

THE 'ISLAND FACTOR'

Dr Ray Brown

Dr Ray Brown is a consultant psychoanalytic psychotherapist who has been practicing on the Island for 4 years, but from the end of October is moving to Bristol.

Dr Brown felt he had learnt much during his time on the Isle of Wight and would be processing the clinical material he had collected during his work for some years to come.

Dr Brown explained how psychotherapy had its own jargon but he would do his best to make concepts clear to the group.

He explained how the concept of an Island was multidimensional, and the rural/urban dimension was important. Islands could be as diverse as Hong Kong and the Falklands.

Islands tend not to be the discrete closed system they used to be, however, populations were still more stable than those seen on the mainland and 'tribal networks', 'common cultures' and 'common mythology' do develop. Dr Brown was especially interested on the impact of modern mass culture on the individual.

Many of the models used in psychoanalytic psychotherapy have their origins in the work of Freud who felt that we all have an unconscious psychic life that is inaccessible to us with its origins in our very early development.

Some of the experiences people have as adults become 'linked' with their early primitive experiences and consequently people experience conflict and anxiety.

Social systems can be developed as a defence against anxiety e.g. the rigid way in which nurses are taught to deal with patients. Situations may be dehumanised to make them bearable.

An Island can also develop such systems, although in a more diffuse fashion. Because an Island is a partially closed system, there is an expectation on people to conform and anxieties cannot easily be discussed because of the fear of breach of confidence. People tend to feel that they cannot be unhappy on such a beautiful Island.

The mainland can become a ready 'container for projection', the 'them and us' attitude. Everybody on the Island is 'good' - all on the mainland is 'bad'.

Dr Brown concluded by discussing Bion's Theory of Thinking. He explained how thoughts had to be processed and if they could not be digested, and if the mainland was not sufficient as a 'container' for bad thoughts, Island people often responded by displacing psychic pain to travel. A journey of 5 miles on an Island can be considered a major undertaking, whereas on the mainland, such a distance would be considered trivial.