

# An Open Letter to Richard Mowbray

John Rowan

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Congratulations on your new book, *The Case Against Psychotherapy Registration*. I think it is very thorough and well argued, and should make quite an impression.

There is just one area which you seem to avoid, however, which seems important to me. It has to do with the alternative you present to the present set-up. You want to make a distinction between 'people who have insufficient adult functioning available for them to be fully self-responsible, for example, work with children or people in a breakdown situation and people experiencing non-ordinary states of consciousness, including "madness" on the one hand, and people who 'have *Sufficient Available Functioning Adult Autonomy*' on the other. The one, you say, might be treated by psychotherapy, while the others could be treated through growth activities of the nature of 'human potential work' or 'humanology'. You do not say anything about the degree of commitment which it is appropriate to adopt when working with any of these people. Let me contrast two forms of activity which are observable at present, and let us not label them for the moment:

## Activity One

- Commitment through holidays
- Once or twice a week for months or years

- Person has been trained to deal with transference, counter-transference and resistance
- Observes strict boundaries
- Stay with one person
- Person is in supervision
- Person probably has own therapist or group
- Subscribes to an explicit ethical code which includes a complaints procedure

## Activity Two

- Short-term commitment
- One-off workshops or brief series
- Person is self-taught or perhaps apprenticed and may or may not pay attention to these things
- May or may not observe strict boundaries
- Variety of people
- Person probably not supervised
- Person may or may not have own therapist
- May or may not have an ethical code which includes a complaints procedure

You do not make this distinction, but it seems to me an important one. I don't think it will do to say, as you do, that you are drawing a line between patients and clients, or between those who are distressed to the point of losing self-responsibility and people who have SAFAA. As you well know, people who do have SAFAA can encounter much deep early ma-

terial in regression which is just as hard to deal with as any of the recognised forms of mental distress which you would put in the other category. I am arguing, then, that most of the people who start on the road to personal growth will sooner or later hit neurotic, borderline or psychotic material, which will then have to be dealt with somehow. My belief is that in such a case they need the security of being treated according to the principles of Activity One.

I have often said that all the available methods of personal work can be used in Activity One or Activity Two. The actual methods are the same in both cases.

I don't think Activity One endangers Activity Two or vice versa — they are just different aspects of the same thing, done in different contexts and under different conditions. This is very similar to the distinction often made by the British Association for Counselling between 'counselling' and 'counselling skills': a counsellor is trained to hold a client through all the necessary vicissitudes, while someone with counselling skills does not necessarily have any such train-

ing. I don't think I am saying anything new or contentious. But I am certainly saying that conducting Activity One is more demanding than conducting Activity Two. It calls for fuller and deeper resources, and better and longer training.

I call Activity One psychotherapy, and Activity Two personal growth. You seem to think (we cannot be sure, because you do not make this distinction) that both would come under the heading of humanology. But in that case we would have to distinguish between 'Humanology 1' and 'Humanology 2' or some such, which I think might be awkward.

The distinction between those who have SAFAA and those who do not is quite important to your argument, so I think you must have some view on the question raised above. It is just that you have not tackled it in your book.

Again, I would like to say how much I admire the book for its very careful trawling through all the evidence on the existing situation. But the question of what we do instead is going to require a lot more work before it is really clear.

