Towards a Radical Psychotherapy[1]

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[1] This paper is based on a short presentation at the Annual Conference of the Society of Existential Analysis, 2016

Abstract
This paper considers the way in which perceptions of the 'other' change with the socio-cultural and physical environments that encompass our experiences. Using concepts from the Sartrean tradition, I argue that when we facilitate change in the way that another person experiences the world, we are acting both politically and from a radical perspective.

Key Words
Anxiety, Consciousness, Self, Other, Authenticity, Political, Radical, Psychotherapy.

Introduction
We live in a world that is characterised by discord and violence. Increasingly an air of pessimism pervades thoughts of the future, and the anger and hatred expressed in relations with what is considered 'other' seems to grow. Following the near collapse of finance capitalism, and internationally engendered civil wars, societies (within and across borders) appear more and more fractured, and although this has given rise to a variety of social movements, increasingly we see the rise of polemics similar to those of the 1930s, those dominated by a worldview that emphasises *hierarchy*, *difference* and *discipline*. It is these three words, I argue, that encapsulate the outlook that pervades the aftermath of social trauma, that engender and respond to a zeitgeist that is pervaded by a deepening of existential anxiety.

In arguing for a 'radical' psychotherapy[2], I am not necessarily suggesting that many of us do not approach our work in this way already, but rather making the case that if we are to carry out our role with authenticity, an awareness of the radical foundations of our work is pertinent. A starting point here is that our work is always social. This is axiomatic once one accepts the pervasiveness of social trauma. This arises, I argue, because social trauma is personal in its implications, and personal trauma always has social consequences.

All of us live *in* the world, in society, we are not absent from it at any time. Personal trauma, a consequence of experience, is the manifestation of anxiety that always has social consequences. We cannot detach from these consequences. Here I attempt to explore some of the implications for both counsellors and psychotherapists in the current context of social and cultural change. In so doing, I first consider the bedrock of trauma that is anxiety, before going on to outline what I consider to be the ethical basis of our work with reference to the philosophical roots of existentialism provided by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Finally, I argue the case for regarding our work as essentially political and, following Bazzano, M. (2016,) supporting a view that is both progressive and radical.

A note on anxiety
We are anxious beings, it is a part of who we are, and is one of the elements that defines us as human. Our anxiety is borne from our sense of uncertainty. Nothing is certain in our world; whether concerned with the outcomes of events or actions that are past, or those that have yet to take place, our world is coloured by uncertainty of varying degree. In part this uncertainty arises from the responses of ourselves or others to contexts which we engender or which directly concern us, and in part to events outside of our immediate sphere of influence, but which describe the context in which we exist. By saying that something is uncertain, we are saying it is, in some

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[2] I was inspired to use this expression by two luminous keynote speeches at the Conference of the Society of Existential Analysis, 2016: those by Manu Bazzano and Michael Montgomery.

degree, unpredictable; that the outcomes of events are not, and cannot be fully known. The anxiety borne of this fundamental uncertainty, I describe as *existential* anxiety. An anxiety that pervades and defines our existence, and also underpins all states that are misleadingly described as examples of psychological dysfunction.

In response to this pervading sense of anxiety we attempt to build structures, ways of seeing ourselves in the world that coalesce around a notion of 'who' we are. I have argued (Pearce, R. 2016), following Sartre, that we approach an awareness of self pre-reflectively, but that this sense is dynamic in the way that it interacts with our reflected knowledge of the world. But this perception of identity, however fleeting or even misconceived, is a structure through which we attempt to ameliorate anxiety, to make our 'self' safe in an uncertain world. It allows us to find value in an otherwise meaningless world. The more comfortable we are with this identity; the more we are able to feel included, accepted or connected, the less the threat of uncertainty pervades our consciousness.

The anxiety we live is a part of us, but our ability to manage this is contextual. The word 'trauma' is generally taken to refer to a "deeply distressing or disturbing experience"; we can interpret this as meaning an experience that threatens our ability to coherently manage our contextual anxiety, that threatens the structure that is our sense of 'self'. As psychotherapists we are very aware of the way in which personal traumas may threaten such structures, leaving individuals open to the invasion and consolidation of fears: shells permeated by the toxicity of uncertainty. But there is also social trauma, the anguish of social change that may lead to the falling away of the expected, the recognisable, of everything that marks our world as 'safe'. And when we encounter trauma we may seek to reinforce these structures, to pursue certainties in our attempts to counter our growing anxiety. I believe, however, that there is always a personal face to social trauma, just as there is a social face to personal trauma: one reinforces the other.

