

Letters

Dear S&S,

Self & Society (January 1996) is to be commended for giving continuing, and indeed increasing, coverage to the politics of the field, namely accreditation and statutory registration issues. It is also to be commended for coming off the editorial fence and in John Button's editorial putting its weight behind an alternative route, that of self-registration, a move that assumes the best rather than the worst about human nature and our capacity, personally and professionally, to regulate ourselves. In seeking to hold the broad church of humanistic psychology before it splits, *Self & Society* is currently doing a better job of representing the pluralism of humanistic psychology than the therapy bureaucracies themselves.

I want to add to the debate by stressing that the pressure leading to the split in the human potential movement is the 'statutory' in 'statutory registration'. What we are beginning to experience is the coercion that lies behind the efforts of UKCP to use the power of the state in order to establish for itself a dominance in and over the therapy field that it has neither been appointed to from above, nor elected to from below. These features distinguish the kind of hierarchy being established within UKCP as a dominator hierarchy (to use Ken Wilber's term) rather than the naturally-occurring hierarchy that Emmy van Deurzen-Smith would have us believe it is.

We need to be able to discriminate between kinds of hierarchy rather than to slot unthinkingly either in to or out of them. What makes UKCP a dominator

hierarchy and therefore a 'bad' one is that it is not electable by and accountable to the people it claims to represent; and the power it seeks to call on, the power of the state, is itself founded on the preservation of vested interests. In other words, UKCP is a dominator hierarchy seeking to borrow power from another dominator hierarchy in order to impose its dominance. Practitioners must make it clear where they stand in relation to maintaining an 'open' and pluralistic field by addressing the term 'statutory'. It is not possible to canvass for 'pluralism and diversity' whilst voting for 'statutory' registration. Those within the humanistic field who support statutory registration (and I welcome, though I profoundly disagree with, Clarkson's and Pirani's contribution) should explain how the use of state power has come to be a desirable or necessary thing in the regulation and promotion of humanistic psychology. Instead of a special organisation of psychotherapists for political and social responsibility, how about psychotherapists beginning to own and examine their political and social responsibility at home base and to remember Hillman's call to make the therapy room a 'cell of revolution'? That would make us all a little less sanguine about the benevolence of the power we are seeking to invite in through state intervention.

You may express your concern about and opposition to 'statutory' registration by contacting myself, Juliana Brown and Denis Postle, who are forming a non-affiliated working party in favour of pluralism and autonomy (and therefore opposed to

statutory registration) in the personal growth/counselling/psychotherapy field. Please write to Juliana, Denis and myself c/o David Kalisch, PO Box 15, Budleigh Salterton EX9 7YW.

David Kalisch

From the *Guardian* Letters page, 28th November 1995:

The UK Council for Psychotherapy (Letters, 23rd November) is an unrepresentative trade association of psychotherapy training schools that is unilaterally laying claim to the field of psychotherapy. It will make therapy more expensive; it restricts entry to the field; it will stifle innovation; and there is extensive evidence that registration is ineffective in protecting clients.

Denis Postle

We sent a copy of Denis Postle's letter to the *Guardian* to Professor Digby Tantam, chair of UKCP, mentioning that Denis bases his second sentence on Richard Mowbray's book *The Case Against Psychotherapy Registration* which we reviewed in September 1995, and asked him for a response. We are very pleased to be able to print his reply to us and to Denis.

Dear S&S,

I am grateful to your editor for the opportunity to comment on the letter by Denis Postle, published in the *Guardian* on 28th November, in which he expresses anxieties about the claims on the field of psychotherapy that are being made by the UK Council for Psychotherapy, of which I am currently chair. My comments are informed by such knowledge of the Council and of the field of psychotherapy as I have gained through my own practice as a psychotherapist, and through my work as

chair. They do not, however, represent the official policy of the Council.

I think that we can all start from the premise that psychotherapy is only one domain in a much larger territory of encounters, whose end result is to change a person's way of looking at the world. Some of these encounters are personal, and some are professional. Some of them are designed to open a person more fully to beauty, or to truth, or to a perception of humanity which transcends our normal everyday concerns. Other encounters may be more prosaic, and concerned with enabling a person to deal with these concerns. I take this to be a description of the territory which we might all hold. Once we try to describe it more precisely, our perceptions and our values become inextricably intertwined. I shall therefore state my own values immediately.

