

Self & SOCIETY letters

Dear S&S

What do you do to check out that advertisers in *S&S* are reputable? From the late 1980s until last year I undertook various tasks as part of *S&S*'s editorial team and we did this reactively, when it was brought to our attention. For example, there were two occasions when readers complained that we carried advertisements for, in one case, a serial seducer and in the other a man advocating sex between fathers and daughters. We urged the centres where these villains worked to cease giving them workspace. They agreed. And we accepted no more advertisements from them. Are you willing to be proactive in checking out the credentials of advertisers? This would help make it clear to those who still doubt

it, that AHP and *S&S* do not support people who are in the habit of trying to gratify their libidinous desires with those to whom they offer therapy or personal growth. In Old Humanistic language you would ban advertisements from practitioners who are on a sex trip.

David Jones

Dear David

Currently there is no particular pro-active system for monitoring advertisers. We could ask advertisers to provide proof of membership of reputable professional organisation or ask them to provide a reference. A decision on what is feasible will be published in the next issue of S&S. Eds.

Dear Self & Society,

I am writing in response to the exchange of letters between Alix Pirani and Guy Gladstone in the November 1999 issue of *Self & Society*. Although I don't know anyone involved, I have that terrible discomfort of watching two people in a righteous battle, where the knives are out on both sides and the blood is beginning to flow. I also have the terror of saying anything for fear the knives will turn against me. From my own experience, I know that the feelings being evoked, by the letters and my witnessing, are smothered with the unmistakable fingerprints of the scapegoating complex. I also know that to stay silent at this point would be to collude with it and its lethal consequences. When the scapegoat complex is present, there is always a terrible menace and, in speaking, I am afraid.

The first thing I would say about the issues being raised is that I have no answers. I have only my experiences to draw upon and the limited wisdom I have been able to acquire to date. My knowledge is incomplete and often painful, with all the reactivity that brings. Those places where I am still blind will leap out to onlookers with dazzling clarity whilst I remain blissfully and dangerously unaware of what I might be provoking. This is the nature of the scapegoat complex for it finds each one of us where we are at our most vulnerable, most unconscious and most human. It might be wiser to stay silent and allow these protagonists to slug it out. I could tell myself that this has nothing to do with me but my feelings as witness clearly tell me otherwise.

As a psychotherapist, issues about abuse enter my consulting room with terrible regularity, and as a human being, I cannot but be affected by the appalling savagery humanity can unleash on itself. The spectre of the scapegoat complex has haunted us all down the centuries and it has found new variations for bloodletting in recent times that are barely imaginable. The complex is loose in the collective, so it belongs to us all. We are all a part of it. But there is something else present, if we can stay with our humanity. Paradoxically, with all its darkness, the scapegoat has the capacity to heal.

The process of scapegoating is sacred. The ancient Hebrew ritual of slaughtering one goat and exiling another was the means used to reconnect to the Divine. Both goats belonged to God. They carried the sins for the tribe and were ultimately a tool for healing. So this is being written with the hope, possibly foolish, that if we can begin to understand the complex where the destruction is reactive, we might be able to transform it into a process that contains healing. At best, it may enable us to accept our wounds and our destructiveness with compassion.

The description Alix Pirani gives of her time with Glyn Seaborn-Jones has a horrible and familiar ring about it for me. I don't know any of the people in her story, but I clearly recognise experiences of blurred boundaries, abuses of power, unheard protests, demands for loyalty and scapegoating from people on whom I was dependent. Uncovering my silenced voice has been painfully slow. As I process these experiences, I find myself in touch with a furious rage and a deep desire to inflict the same pain on those who perpetrated it on me. The passing of years makes absolutely no dent whatsoever on the intensity and immediacy of this rage when it rises. It

remains as fresh as the moment the violation occurred, whether it was ten, twenty or more years ago. Instinctively, I sense something more needs to happen in this process and, at the time of writing, I am not sure what that something else is, but I have a few clues.

One clue is in my desire to inflict the same pain on my perpetrators – I want them to know how it felt! A similar clue appears in Alix's piece when she writes '...it may become a safe haven for those wishing to escape judgement of their actions'. Whenever the scapegoat is present, so is the scapegoater or priest – the one who stands in judgement.

The eminent astrologer and Jungian therapist, Liz Greene, describes the scapegoat complex as a hall of mirrors. So when I feel scapegoated by people I have known and on whom I was dependant, so the scapegoater in me stands in judgement of them, desires to do the same to them, wishes to unleash the same destructive forces onto them. To act on this would immediately turn the object of my righteous rage into a scapegoat and I then become the scapegoater. What has been an important revelation to me is the recognition that when I am in the clutches of the scapegoating complex, I am both the goat and the priest.

If I were to use my desire to make those who have hurt or humiliated me feel the same thing, I could seek to have some formal judgement that I was abused handed down from on high. We see this in the proliferation of lawsuits that now fill our courtrooms or in the increasing number of complaints against psychotherapists in my chosen profession. I understand completely the desire to publicly shame and humiliate the perpetrators of my pain for all the faults they had oh-my-god years ago.

But there is a problem here.

