

the identity of the AHPP

John Rowan

Every so often I hear people saying that the AHPP should secede from the AHP and be an organization on its own. This has begun to hurt me so much that I feel that a considered reply is called for.

When the AHP first began it considered itself to be part of the international community of humanistic psychology, which was growing and burgeoning at a great rate at the time. More or less without thinking, it adopted the logo of the AHP in the States, and used it without consultation or agreement. We considered that we were thinking along exactly the same lines as the people in the States, and in fact some of the original members, such as Ruth Lassoff, Bill Schlackman, Leslie Elliott and Mel Berger, were Americans. After a while we were visited by Carmi Harari, a visiting representative of the AHP from New York, very enthusiastic about the spread of humanistic ideas around the world, but anxious to make sure that we did not stray too far from the fold. He proposed that we become a Chapter of the AHP, like the Midwestern Chapter or the East Coast Chapter, and paid a subscription of \$200 a year for the privilege. We let him know that this was not on, and he went back to the International Committee with this information. This sort of thing happened several times, and then the AHP gave up on the attempt.

When we started to have quite big conferences, however, and to start publishing a journal, the AHP Board in San Francisco began to feel that perhaps we should not be using their logo. It might become embarrassing, in the event that we started to diverge from the humanistic path. By that time we had lost all the Americans from the committee here, and were a purely British organization. So we agreed to modify our logo, to incorporate a B for Britain. That is why the logo is as it is today.

I just want to underline that there is no way in which they could have forced us to give up the logo. But we actively wanted to stay in the humanistic family on agreed terms, and not to do anything which might be considered embarrassing or offensive to our friends and colleagues on the other side of the water.

At the moment that very self-same logo is incorporated into the logo of the AHPP. There is no confusion, because there is no AHPP in the States, so there is no problem. But if there were a move to split from the AHP, it would hardly be right to go on using the same logo, because the logo expresses a solidarity, a collegueship, which would no longer be truly present.

My expectation would be that a minority would want to break away,

and a majority would want to stay within the fold of the AHP. The breakaway organization would have to find a new logo and a new identity. Even if it were to go against my expectations, and to work the other way round, there would still be a group of practitioners wishing to maintain the AHPP in its present identity.

In the present political situation, where psychotherapy is trying to create an identity for itself which is not subservient to medicine, psychology or social work, it would seem to me that unity were highly desirable, and fragmentation undesirable. Even if this were not so, it would hurt me very much to part company with some good people.

Humanistic psychology is a world-wide movement which has many international connections. The present Chair of the International Committee is Fritjof Capra, who travels round a number of countries representing humanistic psychology and talking about it. There is a very active committee which for ten years now has been sending parties of people from the AHP to Russia to talk with psychologists there and to see what is really going on. I do not like the idea of a group of people withdrawing from their organic connection with other AHP members into a small world of their own.

This was written in 1990, but it is still true today. Let me also point out that if AHPP wanted to secede from AHP(B), that would entail a change in the Constitution of AHP(B), which would have to be voted on and passed by a two-thirds majority at an Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting. Clause 8(d) of the

Constitution says that By-Laws are a part of the Constitution in this way. The rules of the AHPP were adopted originally by the AHP(B) as By-Laws, and were originally called that on all the relevant documents. In recent revisions, they have been renamed as the Constitution of the AHPP, but the first clause still states that 'The name of the association shall be the Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners ("the Association" or "AHPP") a section of and subject to the constitution of the Association of Humanistic Psychology in Britain (AHP(B)).'

Members of the AHPP may not be aware that humanistic psychology emerged from the Old Saybrook Conference in 1964 (see Ordinary Ecstasy page 10) and that next year there is planned another conference in the USA at present called Old Saybrook 2 (a more lively title may be used), to relaunch and revitalise humanistic psychology. As part of this effort a book is coming out, called The Handbook of Humanistic Psychology, published by Sage and edited by Kirk Schneider, James Bugental and Fraser Pierson, with 43 chapters by different eminent exponents of humanistic psychology, including me.

In other words, this is a very exciting time for humanistic psychology, and it seems to me no time for gestures which could be a prelude to losing touch with the heartland of our approach.

John Rowan 9 October, 1999