



Fables and Reflections

Ten

The pernicious appeal of the strong model

I intend to pursue here a line of thought that explores the appeal and attraction of different forms of idolatry for people in disarray or under unusual stress.

That line of thought will begin, almost at random, with the “hippy” culture which flourished in the United States and Europe during the late sixties and much of the seventies. And the direction the line will take touches on mental health and social work and other related disciplines and topics. Some of the images or examples I use come from the end of the twentieth century rather than the beginning of the twenty-first, reflecting my age as well as the time this piece was first drafted. But those examples are sufficient to make and even strengthen my point, I believe, and I have decided to keep them. This side of the Millenium, there are plenty of new examples, and they seem to be multiplying at horrendous speed. But the point is less what the examples are, than that they keep appearing, keep multiplying. As time passes, this piece seems to become not so much dated as more and more urgently relevant.

Before embarking on my line, I would like to set out two propositions.

One is that the true facts of any matter tend to be complex, closely related to the facts of other matters and to demand personal involvement ; put more simply, reality is never plain and simple, it is mountainous and complicated and to understand it you have to climb into it. You can't hang back in your laboratory if you want to understand.

Thus, where reality is, facile and easy answers are not - so why do people keep inventing facile and easy answers as a way of addressing reality ?

Where reality is, you cannot remain uninvolved - so why do people keep trying to detach themselves ?

The other proposition concerns mental health. I have worked in the field of mental health for most of my adult life. Having done so, I would conclude that the only fixed point, the only constant, the only fact I can always be sure of, concerning this subject, besides its complexity and final mystery, is that the practitioner who wishes to be usefully involved in it needs above all to be good at relationship.

Now to the beginning of this piece : in the late sixties and early seventies, there flourished a phenomenon called the “Counter-Culture.” To many people - and not just the young - it was a source of strength, hope and meaning, a force for regeneration, a kind of movement which one could join and feel part of. Much of it was silly, much was not. Some genuinely talented people consciously attached

themselves to it. Books were written about it. It shaped lives, provided martyrs, even perhaps helped to stop a war (the Vietnam War). To be part of the Counter-Culture was to be beautiful. People were convinced it would save the world, it would change the way people were and how Society worked, it would make the world beautiful.

Some surprisingly diverse elements went into this immensely powerful phenomenon and in Britain (and beyond) there is no doubt that the writings and mythos associated with the psychiatrist RD Laing constituted one of those elements. His fame and following extended far beyond the professional world of psychiatry. To be a friend, or even to imply you were a friend, of “Ronnie Laing” was to be beautiful. So that’s what people often called him - “Ronnie Laing” – even though the vast majority had never even met him. To imply friendship in this way earned instant social credit for the speaker.

The reason for Laing’s enthronement as some kind of guru seems to have been that he found poetry and significance in madness and - perhaps more important as far as his status went - the sensitive readings he took of the experience of schizophrenia found a richness, a resonance and a depth of meaning in that experience which the modern urban and suburban experience of ordinary living did not provide. Almost it seemed that becoming mad made you real, substantial and even heroic as a human being ; your madness made sense as an honest and consistent response to a senseless, immoral and alienating world.

Thus, at least as a concept, madness became trendy. Like having an LSD trip. No longer did madness mean some sort of failure to cope, some terrifying fall through the floor of coping and acceptability, some sort of unbearable mental shorting-out. On the contrary, it was a way of becoming. It was a passport to reality.

Consequently, the words “normal” and “sane,” spoken on their own without qualification, became taboo for a while. Everyone - from psychiatrists with the most narrowly biological approach to mental disturbance, to gossip columnists in popular newspapers - everyone felt bound to string together a doubt-filled floating phrase where once a single absolute would do. So Sanity became “So-Called Sanity.” Normality became “So-Called Normality”. These word-parades were usually delivered with a kind of conspiratorial chuckle. As if each was a kind of Masonic sign that gained you entry into the land of the beautiful people. That chuckle seemed to say : “Yes, well, we agree the conventional world is completely barmy, don’t we ? And we don’t truly belong here, do we , you and I ? We’ve seen through all this nonsense, this un-cool shit. Let’s hit the road, babe. Tomorrow, or the day after, let’s hit the road, okay ?”

Most people didn’t actually behave very differently from the way they always had, of course. But across an extraordinarily broad swathe of the population, the language did actually change for a while. And for some at least, it meant a genuine willingness to wake and stay awake to the complexity, the relatedness and inter-dependence of people and their behaviour.

