

# **The AHP Page**

## *Can a Thousand People Keep This Secret? The 1995 AHP AGM*

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This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 1st April, and will be followed by a Surprise Party to celebrate John Rowan's 70th birthday and Another Year of AHP. All this will take place at College Hall, Malet Street, London WC1 (parking is available). To be part of this special event you will need to send for your free tickets: as it is a special occasion we need to know the numbers for catering purposes.

The AGM will start at 7 and, after the business part, John will facilitate the first of what we hope will be a series of 'encounters' between people taking opposing sides on controversial subjects. And it will be the opportunity for us all to join in. We will be airing the relationship between AHP and AHPP. What should our relationship be, and what are the tensions between us? This keeps surfacing from time to time, and came up again at this year's Conference, but there wasn't the time for it to be discussed there properly.

We will then end the AGM/start the party with birthday cake and champagne (I subscribe to the view that life being short one should start with the puddings whenever possible, just in case). The party will be from approximately 8.30 pm until 11 pm.

All AHP members and their guests, including children, are invited. Admission

will be by ticket, which you need to send for by 28th March, from me, Marolyn Burgess, 66 Park Meadow, Hatfield, Herts AL9 5HB (telephone 0707 264949). I shall need to know how many tickets you want, whether you are coming at 7 or 8.30, whether you will be bringing any children, and your address and phone number.

At the party Sue Mickleburgh will be presenting John with a 'Festschrift', a book with writings about him and his work over the years. If you would like to write a contribution for this, please send this to me, also by 28th March, and I will ensure that it is passed on to Sue for inclusion.

On the subject of the AGM, don't forget to let us have your nominations for the Committee, or to tell us if you would like to stand. We particularly need people who like organising things and who would also be willing to lead, or be involved in the work of, one of the sub-committees. If you are interested in this, but perhaps not sure, do give me a ring to discuss it.

The AGM brings to an end my three-year period as Chair, which I have enjoyed very much. I will, however, be standing again as a Committee member, and I look forward to continuing my contact with you.

*Marolyn Burgess*

## Rowan's Trivia: All Intercultural Now

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I went to a meeting recently about intercultural counselling and therapy. It was very interesting. And something started to dawn on me which had not been obvious to me before. So it may not be obvious to you. Let's see.

Sometimes counsellors or other therapists encounter people who are not like them. If they are heterosexual, they may meet a homosexual; if they are white, they may meet a black; if they are able-bodied, they may meet someone who is differently abled; if they are male, they may meet a female, and vice versa.

The point that suddenly occurred to me is that, to the extent that this strange person comes from an unfamiliar culture, everyone really comes from an unfamiliar culture. All therapy is intercultural therapy.

Each family is unique, each person is unique, each situation is unique, and every time we make the assumption 'Oh, this case is just like this other case', or even worse, 'This person's background is just like my own', we make a mistake.

The compilers of the AHP page apologise to John Rowan for including the same 'Rowan's Trivia' piece in both the November 1994 and January 1995 issues of *S&S* (what do you mean, you didn't notice). This was due to a changeover in staff; you know how it is . . .

So we as therapists always need to be open and questioning, rather than thinking we know. A good phrase is 'beginner's mind': if we can cultivate a beginner's mind in every session, that is the best we can do. The moment we think we know what is going on, at that moment we lose touch with the present and move into something more fixed and less alive. If a man mentions his mother, we might ask 'What is a mother?' — rather than assuming we already know.

Somebody once said that it is good to know a lot of theory, but that it is also good to leave it outside the door when actually with a client. It certainly seems to me that theory is good for analysing later what went on, or for planning what to tackle next, or for discussions with a supervisor, and so on, but not for guidance during the session. For this one rather needs a freshness, an unblinking eye, an unfazed gaze, that takes nothing for granted.

All counselling is intercultural counselling. That is the point.



# The AHPP Page

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The year is paced out for me as Chair, with a mixture of familiar events: the UKCP Conference at Kent, the first board meeting of the new year, and the first meeting to organise the next AHP/AHPP conference, a curious mixture of the known and the unknown. Our task on the organising side of AHPP is to find a balance between keeping old and proven ways of working and incorporating new ideas.

The UKCP Conference which I attended with Chris Coulson saw the retiring Chair, Emmy Van Deurzen Smith, speaking of the narrow-mindedness of therapists, their personalities, theories and preference for past-thinking. She seemed glad to give up her year as Chair, and urged a more democratic way of operating within UKCP. Our new Chair is Digby Tantum from the PPS, who was elected in preference to Ken Evans from HIPS who also stood. Digby then spoke of the unlikelihood of the conference being as involved in the detailed running of UKCP as previously, which immediately filled me with fear for Emmy's wish for more democracy!

Other items decided on at the conference were:

- More work to be done on NVQs with regard to psychotherapy, as the process has almost been decided for counselling. This means that those of you AHPP members that are trainers need to be aware of the implications of these

developments for your organisations. We will try to keep you in touch with developments.

- Further work for the Intercultural Committee, now extended to look at not only racial issues, but other minority groups and their interests — for instance the Freudian view of homosexuality as a perversion and the non-acceptance of gay and lesbian people for training. Partly because of the issues revealed at the conference at Dartington, I have offered myself as a member of this committee. I look forward to keeping you posted about the important work going on here.
- Complaints were discussed at a UKCP level, the main difference from our procedure being that the UKCP takes third party complaints and we do not. At present we have to state clearly in our published procedure that we do not, but it may be that we have to look at this further.
- The fee for inclusion on the register was raised to £40, mainly to pay for the lobbying for a statutory status, and to fund the external relations with the media, where work is going on to change the image of psychotherapy. I can't pretend that your delegates were in favour of all items passed, but I think it is important for AHPP to be represented there.

So, that's the news for psychotherapists, and it would be good if there is an AHPP

member of BAC who could report back if they go to the BAC conference, so that we can provide up-to-date information for our counselling members also. Contact me if you need more information. I am getting more feedback and letters from members than before and that is great — keep them rolling in. During the last board meeting we discussed various topics of interest to us as practitioners, including: What happens to the clients if a therapist dies? What about the effects on the family of a client in therapy, and the extent of the practitioner's obligations? How can we improve the complaints procedure for everyone concerned? What is the status of the practitioner's notes, who do they belong to and who can see them? To this end we decided to offer a series of workshops on

these topics. The first will take place on the morning before the next general meeting at College Hall, Malet St, London on Sunday May 14th. It will be a workshop with both experiential and taught elements, looking at both how we deal with complaints and how we can do it better, and the role of the membership in this process. Our hope is that, if members are given the opportunity to explore what might be required of them if they were to become involved in the process of exploring a complaint, then they might be more willing to involve themselves in this important and taxing process. A small charge will be made to cover costs. AHPP members will be mailed with more details as they emerge; non-members should let Ian Doucet know if they are interested.