

# Letters to the editor

## WHY HOLBROOK AND ANTI-PORN?

Sir,

Why print an article by David Holbrook? He's no humanistic psychologist, or anything like it. His strong and illiberal views on pornography are well-known and do not need 'Self and Society' to publicise them further.

Far from putting a humanistic psychology case on violence and sex, David Holbrook doesn't even mention one. The only psychology he seems to have heard of is psychoanalysis, plus a little orthodox social psychology. And he doesn't even have the honesty to talk about psychoanalysis under that name (presumably because its deficiencies are now so obvious to most educated people) but talks instead of the 'psychotherapeutic point of view'.

Thus we learn that 'from the psychotherapeutic point of view' masturbation is a 'manic activity', associated with fears of annihilation, and sex, and anxiety about it. Well, I would like to inform David Holbrook that there is more than one psychotherapeutic point of view. I've never heard Carl Rogers say that masturbation was a manic activity - and indeed it would be odd for anyone to make such a sweeping statement since masturbation, like most other human activities, takes place in a variety of different ways at a variety of different times.

In my own experience, masturbation can be a blow-off of energy, or a comfort in depression; it can be the outcome of a strong bodily need, or a wish for a change of mood; it can be the expression of an almost holy wish, or a cruel fantasy; it can be stimulated by delicate eroticism or crude pornography; it can be almost purely mental or almost purely physical; it can take thirty seconds or thirty minutes; it can refer to the past or the future or the world of imagination.

These seem to me to be obvious statements, well within the experience of large numbers of people. I sometimes wonder whether David Holbrook has ever masturbated at all. If he did, it seems obvious he didn't stay with it - maybe he got frightened at his own fantasies - I don't know - or maybe for him it became a manic activity - I can't say. But whatever the reasons why he gave it up, I am prepared to agree that they were valid for him. All I don't agree about is his assumption that they shall be valid for me and everyone else as well.

My argument with David Holbrook is really that I like a lot of human variety, and want if possible to increase it. This liking for human diversity seems to me to be quite common amongst humanistic psychologists. Now the urge to suppress pornography, which David Holbrook expresses always in fact has the effect of diminishing variety and cutting down choice. And it does this because people like Holbrook have already diminished the variety in their own minds before they start. They narrow down erotic writing to the crudest

pornography, they narrow down masturbation to aggressive and depersonalised fantasies; they narrow down sexual variety to sexual deviance - and then, of course, it is easy for them to oppose this narrow monster they have themselves created.

I ask again, why bother to print this kind of article?

Yours,

John Rowan

## UP THE CREEK

Dear Vivian

I did enjoy your company skiing and hope we meet again sometime.

Now, let's get down to the nitty-gritty about your journal. I quite enjoyed reading it though I feel it is a little off-piste to me. Basically I'm a Russellite and have been influenced by the books of Bentham, Paine, Godwin etc., and politically (at the moment) I am a Liberal, but in past hectic days have been a Communist. It seems to me that human behaviour is governed by the Id and the Ego. The Id controls the autonomic nervous system of our bodies - makes us breathe, heart to beat,

Now what I believe is this: I believe that those emotions that are good - sex, joy, love, generosity etc., mostly controlled by the Id, should be encouraged and allowed free rein, but for the general good we should use our Egos to control those emotions which more often than not are harmful to us. For instance, when we are really angry we say things which we later regret and couldn't care less if we knocked a bloke's head off. But when we calm down and are more rational we rather wish we had not let our passions loose so freely. (This may well apply to sex too.) I believe that those emotions which are governed by the Id which often prove harmful to us if let loose are better brought under the control of our Egos. It may be alright for monkeys to swing about all day doing just as they like, giving vent to temper when they like, having sex when they like, but it is hardly suitable for motorists, our family systems or our governments with all their space age power.

I firmly believe that Gaie Houston is right up the creek. It would be perfectly alright if she were a monkey, or incapable of harming others or herself and was totally good and hence could only enjoy herself and make others happy (or at least leave them alone). However I suspect, like the three Almighties, she too has her faults.

I did enjoy John Rowan's article but thought he was rationalising himself out of business. I'm sure with a bit more effort he could negate all the accumulated theories and start again at square one with nothing at all. I had never heard of Maslow but the quotations in the Journal of his works were most interesting, particularly the paragraph against usage of drugs - 'Instead of being surprised by joy' etc. it is made a commodity - 'until jadedness and impotency ensue'. I think that about sums up what I have thought for some time. Maslow's simplified theory of instinctoid needs is interesting and probably describes general trends. Prisoners starving themselves over self-esteem. and suicides over love or self-actualisation are anomalies that spring immediately to mind though.

Anyway, by now you are probably of the mind that it is I who am off-piste.

Best wishes

Ian Hall

Wiveliscombe

## GETTING TOGETHER

Dear Vivian,

It was good to meet you on Easter Monday. Unfortunately, owing to home domestic commitments I had to leave during the showing of the second film.