In actual fact, at a level beneath the foolishness of some responses, and the faddishness and the glamorising that went with the guru status, Laing had much to say of real value. In actual fact “mental illness” is a highly relativistic concept, varying in its definition and its social meaning from age to age and from culture to culture. In actual fact, mental ill-health remains no less a mystery, a complexity, a fluidity, a subtle balance and constellation of factors and forces, than does mental health. And can anyone stand up and say with confidence and in a few words what mental health is ?

In actual fact, the treatment of most forms of mental illness by purely medical means is now almost everywhere accepted as being insufficient ; and people from all the relevant disciplines would agree that the notion and in some quarters still the hope that its causes and cure belong in the purely biological sphere, is untenable and doomed to disappointment. What is, after all, the “purely biological sphere ?“ Does anyone live there ?

We need to say immediately that none of the above denies the reality and cruelty of the experience of mental disturbance, nor the damage and distress it causes, nor its intractability in so many cases, nor the frequent inadequacy of all known treatments, non-medical as much as medical. All disciplines and approaches concerned in mental health are insufficient and, accordingly, from a position of appropriate humility, all need to respect one another and work closely together.

But Laing’s influence both in psychiatry and as cultural guru did not last. By the mid-eighties, his appeal, and that of the “Anti-Psychiatry movement” with which he was associated, had almost entirely faded. The mid-eighties was not a time for anti-anything. Laing became fatally associated with the whole Hippy scene and suffered from the general derision in which that whole era was now held.

Suddenly and most pointedly, it was okay to know definitely what “normal” meant and to know precisely what was “sane” and what was not. And it was okay to use the term “mental illness” again. In fact to do so showed that you had bottle, that - like Mrs Thatcher - you had the guts to call a spade a spade when all around you were still failing to grasp the nettle. To hell with all this tentative relativist middle class nonsense, all beads and therapy !

For the practitioner in the field, this shift of approach led to some bizarre contrasts. It became more and more common to work with a psychiatrist who was not just concerned with someone’s medication, but had an interest in counselling and a concern for that person’s housing conditions. I think there were various reasons for this, but one was advances in knowledge within the psychiatric discipline based on solid and generally accepted research findings.

At the same time and in contrast, hardly a mental health social worker one ever met in the mid-eighties questioned a rigidly narrow and by now anachronistic medical

approach to mental ill-health. Out of all the disciplines, one would have expected social work to stand firmly for a complex and comprehensive view of both the causes and treatment of mental dis-ease. Not a bit of it. In course after social work course, the highly questionable and in my opinion misleading phrase "mental illness" was trotted out without a single challenger - when only five years previously no-one would have allowed so un-cool a term to pass their lips. And in many a hospital ward-round the most rigidly medical position was being taken, time after time, not by the medical staff present but by the social worker. So what was going on ?

I went to ask a social work trainer.

"It's quite obvious !" she said without any hesitation. "The medical model is a strong model. It's like the bible to a fundamentalist Christian. It offers clear-cut simple answers, concrete rules, material explanations that permit no doubt. It doesn't matter that those answers have often been over-simplistic, crude, often completely false. Because the medical model is a strong model, it offers security and detachment, a firm position in difficult weather. Therefore medical professionals are often adventurous, assertive, innovative. When your home base is strong, you feel confident to range out a bit.

"Now look at social work. What sort of models does social work have ? All greys and complexities, all relativity, all emotional voyaging and non-material values, all self-doubting and fellow-feeling. It may be reality but it ain't comfortable and it ain't clear. You can't grab it. You can't count it. You can't control it. So no wonder social work keeps gravitating to strong models, however unsuitable they might be, however fictional, however alien or often plain wrong they are. What did the Israelites do when Moses left them to climb his mountain? Meditate on the ineffable? No way ! They reached for the golden calf ! Something they could get grab of !

"These are difficult times for the people professions [she said, all those years ago in the 80's]. Don't expect them to behave well. Expect them to lurch about in the storm. Expect them to stand wingeing by the road-side trying to hitch a lift from passing strong models. Expect them to go flying off in all directions, everyone else's directions, since they cannot find their own. Expect what is weak to have a most unhealthy reverence for what seems strong and oppressive and to make far more room for it than is necessary or honourable, out of sheer self-hatred and self-doubt.