Firstly, it may bring me some satisfaction to have a second, third or hundredth opinion that I am right and they were wrong, but, like the passing of years, it ultimately has no true impact on the rage within me, other than to reinforce its righteousness.

I know that when I am feeling righteous, that is often the moment when I am most abusive. I forget to look into the mirror and see the scapegoater within me – where my hands are as dirty as those I am seeking to destroy and where I am as destructive as that which I am opposing. I fail to allow for the human process of learning. I may insist that they should have been aware of what they were doing and forget that I have the same problems with repeating abusive patterns because I am not aware of them. There are parts of myself that I have struggled with for years to become aware of and am still able to miss the point entirely at the vital moment.

When I am in this place, what is missing from me is compassion. All the things I am enraged about happened many years ago – the point that Guy raised in his letter. The people who perpetrated the hurt are not the same people now as they were then. To employ my righteous anger now seems inappropriate – my rage is with who they were, not who they are now. My rage belongs in the past, not the present – and yet it is present in the here and now, as undiminished as it was then. To strike in rage now would be to perpetuate the pain, and yet I also need to respect a rage that would seek to protect me from abuse.

If I stand alongside the people who hurt me as they were at the time of that hurt, I can see the world from a different

perspective. Frequently, they are simply repeating things that were done to them. They knew no different at the time. I am not saying that their ignorance and the consequences of that are therefore acceptable or right but it can be understood.

We can see the same thing happening in psychotherapy from Freud onwards. Our professional ancestors are held up and condemned for not knowing that what they did was abusive. Yet our understanding of therapeutic abuse has developed slowly over the years. Things that were normal in the past are now a professional anathema. To condemn is to miss the point.

I doubt very much that anything we now name as abuse was inflicted with the conscious intent to cause harm. We know it is harmful only with hindsight. More the question is, if they were able to inflict that which we now understand to be harmful, what harm are we inflicting now with all our good intentions? Who of us can be certain that we are on a road to healing and not paving the road to hell?

I think the problem deepens considerably when it comes to training the next generation of psychotherapists. On the one hand, I believe psychotherapy is about accepting the presence of all aspects of human nature with as little judgement as possible – the dark as well as the light. Yet, in training, the trainers are automatically in the role of judge and the trainees in the position of judged – well, some people have to fail, don't they? Could this mean that the potential for scapegoating is automatically present in all trainings and that all trainees are likely to have the experience of being scapegoated? Is it therefore likely that all psychotherapy trainers may eventually face some form of complaint from trainees about their role as scapegoater? If this has a ring of truth to it, how then does this evolve when we

step into the issues of accreditations, registrations, ethics and so forth? For a young and emerging profession whose stated intent is to provide as non-judgmental and accepting an environment as possible for our clients, we can appear to be tremendously judgmental and unaccepting of the inevitable humanity that emerges from our practitioners. I am not advocating an acceptance of things that we know to be harmful but I do raise the question of how we are dealing with it when it arises.

The scapegoat complex is deeply paradoxical. There is a urgent need to have the pain and rage of the scapegoat heard – to be able to name that which is being denied by the priest or the collective. Those people who find themselves carrying the collective sin have a valuable and healing knowledge of what is being denied if we can find it in ourselves to listen. Those of us who would prefer the scapegoat to carry our sin for us need to look within ourselves to find out what it is we cannot bear. To say that scapegoating is wrong is quite right, but how is it being said? When it is presented that the scapegoat is right and the scapegoater wrong, the split and the complex continue. I believe the right and wrong is in all of us and both are so deeply intertwined as to be inseparable. In this situation, I find myself standing precariously on a very sharp knife-edge – one way is the goat, the other way is the judge, and all the time my feet are being cut to pieces. I don't have an answer – all I know is that, at times, it is painful beyond bearing and all I want to do is put the pain and those who remind me of it as far away from me as possible.

There is an idealisation that life should be better than it is and this inevitably leaves the door open to the scapegoating complex and it finds a comfortable home in the fields of psychotherapy and politics.

We want to be better human beings. We want a better world. I am no different. I wanted to be rid of the darkness that had haunted me until I found my way into a consulting room fifteen years ago. I wanted my parents, teachers, mentors and therapists to point the way. I wonder if a part of my rage and pain is the terrible disappointment that they all turned out to be flawed and human and that the best I can ever expect is to be is a flawed human too.

As an adult, I have my own part in the scapegoating situations I find myself in. I choose to stay, or I choose to speak. I choose not to listen to my own voice because I want to believe the illusion that someone else knows how to make me better. Each time I have found myself encountering this energy, I have learned a bit more. I have become slightly wiser. And I have gained something valuable from it. I have a job of work I love. I have learned to find people who could really listen to the silenced voices within me and who have taught me how to listen to them myself. I've learned about boundaries and abuse in a way that no theory could have ever taught me. I have learned to be deeply curious about my own internal processes in ways that are as non-judgmental as I can manage at the time.

This feels like a somewhat ham-fisted response to the issues raised by Alix Pirani and Guy Gladstone who both had the courage to express a naked pain, rage and despair where others could see. Maybe those of us who are witnesses could tentatively begin to listen to the truth of the scapegoat in both stories because it is a sacred goat that carries the truth of our unbearable and flawed humanity.

