

Letters

Dear *S&S*,

I'd like to thank you for such a wonderful publication. Congratulations on a size that makes it very easy to shove in my pocket and read anywhere, even though I find it hard not to read it all straight away! Thank you even more for fresh writing, a wide range of views, and good humour which encourages openmindedness.

Ramona Sterling

Dear *S&S*,

Can I point out to your readers that two books, *Social Interaction and Personal Relationships* and *Understanding the Self*, reviewed in the September and November 1996 issues, are published by Sage in association with the Open University Press? They are not co-publications as stated in the reviews. Many thanks for agreeing to publish this correction.

Alison Browne, Sage Publications

Dear *S&S*,

I write to express a sense of unease that centres on the Earwig column but which leads me to question the degree to which humanistic beliefs are truly central to the inner workings of this journal.

This column is often either vague and esoteric, or else it appears to be a means for the author to make some kind of point without putting their name to it. For example, in last month's column, although in this particular case I know something of the background, anyone who doesn't would be pretty much in the dark about what has actually been going on. The September 1996 issue is similar. In its present form the function of this column seems to

be to sort out whose on the 'inside' and whose on the 'outside'. It all seems to be covert and indirect, and people are being asked to join in on a certain stance without being given a clear picture of all the facts. This isn't, as I'd like it to be, straight, witty or challenging; instead it feels like a power game that is deeply unhumanistic.

In future, if the author has points to make it would be better to spell them out directly as well as humorously, rather than speak to the elect few and invite everyone else to collude from a position of ignorance. Is there a place in a humanistic journal for something that remains anonymous, unaccountable, indirect, excluding and has potential for abuse of power,?

Questions follow from this: How do editorial decisions get made? Whose voice is *Self & Society*; is it independent or does it speak for AHP(B) or AHPP? These things need to be made clear, and the editors have a responsibility to ensure that *Self & Society* reflects humanistic values in all aspects. The editorial disclaimer does not release them from the responsibility to continually question whether the choices made are a true manifestation of humanistic core values.

Mandy Bowden

John Button replies:

There are two issues here: the purpose of the Earwig column; and the relationship between AHP, AHPP and the magazine. Both AHP and AHPP have committee members on the magazine subcommittee, and all major policy decisions and theme ideas are discussed at meetings at which all members' input is welcomed. We would love to hear from anyone who would like to become ac-

tively involved in the magazine. Since the first appearance of the column six years ago Earwig has attracted both strong criticism and fiercely protective supporters, and the column's purpose has regularly been raised in the letters page. I would like to welcome readers to write short responses to Mandy's letter, and we will print a selection in the next issue. We shall, as ever, listen and take whatever action is needed — Earwig, you have been warned . . .

Dear S&S,

It was good to see Tricia Scott's 'conversion' to a position opposed to statutory registration in her recent article in *Human Potential Magazine* (Autumn 1996). This brings her into line with the views held by the majority of members of the AHPP Board. Basically this means that as a result of the impact of Richard Mowbray's Case against Psychotherapy Registration a number of important shifts have gradually taken place:

(1) It is no longer a minority or an 'extremist' position to be 'not in favour of' or 'opposed to' the statutory registration of psychotherapists and counselling. On the contrary, dare one but say it, within humanistic and neo-humanistic circles this is becoming something of a 'politically correct' position to take.

(2) As Michael Pokorny has indicated, the pro-statutory lobby within UKCP has clearly failed to make its case for statutory registration. We have awaited this case being made for sometime now, and continue to wait with considerable interest.

(3) Given the Government's recommendation of the 'interest groups' concerned to the Review of Professions Supplementary

to Medicine, it seems highly unlikely that any Government will entertain a case for independent regulation for counselling and psychotherapy in the foreseeable future. Given the opposition of many counsellors and psychotherapists to being lumped together with medicine's ancillary occupations (radiology, occupational health, etc) it is hard to see how any but the most desperate register-builder or kudos seeker is going to jump at this one. However there are a number of grounds for caution.

Although it is now 'politically OK' if not 'correct' to be opposed to statutory registration, there are still a lot of discrepancies between what's said in private and what's done in public. How many members of the AHPP realise that the majority of the current AHPP Board are not in favour/opposed to statutory registration. To what extent have AHPP representatives to UKCP made this position clear to UKCP? I would welcome an AHPP response to these questions.

Although statutory regulation currently looks like a dead duck, as Richard Mowbray points out in his recent article in *Counselling News* (September 1966) *de facto* registration, achieved by the cartelisation of training, the hypnosis of clients, trainees and purchasers of services into a 'UKCP/ UKRC only' mentality, the pro-register policies of insurance companies can create virtually the same straitjacket as statutory regulation, thus strangling consumer choice and creativity in therapy and training. These are not idle fears — they're part of what's happening.

A key factor is that the criteria employed by UKCP/ UKRC, and indeed BAC and AHPP, for addressing 'competence' in

counsellors and psychotherapists are simply not borne out by the research evidence on outcome effectiveness (or indeed Mah-rer's alternative 'in therapy' paradigm). In short they're not rational. They don't command assent on rational grounds. And yet they represent the foundations on which an independent profession of counselling and psychotherapy is to be built! This is not to question the genuineness of particular UKCP trainers in relation to the criteria — many no doubt believe in them. The point is that in order to enforce them, either by statute or by controlling the market in training, would require empirical proof which is currently not only lacking but is in actual fact contra-indicated (see for instance Bohart 'The Active Client' in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* Vol. 36 No. 3 1996 and Alex Howard's *Challenges*

to *Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Macmil-lan 1996)

The position is somewhat akin to the Tory's attempt to claim the 'high moral ground', 'classlessness', and 'family values' as its ground. It sounds good. The evidence points in exactly the opposite direc-tion. One hopes that both 'electorates' wake up from their respective trances in time.

David Kalisch

The Editors asked the AHPP Board whether it would like to respond to any of the points made by David Kalisch in this letter. Their brief but clear response is that 'The AHPP Board is opposed to statutory registration, a position that has remained unchanged for years. This opinion is put forward at UKCP meetings whenever ap-propriate.'

AHP Page

June Green

Mainly good news this month. Look out for your notice of the AGM on 26th April, which is enclosed with this mailing. Colin McGee has agreed to run the afternoon workshop, and will be using art as a way of exploring time and space. For the formal business of the day, we need nominations for officers and committee. It would be good to have some new people with fresh ideas and energy. If you live outside London you can claim expenses to come to meetings.

Another date for your diary is Saturday October 11th, when we are planning to have the Festival we have talked about for

a year or so. The venue will be Hillcroft Col-lege, Southbank, Surbiton. Invitations will be going out soon to various organisa-tions, centres and individuals to run stalls there and of course we will keep you posted as plans develop.

Some bad news — Camilla, our hard-working administrator, has decided to leave us in the near future. A leaflet with the advertisement for the post is enclosed in this magazine, so please show it to any-one who might be interested. We will be sad to see you go Camilla, but we wish you every success in your new venture.

Hoping to see you at the AGM!