

Letters

Dear S&S,

Why 'Wild Will's Wedding' ? Why not 'Fabulous Phoebe's Frolic'? Or did Will get married on his own? You editors just don't seem to learn about sexism, do you?

Mary Smith

Dear S&S,

I was very disappointed by January's 'Earwig'. I have no objection to humour in general or the invention of Flossie Crimp, but when humour becomes racist then I feel deeply offended, both as a member of an ethnic minority and as a bodyworker. Flossie Crimp should remain in the world of fiction. Imagination is required to turn something into humour — Earwig failed this transformation, demonstrating a deep lack of respect for the Polynesian race, psychic surgery, shamanism and Zen. This is not funny. If you want to continue making jokes perhaps you should join a workshop entitled 'How to be funny without offending ancient peoples and their traditions'.

Caroline Arewa

Dear S&S,

The death of the human potential movement?

Whether by chance or design I know not, the cover of the recent 21st birthday issue of *Self & Society* was adorned with a birthday cake superimposed on a reproduction of the cover of the first issue of *Self & Society*, thereby all but 'burying' the message which adorned that issue: 'A channel of communication for the Human

Potential movement'. Is this significant? That description has appeared on the cover of *Self & Society*, front or back, from its beginning in 1973 until quietly dropped in 1993.

That same 21st birthday issue also featured articles on death and grieving and in the editorial, David Jones refers to the: 'now vanished human potential movement'! and how the language of personal growth has been replaced by: 'the lexicon of clinicians, clinical training, and psychiatric diagnostic systems' and that: 'Sometime, somewhere, there will be an "alternative" movement to all of this . . . The Buddhists, probably.'

Hang on now! In my experience the Human Potential movement is still with us despite the smothering 'potential' of UKCP et al. I regard myself as part of it. Please do not bury the corpse without first checking for vital signs! And without due ceremony — at least a memorial issue of *Self & Society*?

If it does transpire that we have in fact expired, ceased to be, are no more, etc., then I suggest the following epitaph: 'The growth movement registering by numbers, dying by degrees. It had a lot of potential.'

Richard Mowbray

Dear S&S,

I would like to share my response to editorial comments I received on an article I submitted to *Self & Society*. These comments, although generous to me personally, slightly devalued the 'academic' aspect of the paper, and the fact that it

quoted various writers in the field rather than 'telling it as it is'.

I have a strong opinion that there should be space for a slightly more 'scholarly' approach (I don't mean boring old fart pedantry) in *Self & Society*. I feel it veers a bit too much towards the purely personal experiential at times. The American journal, *Humanistic Psychology*, sometimes offers useful, thoroughly written material that I can really use as a practitioner, and which gives me food for thought and discussion. This results in a journal which isn't so chatty. This might mean it is only read by 'serious' practitioners, or it might mean that Americans who are interested in humanistic psychology take themselves seriously and are not afraid of being educated in the subject.

Humanistic psychology has come of age – there are ways of being rigorously subjective, of taking account of new research, such as heuristic research, and of standing our own ground as an approach that is as well substantiated in terms of its underlying philosophy, assumptions and theoretical frameworks as any other. I feel there is still the old style humanistic tendency to throw one's thinking side away in favour of feeling, and there is still a tyranny in this. Why can't we have both?

What do other readers think?

Alyss Thomas

John Button, editor of *S&S*, replies:

It's always hard to find a balance of articles that will satisfy the needs of the wide-ranging and varied readership of *S&S*, but Alyss's important letter prompts me to outline a few points about our editorial policy.

We very much want the magazine to include a balance of first-hand experience (since working from our own experience is central to the humanistic approach) and the integrated and well-researched analysis of important issues. We have never eschewed the more scholarly approach (if by 'scholarly' you mean well-thought-out, experienced and wise), and welcome such contributions to our pages. What we do *not* appreciate, however, are long, cold, spiritless, derivative, academic articles of the sort that fill countless journals and anthologies and seem to be written mostly in order to get the writer's name in print.

My particular bugbear is the unnecessary footnote. In *S&S* we are always happy to print a short 'Further Reading' list of *appropriate* sources, but a four-page article with thirty footnotes is rarely justified, and as a matter of house-style (in common with most magazines, as opposed to academic journals) *S&S* prefers not to break the text of articles up with numbered references. I hate articles which start 'It is in the nature of human beings to feel ambivalent about life (Freud, 1909; Jung, 1911; Winnicott, 1956; Rogers and Boyesen, in press).' And we won't print such drivel!

Dear *S&S*,

Thank you for printing my letter suggesting a self and peer accreditation network. There has been an enthusiastic response, and a founding conference of the Independent Therapists' Network will be held on November 19th at the Open Centre in London. Details from 326 Burley Road, Leeds LS4 2NZ. See you there . . .

Nick Totton