I would have liked to have taken part in the discussion on the second film on Obedience for it has a lot to say to Encounter Groups as well as to society in general. Madeleine Francis spotlights this issue in her article 'Entrance Not For Everyone' when the group, without any understanding of the psyche of the individual concerned attempts to 'break them down' and react in a way that the group conscience dictates as 'right action'. In my own work I emphasise that every member in the group situation is entitled to remain silent whenever, and for so long as they wish and no member or group of members of a group is entitled to force their way into the individual's mode of presence without invitation. Each member contributes something by their continued presence and much transpires within a person who has ostensibly 'opted out' of a group process or activity. I am personally familiar with the devastating results of attacks upon individuals for their 'serenity' whether it be true serenity or a mask of protection of a vulnerable area beneath. There is a time and a place for every 'flower of the psyche' to open and group leaders, in particular, seem to me to be often overeager to prise open some choice oyster-like situation that they think they have spotted. It is this activity that breeds 'artificiality' within the encounter group situation for the true group situation should not be separate from, but more intimately related to, life as it is lived and experienced in the world at large. One sees, for instance, references to that 'Monday morning' feeling following group experience which indicates all too often that the work has been illusory and divorced from day-to-day reality - rather like the person who enters a state of self-hypnosis or trance and thinks that he is meditating! There is much in modern Encounter techniques that is valuable but it can be a two-edged sword and overenthusiasm for its 'joys' should be carefully watched.

Regarding the future of the A.H.P., a significant remark was made by a visitor to the Easter Monday meeting - 'Is this where the Encounter Thing is being held?' This is by no means an isolated example and I would ask the Executive to watch this trend carefully for Humanistic Psychology is much more than a term for an English version of Esalen Encounter work. It includes Encounter as but one aspect of a much greater Whole, both Inter-personal and Trans-Personal. Young people are seeking 'Excitement' - and why not? - and therefore they tend to gravitate towards those activities that look and sound as if they are full of 'Movement' and 'Different'. By so doing, if we cater altogether for such tastes, we find Humanistic Psychology becoming little more than a new 'cult' or psychological 'variant' instead of the FULFILMENT of all that has been done in the field before PLUS an added dimension which differentiates Humanistic Psychology from any other approach.

Since I have had the privilege of being a member of the A.H.P, and also being involved in, and carefully observing, the growing situation in this country for the past 10 years in this field via Psychosynthesis with Assagioli and his British contingent of students, I suggest that what we need for the future of the movement is less 'REACTION' against established 'norms' of society, and far more INTEGRATION of insights, of techniques that have proved themselves, etc, into society as we find it here and now.

Well, I've finally got that off my chest!

Yours

Ron Shepherd

Staines

## WHO'S WHO

Dear Sir,

An important factor in the value, to me, of a journal like *Self and Society* is the extent to which it forms a continuously updated directory of people in the business - individual 'therapists' (I wish to avoid the suggestion that what I am writing about is in any way part of the practice of medicine) and teachers of things like Tai Chi and Akido and Arica exercises as well as group leaders and growth centres. This matter of spreading information about who does what where is quite separate from the question of accreditation, about which I do not know enough to have any opinion, except that I would hate to see the human potential movement becoming closed and authoritarian like the medical profession.

One way of doing this 'directory' would be something like the lists of yoga teachers and classes in 'Yoga and Health', and another, not quite equivalent, but conveying a great deal of useful information, would be to give some biographical detail about your contributors (who is John Garrie, for instance, he sounds like a man I would like to learn from), particularly where they practise. This last point is very important to me, and is the basis of my (at the moment) obsessive dislike of the medical profession. A thing I am interested in, which is a part of medicine and not of humanistic psychology, is Masters and Johnson type treatment for impotence. I know there are some doctors and hospital departments in this country which do this, they write articles describing their work, but they have to do so under assumed names; biographical information is given, but everything of the slightest value, namely how to get in touch with them, has to be suppressed in the name of professional etiquette. This seems to mean that I am never allowed to know what I want and deal directly with the people who do it, but always have to be referred by someone who usually knows nothing whatever about either what I want or who is available to do it.

Humanistic psychology is, so far, mercifully free from middlemen and this sort of referral procedure, and a good way to keep it that way is to set up a tradition of what doctors call 'advertisement' but which is only public access to information on who does what and where they may be found.

Yours sincerely,

George Weedon

Edinburgh

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## JOHN ROWAN

### NO, YOU CAN'T HAVE A BETTER WORLD

You are sitting in a U-shaped group of 14 people, and you have one red card and one green card. The man at the open end of the U says 'ready', and you decide to choose the green card this time. Then he says 'up', and everyone in the group raises their cards in front of them. You notice that there are seven red cards and seven green cards, including your own. The man says - 'Seven red - you each get 22 points; seven green - you each get 16 points.' For every 100 points you get, you earn one penny, and there are 50-odd rounds.