

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Vivian Milroy,

Thank you for publishing in your March/April issue my Comment on John Rowan's "Humanistic Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis". May I be allowed a supplementary comment?

John Rowan had written that the two-day workshop on which I'd co-authored the report "was attended by far more psychoanalysts than humanistic therapists". In the text of the Comment I sent to you I had responded: "Of the 43 participants, almost all of whom stated their qualifications, only two were **definitely psychoanalysts, one of them a Jungian, as against seven self-defined humanistic therapists**". The words emphasized were omitted from your printed version, thereby creating an odd distortion.

Secondly, I notice that in the Index my name appears as Eric J. **Mahrer**. An unintended compliment?

At all events, it's clear that the unconscious is alive and well in the pages of your Journal!

Yours sincerely,

Eric J. Miller
OPUS
London NW4

Dear Editor,

I followed "He, She and It" by Francis Kinsman with happy interest until I came to the place where female graduates were going to change the world, after which I became increasingly dismayed at the naiveté of Francis' conclusions. I feel strongly that in placing her hopes and energies into the idea that advanced technology will solve anything she is avoiding what to me is a fundamental starting place in one's understanding of people and society. In every 'now' each of us chooses for health or disease, and without wishing to seem simplistic, good and evil.

Technological development has made no basic psychic difference to the 'working through' of this process in humanity. We can just choose to be more devastatingly evil, or more constructively good. There is no 'excuse' in the world at this very moment in time for a single child to die of hunger or war. It is our choice that makes this so. I can appreciate the thrill of theorising - but I have to challenge the idea that what starts as a spiritual understanding, necessarily ends in a distancing of oneself from the practical urgencies of the rest of the world's reality. To me if there is an emerging and powerful new synthesis that will be impactful on human evolution, it is between the spiritual and the political states of awareness. Somehow, to proclaim that we can let the micro-chip and the female graduate population solve our problems denies a truth, a need for

all of us to accept the full immediate responsibility of our choices to lead a comfortable Western bourgeois life, while others of our earth pay the price. In Francis' eyes of course, I may just affirm her places of knowing all about co-operative, participative, egalitarian, decentralist unreal weirdies. I do seem to affect people this way, especially people who desperately want to believe their hard earned salary is clean as driven snow; but then, that's me learning to exercise my 'feminine nature'. I refuse to depend on a micro-chip for the well-being of our earth family. The same false hope and Messiah myths were attached to nuclear fission and television: we ended up with 'The Day After'.

Lastly, I have met so few individuals who have been able to achieve wholeness and balance 'within' an organisation, without getting the 'sack' or leaving with their self-respect just intact. I know caring people who pay a high price in many ways and need much support to remain 'in' and maintain their purity.

As life stands in the Eighties, employees "relieved of routine drudgery by the computer" will be very soon well acquainted with the dole queue and the Social Security. Here, if they are lucky, they will be turned on to the meaningfulness of being alive rather than being 'an employee'.

Thankfully here too, one can see the world ablaze with light.

Peace,

Lorraine Cowen
Sheffield

Dear Vivian,

Apocalypse now!

I read Francis Kinsman's article 'He, She and It' (**Self and Society** May/June 84) with some amazement. I am pretty used to therapists and spiritual teachers in this country shunning politics, and those on the political Left abhorring personal growth, but I thought this article was unusually Utopian and unrealistic. I have so many quarrels with the writer's argument that I have tried to restrict myself to the main and substantive ones.

I think the analogy between modern society and a man (or woman) in mid-life crisis struggling to meet his (her) anima (or animus) is an excellent one. But to say that 'the anima of society first asserted itself at the beginning of the century with the suffragettes' is historically and psychically insular. I think Francis Kinsman is making the common error of equating the masculine with men, and the feminine with women - but this leads us to a ghetto-like rigid correlation between psychic and social forces. I believe the great shift to the feminine occurring today is working in and through **both** men and women. The equation: masculine = men; feminine = women; leads us into all kinds of trouble. What about the present Prime Minister? Do we assert that Margaret Thatcher represents the resurgent anima? I think this would be an incorrect analysis - she represents surely the triumph of

authoritarian masculinity in league with a violent (because repressed) anima in society. Another example: within the patriarchal system of Jewish society and ideology, Jesus represents a strong shift to the feminine (despite being a man and having male disciples) in that he advocated abandonment of the Law - the legalistic definition of the permissible and impermissible - in favour of action from the heart. Of course this message has often been in turn distorted and 'remasculinized' within authoritarian social systems (such as the churches!), but the core of his life's meaning is still available.

