

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CLIENTS

Dear Editor,

Re: AHPP (*Self and Society* Jan 1992)

In August I formally resigned in writing from AHPP because I was disillusioned and appalled at their procedure and practice over many months. If anyone wishes to know my version of events I can easily be contacted in Brighton.

G. Whitfield

Dear Editor,

Regarding the debate surrounding sexual abuse in therapy I am not condoning what may go on in therapy, but might I ask about the potentially collusive element between therapist and client? Are client completely passive and helpless in this situation? After all we are all adults albeit dealing at times with early childhood issues, and DO have a choice as to whether we continue with therapy.

Jen Popkin
St Leonards-on-Sea

Dear Jen,

Of course clients are not completely passive and helpless in therapy. They actively express feelings and deliberately act in all sorts of ways about whatever issues they choose to work on. And that includes sex. This means that a client must be free to express sexuality, safely, in any way including being flirtatious and seductive without the therapist exploiting it. Indeed the therapist may give a lot of permission for this to happen and to be explored and will notice their own reactions to it and where appropriate use these reactions to help the client. But an intention by the therapist to gratify their own sexual needs with a client is abusive whether or not they act on it. Clients are sensitive to this and are harmed by it. A deliberate attempt to court or seduce a client is clearly more harmful. The hurt and confusion seems to be worse if they also experienced, as they often have, sexual abuse in childhood.

Yours,
David Jones - Editor

BROWN RICE

Dear David,

Your insulting comment at the end of my piece in *Self and Society* really hurt, angered and upset me. Of course I know that only 20-30% of the world's population used to eat rice and that nobody in America, Africa, Europe or Australia used to. You know that also and were jeering like a playground bully at a minor lack of clarity in the style of writing. How can you ask someone to write a piece that attempts to bridge two fields of psychology and then make such facile comments? Not many parapsychologists now would wish to write for you because on the one hand you say you want more from parapsychologists and on the other hand you are putting them down. A classic case of approach-avoidance conflict!

I would, though, like constructive criticism and dialogue and that is why I accepted your request. At present Western Society is HOPELESS with regard to the problems faced by people who suffer from acute or chronic psychosis and we must try to find ways towards a more mentally healthy society. I feel my ideas and those of parapsychologists can add to the debate and should be considered. Your response saddens me.

Yours sincerely,
Serena Roney-Dougal
Glastonbury

Dear Serena,

I apologise for the footnote I put in your article 'Meeting Points between Humanistic Psychology and Parapsychology' - *Self and Society* January 1992. It was uncalled for, unhelpful and distressing for you. I am sorry that I did it.

I am especially keen not to distract attention into a squabble because I am in complete agreement with the importance of what you write especially when you say "Western Society is hopeless with regard to the problems faced by people who suffer acute or chronic psychosis and we must try to find ways towards a more mentally healthy society." It would be nice to be able to concentrate on that type of issue in the future. I am sorry that a silly act by me put that at risk and hope you can accept my apology.

There is something which lies behind my footnote. I am touchy about images of "other cultures" being used as canvases on which to project our own needs. You were not doing that. In future I will stick to commenting on the AIDS industry or the myth of Senoi dreams where that happens to the detriment of other people.

David Jones

IF I BECOME A VEGETABLE

Dear David,

May I add a note to Vivian Milroy's book-unwritten *Death the Universal Comforter* (*Self and Society* Nov 1991)? I have recently signed an Advance Directive, as the result of doing an excellent week-end group with Christianne Heal entitled 'Exploring Your Own Death'. Boiled down and in lay language this is addressed to medics and relatives asking them not to keep me alive if I become a cabbage. My GP surprised me by welcoming it, although he had never seen one before and put it with my file. I obtained a receipt and sent this with a copy of the Directive to my Solicitor; further copies of both to my relatives and to my long term (the handwriting seems to say *infirmitist*?) with a note that I hoped that he would attend my dying. I assured everyone that I was quite well and not a bit suicidal. I feel comforted by this arrangement.

I believe that these directives help both medics and relatives, and the more people sign them the better all round. The forms can be obtained from the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8 5PG

Yours sincerely,
John Ridpath
Zeal Monachorum

P.S. A nearby nurse declined to witness my signature, as did my Solicitor's Clerk, but the Bank staff had no qualms.

APOLOGIES

The illustration printed with Mary Smith's article 'Athena and the Great Goddess' in the September 1991 issue of *Self and Society* was sent to us by Cora Greenhill to go with her article 'Iraq - Ascent of the Sky God' in our January 1992 issue. We apologise to her for our error. It may be thought that Mary Smith was herself the artist as she is an illustrator. In fact, Anthea Hellwell of Lea Farm, Brightholmlee, Sheffield S30 3DB was the artist and we apologise to her for the mix-up.

THE GULF WAR

Michael Soth is publishing a booklet based on 'The Gulf in Me' (*Self and Society*, Jan/Feb 1992) available from 16 Riverside Road, Oxford, OX2 OHU Tel 0865 723 613 - Price £0.80

Self and Society will print examples of both well informed journalism "GOOD JOURNALISM" and ill informed journalism "BAD JOURNALISM" about counselling, psychotherapy and personal growth. Our intention is to discourage journalists from titillating their readers with distorted and prejudiced information and to recognise good reporting and comment, even if it is critical. Simply tear out examples or photocopy them and send to the editor of *Self and Society*, 39 Blenkarne Road, London SW11 6HZ. Include the name of the paper or magazine. Especially welcome are examples where journalists assume or imply that all Psychotherapy is in fact either Analysis or Psychoanalysis.

BAD PRESS

From *The Observer Magazine* 12th January 1992

"SUPPORT, COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY For milder depressions simply discussing what is upsetting you can be therapeutic, just as talking to an empathic partner can prevent you from getting that way in the first place. It releases pent-up distress and helps you gain an objective view of your problem. Counselling goes one stage further, identifying specific difficulties in your life and encouraging you to take practical steps to deal with them. If you can't obtain this from your family and friends there are many good counselling services around, though most require payment. GPs, social workers and NHS psychiatrists are free alternatives."

"Psychotherapy is less a treatment for depression than an examination of personal conflicts and self-doubts, including those that feed your unhappiness. It can be an intense experience, requiring a weekly commitment for several months, either alone or in a group. A GP may refer you to an NHS-based psychotherapist, often via an assessment with a general psychiatrist."

ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY ECT is given only to the most debilitated or psychotic of depressives and is safe and rapidly effective."

**DESPITE BEING THE TARGET
OF SUSPICION, THE EVIDENCE
THAT ANTIDEPRESSANTS
WORK IS INDISPUTABLE:
MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF
PEOPLE TAKING THEM
RECOVER**

Self and Society comments:

Professor Eysenck and, more persuasively, the Sloane study show that most people 'recover' no matter what treatment they get including getting no treatment at all.