

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Accreditation

Jill Hall replies to John Rowan (Self and Society May/June 1991)

Dear John Rowan,

It seems that you have reached a point when you so deeply identify with the accreditation issue that you are unable to tolerate any challenge from, and refuse to enter into dialogue with, those who happen to have a different perspective to offer on this enormously important subject. Of course you don't want your long years of work in this area 'slagged off', any more than do your colleagues of long standing experience want their efforts to contribute to the debate dismissed with contempt. What in you calls forth the remark 'If they manage to run the conference (on Sept. 27th)'?

I believe that you, Peter Hawkins, Courtenay Young and others have done a most valuable job, on behalf of all humanistic practitioners, in gaining some hard-won recognition for body work at the UKSCP and in refusing to agree to compulsory degrees for psychotherapists. I feel real gratitude to you for that. You have fought with admirable energy and skill to uphold the more liberal British position in relation to European requirements. But surely this does not mean that our arrangements in Britain should now consolidate and no longer be open to further development as we learn, through trial and error, what serves the true quality of our work and what inhibits it?

We are fortunate in this country to be able to draw from a culture which values the freedom of the individual; many of our traditions stifle us but this strand in our heritage could be enormously to our advantage as we struggle to promote and protect the creative ground from which living therapeutic interaction springs. Flexibility is of key importance as the rate of change increases, and AHP in Britain could have much to offer if we work together from the richness of our differences. Just because you have achieved much on the 'external' front it does not mean that there is no more to be done, at the same time, on the internal psychological level. Are we not all interested in becoming more conscious?

I note that you yourself give support to the notion of diversity and say 'we need many gods and goddesses'. You boldly state 'Not the either - or but the both - and. I couldn't agree more whole-heartedly. Why can't we explore these issues together so that the body of practising psychotherapists and other interested people does not split and polarise into defensive factions 'for' or 'against' accreditation? You say that you find 'the appearance of either - or ... hurtful and

damaging'. And yet when you were invited to attend the forthcoming conference in Cambridge you replied 'I wouldn't waste my time'. Are we really behaving as humanistic practitioners if this is the level and quality of our interchange? Is it possible that we have arrived so soon at the alarming position when only the views of those already 'in' the UKSCP count? What a very 'un-liberal' state of affairs for a proudly liberal body to countenance.

Yours sincerely,

Jill Hall

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John Rowan Responds

Dear Jill,

It seems that you are angry with me because I say that accreditation involves two elements: an internal part, where we look at our practice and seriously examine it for our own benefit; and an external part, where we try to measure up to the demands of the outside world. The anger seems to arise because I say that any approach to accreditation which concentrates on the internal to the exclusion of the external is not really about accreditation at all, and therefore not worth spending time on, if accreditation is really what we are interested in. Yet to me this is the merest basic common sense.

I agree with almost every word you say in your letter. I am not saying at all that the systems of accreditation in vogue at the moment are not improvable or even radically changeable: all I am saying is that if you concentrate on the internal to the exclusion of the external it really looks as if your real agenda is the substitution of the internal for the external, and that is not on. The conference which you are organising in Norwich seems from the printed programme to be exclusively about the internal aspects, and not to provide for any discussion at all of the external aspects. When I saw this, I was disappointed that a valuable opportunity to examine all aspects of the matter had been thrown away.

Hope this clarifies matters somewhat. I must admit that I was a bit miffed that you sent your letter not to me but to *Self and Society*. I would have thought that a copy could have been sent directly to me as well.

Yours sincerely,

John Rowan

Dear Editor,

Just a word to convey the wondrous pleasure I felt on discovering your existence. I took particular solace from the article by John Rowan on accreditation. The concept of an inward accreditation coincides entirely with my own experience. I have recently completed the third year of a four year psychotherapy/counselling course and have felt inwardly accredited for some time while I still await (correctly in my view) the 'collective's' accreditation in the form of some document and letters after my name. The fact that this last is less important to me than the first does not mean that I do not value it. I do. I see it as the inevitable balance that I try to find in all things. It is common sense to seek out the middle way and the middle way is what John Rowan seems to be arguing for in his article. I support him in this.

Yours etc.

Julian Nagle

Dear Sir,

I appreciated the thoughtful review of my book, *Couples in Conflict*, and its many positive comments, which appeared in the May/June issue of your Journal.

However, the reviewer goes on to express his disappointment that my short-term model does not fit his own caseload. Although my cases do move through the family life-cycle, my focus is on problem-solving in relationships which must arise in some of his cases.

He indicates that he is working with some unusually complex problems, and with deep-seated personality disturbances. In my Chapter 8 on "Contra-indications", I illustrate that such cases fail to respond to time-limited therapy, and that on-going treatment is needed.

May I suggest that when open-ended therapy is under way, the opportunity to use time-limits is lost. The use of time is a powerful dynamic in enhancing client motivation, and in my opinion is too often an underused approach.

If the reviewer's couples had been told at the outset of treatment, that there would be a three-way assessment after one to three sessions, to decide whether a time-limited procedure should be used, he may have been surprised by the positive reaction to the challenge, in at least some of his cases.

Very truly,

Dorothy R. Freeman

Dear David Jones,

I'm writing to you with regard to Guy Claxton's article on Schumacher College in the January issue of *Self and Society* on the need to re-evaluate the aims of education. He claims that belief in astrology serves to 're-instate a questionable, if not spurious sense of personal understanding' that stems from a supposed need to think 'shallowly, ineptly or magically' or to demand 'phoney certainties' from life.

Astrology has a profound and distinguished past, which probably no other discipline can equal. In both the East and West (and in the Mayan culture) it was the first coherent attempt to explore both the nature of time and the manner in which individuals may express or interact with the changing collective energies. It is also our oldest attempt to formalise how we experience the nature of our individual existence while exploring the common ground of experience, and the manner in which we interpret our surroundings.

The study of astrology laid the foundation for all the mathematical sciences and is inextricably bound into much of the early Greek philosophy, to which the West owes so much. Its fall from favour during the 17th century (in the West at any rate) had little to do with the emergence of Newtonian physics (as is often claimed) and far more to do with the prevailing political shifts of Church and State.

There is overwhelming statistical evidence for the existence of real astrological effects obtained from research carried out over the past 40 years. Some of this research was conducted by bodies hostile to the notion of astrology, and its statistical significance far surpasses the clinical evidence for the basis of any psychotherapeutic belief system.

One of the few astronomers who is an active believer in astrology, Dr Percy Seymour, has proposed in his *Astrology: The Evidence of Science* that the magnetic resonance of the solar system, continually modulated by the positions of the planets, may underlie the astrological effect.

Yours sincerely,
Michael Harding