"Who was it said 'Humankind cannot bear very much reality ?' Too right, baby."

Exit a bitter trainer, stage left.

I believe that our future depends on how skillfully and wholeheartedly we relate to our fellow citizens and to our environment on the basis of our recognition and experience that we all matter with equal centrality. Our shared centrality is both extraordinary miracle and fundamental starting-point , a miracle and starting-point it

is our destiny to address. No society will now survive or deserve to survive unless it organises itself on the basis of the extraordinary fact that stands at the core of all our lives. The idea that only self matters, self in detachment, and that life may be lived on the basis of detachment and singularity, is simply a denial of reality, a pathological fiction which threatens the world's future.

If the above holds good, it surely follows that disciplines and professions concerned exclusively and rigorously with skill in relationship have great significance and great value. Their knowledge and experience have much to offer the rest of us. And their state of health at any one time, whether they flourish or languish, whether their practitioners function with confidence or in disarray, whether their ground is firm or unstable, whether they know where they stand and have standing there, or flounder and function in perpetual shadow and doubt, is all of great general interest and significance, having a crucial relevance to the state and prospects of Society as a whole.

So let us stay a bit longer with the notion and story of the strong model as it pertains to social work, alert as we do so that we are concentrating on a human activity of central significance, where reality is particularly vivid, difficult and direct, where - if we picture its position somewhere close to the centre of an accelerating centrifugal wheel - the forces pressing it outwards towards fragmentation at an extreme and one-dimensional edge grow and grow.

(In focussing on social work in this way, I am most certainly not seeking to imply that these points apply only to that profession. I believe they apply across a spectrum of "people" professions, including teaching, various therapies and, to an increasing degree, nursing. I have stayed with social work here partly because I am a social worker myself, and partly because social work was more prominent in mental health community support work at the time this piece was first drafted).

And we can look at other examples besides the one mentioned earlier, in which social work can be said to have lurched or been driven off its central and hence difficult ground where reality is relative, complex and demanding of involvement, and has turned instead to a foreign "strong model."

Take Equal Opportunities, as it was called in the 1980's, then a newish set of strategies and methodologies which aimed to increase the openness of agencies and systems and finally Society, to people still in minority and seen as "Other." The intention was fairness, accessibility, transparency. Quite plainly, the essence and spirit that informed the whole Equal Opportunities movement was quintessential to social work. Equal opportunities was and is about justice and basic human rights. It rests on the self-evident principles that everyone matters equally, that everyone has absolute and equal value. It is the essence of social work's meaning and integrity to be concerned with challenging prejudice or injustice, to be working alongside the excluded and disinherited towards a just and healthy and human society.

But too often in social work, Equal Opportunities, at least in those early days, was turned from a movement based on central human principles into a fundamentalist and often highly intolerant system of outward right-on postures, from a campaign to do with inclusiveness and understanding to an opportunity for a new form of divisiveness and intolerance, from a movement for better connection and truer humanity to a game of almost totalitarian intimidation, from something of the heart and soul to something that all too often meant just a game of numbers, from something that everyone could respect to something that too many people found merely silly and irrelevant.

Unsurprising, but in a way ironic, that this opened social work to attack from the Right, under Thatcher. One group of fundamentalists attacking another for being “politically correct.” I believe there is a simple reason why the Equal Opportunities movement was often and too easily corrupted or oversimplified or driven to excess, from within ; and unsurprisingly but ironically, the reason for it was the same as the reason why the fundamentalist market dogmas of the Right were imposed so widely under Thatcher, and are still in place, so fanatically, and in many cases and activities, so inappropriately ; it is because in times of confusion and for people under stress, an apparently straightforward and externally imposed way of understanding and managing conditions and behaviours offers comfort, a sense of control, and relief from personal responsibility. I exchange my conscience for a rule-book; I deny my complexity of experience in favour of a set of instructions and a wardrobe full of postures; I step back from the hard-to-measure quality of my involvement in relationship and instead start counting numbers as a mark of my progress.

On from Equal Opportunities, take Unionisation, once an important element in professional life, with an honourable history. Social work never had its own Trade Union (unless BASW counted as a Union). Instead, most social workers in the last quarter of the twentieth century in the UK were members of what was then the main union for local government workers, called NALGO. This Union itself kept getting confused all through the seventies and through much of the eighties between the complex inter-dependent present and the gloriously simple barricade-divided past, between the concerns of their present day local government office workers and the shop stewards’ own infatuation with the Thirties rhetoric of Industrial Action and Brothers and Sisters of the Working Class.

