

Letters to the editor

Dear Vivian Milroy,

The joint letter from representatives of the committee of the British Institute for Transactional Analysis published in the August issue of *Self & Society* suggests that these two gentlemen have failed to grasp the realities of the situation, namely that the recent British TA Conference was notoriously expensive and will probably continue to be so whilst TA remains in the hands of a few semi-professionals who are using it for personal gain. Although I was founder of both the London TA Study Group and the *British TA Bulletin*, I, like Yvonne Craig, could not afford to attend the Conference. This was not because of my 'game' or 'racket' or anything else - I simply could not afford the excessive fees and I have since written to both the Conference organisers and the Executive Director of the International TA Association in California to protest about this insulting state of affairs.

I have decided to organise another TA Conference for those like myself who are both radical in our approach yet at the same time wish to keep the costs of learning, teaching, using, and sharing ideas about, TA to an absolute minimum. The conference will probably be held either in Southampton or in Winchester sometime in early 1977. It will be aimed at those who wish to use TA with a radical political perspective, such as feminists, gay activists, etc. Further details will be published shortly.

Yours sincerely,

David Porter
Southampton

Dear Vivian Milroy,

I would like to respond to Ian Holland's *Atlantis* article in the August issue of *Self & Society*. What reason is there to suppose that doing one of Janov's three week intensives means being cut off from human contact? The therapist (with or without capital letters) is perfectly human: his/her task is to provide the necessary stimuli for evoking 'old' feelings without being stand-offish or aloof. It is ridiculous for Jenny James to generalize about 'middle-class Americans' leading a 'gregarious social life': just read some of the case histories in Janov's books--they paint a pretty bleak picture of loneliness (if not, necessarily, of solitariness). The 'middle-class' tag is also unjustified as the U.S. social structure is different from that in Britain and other older European countries; whilst the 6,000 dollar fee is for Americans not as considerable a sum as we might think.

What annoys me about *Atlantis* is that it claims to be a primal therapy community, which it isn't. Primal therapy has nothing to do with communal living, mysticism and back-to-nature-ism. Neither has it anything to do with individuals psyche-ing each other out (some of us want to get away from that kind of thing for once). Having had personal experience of another soggy eclectic primal-type therapy (see classified ads), I feel that many people are going to come out of such groups more messed up than before.

yours sincerely,

Ray Tower
Colchester

Dear Vivian,

Responsibility seems to mean different things to different people or rather, ideas on what the individual is responsible for, seem to vary. In the August issue of *Self and Society*, we had Tom Osborn earnestly (and correctly) criticising 'the ideology of take responsibility for yourself', as synonymous with advocating individualistic solutions to social problems, whilst Adam Jukes and Laurence Collinson tell Yvonne Craig that if she is excluded from events by her poverty, she is totally responsible for that situation. (Have they never *heard* about the economic oppression of women, let alone the psychological oppression of 'its your own fault'? And anyway, isn't there also a game called 'I'm right, you're wrong'? They certainly weren't accepting any responsibility for failing to communicate that ITA fees were negotiable.) I think there can only be responsibility if the person had control over how she got into that situation. But what we certainly *are* responsible for, are our responses to the situation we find ourselves in.

For example, if the AHP puts things on at such short notice (like the day of dancing) that those of us who have to travel, or make arrangements for children etc are effectively excluded, then I am not responsible for that, but if I don't respond to that situation in a way which communicates my initiation and requests more efficiency and intelligence to be brought to bear in making such arrangements, then I cannot complain next time round that nothing has been done about it, can I? Which reminds me: why can't we have brief reports of AHP committee meetings, instead of having to get information through chance personal contact? And surely, Vivian, you could have found someone to write a criticism rather than a eulogy of J. Rowan's boot. And rumour has it you are short of copy, hence some of the recent turgid stuff. If you told everyone that, perhaps they would do some thing about it. And – no, no, that's enough for one letter.

Love from,

Vicky Seddon
Sheffield

Dear Vivian Milroy,

Adam Jukes' letter in the August issue of *Self and Society* seems to be doing exactly what Tom Osborn was pointing out on page 6 of his article in the same issue. Adam Jukes' analysis of Yvonne Craig's letter might or might not be 'correct' – the point at issue is that, by responding in the way he did, at the level of her 'personal problems', he manages to ignore the real political and organisational point which she was making about the whole growth movement i.e.: that is very largely the province of the middle class who have either the time or the money (or both) to pursue their own growth, and takes no real account of the surrounding environment which fucks people up in the first place. The movement doesn't, on the whole, address itself to the patterns of power and oppression in society at large; as other people have also asked, what has happened to the 'society' in *Self and Society*!?

As Tom Osborn stated, correctly in my view, the activities of the various growth centres in no way touch society at large. It does seem to me very much like a new version of the individual salvation doctrine - the rest presumably must remain in limbo, or go to hell, while the chosen few (those lucky enough to live in London, or at least within striking distance of a 'Growth Centre' and who have time or money to spare) can grow, unimpeded by too much contact with the nasty realities of society as it is.

I have deliberately stated the case in the harshest of terms - I hope it will stimulate some real thinking, and not just defensive reactions.

Yours,

Pam Lunn

WArks

Dear Vivian,

I have a small history of misfortune in the printing of my articles in *Self & Society* so I am pleased that my recent one on *Drama Therapy* has come out all right. There are still one or two errors due, I expect, to my writing being hard to read. I'd like to draw people's attention to one mistake, however, which destroys the sense of what I intended. In the second paragraph on page seven it should read 'I do not claim that this is a different aim from Moreno's. However, his adherence to a cultural conserve, the theatre setting with its differentiation of stage and auditorium, actors and observers, seem, to me at least, a paradox'. As printed the sentence doesn't make sense. What I'm trying to do is point out that Moreno is here going against his own ideal of getting at creativity and spontaneity by escaping from cultural conserves.

Love,

Nick Owen

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David Porter

Gay Self-Oppression

Whilst gay people and members of other minority groups may be only too aware of external oppression, particularly from the mass media, the law, psychiatry and the Church, they sometimes fail to recognise how certain aspects of their oppression may be incorporated into their own personalities, leading to self-inflicted oppression. Such forms of self-oppression appear to be best investigated in a group setting, such as an awareness group or an encounter group, although I prefer the term problem-solving group because of its emphasis upon direct action and rational discussion. Such groups have already achieved widespread adoption in the States, particularly in the Women's, Black and Gay Liberation Fronts. The demystification of oppression coupled with healthy, joy-giving messages allow struggling minorities to become 'O.K.' These may also provide them with a realistic path to personal liberation. Claude Steiner, in his book *Games Alcoholics Play*, describing the Black Panthers, says 'these movements are of great value in that they clearly offer an alternative to the usual self-defeating scripts which are commonly seen among black people; the basic message given to a black youth by such a movement is 'you are O.K., not in spite of being black but because of it; you are a prince and deserve princely treatment; black is beautiful; your hair is beautiful; you are beautiful; you can have anything you want; you are O.K.:' this statement offered at the time of decision is a powerful antithesis against the adoption of a self-destructive script such as heroin addiction or alcoholism'.