Hierarchy, Discipline and Difference[3]
Social trauma may take many forms, have many depths, and even though our times are coloured by a plethora of events that might be considered 'traumatic', it is seldom absent in an uncertain world. What concerns us as psychotherapists, however is our understanding of trauma as it engenders responses in those who come to us with their pain. The shock of change can be destabilising and threatening and, I argue, precipitate responses that are often 'inauthentic' in ways that reinforce the very conditions that threaten.

The vision that the words hierarchy, discipline and difference convey is one pervaded by a desire for order, for certainty and for acceptance. The archetypal 'safe place'. A perception of structure (order) is necessary to obviate the enervating impact of uncertainty and to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance by others. Without the metaphorical scaffolding that is perceived as order, the edifice through which the ability to envision a 'safe' or estimable future begins to crumble. It is the container through which hope and aspiration can emerge. This sense of structure can appear spontaneously from the social fabric when it engenders a feeling of containment, of grounding, such that the individual has a sense of ease in their environment or

[3] After the tragic death of the British member of parliament Jo Cox, I researched websites sympathetic to the views of the person who killed her. These three words, I believe, are a synthesis of the ideological motivation of those who perpetrate current tendencies towards such intolerance and hate.

relationships, and feeling at ease implies an absence of threat, a perception of integration and belonging. Such an emanation of order is then an internal manifestation rather than an imposition. But when that structure appears threatened, or in some way made impermanent, then we seek to create ways of retaining or regaining the certainties that are leaving, to establish or reinforce the scaffolding that holds our fleeting sense of self together, and these are configurations of defence, of walls rather than of openness. Structures to protect us from the chaos of uncertainty.

At the Edge of Uncertainty
To say that our world appears in chaos, is to say that it is beyond our knowledge, unfathomable; unreachable and separate from us even though we are a part of it. Chaos is always there, it resides at the edge of uncertainty. It is when the world becomes unknowable. But when the breakdown of familiar structures appears to escalate, the world becomes threatening and 'unsafe'. What is safe is what is known, what can be predicted. So we seek to make the world safe, even if that means accepting a place of subordination in that world, as long as we have a place, a home that is predictable and more certain. We seek "order in the midst of chaos". In such a context the external imposition of order becomes acceptable or even desirable, and the price of that is acquiescence to hierarchy, to having a place in the social context that is imposed. In so doing, as I argue below, we abjure our freedom in order to avoid the responsibility that freedom brings. But the imposition of hierarchy requires discipline, and what better tool with which to impose discipline than a sense of difference[4], a way of differentiating ourselves from others, others who (we might believe) have a lesser or undeserved place in that hierarchy, so that we may justify to ourselves our certainties in a world that is attained at the expense of (instead of) that which is different to ourselves, of that which is 'other'.

Often our engagement with the 'other' is contradictory, or at least paradoxical. On the one hand, we seek inclusion with and by the 'other' to enhance our sense of certainty, to reduce the anxiety that comes with a lack of predictability about our future. Inclusion gives us a sense of belonging, being a part of something greater than ourselves. In this we are like species of bird that fly in flocks to reduce the chance of being 'picked off' by a predator. We do not stand out, we are less vulnerable. We seek to shore up our sense of vulnerability, above all our vulnerability to the predator, to a threatening 'other'. At the same time, inclusion provides a sense of safety against that which excludes. And exclusion, creating a sense of difference, allows us to identify (make common feeling) with others who appear in some way more like ourselves, more separate from that which can be excluded.

I suggest that this dichotomy of inclusion/exclusion closely mirrors another binary, that of intimacy/individuation. Just as our responses to social contexts can hinge on our desire to be both separate and secure (a part of), our responses to the unfolding circumstances of our more personal lives can pivot around the paradoxical and conjoined searches for merger and separateness (Pearce, 2014). In this context, the often overwhelming, and frequently pervasive fear of 'not being good enough', can distort our equilibrium between these two foundational ways in which we seek to combat uncertainty, to ameliorate anxiety. 'Not being good enough' implies not being accepted, and not therefore feeling included by others. In more severe circumstances

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[4] I use the term 'difference' here to imply a means of differentiating and separating. In expressing individuality or a minority interest 'difference' *can* be something we celebrate. But the term can also be used, as I have, to denigrate that which is 'other', to separate ourselves from that which we seek to dominate, or use to shore up our sense of our self-worthiness.

this struggle may lead us to crave acceptance by the 'other' or, alternatively, to immerse ourselves in exclusion, from where we may comfort ourselves in the 'safety' of self-loathing, or the defiance of the 'outsider'.