The notion that social work was somehow an industry and that the withdrawal of its labour was somehow a potent act in the class struggle was a pathetic illusion. Who cared a damn if social workers “withdrew their labour” ? Who but their already struggling clients were in any way affected ? But it was a delusion frequently succumbed to by a large number of sensible, caring people. Presumably the union meetings, full of rant and anger and ritualised defiance of every possible governing body, represented a glorious hour or two of escape from the complexities of being a caring adult professional in an ungrateful world. It gave people a different, easier role to play, a sense of being part of a power-base. Only by degrees did people realise that the power was illusory - it was all a mirage, a children’s war-game.

Social work never was an industry and neither the rhetoric nor the traditional activism of manufacturing industrial workers had anything in common with what social work meant or what it could effectively have done as a genuine movement for social justice in its own right. Rather than adopt some already anachronistic shape from the industrial world, why could social work not have functioned in its own shape, spoken with its own voice and acted in accord with its own rightful nature as a civil activity concerned with social responsibility? Throughout the eighties a lonely Bishop, David Jenkins of Durham, seemed to be substituting for the entire social work movement in giving persistent and effective voice to the nation's social conscience.

On from Unionisation to a later social work "Strong Model" - imposed by government but accepted with no resistance whatsoever by the profession. Where teachers, doctors, police - all activities to do with skill in relationship and all under attack - where these activities fought back with varying degrees of effectiveness against Thatcherism's fanatical and wholesale imposition of the market ethos and structures, social work offered itself as butter to the knife. From some quarters there seemed even to be a tone of glazed enthusiasm for this new cure-all, this new wonder-drug, this new bible.

The rather unsatisfactory social work term of "client" changed in many quarters to "customer" - as if this would somehow induce an appropriate servility in the minds of the helping professionals involved as they wrestled with the varying forms of desperation they met in the people who sought their help or required their statutory intervention. Co-operative planning - rare enough in the most favourable of conditions - was replaced by 'the discipline of the market-place' (meaning fear, fragmentation, insecurity, inconsistency, mutual suspicion, glossy brochures in which market-speak covers for truth telling). Through a traumatising process called "competitive tendering," an already pulverised Town Hall disgorged its progeny in all sorts of new shapes and sizes, suddenly required to function as "Businesses," each with its annual "Business Plan" and hugely time-consuming criteria for "quality assurance" based on measures that originated in the car industry. Radical surgery split the service into separate entities called "Purchasers" and "Providers," causing in some cases huge disruption and distress to service workers and service users alike for which the glad tidings of market-place dogma offered incomprehensible justification and no sign of any significant improvement in practice.

For a time, the word "Business" carried an indefinable magic, an extra ring. Social work recruitment adverts blazoned it as an irresistible attraction of the parent body. "Join our Business" as if somehow in doing so you would enter some sort of new state of grace, a new vibrant potency, in which other happy thousands were already marching, heads held high towards some sun-blessed horizon. One was reminded of the early Soviet posters.

What was this if not a form of bizarre religion, a new cult that invited people to forswear the weight and complexity and individual painful creativity of all they really were and did and experienced, in order to become blind and bought-up followers?

One was sure at the time that the Business “Strong Model,” introduced under Thatcher, would not last long in social work, that it was too offensively absurd a borrowing to last, that it distorted, undermined and denied the reality of social caring to too dangerous and socially-irresponsible an extent. One was wrong. The “Purchaser/Provider” split is still in place. The “tendering” still goes on. Market thinking continues to spread deeper and wider, whichever party is in power.

But just supposing the Business Bandwagon as applied to social work and other people professions is destined - like Stalin’s massive statue - at last to be dragged with ropes down into the dust and be mocked there, can we be sure that another foreign body won’t immediately be set up in its place, some new crude cult or idol before which the practitioners of social care will rush to debase themselves ?

To help answer that question perhaps we should ask what the models I have listed here have in common - the medical model, the equal ops model, the union model, and the business model. I suggest the following :

- rather than emerging or evolving from the experience and practice of social work and social care they tend to be imported as complete systems from outside; they did not emerge from within as a part of a creative process ; they were adopted or borrowed from other fields and imposed on social care practice like moulds.

