

The AHP Page

Marolyn Burgess

This year's AGM took place on 1st April and, for an AGM, was well attended. Not as well as the party afterwards, though, when we also celebrated John Rowan's 70th birthday. Sue Mickleburgh presented him with the *festschrift*, an appreciation both of John and his work: the party heard highlights from this, a poem by Hilde Rapp and a tape by Petruska Clarkson.

During the year, Melinda Moore Meigs, our Vice Chair and Treasurer, left the Committee, and at the AGM we said goodbye as a committee member to her and expressed our appreciation for all that she has done for us. We also thanked Roger Sharpe, Rosemary Steel, Edward Tagg, and Chris Parker, who are not standing again for the Committee this year, for their hard work for the association.

We thanked Ruth Finer for all that she has done as our first administrator. We have greatly valued all Ruth's support, and are delighted that she has joined the committee since she resigned her post as administrator. We also welcomed Camilla Sim, our new administrator since the Autumn.

We elected people as follows to the committee for 1995:

Chair: Sue Mickleburgh

Treasurer: Mark Fotherby

Committee members: Marolyn Burgess, Whiz Collis (representing AHPP), Nick Davis, Ruth Finer, Judith Furner, June Green, James McKenzie and Sheelagh, Robinson.

We are particularly pleased at the above list, as we have only recently emerged from a period where we have been just too few to do anything other than keep the association ticking over. Thank you to Nick, Judith, June and James, and we expect to be able to add to this list in the course of the next few months. Several other people are considering coming onto the committee and, as a first step, will be attending a future meeting to get more of a feel of what we do. If you are interested too, we'd also be very pleased to hear from you.

I gave a report on our activities during the past year. These included the February weekend in Cuddesdon; the joint AHP/AHPP conference *Borderlines and Boundaries*; the production of John Rowan's *Guide to Humanistic Psychology* (available from Camilla Sim for £3.95.); our events subcommittee's questionnaire about what the membership wants; a party in January; and closer working relationships between the AHP and AHPP committees.

Mark Fotherby reported that our finances are now quite healthy. We have substantially increased our membership/subscribers this year, to well over 1,000. This has been greatly helped by the promotional work undertaken by Ruth and the editors over the year, involving the distribution of some 20,000 leaflets advertising the magazine.

Virtually all of you have been willing to pay our increased subscription rates,

despite my worries that you might not be. However, quite a few people have not yet got round to increasing their standing orders. If you are among the few please do this right away. David Jones reported on *Self & Society*, and was given feedback from the meeting. We also received a report from Whiz Collis on AHPP matters.

We then had some debate, facilitated

by John Rowan, about AHP and AHPP, our similarities and differences, and whether we could work more closely together. It was agreed that a working party would be set up to take this discussion further, and that we would invite you to write in to us with your views on this subject. So please do so.

Rowan's Trivia: Early Origins

At the beginning, we do not distinguish ourselves very well from our mothers. We are not quite sure where our mother ends and we begin; there seems to be an overlap, which is quite large at first. We are not even sure that we want to be separate, or have the right to exist as separate. All the strength, all the power, seems to be in the relation with the mother, the identity with the mother. Perhaps the mother and I are one. There may even be a feeling of omnipotence, of being all-powerful, because of this. Everything we do is right.

In order to move out of this unity, and become a separate body, something is necessary, and it is going to have to be something which threatens this power, this omnipotence. Harsh reality is going to have to tell us that we are not all-powerful, that we are not the mother, that we are little, and weak, and wrong.

Sometimes this is the trauma of birth. It may be an earlier trauma, or a later one. It may be just the experience of not getting what we want, when we want it. It may be the feeling of being abandoned. It may be actual insult or injury. But whatever it

is, and however violent it may seem, the broad effect is the same. We somehow split, in an almost instinctive way, into a hurt, vulnerable self that is put away, and a hardier self that is pushed forward.

At the same time, a notice is put up, as it were, which says – “Do not enter; here be pain.” And so we carry on, improving the false self, and maybe even developing other false selves on the same model, to satisfy other, newer, situations. We do not go back.

It may be that this is the crucial move that made us different from the animals. There is no evidence at all that the consciousness of an animal splits in this way. Poets and other writers down the ages have told us that the appealing thing about animals is that they are simpler than we are, more direct, less tortured. Perhaps it is this fatal split that makes us the complex creatures that we are – creatures with an inner life that is just as important as our outer life, and often harder to cope with. Perhaps it is this negative and challenging experience which makes us human.