Often both these impulses may run in contradiction as we seek to respond to the threat of what Laing described as ontological insecurity, a state characterised by fear of engulfment or depersonalisation, often both at the same time (Laing, 1960). Laing described an ontologically secure person as one having a sense of identity and autonomy. We can interpret this state as one where there is an awareness of oneself as an entity, a cohesive sense of existing that is capable of continuity. This need not be fixed, it does not preclude change, but neither is it threatened by change. At the same time, this entity feels a measure of control over her choices, a freedom to interpret her experiences.

Freedom and Authenticity

A cornerstone of the existential or Sartrean tradition emphasises the notion of freedom, that is the existence of agency in the context of choice, and that we can exercise that choice in either an active or a passive way. But choice is unavoidable. We are, according to that tradition, contingent beings shaped by experience, but making choices in how we respond to that experience (Sartre, J-P. 2008). Often that choice is made impulsively, without reflection, a response to habit or embedded ways of responding. By saying that such choices are embedded within us, I am suggesting that they are products of what Sartre described as non-reflective consciousness, our innate sense of self. That awareness of ourselves, or self-consciousness, that meets the world.

Reflective consciousness, on the other hand, (the presence of which is perhaps what defines us as human beings), reflects on past or future experiences, it tries to make sense of the world and, sometimes through deliberation, makes what might be called 'informed' choices. Even allowing for reflection, however, such choices are influenced to a varying degree, by past responses to experience, our habitual ways of 'thinking' about a particular entity or conjuncture (Webber, J. 2017, Ch. 7)[5]. To the extent this is the case, there is no agency and our choices are not free, they are not manifestations of our freedom, rather they represent our conditioning, our embedded ways of seeing and being in the world. On one level we may believe we are responding to an 'event' by making a choice in 'good faith', i.e. one that is 'genuine' or 'authentic', a choice that resonates with our sense of self, but more often than not such responses are inauthentic, or in bad faith.

The conception of freedom is a controversial one, and one about which Sartre moderated his views through his life (Sartre, J-P. 1977). When we say we are free in an existential sense we mean we are free to choose who we are, and therefore how we respond to events and experiences. That some sense of agency exists seems an imperative to the approach to psychotherapy adopted not only by existential psychotherapists, but to many humanistic, cognitive and psychodynamic traditions. But the extent that we feel able to exercise freedom, in Sartrean terms to change our original project, may be limited by the growth of habitual responses to choices, by embedded attitudes that have arisen in previous attempts to find a semblance of certainty in an uncertain world.

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[5] This new book by Jon Webber, entitled "Rethinking Existentialism" is a very valuable addition to the existential literature, but particularly here in drawing out the contribution of de Beauvoir's writing on embeddedness to the broader Sartrean tradition.

According to Sartre, a characteristic of bad faith is to deny our freedom; to act as if we have no choice, or to represent ourselves as an object, rather than a subject, as an entity rather than a process (Detmar, D. 2013). When we fail to recognise the choices we face, or be aware of the motivations that underlie that process of response, we are acting inauthentically. To act authentically, therefore, entails an awareness, or self-consciousness that enables us to 'know' in depth what causes us to make the choices or responses we make, and to act in a way that reflects that knowledge.

As a point of clarification, it is appropriate to refer back to the difference between the manifestation of 'self' that is 'aware', that is the sense we have of ourselves when we act; and the objectified self, or ego that we attempt to construct through reflection, through 'knowledge' (Williford, K. 2011). I would argue that neither of these two conceptions of "who we are" are necessarily authentic or inauthentic, there is no "true" self, just a process. And that process involves a constant dynamic between these two aspects of consciousness, a dialectical relationship that is the constantly changing bundle that is a human being (Pearce, R. 2016). The way we experience the world non-reflectively, our sense of awareness, is constantly interacting, dialectically, with our reflections on our experiences; and the tenor of those reflections move with the dynamic of how we experience the world. This is the fulcrum of our work as psychotherapists. But often this dialectic may be static or enclosed, repeating patterns of behaviour in order to reduce, or prevent the growth of uncertainty in our lives.