- as interpreted very often by social care professionals or bodies, they provided systems or perspectives or guidelines for action to which the person deferred, with which the person complied, into which the person fitted or behind which the person hid - rather than being sources of individual inspiration, aids for individual expression and openness, support for individual initiative and creativity. Rather than a set of principles designed to support and inspire, they tended to act instead as a system of rules whose over-riding purpose was control and conformity.

- they had a tendency to compartmentalise, to externalise, to simplify ; they all in different ways were systems which demonised, which saw themselves as divided from and in opposition to a force of badness or sickness or antagonism lurking outside their own charmed circle.

- they tended to be divisive, diagnostic, materialistic and reductive - condemnation and fragmentation coming more easily from all of them than connection, reconciliation and wholeness. And in which system would it be safe to use the word “intuition ?” In which system were the words “warmth” or “subjectivity” welcome ?

And having made that short list, which may not be exhaustive, we should perhaps refer back to our starting point. We said that plain reality is relative and complex and demands full personal involvement. And we asked why - if reality is complex - do people keep trying to invent answers that are facile and easy ? And we asked why, if reality demands full personal involvement, do people keep trying to detach themselves ?

We have to conclude, then, that social work's lurching from strong model to strong model is simply one attempt after another to escape the discomfort of its exposure to involvement in the relative and complex, in other words to the raw reality of relationship and social responsibility which is its task and humanity's hope. By the same token, we are bound to expect social work and related disciplines, and whatever range of similar activities succeeds social work, to continue to surrender themselves to inappropriate "Strong Models," as these become available.

Before widening the focus of this line of thought, I should like to explore a bit further a connection which has been hinted at earlier - between the "Strong Model" and idolatry. Both phenomena offer a false comfort, the delusion of a simple clear answer ; both require a subsuming of the self which in return absolves you from personal responsibility by providing an external power, a clear code, an externalised book of rules, which you follow like an automaton, a puppet ; by offering outward forms and objects for your worship as a way of soothing you, both ease your confusion or your isolation by lessening you ; in both, there is the reassurance of some material massiveness, power and tangibility, something you can get hold of at whatever expense to inner integrity, wholeness and truth. Both represent an avoidance of and an escape from reality. Both, simply, are counterfeit, a turning away, a defeat.

And then the further link between Idolatry and Fundamentalism - for is not Fundamentalism a form of Idolatry ? In following the letter of the written law as if you are a slave, an automaton, in the absence of your own full and active and personal involvement in what essentially those words meant for their own time and how this translates in spirit into the present time, then you worship the external form of the letter and you neglect and even forswear the spirit that created it and gave it meaning in its time. For the letter - like an autumn leaf, the statue of a god made of precious metal - is bound in time and is a part of its time. And in time it fades. In time it withers. The spirit within the letter, the spirit that made it, is not bound in time but needs time, time after time, for its expression. To follow blindly the letter that was formed in and belongs to its own one time, to follow it as if it applies to a turning and evolving world for all time, is to worship a fixity, a dead husk, a discarded gathering of matter, an idol. We each have a responsibility to hear the spirit of truth that speaks for our own time. God is forever a new language trying to make itself understood. The living truth exists nowhere for us but now and here.

I do not seek to turn this piece into an exercise in amateur theology. I am looking at ways in which we deal with truth and reality, and ways we find by which to avoid doing so. These ways of avoidance spare us the pain and confusion of being fully alive in ourselves and to each other and to our surroundings. They ease us by allowing us time out. Some of us perhaps spend our whole lives taking time out. Ultimately, our ways of avoiding pain and reality threaten our survival, the survival of our children, the survival of the race.

If the linking of the "Strong Model" to Idolatry and then on to Fundamentalism is valid, it allows us to see that positions and movements and policies and practices on the face of it widely different and even in some cases opposed to each other, are in fact

powerfully connected and often essentially the same. Thus two states go to war against each other - each of whose ruling parties have far more in common with one another than with the peoples they rule. Two political parties fight an election - whose conflicting policies mask an essential sameness of interest, for instance in their centralising of control and in their intolerance of opposition.

