

Friendly respect and anxiety

The Conference delegates did meet twice in small groups, comprising members from the different sections, to discuss certain topics and this was very rewarding as this was a friendly forum where we could begin to get to know each other and were able to share differing backgrounds and views. In my group a psychiatrist, an analytic psychotherapist and a family therapist were able to listen to, and ask questions of, a hypnotherapist and express their personal concerns and ignorances. Respect of differences was shown but there were also real anxieties as to whether they wanted to be bedfellows with each other.

By Sunday I began to feel my place and could feel some excitement at the process which was happening. An election took place and three members of the HIPS section were Courtenay Young (as Treasurer), Emmy Van Deurzen-Smith and John Rowan.

Overall I was impressed at the enormous task to which the Conference was addressing itself and the hard work which had been done by dedicated representatives of all the organisations in the past years. I was also impressed by the amount of goodwill and open attitudes there were amongst many of the delegates, although the long pervading attitude, that only the analytical fundamentalists have the true voice, was still around.

It is my view that the UKSCP is an important body to be part of and to support. It can be the only chance for all psychotherapists to have a competent authoritative voice to represent them. That we are having to confront and clarify our trainings, philosophies, ethics, reasons for working, can only raise the standards of our work and the professional service we offer to the public and our clients.

ACCREDITATION

by John Rowan

The time seems to have come for me to say something about accreditation. There have been several articles in *Self and Society* about this recently, and some of them seem to be to be missing the point entirely.

In 1980 I helped to found the Association for Humanistic Psychology Practitioners, because I wanted to grasp the nettle of accreditation. A couple of years earlier I had resigned from the Psychology and Psychotherapy Association because it had (after several inconclusive meetings) failed to do this.

The point of accreditation, as we spelled it out at the time, was to put some structure into a disorganised field which had become quite messy. We felt we wanted to put our own house in order, so that we could say to all and sundry that there were some decent standards of practice, and that some of us cared enough about that to make sure that they were upheld, at least within the bounds of the organisation we were setting up. And so we set out some guidelines for how people could assess

themselves and their practice, and submit themselves to the judgement of their peers. We also set out some ethical standards, and a complaints procedure so that clients or others who felt offended against by one of our members could find redress.

Inward and Outward

We were clear that there were two sides to the issue of accreditation: an inward side, where we became clearer about what we were doing ourselves and the kind of values we wanted to uphold for ourselves; and an outward side, where we said to the world: "We take collective responsibility for our practice, and are prepared to have it examined for its adequacy by anyone who wants or needs to do so." We were also clear that there were many different kinds of humanistic practitioners, and that we wanted to cater for all of them - therapists of various persuasions, group facilitators, counsellors, organisation consultants, educators, researchers and so on.

Then came, gradually and bit by bit, the United Kingdom Standing Conference for Psychotherapy, which has had some flak directed at it. I'd like some acknowledgement that the people involved with it have done a tremendous job under enormously difficult conditions. To hold together in one regular meeting all the various tendencies within psychotherapy, to enable dialogue and mutual understanding to take place, and to find a growing mutual respect emerging, is no mean achievement. The reason why this has been possible is that it is not agreement on theory which is being attempted, but agreement on staying together so that the UKSCP can be recognised as the only competent authority in the U.K. which can speak for all psychotherapists: hopefully thus preventing the atrocious oppression which has taken place in most countries of Europe, where only such psychotherapy as is approved and controlled by the psychiatric establishment is allowed to take place. Those countries where strict control is also exercised by the psychological establishment are regarded on the Continent as liberal. The UKSCP stand for a system by which free organisations freely combine into groupings with explicit criteria of membership, which can be scrutinised and modified by mutual criticism. This exists nowhere outside the U.K., and it is a credit to all of us who have been involved since its inception. I don't want anyone slagging it off.

Now because of the UKSCP's existence, and the pressure from Europe to produce some kind of rationale for what we were doing in this country, the AHPP had to devote special attention to psychotherapy. Our work on accreditation in this particular area was not only under scrutiny from our peers in the Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy Section (HIPS) of the Standing Conference, but also under scrutiny from other sections, and from the Council of the Conference. In the event, AHPP members took a leading role in drawing up criteria for membership of the Section which took into account many of the lessons we had learned in the AHPP.