It is also a foundational tenet of existentialism that our senses and reflections are defined in relation to the 'other'. What exactly constitutes the 'other' in this respect may be a matter of debate, but here I will make the assumption that we are speaking of another human being, or collective of human beings, of whose presence we have come to be aware. For Sartre, this issue crystallizes around his discussion of the 'Look', and the impact of being rendered an object through the awareness of another (Catalano, J. 2010, Ch. 2) . We are 'known' by the other, in a way that objectifies us and denies our subjectivity, and therefore our freedom. We may in turn objectify the other, and reciprocate this exchange of hostilities.

In reality our interactions are likely to be far more nuanced than the polarised exchange that Sartre describes in Being and Nothingness (Sartre, 1956), and there has been considerable debate concerning the potential of reciprocal recognition of the other as subject: the potential of seeing not just an object, to dominate or fear, but a subject that is full of possibility (Martinot, S. 2005). But what does it mean to say that we are aware of the other as a subject? In one sense we do this when we perceive of ourselves as an object for the other, of the other's attention. And indeed this might often be the first reflex in a round of defensive endeavours, a marking of territory, as we attempt to position this intruder into our subjective space in a manageable place, to categorise and objectify, to make them more known and predictable, therefore bringing less uncertainty into our lives. Even if we allow their subjectivity, their freedom of expression, we may objectify it through making objects of ourselves: we feel comfortable when we know our place. So in this response to the otherness of the other we either deny our own freedom, our contextual agency, or we deny the freedom of the other.

The degree of familiarity may be important here, the other may already be conceived as relatively known, but also alienating. This alienation may be due to appearance, or past experience. Someone who through past actions de-stabilises our sense of self, our identity or capacity for subjective expression, or through appearance or observed behaviour may be associated in our perceptions with the likelihood of such de-stabilisation. The more the other is either a stranger who brings a high degree of uncertainty, or someone familiar who already carries a level of alienation, the more likely we are to respond in an inauthentic or bad faith manner, denying freedom through objectification. The more our responses are embedded, the more our disposition will be to act in this way.

It is through the manner of our confrontation with the stranger that our responses to the 'other' can be most clearly illustrated. In this respect, we don't meet the stranger in a vacuum. The stranger carries with them a wide range of information that imprints itself onto our senses. This will include appearance, mood, gesture and context. Through this we already attempt to make them less 'strange'. We react to these according to past experiences, whether real or imagined. And we make assumptions accordingly with respect to how 'best' we might meet this stranger. We rarely meet the stranger with an openness that allows us to perceive their freedom, the possibility that they can be other than what they appear to us in our past-laden perception. To the extent that we meet them from this closed place, we deny them their freedom to choose who they are; we meet them as predetermined, as an object, and we deny them their freedom.

In terms of the previous discussion concerning existential anxiety, how 'best' to meet the stranger in this context may mean how can we most easily make ourselves safe; our becoming less uncertain? How can we minimise the uncertainty that this encounter engenders? How can we reduce the potential threat? It is axiomatic that the greater is our ease with ourselves in any given situation; the less we fear the possibility of non-acceptance, the more open we can be to the other. The lack of openness in our disposition is therefore a reflection of our underlying existential anxiety.

A central tenet of Sartre's philosophy is that we free to choose who we are within our context. That we have agency and intentionality, and make choices given the world we face at any moment. To express choice is to reveal our subjectivity, and we do so in our interactions with the world we find ourselves in. But, he also argues, we should not lose sight of the equal potential of the 'other' to express their freedom. To deny our own freedom, is the ultimate deception in his view; it is the concept of bad faith or inauthenticity. It can be argued that such a precept provides the basis of an ethical framework and a political agenda.

An Ethical Framework
The ethical basis of an existential approach is probably first outlined by De Beauvoir (de Beauvoir, S. 1948; Bergoffen, D. 2012), although it is already implicit in Sartre's writings of the immediate post-war period, in particular his Anti-Semite and Jew (Sartre, 1944). The reasoning highlights the ethical or moral choices we face. To be authentic, according to this tradition is to make choices based on the knowledge that our primary purpose as humans is to 'unveil being', to seek the truth of our existence through our actions, and that that truth is predicated on the idea that it can only be revealed through our being; through our existential choices. We choose our actions, and therefore are responsible for them.

At the same time, to experience our subjectivity, to unveil our being, our transcendence, our becoming, is only a part of this story. To seek the truth of ourselves, is to seek a paradoxical truth that can never be known or held, but only glimpsed as an awareness of becoming. We are nevertheless bound to pursue this vision, to seek the unattainable in order to give meaning to our existence. But in this pursuit we are dependent on the subjectivity of the 'other', to be 'seen' or 'held in awareness' by the other. In our unveiling of our being, we need the 'other' to verify our existence. Without that verification we do not exist (Sartre, 2007).