Firstly, I assume that there are times in a person's life when they are failing to deal effectively with their life-situation, and that these episodes are generally marked by characteristic emotions which I am tempted to call, as a doctor, emotional disorders. Secondly, I take the view that people in such episodes may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Thirdly, I take the view that psychotherapy differs from the other human encounters, which it resembles, in that it is a therapy, a treatment, and I assume that psychotherapy is particularly concerned with people experiencing episodes of emotional disorder, and delivered particularly to people who are especially susceptible to exploitation. John Rowan, in a recent article in your journal, which I very much liked, sets out what I take to be a similar position in a cogent and interesting way.

I am not sure how many people would contend that there is no risk of exploitation. Most of us have heard numerous anecdotes about quacks, purveyors of snake-oil, cults, and other activities in which the power of human persuasiveness is used to extort or coerce rather than to heal. The impetus leading to the UK Council itself arose as a result of the Sieghart Report in response to the growth of the Church of Scientology. If one accepts that this is a problem, then I think that one cannot dodge the responsibility of doing something about it. The UK Council for Psychotherapy exists because its Member Organisations, its delegates, and its registrants, consider that they can best discharge this responsibility by concerted action. I am not sure whether Denis Postle and others concede that there is a problem, and if they do, what their preferred solution would be. They refer to extensive evidence that registration is ineffective in protecting clients, but do not cite the source of the evidence, or whether it is relevant to the kind of registration process which UKCP has adopted. The Council has just established a Research Committee, and that committee would certainly welcome any suggestions about how to conduct a practicable (and affordable) study of the effectiveness of UKCP's own registration procedure. It does, however, seem implausible to me to argue that extensive evidence of ineffectiveness is a proof of ineffectiveness.

In every other activity where people place their lives or personal safety in the hands of others, some sort of accreditation or registration procedure has been introduced. I am thinking, here not only of doctors, nurses, psychologists, physio-

therapists, acupuncturists, occupational therapists and other health workers, but also of gas boiler installers. When a registered medical practitioner is required to be struck off, or when a boiler is installed wrongly by a registered gas installer, there is no call for the abolition of registration, but there may be demands for tighter and more careful controls of it. I am reluctant to assume that this natural reaction is foolish or misled. It is clear that registration is imperfect. The registration process itself may be imperfect, and organisations such as the UK Council need to be aware of this, and to be open to constructive criticism and advice about how to improve our procedures. Moreover, without an effective means of assessing competence, and of how ethical values are applied in practice, registration is inevitably based on training and acculturation into a professional role. However, I do think that these methods have served the public well in the development of other professions, and that they do have a place in the creation of an ethically sound, highly trained, profession of psychotherapy, on which the public can rely.

I have replied at length to some of the larger issues raised by Denis Postle's letter, because I think that we do need to debate them, and be convinced of the need for registration, rather than just take it on trust. There are one or two inaccuracies in the letter which I do wish, however, to point out. The first is that the Council is accused of being unrepresentative. Those readers who attended the Rugby Conferences will know that there were considerable efforts to draw every potentially relevant organisation into the formation of what was to become the UK

Standing Conference, and then the UK Council for Psychotherapy. We have avoided having a definition of psychotherapy, because it seemed premature to draw too rigid and too tight a boundary around the field. We have actively encouraged organisations to continue to join the Council, and they continue to do so.

A further inaccuracy is to describe the Council as a trade association. Trade associations usually have the interests of their member organisations, rather than the public, at heart. They exist, quite appropriately, to increase the profitability and success of their member organisations. That is not the UK Council's purpose. We do not encourage people to seek psychotherapy who would otherwise not wish it. The Council does not promote one type of therapy against another. The Council simply states that if people wish to see an ethical and well-trained psychotherapist, there are procedures to ensure that a UKCP-registered psychotherapist would be a good choice, but that, if, for some reason, the relationship goes wrong, there is a means of redress within the Council's disciplinary procedures.

