

FESTSCHRIFT

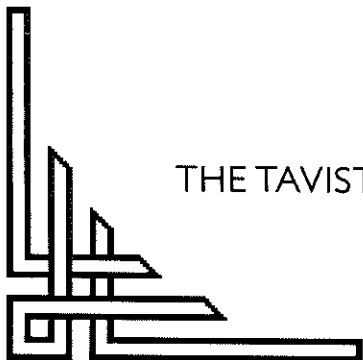
in honour of

Professor Israel Kolvin

John Bowlby Professor of Child Mental Health

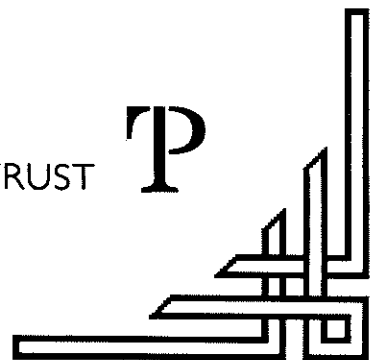
on the occasion of his retirement

September 1994



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Preface



Professor Issy Kolvin

It was a memorable day on September 22nd 1994 when we gathered together at the Tavistock Clinic, a large group of Issy Kolvin's colleagues and friends, to celebrate his work and to mark his retirement as John Bowlby Professor of Child Mental Health. We had been privileged to have Issy as a colleague at the Tavi for five years. During this time, we had seen the wished for establishment of a secure research base for our psychotherapeutic endeavours. Built on an existing tradition of scholarship and investigation, this was further fostered by Issy's thoughtful understanding and skill.

We invited some of his many colleagues to contribute papers to this Festschrift in his honour; most, but not all of the papers, were given on the day. The papers pay tribute to the extent of Issy's influence in the field of child psychiatry. His endeavours on behalf of child mental health, research and training at the Royal Free Hospital and at the Tavistock Clinic have been much appreciated. We are delighted that, in the tradition of the late John Bowlby, he is remaining with us following his retirement, to continue his life work.

Dr CAROLINE LINDSEY, Chair, Child & Family Department, The Tavistock Clinic, July 1995

Acknowledgements

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Issy Kolvin: A Biographical Note

Philip Graham

Professor Israel Kolvin was born in Johannesburg in 1929, the youngest of five children. At the time of his birth his father, like a number of others at that time, ran into serious business difficulties. The family was not well off, but when Issy (as he is known by everyone, and as I shall refer to him from now on) was six, his father died and there was considerable financial hardship. But relationships in the family were warm and caring. Issy basked in the love and warmth of his mother and older sisters. Their caring approach to other people, even less fortunate than themselves, exerted a lasting influence on him. He was soon seen to be bright, went to grammar school and then to medical school in his home city.

After two years, the funds to support his medical studies ran out. He left medical school and worked in various jobs, including junior manager in industry, and a research assistant in a personnel management organisation. In his spare time he successfully completed a BA course in Psychology and Philosophy and courted Rona, his future wife. He then went back to medical school and qualified as a doctor.

During his house jobs he was intrigued by the severe psychiatric pathology he saw in the admitting room and on the wards. Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto, where he worked, was remarkable for its teaching and training, but daunting because of the alarming severity of the clinical conditions that presented. He felt the malnutrition on the paediatric wards and the acute psychiatric disorders in adult patients presented the most challenging problems. Others thought he had a gift for coping with the psychiatric disorders. While an undergraduate he had already been fascinated by reading Freudian psychology, so all in all it was natural he should think of a career in psychiatry.

Academic and research opportunities in South Africa were few at that time, and young doctors looked to the UK and the United States for psychiatric education. Issy, by now married to Rona, found a place on the Edinburgh training scheme. While on the scheme he was attached to Margaret Methven's child psychiatric unit there. He found her approach, and that of her colleagues, a rewarding experience and rapidly decided his future lay in child psychiatry, where there was usually much potential for change.

In 1961 he went to work as a senior registrar in Oxford where he found the senior child psychiatrist there, Kit Ounsted, an inspiring teacher and researcher. At that time Ounsted, though an idiosyncratic character, was really the only significant researcher in the field. Under his tutelage, Issy began serious research and produced ten papers in his two years in Oxford, including especially his study of childhood psychoses, demonstrating clearly the differences between autism and schizophrenia.

