

## A Brief Journey (Or Ramble) Through BAPCA

Saturday December 4th. Picture the scene: I was travelling by rail from Southampton to the 'Future of Psychotherapy' meeting in London - with a background context of recent train disasters. Further - there had been an announcement just a day or two before that one of the trackside signals just outside Southampton Central was in the top ten of signals most often passed at danger...

I floated off into a reverie... I wondered: Imagine BAPCA as a railway network... What signals might there be for BAPCA, and are there any signals we have less confidence in? If we pass these signals, are we entering extreme danger - or even catastrophe? Who is responsible for the signals?

Do we trust others - those who staff the network - to 'do their bit' and 'play their part' efficiently?

Do I trust myself to play my part, to do my bit efficiently?

What is my part? What are the parts of others? As retiring Chair of BAPCA, I might want to say a little something about my part later.

What are the analogies, if any, with Railtrack, with Virgin, with drivers, with guards, with ticket sales... Let's look around for a moment: Are there any non-members here who haven't paid their five quid? Or anyone who hasn't made a contribution for their drinks? Fare dodgers! Who are our ticket inspectors, our guards, our railway police?

Bernard - where's Bernard? Bernard accounts for the fares and other income - Bernard can be our ticket inspector, guard and policeman too. Look: He's even wearing his Treasurers cap!

Yet I suspect that the money gatherers and guards and ticket inspectors and police don't quite get the same respect as some others...

Yet we need them.

Without them the whole network goes bust.

What of the buffet facilities, the rolling stock (linked with issues of safety and comfort), with stations of departure and stations along the way, and signal boxes and points and timetables and [assenger enquiries...

What are the possible analogies with the whole system?

Of course, there are the passengers, too...

Are BAPCA members our passengers? Is the BAPCA network 'carrying' its members? There may be feelings about being a passenger. There may be even more strong - or at least different - feelings about being carried... The

football team that has used up all its substitutes and then a player gets injured 'carries a passenger' - the 'lame duck' has a very negative connotation.

Yet without passengers, if people aren't carried, there would be no point at all in having a network in the first place.

Do we have first class and standard passengers, I wonder? I hope not. I hope that this is at least one thing we've got right - although I am unsure as to whether we are perceived that way. I hope so. And you can still come on our journey even if you can't afford the full fare - I hope we've got that right, too...

How do I want to feel as a passenger?

I want to feel safe. I want to end up in the right place and to get there on time. I'm not sure where 'there' is - talk about 'nondirective'! - but I don't want to be kept hanging around too long in getting there. And I definitely want to be informed about what is going on - if there is anything going on. Then again, if everything is running smoothly and according to plan, please don't interrupt my peace and bother me with information that does not concern me. You'll spoil my journey.

I want, most of the time, to get from A to B, whether on business or pleasure. I think I know where I'm coming from - I know where A is, but where is B? Am I in charge of my own destiny, or as a passenger do I let someone else drive me there? Still: It was my choice to embark on this journey with this network...

And if I want to be a driver, I understand that I am welcome to join the drivers. Who is our driver? Who are our drivers?

If on business, I'm less likely to enjoy the journey itself than if I am travelling for pleasure. On business, I'm thinking about where I am going and what may hap - I am more likely to experience stress or anxiety, my faculties being taken up with anticipation and rehearsal and...

For pleasure, I want to relax, to enjoy the view, to sit in comfort...

Who in BAPCA 'does the business'? Who enables the pleasure? And what of the other passengers? Do I wish to travel in company or isolation?

While I know that the over-use of technical language can be off-putting to some, I wish to thank Steve Cox for reminding me of an essential piece of psychopathological semipseudodemiquasi diagnostic scatological jargon as coined by Paul Merton as I ask myself: Will the 'bonkers in the nut' passenger sit next to me? Some journeys I might welcome that. Most journeys, however, I would want to hide from such unwelcome involvement.

Then there's the sidings. Let me shunt into a siding for a moment: Picture the scene again: Travelling from Southampton to Glasgow by train for the 1999 Forum, so kindly hosted by our colleagues in Scotland. Yes, it was a Virgin

train. Yes it did break down. Stuck on a bridge for a while... I had been invited by PCCS Books to do a 'head-to-head' review of the revised 'Person-Centred Counselling In Action' and Tony's 'Being and Learning in Person-Centred Counselling'.

My first ever book review - I was going to commit myself to this endeavour and do the job properly! I took the original and revised version of Mearns and Thorne with me, had them side-by-side on the table in front of me... Chapter One had been considerably revised, yet from then on page after page after page seemed identical to me...