Freedom of the other is essential to our own freedom, since without the other being free we cannot ourselves be affirmed as free; and if our own authenticity is dependent on our recognition of our freedom to transcend ourselves in pursuit of our original project, that is that we are free to make choices and accept the responsibility of those choices, it is also dependent on the other's freedom to recognise us as a free being, since without that recognition we cannot be aware of ourselves: it is through the 'other's recognition that we 'unveil' ourselves as intentional beings. To be authentic, therefore is to meet the 'other' in a mutual recognition of each other's subjectivity. I will now explore what this might mean in terms of psychotherapeutic practice.

What do we do in Psychotherapy?
I described a conception of existential anxiety that stems from the inescapable uncertainty that afflicts us as free human beings as we project ourselves into the future. It is when this uncertainty grows to proportions that are, or threaten to become, unmanageable, that we may seek therapy. Such uncertainty, and the anxiety it generates, has its roots in an 'other' of some description, an 'other' that is not known sufficiently to engender an adequate security of outcome. As Sartre described, the 'irrational' responses so engendered can lead to projections of fear, anger, or blame onto the source of uncertainty, onto the 'stranger' (or the 'strange' phenomenon). It is a projection that is designed to generate a movement towards a defence, a safeguarding, of a fragile sense of identity. The more fragile this identity construct, the greater the projection can become. Not to do so might allow this ephemeral sense of self to be undermined, to be left defenceless. Such responses, therefore, are often inadequately reflected but genuine responses to experiences of a palpable suffering.

Alternatively, and commonly, those projections are also interiorised, turned inwards, onto the 'self'. This may provide a more easily recognisable manifestation of alienation or non-acceptance, a process that more obviously (to us as therapists) describes the undermining of the scaffold that supports our transient sense of ourselves. But there is, I argue, a dialectical process, described by the *inevitable* and reciprocal action between our external and internal worlds. This process may, all too often, compound both forms of alienation and reinforce collective manifestations *of* non-acceptance, or hostility, towards the 'stranger', or that which is 'other'.

Drawing on this perspective, and while recognising that there are many things that we do in psychotherapy, I would suggest they have a common theme, and that this concerns facilitating awareness of self and other on the part of the person concerned. This statement itself may be contentious, and the subject of another paper, but briefly I would argue that this is the primary intention of all approaches. We may do many things, employ diverse techniques, but ultimately this growth in self-conscious

awareness is what we are trying to achieve. This, of course, raises the question of what we mean by 'self-conscious awareness?

In one sense we might think of self-awareness as one where we are familiar with "what is really happening". No illusions, no self-deception, we arrive at this point through stripping away, or seeing through, the masks and illusions through which we might interpret our actions and motivations, and through which we experience the world. This is not to say that there is a true reality that we are failing to see, it is not about platonic ideas of essentialism, but about understanding the conditioning behind our own sense of being in the world, and of being in the world in context, that is the fleeting and intuitive sense of awareness that we call a self. This might be described as an understanding of what it is we value. And if it is our values that define our sense of self, therefore, then it is an awareness of both what it is we value, and how we arrive at those values that constitutes, at least in part, our self-awareness.

But to enhance or elaborate an understanding of our 'selves' is only a part of the story. As psychotherapists we also seek to facilitate an awareness of the 'other', of the potential reasoning and conditioning that produce the actions and motivations of the other or others with whom we interact. An understanding of the other facilitates a placing into context of our own responses and intuitive awareness. But to be aware of the other in this way, means being aware of the other as subject, not as object, since if we objectify the 'other' we experience them as part of our objective world, not as subjects of their own worlds.

The awareness we are concerned to facilitate, therefore, is one that I have described above as authenticity. It is one that allows the mutual and reciprocal recognition of subjects; an authentic awareness that encompasses both the subjective presence of the self alongside that of those we come into contact, through whom we construct our lives. It is, as Sartre suggested, an almost impossible target, something we can glimpse from time to time. As Catalano has suggested, this place of good faith or authenticity exists somewhere between non-reflective consciousness and pure reflection, between subjectivity and non-objectifying thought. Pure (as opposed to impure) reflection implies a standing back from the perception of the subjective, a reflection that allows for the subjectivity of the other, similar perhaps to Buber's notion of 'I-thou'.

