

Letters to the editor

Dear Vivian Milroy,

With reference to the June editorial, obviously you cannot produce a journal more frequently than the articles come in for it, but perhaps it would be possible to continue with a more or less monthly news-sheet of growth centre addresses and programmes and maybe classified advertisements.

I would like to express my appreciation of the two very interesting articles by John Rowan, on accreditation (a very impressive presentation of both sides of the argument) and on competitiveness, and to offer a comment on the latter. I think that for a long time I have shown obvious 'tendencies to be aggressive, exploitive and rivalistic in interpersonal relationships', and also that during the past two years I have become perceptibly less so, although of course still remaining mostly of a competitive and manipulative character. One important reason for the change is the greater accessibility of the sort of techniques which make change possible, but the interesting question concerns motivation. I think the reason I have wanted to seek out these things is the unsatisfying nature of competitive achievements - I have wanted many things, to go to University (at a fairly advanced age), to get the sort of job I wanted, to get married, to solve problems - I have pursued objectives with much hope and great determination, only to find that when they are achieved, they are not what I really wanted at all. I have also found that by loosening up (even only a little), and by becoming somewhat more aware of my body and my breathing, my life has become rather more satisfying and less boring.

So, to come to John Rowan's question, 'What hope have we got of creating a better world?', I think the answer is: Keep the techniques of 'loosening up' available as far as possible for anyone who wishes to find them, and do as much as possible to keep the information on their effects public. Apart from that, we have to rely on the armoured characters' wish for change (eventually, when we have tried everything else) *when we learn that change is possible.*

Yours

George Weeden
Edinburgh

Dear Sir,

The system of accreditation, qualification etc., which is so much the vogue these days, rests on assumptions, the absurdity of which everyone can verify for themselves.

1. The assumption that you can know anything about anybody without going to the trouble of finding out for yourself. From this flows letters after the name, degrees, established reputations etc. But if you are idle and stupid enough, perhaps you deserve 'the most eminent names in their field'.
2. The assumption that hazard is a bad thing and that you can be, and ought to be, 'safe'. Thus, the selflessly accepted duties of governments and public institutions to protect you. Freedom and hazard are inseparable. If you are unable to face the hazard (this is true of everybody at some time or another) you must place yourself under the protection and authority of another.
3. The assumption that competence is a permanent and repeatable quality. This arises from:
 - (a) the failure to see that competence is always competence in a concrete situation and therefore unique.
 - (b) the failure to distinguish between competence and the techniques that it needs to express itself. Take the example of a fencer: he must have developed the right kind of physical fitness, and mastered a repertoire of skills in handling himself and his weapon. But by itself this can only produce dead craftsmanship. Competence is living, and comes from a connection between the man and totality and uniqueness of the situation. The competence that is within him is called forth by the needs of the situation and uses the skills to act creatively. Perhaps this sheds some light on the phenomena of competence being displayed by inexperienced people, and very experienced and qualified people being, as John Rowan pointed out, quite useless.

Yours sincerely,
Peter Roberts
Kingston, Surrey.

DAVID HOLBROOK REPLIES:

I believe that the survival of man is bound up with his discovery of the capacity for *liebende Wirheit*, 'loving communion' - a term I take from the existentialism of Ludwig Binswanger, (see Rollo May in *'Existence - A New Dimension in Psychiatry'*). I therefore condemn all manifestations which promote hate. I have spoken against bombing and war in *'Writers Take Sides in Vietnam'* and in my novel *'Flesh Wounds'*. I have turned recently to the way in which more hate is being thrust into our society by the commercial exploitation of sex and violence. In my article I simply reported some psychological work which seemed to show that violence and sex in films *had an effect*. I intended thereby to counteract the foolish dogma of progressive intellectuals today, which declares that films have no effect. We can go on to argue whether the effect is harmful or not. To me, to strip someone of their clothes, expose their bodily privacy, and make them perform acts of copulation or defecation for the amusement of others for money is as disgusting and degrading as racism, and I have no doubt that someday the trendy minority will wake from their present brainwashed state, perhaps after watching Pasolini's scene of a man pissing over a group of others from a balcony, in