Still stuck on the same bridge some hour or so later, I suddenly burst out aloud laughing. I could see and otherwise sense the other passengers... 'Oh oh - we've got the bonkers in the nut one in our carriage.' The major revision I found? "It's like being a Glasgow supporter in the Celtic end (see note at end of chapter)." The note at the end of the chapter explains that Celtic and Rangers are two major Scottish football teams between whom there is great rivalry. Then the 1999 version: "It's like being an Everton supporter in the Liverpool end (see note at end of chapter)." The note at the end of the chapter explains that Everton and Liverpool are two major English football teams...

I can't wait for 2009 version - who will it be? Barry Town and Inter Cardiff is my bet!

Another quick shunt into a siding. I recall one of my favourite ever pieces of jargon. The sentence read 'Is your receptionist warm and welcoming or is she psychonoxious?' Psychonoxious!

Back to the railways. I mentioned PCCS Books, who now deal with our membership. It occurs to me that our operational staff went on a kind of work to rule.

As volunteers, handling the sheer size of our steadily increasing membership became just too much to handle. Our terms and conditions were no longer reflecting our jobs! At least an all-out strike was averted - what would that mean for BAPCA?! It occurs to me that in terms of working to rule, we don't really know what the rules are, or who makes them, or... So: We brought in PCCS Books to deal with membership. It's like they are the travel agents, the information givers, sending out details and booking forms and keeping records and publishing timetables - our much esteemed Person-Centred Practice journal. And in another station not too far down the track, there's Tony, actually putting together the information and customer surveys and...

I mentioned PCT Scotland, too. It seems to me that one or two people saw the 1999 Forum as BAPCA and PCT Scotland being on a collision course - a recipe for calamity and disaster. Personally, I see PCT and other person-centred associations as not necessarily on the same track, but at least being on a track running alongside us - yes, the rails may loop away at times, but we're kind of on the same journey. And it makes sound sense, does it not, to co-operate with rather than duplicate some services at least?

We can co-operate with international networks, too. Most of you know that I am the link person with the Center for Studies of the Person in San Diego - we can exchange personnel, practices, ideas... This takes me onto another siding:

In America, I experienced an interest in British culture. I find this difficult - because most of the stereotypes seem to be about white heterosexual (et cetera) culture, not multicultural. These 'isms' notwithstanding, when asked what the British are like, I responded with an anecdote I heard from comedienne Victoria Wood:

The scene is another, reasonably full train carriage. Amongst the passengers are a man and a woman who begin to get more and more friendly towards one another... As they reach the stage of caressing and cuddling, the eyes of all other passengers are averted - looking out the window, looking at the ceiling, looking at shoes, pretending to be asleep...

As the couples clothes begin to be shed and strewn across the gangway and fondling reaches epidemic proportions, the avoidance of any contact is extreme - now we don't just stare avidly out of the window, we attempt to count every individual blade of grass we pass by. Damn! I can't look out of the window, I might see a reflection (or might I take a sneaky, surreptitious glance...!) What an interesting speck of dust I see on my shoe, I can focus on that for a good few minutes, or count the rivets in the joins on the ceiling or... The books and newspapers are out with a vengeance. Never mind pretending to be asleep - there are even make-believe snores to be heard from some.

As the orgiastic entwining reaches a crescendo, rivers of procreative juices sweeping down the aisle - and moans and sighs that can be heard in the train behind, ANYTHING will do... I avidly read my sweet wrapper, the books and papers are glued to the eyes, others no longer asleep but rigidly comatose, heads buried beneath jackets...

As the couple relax and the post-coital cigarettes materialise, everyone looks up, everyone makes eye contact. "I say - excuse me - but this is a no-smoking compartment."

Maybe we have a parallel - the practitioner using techniques or implementing skills from other approaches: "I say - excuse me - but this is a person-centred association!"

When I grow up I want to be a train driver.

My guess is that when I was elected as Chair there were many reasons for the casting of votes - I would like to think, though, that some positive choices were made on the basis of my drive, my energy - my commitment to drive... Not necessarily from A to B - but at least we'd move on from A and at least I had some ideas about where B might be - or at least the general direction to take.

Through being your Chair, I think that I have grown up somewhat. Not a lot! Somewhat. At the risk of another 'ism', isn't there a 'Fat Controller' in one of the childrens programmes? That's what being Chair felt like at times! Not out there in the engine, driving...

I want to get back on the tracks. I want to be driving at least some of our passengers somewhere. I hope that some passengers will be interested in and join me on that journey.