The UKCP is described as unilaterally laying claim to the field of psychotherapy, but this is factually incorrect. The British Psychological Society has a means of recognizing psychotherapy qualifications amongst clinical psychologists, and the Royal College of Psychiatrists has a mechanism for psychiatrists. The UK Council does not wish to supplant either of these. Some psychoanalytic and analytical psychotherapists are also represented by the British Confederation of Psychotherapists, a splinter group which left on the creation of the Council

from the UKSCP. The UK Council looks forward to a time when the BCP feels able to rejoin the UK Council, but far from attacking the BCP, I have recently written to members of two organisations who are jointly members of BCP and the UK Council, urging them to remain members of both. I am not sure about the claim that registration stifles innovation. It is broadly true that, if we consider the effects of other restrictive regulations — say the marketing of new drugs — fewer drugs are tried out experimentally on patients. However, those drugs that are introduced as a result of drug licensing have much less chance of turning out to be poisonous and much more chance of representing a real improvement in therapeutic methods than if the legislation did not exist. And despite these difficulties, there seem to be constant developments in the drug field. I doubt, therefore, that registration will stifle innovation, only that it will weed out unpromising, ineffective, or downright harmful innovations at a much earlier stage.

To end on a more positive note, there are two points about the letter with which I want to agree. The first is that registration is likely to make therapy more expensive. This is true. A professional job does not come cheaply. One has to pay a practitioner not only for treatment hours, but also for hours spent training and in continued professional development, in activities like personal supervision or further therapy, in careful record-keeping, audit, and keeping up with scientific literature. However, I think that most people would prefer to pay the relatively moderate increase in price that these costs produce and get a reliable, quality service.

Finally, of course registration restricts entry into the field. I have absolutely no objection to restricting entry to those people who will make good psychotherapists, that is to technically sound, theoretically knowledgeable, and ethically committed practitioners. Would anybody question this?

Digby Tantam

Dear S&S,

In his letter in *Self & Society*, March 1996, John Rowan seems to have missed one of the main points of SAFAA (Sufficient Available Functioning Adult Autonomy), which I have proposed as one of the criteria for differentiating 'human potential work' ('humanology' or 'personal growth work') from 'psychotherapy'. He says that I have argued that people with SAFAA are different from people who are mentally distressed. Not so. What I actually argue is that: 'It is not the presence of intensely experienced feelings or distress that is the limiting criterion but rather the absence of access to a functioning "adult" self . . .' (*The Case Against Psychotherapy Registration: a Conservation Issue for the Human Potential Movement*, page 184).

In a similar vein, John seems to equate what he calls 'Kleinian stuff, birth stuff, prenatal stuff' with being 'psychotic'. Once again, what I argue is that the relevant criterion for distinction is not so much the type of material that a person is experiencing but whether the person is also capable of being rational and in contact with here-and-now reality: 'The requirement of a sufficiently available "adult" in the sense of . . . ability to be in contact with "here-and-now" and "consensus reality" does not, for example,

preclude the exploration of states of regression and of projections and transference feelings. The trick is that such feelings are explored on a "twin-track" basis . . . exploring things from the past while maintaining contact with the present. Allowing one's "inner child" (or whatever) out, in the presence of one's "adult" (ibid).

Hence it is not so much a question of depth *per se*, but rather the ability to access the 'surface' that is the crucial consideration for the matter under discussion.

John has given considerable attention to the SAFAA topic. It would also be interesting to hear from him in these pages as to whether he still advocates statutory registration (and AHP/AHPP participation in that process through membership of UKCP) and if so why, in the light of the evidence that I have assembled which indicates that such moves are unwarranted and indeed likely to be detrimental to the public interest and the future vitality of the human potential and psychotherapy fields.