But if this 'authentic place' we seek as psychotherapists to facilitate is merely a fleeting presence, how we might argue does this change lives, or enable people to live more comfortably with themselves? I believe the answer stems from the idea of the self as a process: if we identify the 'self' as a sense or awareness of being that is non-reflective consciousness, then that self is in continual and dialectical interaction with our reason, our reflection, and in that interaction both our constantly changing. In psychotherapy, we facilitate the person to glimpse alternative possibilities of the world, and these glimpses in turn impact back on the way we meet the world, on our subjective responses to experience. Putting it another way, the subjective presence that is the self is in constant dialogue with reason, and both move as a result of that dialogue.

From the Sartrean tradition we take the ethical imperative of authenticity, of the mutual recognition of our own and other's freedom, as being of value and something to be sought if we are to live lives that have meaning. In psychotherapy, we seek to know and ameliorate the existential anxiety that lies at the root of the concerns that

people bring to us. This leads us to work with people to facilitate that awareness. The techniques we use in that process are of secondary concern and will be unique to each individual and each individual practitioner.

The Political and Psychotherapy
I contend that the essence of our work as psychotherapists is political, and that it is authentic and therefore ethical (in the sense described above) that we recognise the work as such. I further contend that it is likely that most psychotherapists, irrespective of training, work in a way that reflects the philosophical approach outlined above. Techniques may vary, but the underlying premise remains. A political act can be interpreted as any deliberate intervention that impacts, even in an imperceptible way, on the social context that is itself the sum of human relationships. Furthermore, I follow the Sartrean tradition, particularly as described in the 'Search for a Method', in maintaining that there is a dialectical relationship not only between the non-reflective awareness of our 'sense of self' and the reflective search for knowing, but also between that dynamic and our experiences in the world. Our motivations and actions, therefore, impact on the world as part of that dialectic, even if that impact is sometimes infinitesimal.

I understand that within the therapeutic context the individual brings a sense of themselves that is based on those continual and dynamic dialectical relationships. From within that process emerge the manifestations of anxiety that are the individual's responses to their world. I suggest that in the context of psychological trauma, of whatever degree, there can be a response that is a denial of freedom in some form, a loss of authenticity in relations with the world, either through negation of own freedom or that of the 'other'. The role of psychotherapy is to enable the individual to achieve a heightened awareness of their transient self; and to know and accept their own subjectivity as well as the subjectivity of others. It is through this process that we facilitate an understanding and awareness of the pain that emanates from anxiety.

Conclusion: towards a radical psychotherapy
In this paper, I have attempted to outline a challenge that we face as psychotherapists, in a world that is appears increasingly witness to social trauma and dislocation. That challenge is to recognise the political responsibility we face as psychotherapists, a responsibility grounded in the social nature of trauma and its consequences. The interweaving of personal and social trauma is ever present, and emergent from the bedrock of existential anxiety, an anxiety borne of the essentially uncertain nature of 'being towards', the uncertainty of our fragile self-construction as we project into the future.

It is this fleeting entity that is our self-projection that we seek to capture through the provision of a containing scaffold , a structure that is rendered vulnerable and which we seek to reinforce in response to trauma. This defensive process may lead to perceptions cloaked in inauthenticity or bad faith. Our role as psychotherapists in this context is not to collude with inauthenticity, but to facilitate an awareness of the freedom of self and other in a social context; to render the authentic response possible. Authenticity entails recognising and acting upon our own freedom in conjunction with that of others. It involves holding the 'other' in an awareness that allows both our own subjectivity and that of the other. And once we allow the other as a subject, rather than reducing her to an 'object' we no longer interact with the world

as though we are the centre of that world, but experience the world in a more open way. From this state of openness, each 'other' becomes an entity of the world that it is integral and equal. She becomes a free being, subject to the same 'situatedness' as all other beings within our perception. To objectify creates hierarchy, in the absence of objectification it has no foundation. Without hierarchy, discipline has no raison d'être and difference a changed connotation. As long as we cease to objectify self and other, then difference can be accepted rather than become a source of anxiety.

Referring back to the earlier statements regarding our potential response to uncertainty and the tendency to seek structure and surety: our desire to minimise vulnerability and fall back into the pursuit of 'hierarchy, discipline and difference'. We could find the antonyms of these in the French motto: liberty, equality and fraternity. In reflection of this, it can be noted that Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

"*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood*". (United Nations, 1948)

Perhaps this short statement can provide the ethical bedrock of our work as psychotherapists, and describe the political nature of our work as we strive to be authentic in our practice.

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