

# Letters

Dear S&S,

The 'Interview with Emmy' (van Deurzen Smith) in your last issue contains a whole host of assertions, presented as self-evident truths, about the purported beneficial effects of registration and licensing-oriented professionalisation that simply cannot go unchallenged. Thus, Emmy states, *inter alia*, that (1) 'None of this [the existence and implementation of agreed standards] was possible before the UKCP was created'; (2) 'Inevitably there has been a tendency for a hierarchy to form'; (3) 'There is much more choice for the public when seeking a psychotherapist'; and (4) 'With the increasing emphasis on improving training . . . the clientele will be better served'. I could go on. And all this disinformation in well under two pages!

John Button's excellent review of Richard Mowbray's *The Case Against Psychotherapy Registration* (in the same issue) offers an alternative perspective that is incommensurate with that peddled by Emmy. Indeed, the publication of Mowbray's formidable — some might say devastating — critique means the very least we can now expect from those favouring the bureaucratic professionalisation model is an open engagement, point by point, with the substance of his objections. And if there proves to be a deafening silence from the professionalisers, then we in the humanistic field will be left to draw our own (pretty self-evident) conclusions.

'An Interview with Emmy by Richard Mowbray' (and vice versa) — now there's an idea . . .

Richard House

Dear S&S,

In the context of Brian Thorne's touching and deeply anguished consideration of his own small part in bringing about, albeit unwittingly, the arrival of the new accountability culture within therapy/counselling, I found the placement of David Jones' 'Replacing your Certificates' almost eerily incongruous and inapt.

However, I was pleased to see John Rowan's growing awakening to the invisibility of turning humanistic psychotherapy into a set of mini-competencies and functional tasks, at least as far as the NVQing of the profession is concerned. I find it hard to understand how John squares the misgivings expressed in this article, plus what amounts to a frank admission that Richard Mowbray's *The Case Against Psychotherapy Registration* is broadly right, with the position he has seemed to be taking recently. He supports AHPP and UKCP in their objectives of persuading government to form a statutory register of psychotherapists (and thereby effectively to restrict 'title' to those thus registered). I think it would be very helpful to the debate if John himself were to elaborate the important points contained within the final paragraph of his letter to Richard Mowbray:

'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.'

Well yes, but until it is really clear, how about a moratorium on supporting what

is now becoming a questionable cause — namely the statutory registration of psychotherapists and counsellors? A major first step would be to institutionalise the recognition contained in John's statement by formally withdrawing support from those organisations who are committed to statutory registration until and for as long as it takes those organisations to produce empirical evidence that statutory registration will, or at least is likely to, promote those objectives that are claimed for it.

I think these are serious issues and deserve a response from the organisations concerned, and that there are reasonable and practical steps to be taken by those who are concerned about the direction in which UKCP is currently taking psychotherapy.

*David Kalisch*

Dear S&S,

I'm a fairly new member of the Board of AHPP, the Association for Humanistic Psychology Practitioners' Group. At one time I thought AHP and AHPP were 'them' and 'us'. Then I joined AHPP and thought that the Board of AHPP were the authority figures and we members of AHPP were the 'us'. Now I'm on the Board and they turn out to be only people after all. So at last 'them' has turned into 'us' for me as AHP member, AHPP member and AHPP Board member!

Since I can now comfortably identify with all these groups I'd like to ask my colleagues and co-members of AHP who also practice as counsellors how they feel about the United Kingdom Register of Counsellors which is being set up to start in 1996 or '97.

I joined the AHPP Board because I felt

that in the past few years AHPP has given a great deal of energy to its psychotherapist members and to promoting AHPP's membership of UKCP (United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy), whereas counsellors and other category members were not well represented, nor did our interests seem high on the priority list of the Board. I'm a member, an ordinary member, of BAC (British Association for Counselling) as well as of AHPP and have been working in the counselling field for more than 20 years, so I'm hoping that my experiences of some of the things which concern counsellors might be of use to AHP and AHPP.

So at present I'm trying to find out how and if we fit into, or could dialogue with, organisations like the British Association for Counselling. In AHPP we're wondering whether we should pursue the possibility of becoming a sponsoring agency for the United Kingdom Register of Counsellors. We're also wondering if we should have very similar criteria for accreditation to the BAC ones, or whether some other criteria would be more appropriate for a humanistic psychology practitioners' group. One difference is that we actually meet prospective counsellor and psychotherapist members; BAC selects only by the forms and documents people present.

Speaking personally I'm glad that we do have a practitioners' group, that we set minimum standards of training and practice and have stringent ethical standards, now that counselling is emerging into professionalism. Most of the counselling organisations, many of which are voluntary, are working hard to set good ethical standards.

I'd like to know what people really want from a counsellor in the way of training, competence and experience. I'd be very interested to hear counsellors' views on professionalisation and on the forthcoming United Kingdom Register of Counsellors. And most of all I'd like to know what other AHP and AHPP counsellors want from, expect of or hope for from AHPP, and if they see a role for AHPP in representing their interests and concerns.

I've discussed this letter with Whiz Collis, Chair of AHPP, and have written to all the AHPP counsellor members and associate members for their views, so that we can discuss this at the next board meeting; it would be so much better to know what you feel and think, rather than trying to speculate or guess what you want. If you are interested you can contact me via AHP or AHPP.

*Brenda Rogers*