Richard Mowbray

Dear S&S,

John Rowan's piece, 'Changing the Name of AHP', is notable for what he has seen fit not to include in it. I was alerted to something odd by seeing him billed as 'Consultant Psychologist' on the publicity for the Joint UKCP/University Psychotherapy Association Conference that took place a month or so after the November issue of *Self & Society* in which his article appeared. He is, of course, a registered psychologist, part of his pre-Red Therapy, pre-AHP background. The British Psychological Society is currently campaigning to get a Bill through Parliament that

would make it illegal for anyone other than a registered psychologist (registered with the BPS) to use the word 'psychologist' in their professional title. The AHP in the USA is also reacting to a specific legislative context, to which John Rowan curiously omits any reference. Such decontextualisation is part of everything that humanistic psychology has generally opposed. *Self* but no *Society*. Thus it is hard to avoid the conclusion that when John Rowan writes, "The word "psychology" has become more of an embarrassment than an advantage', it is his own embarrassment, not the AHP's, that he is seeking to avert. What neater way could there be to pre-empt an awkward conflict of personal loyalties than to disappear 'psychology' (and therefore 'humanistic psychologist') before the term 'psychologist' becomes restricted. In this light, to adopt 'perspectives', the proposed substitute for 'psychology' in the title of the AHP, is to give up your ground before you've been told to vacate it. Me psychologist, you perspectivist. Looked at from this angle, 'Changing the Name of the AHP', reads rather differently. Beneath John Rowan's guise of doing his readership a favour, doing some thinking on their behalf, perhaps we should note and be wary of the special pleading.

There are further flakey aspects to his argument. 'Post-modernism' my foot! 'Holding to one discipline is no longer a good idea', he says. But the point in question here is not the discipline, the doing or the variety of activities in which one is engaged, but the identity, the being that precedes the doing, whatever holds that variety together as a recognizable entity. To quote him against himself, 'The argu-

ment against (a change of name) is that AHP has a long history and well established identity'. An organisation is a metaphorical body of people. Where bodies are concerned, fragmentation, interchangeability and watering-down lead to disintegration. Only those so post-modernised and fragmented that everything is interchangeable with everything else could equate 'psychology', a term referring to an organised body of knowledge, with 'perspectives', a word referring to points of view. 'Psychology' indicates that there is definitely something there to be perceived. 'Perspective' refers merely to the process of perceiving. Hence there need hardly be anything there as perception. Is this to be the fate of AHP? Again, to quote John Rowan against himself, 'There is a core of accomplished work which has been built up over the years under the label of humanistic psychology'. Accept no substitute!

John Rowan is worried but dare not own the worry as his. Only after his soft sell in the November issue does he give the hard details of the Psychology Bill in the January issue. That something worrying may be the counter-cultural thrust to liberate skills from professional monopolisation. Red Therapist, we remember you in these days of registration, regulation, assimilation, adaptation and, dare I mention it, castration . . . Oh the mysteries, oh the mysteries, in the name of the father, son and holy ghost, amen.

Guy Gladstone

The editor replies: A number of people have written to us about restriction of the title 'psychologist'. The BPS's intentions are discussed on page 31 of this issue.

Dear S&S,

We've just read John Rowan's review of *Family Outing*, and thank you for including this in *Self & Society*. There's just one point — yes, we too have seen percentages for homosexuals within society given as much lower than ten per cent. We totally disagree and feel certain far *more* than ten per cent are lesbian or gay! If you could speak with the husbands, wives and partners of non-heterosexuals to the extent we have, then we are sure you would agree that no statistics can ever be correct. They are merely a 'guesstimate'. Many marry or go into heterosexual relationships to 'make it go away'. They get stuck in there for very many years (often till their 60s) before accepting the sexuality they have tried hard to push deep down inside their very being for all those years. Others who are lesbian or gay are terrified of someone finding out or guessing — are not likely to even fill in a questionnaire honestly. Those who do live in heterosexual relationships are not necessarily bi-sexual, but often one hundred per cent gay. This comes to us from those who are or have been in such relationships.

As we all know, statistics can never be entirely accurate. The truth comes from

the people themselves. We believe people rather than statistics.

Joy Dickens

Dear S&S,

The AHPP always tells us through your columns of the people they excommunicate. Why not also a more positive message giving us a list of practitioners, perhaps as a supplement; perhaps once a year?

John Ridpath

Dear S&S,

I am looking for examples of 'letters I have written to clients which I wish I had never sent'. The object is not to publish these letters, which presumably would not be on in terms of confidentiality, but to extract from them some general points which would be useful to all practitioners. The resulting article would be sent to all contributors for approval before publication, so as to make sure that nothing indiscreet or improper were let out of the bag. Would anyone interested in this project please send material to me, John Rowan, c/o S&S at the address inside the front cover.

John Rowan

