

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear David,

In your courageous and provocative Editorial headed "Warriors" (*Self and Society*, March 1991) you accept the conventional wisdom that the Soviet economy has been socialist. So you can greet its current disintegration with a wry "Wasn't it capitalism that was going to collapse because of its own internal contradictions?" Ignoring the main Marxist alternative to the analysis of *Marxism Today* you turn abruptly to a discussion of the ideological divide between Secular Christianity and Islam. I would suggest that it is not only good Marxism but good Humanistic Psychology to see that ideology needs to be grounded in bodily needs and the economy that supports them, or fails to do so. The Soviet system has been fundamentally capitalist for decades. Working people have been exploited, a ruling class has been enriched, in an economy that has been as competitive as the western economy, because it has been in competition with the western economy. This competition has been crucially in terms of military power, so that one reason for the present Soviet collapse has been their concentration of resources on weaponry at the expense of basic commodities. Add to this the increasing internationalisation of production and finance, and you can see why Soviet state capitalism desperately seeks a share in those "market forces" which simultaneously enrich Japan and Germany and impoverish the third world (absolutely) and even the USA (relatively). Yet market forces don't feed starving Africans, and are unlikely to feed the Soviet's own hungry people, unless at the expense, western-style, of other people's hunger. Why? because investment is most available for hi-tech projects that the rich can pay for, to the neglect of basic needs like food and housing, which are not profitable enough.

With such an analysis, humanistic psychologists can offer some pertinent insights. The much-vaunted "post-industrial" hi-tech "information society" represents not an advance but a regression. Unable to face our oral neediness and lack of emotional contact, we in the west are regressing to a cerebral, schizoid substitute or a skin-deep hysterical one: typified respectively by words or pictures on a screen.

Indeed it seems that our own movement is tempted to regress further, towards some dark stage of tribal myth and membership, or further still towards a womb-like fusion between ourselves and our environment. Or am I wrong in hearing such possibilities in a conference title "Re-enchanting the world"? I hope I am.

For as humanistic psychologists we know that regression for its own sake leads to acting-out our unresolved conflicts. We can see it happening all the time in inter-class and international war. By contrast, the therapist's art is to enable the regression to become a source of integration and healing, so that clients can then face real problems unhampered by archaic defensive patterns.

It is the search for political strategies that are enlightened by this "regression in the service of transcendence", and so no longer merely repeat our primal splits, that can be an essential contribution of our movement to human survival. This means foregoing the comfort of a passive, unconscious involvement in politics, and taking an active and conscious part with all the insight we can muster. If we can begin to do this, then your Editorial, this response to it, and, let us hope, many further interchanges will be signalling not only a significant re-evaluation of our title *Self and Society*, but a worthwhile response to the issues that you as Editor have dared to raise.

Yours sincerely,
Nigel Collingwood

Dear Editor,

I read with interest the Editorial Jan/Feb on the flawed Bristol report.

I am a regular subscriber to your magazine and in 1982 one of Bristol's first breast cancer patients - very poor prognosis - cancer both breasts and radiation damage to my neck and right arm.

After the cruel sterility of orthodox medical treatments and medics, Bristol was my lifeline - I've used homoeopathy, healing, prayer, T'ai Chi, diet and counselling for a life time of family abuse.

I am happier and whole - not cured - and have no illusions on the corrupt cancer industry which has no vested interest in alternatives.

Prof. Tim McElwain committed suicide last November. He no doubt felt so guilty at the harm which was indeed caused by the report.

Yours truly,
Shirley Jones

Dear Editor,

I have been a reader of *Self and Society* (and a member of the AHP) for just over a year. In general I consider it an excellent magazine and support your open policy which gives voice to a wide range of humanistic viewpoints. Whether I agree with individual contributors or not, and I often don't, it is right and proper that they are given a voice in your pages.

In the light of this it is sad that my first letter to *Self and Society* should have to be one of protest. Enclosed with the Jan 1991 issue was a flyer issued by the Scientologists (Hubbard Dianetics Foundation). This organisation can in no way be considered to be part of the humanistic endeavour. They prey on people who have problems coping with the world, indoctrinating them in a most un-humanistic manner with a lot of pseudo- scientific terminology and gadgetry and in the process robbing them of large sums of money.

Working on the assumption that the insertion of this flyer was a thoughtless action by the advertising department, rather than editorial policy, I will continue to subscribe to *Self and Society*. However, in view of the damage which Scientologists do, I cannot let it go without protest and ask you to publish this letter together with a disclaimer distancing *Self and Society*, and the AHP, from any connection with Scientology and Dianetics.

Yours faithfully,
Richard Jannaway

We received several letters complaining about the flyer advertising a book on Dianetics. We fully disassociate ourselves from Scientology and Dianetics and will not accept advertising about them again. Anyone who wants information about Scientology should contact INFORM c/o Dr Eileen Barker. LSE, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE.

David Jones
Editor