Maybe we could begin to learn how to name a wrong without becoming a

scapegoater. Maybe we could learn how to use the scapegoat energy for healing the poison that emerges when it goes into action. And maybe I am spinning yet another hopeful illusion of a better world that will simply attract the shadowy and destructive complex to continue its work.

I still have no answers, only my own struggle with pain and rage. I don't know if I am ready to arrive at forgiveness when I find my old furies emerging from

their time capsule, unchanged and unaffected by anything I may have done or learned since. Maybe the best I can ask of myself is that when I raise my fist to strike, I can find it in my heart to be merciful, to listen with compassion to what the scapegoater cannot bear and the scapegoat is trying to heal.

With best wishes
Dylanie Walker

Dear Editor,

It is pleasant to read that one's work for something one believes in is remembered as having been important (David Jones' reference to me and others on page 38 of the July issue). I worked for Humanistic Psychology for some years fired by enthusiasm for the ideas which it represented; giving my administrative skills free in a number of capacities and usually paying my own travelling expenses. When I was asked to take over as General Secretary of AHPP I was obliged to decline because I was already paying my fare from Derbyshire to attend Membership Committee meetings, and I just could not afford to come to London more frequently. The AHPP Board then offered, as a special concession, to pay my fare to attend Board meetings so that I was able to do that job.

I am drawing attention to this, because in all the recent discussions regarding the way forward for AHP in Britain no account seems to be being taken of the vastly different financial situation. In those days it was normal to do things for free! We were a success because we did not have to pay for administration, and workshop leaders did not expect a fee.

Therefore we could offer monthly workshops for a few pounds, and even then reduce the charge for students and the unemployed. We introduced Humanistic Psychology to many people in this way.

Times have changed. Most people now working in our field earn at least part of their income from it. The revolutionary fervour that led to free services no longer exists. For a time I felt resentful about this, but I have come to see that it is inevitable that members of an organisation set up to promote new ideas will cease to manifest the same enthusiasm once those ideas become more generally accepted. Humanistic Psychology is now a normal part of our lives, it is no longer an exciting struggle against the establishment. Indeed in its membership of UKCP AHPP has become part of the establishment, and I contributed to achieving this.

Alongside the lack of energy for administration and organising conferences there also seems to be a diminution in enthusiasm for keeping in touch with what is going on in Humanistic

Psychology generally. It seems quite some time since I remember reading in *Self & Society* any report from one of our members of attending a conference put on by the parent organisation in the USA, and although we had permission to quote extracts from their newsletter it is a very long time since this was done. It is as though we have become mentally sluggish and disinterested: and this is confirmed in a letter I received from our Committee in 1998 which said that our links with the American organisation had become tenuous, and that we no longer had any liason with the International Committee.

We are now in a New Millennium and I think we should wake up and become revolutionary again - this time in relation to our own structure. We are not presenting a clear image. It must be puzzling to outsiders that there are two Humanistic Psychology organisations, and if AHPP separates from us the situation will become even more confusing. My proposal therefor is that instead of separating from AHP in Britain, AHPP should TAKE IT OVER. When I resigned from AHPP because my life was changing I assumed that I would always remain a member of AHP in Britain which had meant so much to me. However I now think that I should be ready to sacrifice such nostalgia for the sake of the future of Humanistic Psychology in this country. Professionalism is increasingly demanded in all fields, and in my view it is the Practitioners Association which is the right one to carry our message forward in this third millennium because their commitment to professional values is in tune with the times. There is no reason why *Self & Society* and the Web site should not be run by AHPP; indeed they could probably develop them to offer more than we can. I would hope that

some form of associate status could be created for those of us who wanted to keep in touch.

We have existed for thirty years; we have seen our new ideas enter into the general consciousness; and we have formed a practitioners section which has grown from small beginnings to being accepted among its peers in the psychotherapy field. I think this can be counted as a rip-roaring success! Do not let us spoil it by clinging to a structure which was appropriate in the past but has become irrelevant to the needs of the 21st century.

Yours sincerely,
Shirley Wade



Dear Editor,

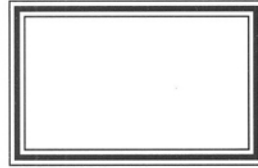
Shame on you! For not publishing Earwig's final (really goodbye?) message in November's S&S! As one of those who will sadly miss Earwig's acerbic observations I'm angry and upset that you have ignored his (her?) obvious communication. You say: "On his chair was a blank sheet of A4. But no sign of the insect himself, nor a message for this month's journal". (My italics.) Surely any therapist can recognise a wordless communication when they see one?! And a blank sheet is so much his style. Please reproduce his final words of wisdom in full, so that we can all interpret his message in our own way. Photographically reduce it if space is short.

Yours sincerely,
Tony Morris.

Dear Tony

Thanks for your letter. You will find Earwig's last sayings in this issue, reduced as you suggested, anywhere you look - between the lines or on the margins. And did you find him on the last back cover?

Ed.



Self & SOCIETY

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