

Letter to the editor

Dear Vivian,

I was very pleased to read the views expressed in the article called *Progressive Psychoanalysts*, by John Rowan in the March issue of *Self and Society*.

However, his penultimate paragraph worries me. I think it is dangerous to assume that 'groups' are better than 1 to 1 therapy. There can be considerable pressure on members to conform to the group's norms. After all society is a big group and look at what it does to its members!

Sincerely,

Arati Banerjee

Dear Vivian

I got a kick from reading your review of my book, *Provocative Therapy*, in your December, 1974, issue of *Self and Society*, and felt that you did a fair job of it from the viewpoint of an 'inhibited Englishman.'

I was, however, nonplussed to read about the 'background of Jewish American humour.' I'm Irish. Furthermore, you hinted ambiguously at 'overtones of a natural cultural division,' and predicted that 'many English patients would do more than cringe' at some of the therapist-client exchanges. That I seriously doubt. People who first hear of provocative therapy not infrequently predict *their* (cultural, ethnic, religious, etc.) group would not react favorably to it; after hearing and seeing it, they almost invariably change their prediction.

The Englishman is, after all, not without a sense of humor, and I feel confident, be provoked to laughter and smiles in the role of a client. The feedback I have received over the past decade strongly suggests that Australians, Germans, Indians, Dutch, Russians, Filipinos, Polish, Canadians, Israelis, Spanish, French, American Blacks and American Indians have excellent

senses of humor and get the point of provocative therapy. Surely the English could. Couldn't they Vivian? Vivian?

Sincerely,

Frank Farrelly, ACSW
Mendota Mental Health Institute, USA

Dear Vivian,

A line of my typescript was left out of the last sentence on p. 4 of my article (*A Model of Life and Death, Self & Society*, Feb. 1975).

Unlike Tom Osborn I cannot relate the error to a 'censored negative' gremlin. On the contrary your printer merely made the most confused paragraph of my article even unintelligible.

The fact is that I don't know what the bloody hell happens when life-oriented groups are introduced into rigid hierarchical pyramids. If I knew, I wouldn't need to call my 'thing' learning *research*.

To put the record straight, the sentence I wrote was: 'The pyramid may then revert to invincible inflexibility and eventual decay (not, of course, necessarily); or the living organism will ingest the valuable components of authoritarianism (self-discipline and goal-orientation) and prejudice (discriminating conservatism) and excrete the elements of corruption.'

But the more I think about it the more this seems a metaphysical or pious statement of hope. Cf. 'Surely there is a heaven where virtue is rewarded.'

What would really interest your readers, including me, is to have some facts about the influence of groups on hierarchies. I'll report later about the examples I know best. At the moment I am preoccupied with the part about escaping.

Yours sincerely,

Max Praed