He was then appointed consultant in charge of the Nuffield Psychology and Psychiatry Unit. He felt strongly supported by Martin Roth, Professor of Psychiatry, and Donald Court, Professor of Child Health. The Unit flourished immensely under his leadership and rapidly became one of the two or three leading centres in the UK. He himself was appointed to a personal Chair in 1977. A number of his staff went on to senior posts elsewhere, both at home and abroad - for example Rory Nicol (Leicester), Ian Goodyer (Cambridge), Marnie Van der Spuy (Canada) and Stuart Fine (Canada). Issy himself was responsible for a large number of projects, but one should mention particularly his evaluation of school-based psychotherapy, published as a book called 'Help Starts Here' (Kolvin, 1981). Certainly, this work is of fundamental importance. It is one of the very few large-scale systematic attempts to monitor the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic techniques in children in the world, let alone in the UK. Issy's valuable work on the cycle of deprivation based on the Newcastle Thousand Families Study should also be mentioned. Perhaps his early experiences of relative disadvantage led him later to take a strong academic interest in this subject.

In 1990 he made a late career move to London on his appointment to a personal chair as the John Bowlby Professor of Child Mental Health at the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine and the Child and Family Department of the Tavistock Clinic. Although his academic appointment was to the Royal Free Hospital Medical School, Issy was based in the Tavistock Clinic. Clearly his position as a non-analytically trained senior academic in the sanctum of Kleinian psychoanalysis was a challenging one. Issy found the creativity of his Tavistock colleagues inspiring, and they found his research expertise extremely helpful. It was a productive relationship, and at the seminar held on his retirement in September 1994, it was clear how much he had been appreciated, and how much he will be missed. He will retain his place at the Tavistock as Professor Emeritus.

Throughout his career Issy has held numerous responsible positions including the hot seat as Chair of the Second Opinion Panel of the Cleveland

Enquiry and Chairman of the Section of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He is a former Vice-President and currently Treasurer of the College. Currently (1995), his is Chairman of the Association of Child Psychology and Psychiatry.

So much for his career and the influences upon him. How has his success been achieved? Issy is an immensely caring person and has great concern for others, whether they be children, family members, or members of his staff. Many testify to his kindness and support, but one should not forget his other characteristics. First he is a phenomenally hard worker. Although he does have other interests, reading poetry, watching and, until recently, participating in many sporting activities (not surprisingly he is a strong supporter of Newcastle United), he is single-mindedly dedicated to his data and this shows in his considerable productivity. He is also dogged in pursuit of aims he considers to be right, whether they be for the benefit of children, child psychiatry or psychiatry. When he is sure he is on the right track and others disagree with his views, he can be tough, and those who have worked with him have found him uncompromising in the pursuit of advancement of knowledge and child psychiatric services.

Note: This biographical note is a slightly modified version of the Personal Profile of Professor Kolvin that appeared in the 1995 issue of the Newsletter of the Association for Child Psychology and Psychiatry.

*PROFESSOR PHILIP GRAHAM, Emeritus Professor of Child Psychiatry,
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Tribute to Professor Issy Kolvin

Professor Rory Nicol

I visited Newcastle in 1972 and said to myself: "I simply have to work here". When we arrived a few months later, my wife having been slightly persuaded that it was a good idea, I realised that this was a place where people stayed on and on. When I left 14 years later, I was still a relative newcomer.

I would like to spend a few minutes talking about how Issy, with no more resources than one would find in any other child psychiatry service up and down the country, created this settled and industrious atmosphere, where one could have had the thought I had, and where so many talented people stayed on and did so, so productively.

Encouragement of others was a key component of the magic. Issy was and is constantly searching for strengths and to catch one's interest. This might be in a joint project, often with little or no external funding, a personal interest, or in a major project such as "Help Starts Here". Professional discipline made no difference to Issy, which was another reason why he had the same group of colleagues for so long. After a few years with Issy, everyone could boast a small portfolio of publications to which they had made a genuine contribution, according to their particular strengths, be they in practical child psychiatry or in a more academic field. The result: the supervision of five PhDs and four MDs, two MAs and a Fellowship of the College of Occupational Therapy.

A great deal of Issy's work has been in epidemiological research. In order to convey the difficulties this posed, I have to say a little about the North East. Many of you will know it well. It is a warm hearted place covered by a cold North Sea mist...

It was in a tiny village a few miles from Newcastle that Alan Wicker, the TV commentator, was rendered into near silence while looking for No 8 Victoria Terrace. The numbering system went 1, 4, 2, 3, 9, 8 (the wrong 8), 16 - the right 8 was 300 yards away round the back. Eventually, he was saved by the postman. On another occasion, an aspiring musician burned through five gallons of petrol looking for a town hall in a very small town with one street. Then there was the famous child psychiatrist, who was looking for his patient. We never found out exactly where this family lived, except that it was past five pubs on the right, up the bank and turn right at

the Colliery Inn. Eventually the home of his patient hove into view, but the family clearly had extremely complex and chaotic dynamics. It was essential to take authoritative charge of the situation. Neighbours were sent home, the family assembled, the dog silenced, the sound on the T.V. was gradually reduced and eventually the T.V. was switched off. The birds could be heard to be singing again.