Outside the sphere of social work and the storm-tossed position of social care, the obvious candidate for the Strong Model in the 1980's and 90's was of course Thatcher herself and the extraordinary phenomenon called "Thatcherism." I would list some of the personal characteristics that seemed to be especially valued and promoted during the time of Thatcher's ascendancy as being tough, resolute, adversarial and dominant ; and - being obviously no supporter - I associate with her generation of the far Right a florid patriotism, a nineteenth century utilitarian materialism, the "Business ethic," and its accompanying worship of market gloss at the expense of human substance, a denial of the subtle and fragile connections and ties of community, a love of conflict and division, compartmentalism and simplification, the assertion everywhere of a central control, the denial everywhere of central responsibility.

Thatcherism was surely notable not so much because it was placed politically on the far right but because, powerfully and persuasively at a time of drift, disillusion and insecurity, it offered a strong model in denial of and as an escape from the plain and appallingly difficult facts of our predicament, which are relative, complex and demand involvement. It turned social vandalism and lives of sleek individualistic piracy into a virtue. It offered a lost people a false and ugly god. It held reality at bay. Its success in achieving the influence it did (and still does) is not at all a measure of its stature or even its credibility, let alone its true merit, but a measure of the lostness and desperation of the people it appealed to and of the power of desperation to drive people blindly into the influence of a cheap and wicked nonsense. One is reminded of the dictum of Dame Julian of Norwich that you dare not judge an event by its aims or claims, you dare not judge either the singer or the song. You wait to see what comes of it, what follows. If good comes, then it was good. If bad, then it was bad. What came of Thatcherism ? What followed ?

But it would seem clear from the earlier thoughts discussed in this piece that, however hateful Thatcherism may have been in so many respects, it was not the repository of all modern ills. While causal of much, it was symptomatic of more. Things were not necessarily going to become more sane or reasonable or moderate in the UK once the Tories were driven out. Thatcherism was just one symptom among many across the world of a universal desperation for firm ground where none seemed to exist. From now on, any strong model, from whatever place on the political spectrum, from any religious source, from any position in any argument - provided it is strong enough - will have extra appeal.

From whichever place it comes and in whatever sphere, all that is required of it is that it should offer escape from uncertainty and from the pain and fragility of being fully human. For instance, Thatcherism shrinks into insignificance compared to the growth of Fundamentalism across all religions, whose causes and attractions are essentially the same as those of Thatcherism and whose potential for harm and destruction has been, and is still, also far greater.

And in Britain, now, all these years later, after the final fall of that Tory era, which ended with John Major, then ten years later the end of New Labour under Blair and then Brown, in this new era of Coalition Government keeling rightward, the urge to succumb to new strong models continues as powerful as ever, if not more so. Those who see, are diminished by it. Those who are blind to it, appear to prosper.

Afterword

We are left at the end of this piece with three main questions. Each has surely far more political urgency at the present time than any that come from the present Right/Left polarities, with their arguments over one form of budget management vs another, or one way of relating to Europe vs another.

Question One. If it is true that “humankind cannot bear very much reality” (Eliot), but at the same time we can see that humankind is doomed and doomed soon unless it takes up a lot more reality than it does at present : if it is true that people who feel secure and sure of where they stand are less likely to be attracted to false gods than those who are bewildered, diminished, persecuted or otherwise at sea - if both these things are true - what can be done by leaders at all levels everywhere to help people increase a sense of their own value, reinforce a sense of their own autonomy and influence, secure the bindings of their own local communities, and build on and strengthen the few places in modern life that hold firm and hold still ? For the more people there are who are willing and able to address reality in full and find realistic solutions to its problems, the greater chance we have of passing on to our children a world that is humanly endurable.

Question Two. In these times of bewilderment, what else can be done in all Societies and in all spheres to counter-act the appeal and force of the Strong model, so dangerous it is, and so threatening to healthy initiative, human creativity and civilised Society?

We introduce Question Three with a quick resumé. The piece began with a fairly light-hearted look at changing fashions in mental health theory. We seem to have come a long way from that beginning. And yet, perhaps the whole piece has been about mental health in the sense that mental health has something to do with a capacity, or the lack of it, to deal with reality. If, as we have said, reality is essentially a matter of relatedness, complexity and involvement, then people who are directly and fully engaged in precisely that central task of being involved with others, people in the caring professions, these people are living at present in a place of almost impossible difficulty and yet huge importance. We need to get close to them. They need our support.

How can they hold their ground ? How can they so manage, protect, strengthen and heal themselves that they succeed not just in holding but securing and extending their ground ? How can they combine, flourish and multiply, in order that they in turn can help us, who so need help, to secure and extend that same central ground of plain reality and build there the cities of the future ?