

I feel so guilty
Perhaps people will love if
I am guilty.

I hate feeling guilty - I deeply resent it,
and what of others?
They are mysterious to me, unknown
I fear them - they could kill me.

I will hate them in the lonely isolation
of the prison of my mind.

Alan Byron

Ian Maunder

Random Thoughts on Wholeness

When I first joined AHP, it was because of my concern as a social worker about the types of psychiatric and psychological 'help' given to people of my acquaintance. I'm not going to go into paroxysms of indignant rage about mechanistic, manipulative psychiatry and psychology, since it has all been said before. Suffice it to say that it took me some time to discover what it was that horrified me about this. Eventually, mainly through reading Carl Rogers' 'Client Centered Therapy' and John Lilly's 'The Centre of the Cyclone' and both books having a profound effect on my thinking, I realised that it had something to do with wholeness.

For some time before reading the books I had been doing a lot of work on myself and I don't think I had realised how little I was looking deeply at others during this period. I was aware that an aggression bubbled within me which was aimed at stopping myself being put down. After years of accepting put-downs without question because of a poor self-image, followed by much work on improving my own self-image, I was damned if I was going to let anybody put me down easily; I wanted consideration, respect for my humanity. Suddenly it struck me that my indignation at the treatment of others by self-styled experts was about the same thing as my own aggression about me. I knew these people and felt that their distress could be touched, worked with, and through that work they could come nearer to wholeness. Instead, the help they were offered was a dehumanising process of suppressing the more disturbing (to others) symptoms of their distress with little consideration given to the person as an individual human being, no respect for them as them. I cannot turn this argument entirely onto psychiatrists and psychologists as, being a social worker, I must admit that many thousands of social workers see their jobs in much the same way.

I began to wonder about the micro and macro levels of humanity and how these could be reconciled - as indeed I still do. It seemed to me that the micro level - consideration

and respect for individuals - was too often being sacrificed to the macro level - society as a whole, that individuality and wholeness were crushed for the 'good' of society. I know that our culture in Western society mediates against the expression of individual traits except within very narrowly defined boundaries, and individuals who insist on expressing them leave themselves open to various social 'punishments' - there's a very thin line between eccentricity and madness. Also, those that ordain and administer such social punishments do not appear to have complete control themselves, but are open to the influence of yet more powerful groups, notably those connected with industry and trade. To be blunt, in our society money talks loudest, and industry has the most money, consequently the most influence, and a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. And in recent years industry and the people seem to have grown further and further apart.

Readers who have borne with me thus far are probably considering that this is a political statement. It is not. It is a sad fact that any comment on the state of society as a whole is deemed to be political. Thus limiting the consideration of the statement and ways of dealing with its content. I do not consider myself to be a political animal. The nearest anyone has ever come to expressing my views on politics was Jeff Nuttall when he said 'politics is, by now, not a persuasion, but a profession and is therefore not susceptible to argument, merely to power.'

So if I'm not talking politics, what am I talking about? I'm talking, as I said earlier, about wholeness and the quality of our lives, and recently I've become increasingly aware of other people who, in their various ways, are just as concerned. The connection is not always obvious, but I believe it to be there. As a friend who is a member of the Campaign for Real Ale said to me recently, 'You say you're concerned with people and the lack of choices available to them, well so am I. You consider CAMRA a bit frivolous, but it's to do with choice. It's to do with the right to drink properly brewed and pumped beer if I want to, instead of the garbage most pubs serve, full of gas and water, with most of the natural goodness chemically removed. And if the big breweries had their way, there'd be no choice. It's sad that we have to form a society to preserve such a small choice, but that's the way it is, and I think it's worth it.'

I had to admit his argument had substance for me and it set me thinking about all the other ways in which choice was being taken. I'd joined the AHP because I recognised the problem in one area of life, but how many areas had I missed? It's true that more and more people are buying alternative lifestyles, alternative technology, organic farming and so on, but the numbers are still only a tiny percentage of the population and everyone needs positive reinforcement of one kind or another. Hence the existence of organisations like the Soil Association, CAMRA, friends of the Earth, and Alternative Society themselves, who described their activities briefly in the January *Self & Society* and many more. And if you think about it, surely we're all concerned with real and natural things, with wholeness in our environment as well as ourselves. I for one would be interested in seeing on occasional item in *Self and Society* about people who have involvement in these kinds of projects, like the one on Alternative Society. If this idea connects with any readers, why not write to *Self and Society* so that the demand can be assessed. Here's hoping.