What I am saying is that (i) the shift to the feminine is a long historical process beginning long before the suffragettes; and (ii) it operates through the whole of human society as a collective shift. Its manifestation in political form in this century is surely a sign of its **conscious** expression. Thus to talk, as Francis Kinsman does, of an increase in women graduates as a 'boost towards the feminine' is a gross analysis, confusing the female with the feminine.

My second point: the use of Hegelian dialectic to posit a culture/counter-culture synthesis is interesting, but I think Francis Kinsman does it with political naiveté. Under the Five Alternative Scenarios, taken from Robertson's book, I was almost amused to see the distinction between 'Business-as-Usual', 'Catastrophe', 'Totalitarian Control'. For goodness' sake, we **are** living right

now through an immense social, political and spiritual catastrophe. I'm sorry - but it's too late to contemplate 'business as usual'. The world is in convulsion socially and spiritually and totalitarian solutions are rapidly being brought into operation (vide Northern Ireland; Central America; the miner's strike, etc. etc.) Is it only in Britain that we refuse to recognize the obvious? Are we doomed by our post-imperial myopia and malaise?

But my strongest disbelief is reserved for Francis Kinsman's main solution - information technology! (so beloved incidentally of the Thatcherites). Here we are with four million unemployed; increasingly violent social tension; social services breaking down under the combined weight of human misery and political hostility towards them - and we are recommended a 'cheap fast reliable electronic machine'! I think this is nonsense - and dangerous nonsense. It completely ignores the **political** questions of who owns and controls production and distribution of goods and information, and the disparity between rich and poor in the world, and the **personal/spiritual** search for liberation. You can't avoid the political confrontations now developing. But on the other hand it's imperative that political radicals take stock of the spiritual and psychic crisis we are in. I agree therefore with Francis Kinsman that one-sided materialism has partly led us into this morass. But information technology is more of the same! No - we are confronted with a human

crisis that demands solutions that are political **and** personal **and** spiritual - not tinkering with software. I don't know how on earth we are going to deal the great split between the material and the spiritual - politics and personal growth if you like, but heal it we must. To go back to the analogy of the person in crisis seeking the integration of the masculine/feminine split - he/she won't do it through machines, but by self-reflection, living and working with other people, and engaging in the common struggle for a cooperative and just society. I think this is going to involve confrontation - do we

honestly think the Thatchers and Reagans and Bothas are going to idly stand by while we reconstruct society? To go back to Hegel indeed - thesis and antithesis are synthesized in **actual struggle**, not in our needs or with machines.

Wake up information technologists, therapists, clients, politics, human beings - we are in catastrophe right now. Society is crying a collective 'HELP' to us - and we are led towards struggle for a new birth: psychically, politically, personally. Birth is bloody and it often hurts, but it is life!

Roger Horrocks

Ah, Wilderness . . .

You were never tame, never lenient
to those who come in search of lax sophorific charms,
but active in your assault upon jaded
sensibilities: from birds that peck and moles
that muzzle, decapitating cats, and corpse-
scavenging rats: mice that strip lank tedded grass,
whilst pranking butterflies whisk from bush to
august bush, and zinging gadflies nip
sweat-exhuding necks and thighs. THESE
are your benedictions, these bless us when we feel
uncontacted: these correct our schema-dominated minds,
our love of stitched complacent fields, our
predilection for transient harmony. TEACH US
through being what you simply are. Nelson
is dead, and we are dying: but life thrusts through
our unacknowledged cracks and interstices. LIFE
is a weed whose virtues we are still discovering.

John Hands