

Letters to the Editor

Dear Vivian,

I would like to take issue with John Rowan on the subject of transference. He says in his book review in the September 1977 issue of *Self and Society*:- "Another reason why the transference is so dubious in value is that it makes impossible demands on the therapist. He or she has to play a double role - a parent in relation to a child, and a facilitator in relation to a client. The one cannot help getting in the way of the other. It seems much simpler and more productive to let an empty chair or a cushion or a group member take the role of the parent, while the therapist stays in the role of facilitator."

This seems to me a misunderstanding of the way in which transference is actually handled. In my experience, playing the parent role is precisely what the therapist does **NOT** do. In fact he avoids it like the plague. The value of the transference relationship lies in the contrast between the objectively neutral non-parental attitude of the therapist, and the subjective parent figure feeling projected on to him. It is this contrast which has brought home to me the unreality of my expectations, and drawn attention to the specific material which needed to be worked on. It has also made me aware of the extent to which I have projected similar unrealistic expectations onto other people (including John Rowan himself in his role of group leader, as he is very well aware!).

I am of course in 100 per cent agreement with John that gestalt and other humanistic therapies also give access to unconscious material. I have had ample experience of this. But I deplore the attitude that some forms of

therapy are inherently better than others. Surely it all depends on the nature of the problem, the person's stage of growth, and his general life situation, to say nothing of his own reaction to the particular technique which to my mind is one of the most important considerations.

Freedom of choice of techniques and type of relationship seems to me most important in the therapy field: one person may prefer to work in a situation where he can regard himself as the patient of a doctor; another wants to treat his therapist as a friend. Humanistic psychology provides a wide range of techniques and possible relationships, and I see this as threatened by the proposals for registration of psychotherapists. John Rowan apparently considers that the move in this direction stems from the Freudian fear that therapy is always a power situation such that the patient develops an infantile dependency on the therapist. But if John does not see it this way then why does he not cry to the heavens that humanistic therapy is different and participants in its methods do not need to be protected by registration?

Instead he has himself put forward proposals for training psychotherapists which include experience of humanistic methods. This idea worries me. I have a horrible feeling that if humanistic psychology comes to be associated in the public mind, and more importantly in the official mind, with psychotherapy, then its techniques may be banned from our public institutions unless practiced by a registered psychotherapist. That a teacher will no more be permitted to make use of gestalt or role play techniques in the classroom than he would be allowed to psychoanalyse his pupils. I want to see

humanistic psychology kept as a free system that people can use as they wish, not confined to a box labelled "therapy".

Yours sincerely,

Shirley Wade

London WC

Dear Vivian,

I congratulate Lilly Stuart on the fine job of putting together the October issue dedicated to Transactional Analysis.

A newcomer to this subject might, after reading this issue, get the mistaken idea that TA is almost totally a tool for therapeutic use in clinical applications and therapy groups. This is, of course, not so.

A large part of the membership of the International Transactional Analysis Association consists of people with interests in the use of TA in areas other than Clinical. These are classified as Special Fields. Within the ITAA, Special

Fields and Clinical Members have equal status. I also believe that currently new contracts for Advanced Membership are being taken out in equal numbers in both these areas.

As a Special Field Provisional Teaching Member (the only one in the UK), I feel TA has as much to offer in these other areas as it does in clinical or therapeutic use.

My own area of specialisation is the application of TA in organisations. When we consider that over 40 per cent of the population spend a third of their working lives in organisational settings, the importance of this is obvious. How people grow, fail to grow, relate, fail to relate, in their job environment cannot be ignored. And neither can the role of helpful systems such as TA as a tool for awareness and growth in the work situation.

Yours sincerely,

Ron Clements
Woking, Surrey

PRIMAL REFERENCE

You may be interested to know that Vol. 1 of **The Little History** by Francis J. Mott is available from Mark Beech Publishers, Eden Bridge, Kent, price £2 post paid. (496 pages including 48 full-page line illustrations.) Vol.2 can also be obtained, price £3 post paid. (864 pages including 59 full page line illustrations.) This is the book that was mentioned several times in **The Primal Issue** (June 1977) as having influenced people like Laing, Lake and Swartley.