"Now tell me, what exactly are the problems you have had with Jimmy?" said the child psychiatrist. An animated discussion ensued: "There's no Jimmy here pet, you must be thinking of next door but he's 26". The next eminent colleague to come to grief in this way was a proctologist but I am going to leave the story at this point.

Instead, let us have a look at Issy's individual achievement. This is in four basic areas: research, clinical practice, teaching and the development of child psychiatry as a specialty. He has published around 150 papers and chapters and five books. His interests have ranged widely, including his early work on delinquency and childhood autism, temperament and classification, treatment evaluation and methodological issues such as screening, early development, language disorder and low birth weight. In many of these areas, he stimulated and attracted young collaborators who have taken the subject further since.

In clinical practice also, Issy pioneered developments in the assessment and management of autism and taught generations of students in his Monday clinic in Newcastle and more recently at the Royal Free Hospital. Then, there was the development of the autism unit, with the help of the Autistic Society. For the psychological management of epilepsy, Issy set up the EEG Department with Mr Osselton (we all called him Os).

In the educational sphere, I believe that his crowning achievement was the generic course on the psychological management of children, now having run for almost twenty years. This course has been a witness, if it were needed, to the development of skill in helping children within a multidisciplinary context.

Issy has played an enormous part in the development of child psychiatry. He has served on the editorial board of numerous journals and has been president of the Psychiatry Section of the Royal Society of Medicine. However, his main contribution is to be a persistent voice at the Royal College of Psychiatrists. I think it is important to realise that this is not just as a lobbyist for child psychiatry, but a genuine valuing of the College as an institution in its entirety. As such, he has won many friends for our spe-

cialty and made a contribution to psychiatry in general. Having been the Chairman of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Section, he is now Treasurer of the College until the year 2000!

We have heard from others about Issy's contribution at the Tavistock. I would like to add that in conversations, Issy has told me about his great respect for what you are trying to do here.

This record tells us of a massive lifetime achievement - and I stress - so far. How has he done it? I think the answer has to be in many ways by collaboration. Most of the papers and books are multi-authored and there are many more, where Issy has offered advice and support of a crucial kind.

Every personality characteristic carries with it its potential morbidity and I can best illustrate this with a case example. One of his PhD students was coming up to his final viva. Issy as supervisor and the candidate went off to meet the Examining Board. The candidate was understandably nervous until he realised that Issy was in a state close to panic. Our friend, the candidate, realised that some emergency restructuring of the crumpling ego was needed and steered Issy to a local hostelry, as the anxious moments ticked by. Each sat down with some badly needed fortification. But there were further dramas when Issy poured his ginger ale into another customer's glass! I'm glad to say that the candidate passed with flying colours.

Case example number two was when I was starting an ambitious community treatment project. After the first meeting of the steering group, Issy suddenly and unexpectedly asked me to a pub lunch. I could detect that the engaging syndrome was again going into relapse. In fact Issy tactfully and tentatively began to raise the question of drift in my research design, if I was not more careful in my documentation.

Issy always encourages. He is acutely aware of the delicate and elusive structure we call self esteem and its importance to creativity. He never humiliates and will go to any lengths to prevent others feeling they have failed or been left out.

Another component of the Newcastle atmosphere was a sense of informality linked to firm boundaries. We were all there for the service of children, but this did not stop us being good friends. We all remember the generous hospitality offered by Rona at their home.

Issy could be rather secretive. "Rona and I are just popping over to the Lake District for a few days" or simply there would be an empty office. Now I can reveal all - a string of visiting professorships and lectures in different parts of the world.

The idea of Issy really retiring fades further from view and it is a case of South Africa, Britain and the world. This brings me to Issy's concern for social justice - so essential in a psychiatrist or paediatrician. The decision he made with Rona to leave South Africa at the time of Sharpsville and his work on the Soviet abuse of psychiatry are further landmarks. Thank you, apartheid, for sending us these people.

I know that Issy will continue to inspire and work with people. He gets so much fun out of his work that to deprive him of it would be "professor abuse". However, we hope there is a little time to relax and reflect.

It has been a privilege to work with Issy. His care and concern is genuine and continuing.

PROFESSOR A R NICOL, Professor of Child Psychiatry and Director of the Greenwood Institute of Child Health, Leicester University.