

# Pragmatism: from Psychoanalysis to CAT

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I knew Tony Ryle when I was university chaplain at the University of Sussex from 1968-1972. He was the Director of the Student Health Service, a service which had the reputation amongst many students that if you went in with a sports injury, you would find yourself in analysis. The doctors (and at least one nurse) were all in analysis themselves, and I think it was almost obligatory as part of their appointment.

I was interested in trying to develop a therapeutic ministry, and approached Tony early on to ask if I could liaise with the Health Service. Tony was very welcoming and we had a drink together in the student bar while I proposed the possibility. He was interested too, and arranged for me to be interviewed by their consultant psychoanalyst, the Kleinian Isca Salzburger-Wittenberg. I think I must have failed to pass muster because I heard no more and imagined that Tony had thought I was not suitable.

But this was not the case, although whatever unconscious processes led to the ensuing silence I can only guess at. Two years later a psychotherapist coming to work at the Health Service made my acquaintance, and encouraged me to approach Tony again. Once again Tony was welcoming and could not imagine why nothing had been taken further before. He arranged another interview with their new consultant, another Kleinian analyst, Fred Shadforth.

This time the process went smoothly and I was permitted to join the Service's clinical seminars held once a week. It was around this time that I learned from my colleague that Tony took on very difficult students, and that he had

a reputation in the Service for very long term work, not able, some thought, to let his patients go.

I received a warm welcome from Tony and his staff. I was interested in Tony's researches using the Repertory Grid and he took me through completing it myself, as well as assisted some piece of small research into theological students' perceptions of God and other sacred figures.

Although I had not been permitted to attend case conferences because of issues of confidentiality, eventually I pointed out that confidences were being shared in seminars too, and so I was able to attend those too. This was huge learning for me, on top of the theoretical seminars. And when the time came for my contract at the University to end, and I applied for a post of counsellor and psychotherapist at the University of Leicester Health Service, Tony was one of my referees; and I am sure that it was his reference that got me shortlisted, and perhaps even the job - from where I went on to develop a career in practice, writing and teaching in the fields of psychotherapy and counselling.

In the 1990s I was directing a psychotherapy course at the University of Leicester and my students had the choice of ten visiting lecturers in their penultimate term. One cohort included Tony on their list, and he came to teach them for a day about CAT. When I met him over lunch I asked him how he had come to develop CAT, when I had always known him as someone engaged in long-term psychotherapy. Tony had by then left Sussex, and was working as a consultant psychotherapist at Guys

(and St Thomas?). What happened, he said, was this. His first marriage had ended (perhaps some time before all this) and he had met a woman who was a painter, who worked six months of the year in Italy. Since he wanted to settle down with her, he needed to develop a method of therapy which he could practice in a 6 month period in London, when they were back in this country. Of course his experience of the Repertory Grid had already made him familiar with the value of psychometric exercises.

Later, in the 1990s, I was writing a series in which a single session with a 'client' was transcribed and sent to six therapists from different modalities, and they could then ask questions through me of the client, and use any other methods they wished to make an assessment, a 'diagnosis', and a description of their method of therapy from that point onwards. Tony was one of six in the first volume with a client whom we named 'Charlie'. He asked his questions through me, and got me to take her through some of the CAT questionnaires. And then the chapter including the initial letter written to patients, came back, for the 'client' and myself to look at, and discuss, and write the last summing up chapter in the book. It was a masterpiece, and Tony was the one therapist whom the 'client' thought had got her right, and whom she would in other circumstances have chosen to see.

I always thought, and still think, that one of the reasons for his real perceptiveness was all that experience of long-term psychotherapy. It meant he could get to the heart of the matter in relatively short-term work (in fact after just one 'session' in this case).