But what this meant was that the outward aspect of the accreditation process now becomes much more important. We had to satisfy not only our own consciences, but also the critical gaze of outsiders. So our requirements, and our procedures, had to be tight enough to stand up to this. One of the things we took on board was the necessity to have an External Moderator - someone senior and sympathetic, but not connected with the organisation, who could scrutinise what we were doing, and tell us whether we were living up to our self-description, or if we were kidding ourselves in some way. We also took to heart the formal assessment by two other organisations in the same Section, which revealed certain weaknesses and holes in our procedures. So now the accreditors were getting, so to speak, accredited by peers. Just the same as what they were doing for others, and just as valuable.

Criticisms

In the light of all this history, consider the articles in *Self and Society* by Shohet *et al* (1991), House & Hall (1991), Postle & Anderson (1990), Brown & Mowbray (1990), a and b) and Heron (1990).

In the Shohet *et al* article, five people got together to experiment with accrediting each other, and discovered many interesting things. But it seems to me that they concentrated on the inward aspects of accreditation, and ignored all of the outward aspects.

Similarly with the House & Hall article - here thirteen people got together, and again discovered a great deal of value for themselves. Again it seems to me that they ignored the outward aspects of the matter. And if they manage to run the projected conference on accreditation in September, I hope this does not make the same mistake.

Postle & Anderson quarrel with many of the details of AHPP accreditation, and eventually suggest their own substitute for that, which in my view really amounts to much the same thing as the proposals just mentioned - and like them refer much more to the inward than the outward requirements of any viable accreditation process.

Brown & Mowbray want to argue that psychotherapy should not adopt a medical model. Here they are pushing at an open door, because all of us in the HIPS group agree on that, and will argue it to the door of hell if necessary. We don't want to abandon psychotherapy to the psychiatrists, or even the psychologists: we want it to be recognised as a diverse activity with many different expressions, all legitimate. It is the strength of the UKSCP (and its weakness in the eyes of those who want narrower definitions favouring their own approach) that it has insisted on the legitimacy of this diversity.

The Kalisch articles both say that bureaucratisation is a bad thing, and that instead we should adopt the myth of rebellion, in which endeavour the figure of Hermes might help us. This seems to me a kind of *either-or* which is not helpful. To argue against bureaucracy is like arguing against traffic lights: at a certain stage in the development of an organisation it has to become more bureaucratic, just as at a certain stage in the development of traffic it becomes appropriate and helpful to introduce traffic lights. This doesn't mean that we have to abandon Hermes, who I find personally a very helpful figure, particularly in relation to psychotherapy, with his ability to go back and forth between the underworld and the overworld carrying messages. The whole essence of the Greek pantheon is that we need many gods and goddesses, not just one. Not the *either-or*, but the *both-and*.

The Heron piece is marred by a determination to use the word "transference" as often as possible, but seems basically trying to say that psychotherapy creates its own clients, or at any rate "exacerbates and reinforces the very processes" which create them. I don't think this can be seriously maintained: of all the forces creating the kind of distress which brings clients into therapy, I would have thought the existence of psychotherapy itself was one of the weakest. He also seems to be saying - though I find it hard to see how he can - that the fact that we are involved in psychotherapy and the UKSCP makes it impossible, or less likely, that we will be involved in personal growth through workshops, counselling, group work, education of various kinds, organisational work, community work and so forth. These are activities which are very central and important to the whole humanistic approach, and will in my view continue to be so. This kind of work in the area of what Heron calls "emotional competence" is something which humanistic practitioners have always done and will presumably continue to do. Again there is the appearance of this *either-or* which I find so hurtful and damaging.

The thoughtful articles of Hawkins (1990a and b) and of Young (1990) seem very useful to me in correcting some of the misinformation still being carried around, but even they do not mention some things which are well known to those of us who have been involved in all this stuff since the beginning. For example, the way the UKSCP is often referred to makes me think that many people have an idea of it as a very formal and hierarchical set-up, such that it would surprise them to find out that Michael Pokorny habitually wears a rugby shirt when chairing the formal sessions of the conference.

To me it seems obvious that accreditation is here to stay, and that it has to take a form which does justice both to the outward and to the inward face of our work as practitioners. I am sure we can do this better as time goes on, but not if the criticism comes out in the virulent form which it sometimes seems to.

The articles referred to can be found in *Self and Society* Jan/Feb 1990, March/April 1990 and July/August 1991. Details and back issues (£1.95 + 0.60 p&P) available - for information s.a.e. to *Self and Society*, Gale Centre Publications, Whitakers Way, Loughton, Essex, IG10 1SQ