their babies (who are seen as extensions of themselves).

There was a general reluctance by the panel to speak directly on spirituality (referred to at one point as the "S" word). Not that Antidote fail to recognise the spiritual (in fact they seem largely made up of Jungian analysts and therapists) but instead, they place great importance on the necessity for understanding our feelings and emotions, which are seen as a necessary precursor to growth and maturity. Madeline Bunting (*Guardian*) observed that the one place where you will find spirituality being openly discussed is in the boardroom. Recent management best sellers such as "Corporate Religion" and "Soul at Work" are increasingly case studying workplaces that have embraced some form of spirit and community (although its hard to see how one can reconcile Spirituality with making a profit). Tom Bentley spoke on *The Challenge of Change* - one memorable line here was, "*the future is what younger people do, not what older people think*".

#### Concluding Remarks

So in answer to George Blaker's question, I believe the Network needs to narrow its horizons and pay more attention to self-awareness and self-knowledge. Antidote state in their manifesto:

*Connecting to our feelings is neither a soft nor an easy option. Disconnecting from our feelings is not clever.*

Otherwise the Network really is in danger of being seen as, "*a comfortable club for the intellectually curious*". There is a Blakean revolution taking place in artistic, cultural, political, ecological and spiritual circles. It would be nice if the Network could be included in this role call. There is also increasing interest in Blake's prophetic works ( *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem* ). The Zoas represent the fundamental aspects of the four-dimensional individual:

- imagination - the Divine vision (Urthona);
- reason (Urizen);
- emotions (Luvah); and
- body (Tharmas).

For Blake, the reunion of these elements will lead to the redemption of the individual (and Albion - the poetic name for England). If the Zoas become disordered, if one of them usurps the role of another, one falls into the realm of torment, suffering and a deadly sleep (Ulro). Albion will only awaken when each Zoa resumes its proper role.

*What is now proved was once, only imagin'd. Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth. The eagle never lost so much time, as when he submitted to learn of the crow.*  
*William Blake, 1790.*

Author Ellison was an idealist. One can imagine a time when people were living in primitive communal societies, where people were honest, caring, decent, hardworking, socially concerned, friendly and generally the finest of individuals in every category. One can also imagine that the phenomena the Network focuses so earnestly on (e.g. telepathy, psychokinesis and clairvoyance) were everyday, matter-of-fact occurrences in these

societies. In the flurry to move towards spiritual intoxication, there is a danger that the Network is bypassing and ignoring the physical and emotional life. Aspects of the personality (body, emotions and lower mind) must be integrated and aligned with the Soul.

There could be a meeting ground between Antidote and the Network. Both organisations are encouraged to explore:

- a more appropriate balance;
- common ground and goals; and
- shared strategies and methods of collaborative activity.

*David Brazier is a risk management consultant in Abingdon.*

Support Antidote The Campaign for Emotional Literacy [www.antidote.org.uk](http://www.antidote.org.uk)

#### References

Argyris, C. (1994) Good communication that blocks learning, *Harvard Business Review*, v72n4. July - August.

Argyris, C. (2000) *Flawed Advice and the Management Trap: How Managers Can Know When They're Getting Good Advice and When They're Not*. Oxford University Press.

Campbell, B (1998a) *Diana, Princess of Wales: How Sexual Politics Shook the Monarchy*, The Women's Press.

Campbell, B (1998b), interviewed in *The Alternative Zine*. Available from: <http://freespace.virgin.net/mark.campbell10/alternative.htm>

Orbach, S. (1978) *Fat is a Feminist Issue*, Hamlyn.

Orwell, G (1947), *Why I Write*, essay.

Samuels, A (1993) *The Political Psyche*, Routledge.

Samuels, A (1996) *Therapists with Attitude: How psychotherapy redefines politics*, *The Red Pepper Archive*. Available from <http://www.redpepper.org.uk>.

Samuels, A (2001) *Politics on the Couch: Citizenship and the Internal Life*, Profile Books.

Wilkinson, R. (2000) *Mind the Gap: Hierarchies, Health and Human Evolution*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson.