

Has something gone seriously wrong with the psychological therapies? Whilst it has been argued that, thanks to such initiatives as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), far more people are having psychotherapy and counselling than ever before it has also been commented that the psychological therapies are becoming an industrial process requiring technicians (Glenys Parry).

So is our work, and the way we are trained to do it, fundamentally changing with call centres, state regulation and manualisation in addition to the overall ills of neoliberalism? If this is the case how can we be clearer as to what is happening to us? This conference aims to explore what may be going wrong in the psychological therapies with particular reference to the nature of our work, and indeed the way we see our clients'/patients' employment, through the perspectives of the socialist and textile designer William Morris, the educationalist and social thinker John Ruskin (both of whom were initially involved in the development of where the conference is being held) and Karl Marx, the philosopher, economist and sociologist (who, with his wife, was very much influenced by Ruskin). In different ways all three thinkers saw the move from cottage industry to factory production as leading to deterioration in working peoples' quality of life. Rather than the intrinsic pleasures of the work itself, instead money compensates for our working time which leads to consumption as the external source of pleasure. Is this also becoming increasingly true of psychotherapist and counsellors, and is this becoming increasingly inevitable for their clients and patients? This conference is designed to open up how we might see ours and others' work by reconsidering thinkers from the romantic and expressive traditions, as well as those brought to us through our call for papers.