

Letters

Dear S&S,

We want to reply to Martin and David's comments about our article on training and accreditation in *Self & Society* Vol 20 No 4. Martin's analogy about dentists is misleading but points us straight to the core of the problem. What matters about dentists — or for that matter plumbers — is chiefly their knowledge and skills (both reasonably easy to assess and accredit). What matters about psychotherapists is chiefly their qualities of person (very much more difficult to assess) — although it may be a bonus if they have a particular skill or piece of knowledge. Part of our concern about the training of therapists and counsellors is that it may well become more and more knowledge- and skills-based as assessment and accreditation take a higher and higher profile. This will be exacerbated as 'competencies' and National Vocational Qualifications enter the picture.

We agree with Carl Rogers that there is little evidence that 'knowing' and 'doing' any specific thing aids the healing processes in psychotherapy and counselling. One of the core points of our article which Martin and David ignore was that good therapy trainings should focus a great deal on the personal development of the trainees; this is the best way to avoid the various kinds of both gross and subtle abuse which therapists may engage in. Unfortunately not all therapy trainings do focus experientially and in a challenging way on the personal development of participants, and the push towards knowledge- and skills-based accreditation

and 'competencies' will probably not encourage this focus.

On the subject of 'mystification' we would remind readers that one of UKSCP's criteria for psychotherapy training is 'graduate level entry'. Thus a candidate who may have a wealth of wisdom, life experience and healing energy but who had turned away from the rigidity of higher education should be rejected? Does this have to do with the real interests of the clients or the interests, status, respectability and power of the profession?

Martin and David both seem to feel that the whole issue around accreditation is simply about the 'copyrighting' of the word 'psychotherapist', and that whatever happens will make no difference to non-accredited practitioners who can simply change their title to 'personal growth consultant' and continue practising as before. The situation is by no means as cut and dried. We are becoming subject to European law. In some European countries at present non-accredited practitioners would be breaking the law and subject to serious penalties for practising what many non-accredited practitioners do here. It is by no means clear that we will continue in Britain to be protected by our common law right to practise what we like as long as we don't 'claim to cure anything'. If that becomes clear we will stop writing to *Self & Society* as we don't really care whether the name 'psychotherapist' simply gets 'bagged' by a particular group of practitioners.

*Sheena Maclean Matheson
and Richard Sylvester*

Dear S&S,

By a sort of creeping putsch, the UK Council for Psychotherapy has established itself and its register at the centre of the therapy world in this country. This is against the will of a number of practitioners, and I know many of them are readers of *Self & Society*. The arguments for and against have been rehearsed at length, and the thing has happened; is there any room at this point for an alternative initiative?

I want to propose the creation of a Self- and Peer-Accredited Therapists' Network. This would be a stripped-down organisation with as few functions as possible beyond acting as an umbrella for therapists who don't wish or are unable to go on the UKCP register. The core of the idea is that therapists can only join the Network in groups of at least six. These groups would vet and accredit their own members, and any complaint against a member would reflect on the whole group.

The point of this is, I hope, obvious: we are saying that the appropriate measure of a therapist's soundness is not the number of hours' training done or the letters after their name, but the willingness of their peers to validate their work. The Network would have a constituting statement dealing with these issues, and members could obviously use this in their publicity.

I don't want to develop the idea further on my own — is anyone interested? I would be delighted to hear from you, preferably in groups of at least six — and hope to be announcing an inaugural conference in these pages soon.

Nick Totton
(326 Burley Road, Leeds LS4 2NZ)

Dear S&S,

My reply to Roger Horrock's angry letter answering my own in the July issue has been delayed by illness.

I do not accept that the actions of the Founding Fathers/Mothers can be overlooked in the development of their theory. I learnt from Horrocks that Freud 'talked to Robert Fliess about his father', which must, surely, have included his abuse. And Freud still kept to his published views about children fantasising their abuse?

The main point as I see it is the suggestion by Horrocks in the May issue of some sort of marriage between Freudian and humanistic models and methods. I believe that cross-fertilisation has already happened; that the Freudians are not much interested in 'us' (see John Rowan's *Breakthroughs and Integration in Psychotherapy*, 1992, Chapter 9, for his correspondence with a prominent Freudian on this). And it seems to me that indeed Freud was tarnished by Fliess.

At the start of my illness I have referred to I shook, sweated, hyperventilated involuntarily and regressed to the state of my baby, who was terrified. This I allowed myself to experience, did not then call for medical help and learnt from this in a humanistic manner from earlier therapy and training. However, much later interpretation — after treatment by drugs for the infection — came with some clear Freudian material in it.

· John Ridpath

Dear S&S,

A letter written by me to *Self & Society* was published in the September issue and

contained two statements in particular which led to an unreserved apology by S&S to Brainwave, the publication of a letter from Mike Considine of Brainwave, and advertising for Brainwave publications at free and/or reduced rates.

One of the statements in my letter as published which resulted in the above was that the book 'had been withdrawn'. I didn't write this, and I am waiting for whoever was responsible for this extraordinary piece of editing to explain why it was done. Another statement in the letter which resulted in Brainwave's objection was that the book was the subject of 'legal action'. This was an error on my part, and I can confirm that the matter was then and remains in the hands of the NUJ solicitors, although at this stage no court action has been commenced. Apart from this misunderstanding of legal process and terminology, I reiterate the substance of my original letter and my objections remain as they were when the book was first published in September 1992.

I follow the codes of ethics and practice of the several counselling, psychotherapy and writers' associations of which I am a member because they reflect on the whole my own principles as a feminist, humanist, and long-time union member. Such principles include equality, co-operation, willingness to negotiate, willingness to recognise mistakes and make amends, objectivity, non-exploitative practice and much more.

I feel that *Self & Society* made several mistakes. These are: altering my letter of August responding to the review of the

book; agreeing to apologise unreservedly, and to print a retraction and a letter from Brainwave without first informing me of the correspondence received from Brainwave/Brainwave's solicitor; failing to consider the position of a long-time member of AHP, and a qualified psychotherapist in favour of a commercial company run by someone who is neither a member of AHP nor a practising psychotherapist; and failing to give me an opportunity to respond prior to publication of the apology, so that my response could be printed alongside.

This letter has been cleared by the NUJ solicitors prior to sending it; I hope that this time it will appear unedited.

Val Falloon

We're very sorry, Val, that in cutting and editing your long letter which appeared in the September issue we misrepresented the situation by saying that the book had been withdrawn; we do reserve the right to cut and/or edit long letters, which we try to do as sensitively as possible. We're also sorry that the magazine's schedule did not provide time to publish your response to Mike's letter in the November issue; we do our best to offer appropriate right of reply, and this is now your space. We would like to make it clear that we did not, and would not, apologise 'unreservedly' to either side in an instance like this; our aim is to allow both you and Brainwave to say what you need to say (and at the same time do our best to avoid either side resorting to legal action against us).

Please remember that *Self & Society* reserves the right to cut and/or edit long letters; we want you to write to us, but please keep it concise and to the point!