

## A Tribute to Neville Symington

I was not in analysis or supervision with Neville, but his thinking had a great influence on me, which I would like to acknowledge.

Effective psychoanalysis leads to a freedom to speak one's thoughts and Neville had the capacity to say what he thought without fear or favour, not always to the appreciation of others.

We enter analysis with some sense of an inner sickness, and it seems Neville was fortunate in his choice of John Klauber as his analyst. Of course a good psychoanalysis doesn't cure everything but it's the best start we have. In Neville's *A Different Path* I found this about his analysis. Enid Balint thought the best analyst for Neville would be John Klauber. 'After I had been speaking to him for some time he said:

“Do you mind if I be entirely frank with you...?”

'No please do' I said in terror.

'I think you are very ill, you know'

I almost cried with relief.”

In his book I was also impressed to read that in response to his situation in his mind he had decided to read D H Lawrence: *The White Peacock, Sons and lovers Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Women in Love*; powerful books which can have such an impact on a developing or stuck mind.

As I've said Neville's thinking had a great influence, for example in his insistence that psychoanalysis was not in essence a matter of 4 or 5 sessions/week. Neville's thinking about what is of the essence in psychoanalytic work, and what is peripheral - such as frequency of sessions and the couch - was most helpful.

I came to a personal realisation, that the only place a therapist can ensure an analytic process is within his or her own mind. The rest is up to the communication capacity of the therapist, and to the gods.

Another iconoclastic view: Neville pointing out that we speak of training candidates, but one trains rats!

Neville and his wife Joan were much influenced by the thinking of Wilfred Bion, about whom he sometimes recounted amusing anecdotes. I see similarities between the two men, not least both of them being shipped off to boarding school at a tender age.

Neville, when on form, was a most compelling speaker. I mined his talks for everything I could get.

Most important however were his books. For me best were *The analytic experience* and *Narcissism; a new theory*. I recognise the genius in these works.

Neville was a man of achievement, in a slightly different sense that John Keats used the phrase. Collaborating with this man of achievement was a woman of achievement, his wife Joan.

Together they worked on writing another work of genius; a book on Wilfred Bion.

There is sadness at Neville's passing, mitigated by the fact that his legacy is there for all of us. I mourn the loss of an out-standing thinker with an independent mind, and note his courage towards the end.