

EARLY DAYS OF THE AHPP

John Rowan

Over a hundred people, old friends and newcomers, attended the AHPP's highly successful opening event in its Festival of Humanistic Psychology in March.

This is the text of John Rowan's talk.

When Anne Dickson was Chair of the AHP(B), she and Alix Pirani called a meeting, held at the Kalptaru Centre in Belmont Street, from 10am to 5pm on Wednesday 28 November 1979. This was a follow-up to a previous meeting in June of that year. It was seen as a meeting for group leaders, designed to get our humanistic house in order and establish what Alix Pirani called "a strong body, professional and responsible". There had been a lot of discussion in the previous year, in the press and elsewhere, of the Sieghart Report, which recommended that psychotherapy should put its house in order generally, and this is what ultimately led to the formation of the UKCP, but this was not very much in our minds at the time. In fact our interest was much more in group leaders getting together than in psychotherapists as such.

There was some discussion as to whether the new group should be part of AHP(B) or separate from it. Anne Dickson thought it should be a professional branch of the AHP(B). Steve Gans wanted to see it as a standing committee of the AHP(B). Anna Wise thought that it could use the credentials and standing of the AHP(B). John Rowan moved that we be the "AHP Practitioners Group", and this motion

was carried by an overwhelming majority. Anne Dickson then moved that we set up a working party to write a constitution: the people elected to do this were Jym MacRitchie, Anna Farrow, Alix Pirani, Elliott Leighton, Maureen Yeomans and Brian Hamilton.

On the 14th February 1980 the whole group met at Playspace, in Peto Place. Jym MacRitchie was in the Chair. A document was presented by the working party, entitled "The Bye-Laws of the Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners". This was amended a good deal before being accepted. Standing committees were agreed as follows: Finance; Membership; Public Relations; Standards and Ethics; and Education and Training.

On the 29th June 1980 the inaugural meeting took place at the Minster Centre in Cricklewood. An interim Board had been elected at the March AGM of the AHP(B), consisting of: John Heron (Chair); Helen Davis (Deputy Chair); Joe Wesolowski (Executive Secretary); Maureen Yeomans (Treasurer); John Rowan, Dolores Bate and Jym MacRitchie (Representatives).

At this stage the aims and objects were declared as follows: To promote training, education and the practice of

humanistic psychology; To promote and further the research and development of the theory and practice of humanistic psychology for the benefit of the general public; To provide information and referral services to the general public; To establish and maintain standards of practice and ethics; To aid and encourage mutual support for members in their practices; and to do such other and further acts as may be in furtherance of the above.

Two things stand out for me as I go over these bare details. One is that there is no mention of accreditation. The other is that very few of these people are still with us. In fact, some of them I couldn't remember at all.

This thing about accreditation is interesting, I think, because nowadays people think of the AHPP mainly as an accrediting organization. What happened already in 1980 was that as soon as the Membership Committee came into being it set itself the task of drawing up membership criteria. But this was done in a very interesting way. I quote from a note sent out in December 1980: "The core of this approach is the individual's act of self-assessment, which is the basis of her/his application for membership. It affirms the primacy of individual self-determination and personal responsibility. No general criteria of adequate experience or adequate preparation/training will be laid down in advance. Rather these criteria will be gradually evolved by the Membership Sub-Committee (subject to the scrutiny of AHPP as a whole at its general meetings) on the basis of the self-assessments which they consider, including their own." In other words the whole thing was set up on the basis of humanistic thinking, rather

than adopting someone else's thinking and applying it in some way.

The Membership Committee was always seen as very central to the work of the AHPP, and it attracted a high quality of membership. Indeed, it sometimes seemed to be stronger than the Board itself. At the beginning it did not have a formal Chair, and the chairing varied from meeting to meeting, often depending on whose house the meeting was held in. People on this Committee in the first year were: Joel Badaines, Helen Davis, Anne Dickson, Ursula Fausset, Tom Feldberg, John Andrew Miller, Alix Pirani and John Rowan. The first people accepted into membership were: John Heron, Joel Badaines, Dolores Bate, Diana Becchetti-Whitmore, Peter Clark, Helen Davis, Anne Dickson, Ursula Fausset, Tom Feldberg, John Andrew Miller, Alix Pirani, John Rowan and Joe Wesolowski. Again I find it rather sad that so many of these are no longer with us. John Heron is of course running his own centre in Italy. Joel Badaines went to Australia and changed his name to Ari. Anne Dickson seems to have dropped out of sight, though I still see her books in the bookshops. Ursula Fausset has rather dropped out of sight; the last time I saw her she was deeply involved in a discipline called Mind Clearing; I don't know if she still is. Dolores Bate works in Canada now, and I think has remained true to Gestalt. Diana Becchetti-Whitmore of course dropped the Becchetti and is the great leader and teacher at the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust. Peter Clark was into Co-Counselling the last I heard of him. Helen Davis of course heads up the Minster Centre, which is now doing some very interesting projects. Tom Feldberg is still around, and last time I

met him was very interested in Da Love Ananda. John Andrew Miller is still around, though not a member any more. Alix Pirani is of course very much with us, except for today, when we all send her our best wishes for a fast recovery. Joe Wesolowski went to Germany, and for all I know is still there. Maureen Yeomans started up the magazine *Human Potential Resources* in 1981, and it did sterling service to humanistic psychology for a number of years.

Of course as time has gone on everything has tightened up considerably, and we have now got a very well-worked-out application form and membership procedure. One thing which many people don't know is that when the British Association for Counselling was devising its own accreditation scheme, a couple of years after ours, I was on the committee which set that up, and we used a great deal of the experience and the forms devised by AHPP in organizing the BAC scheme.

Similarly, many people do not realise that when the UKCP HIP Section was devising its criteria and basic statement, this was written by Joan Evans, Courtenay Young and me. In other words, two out of the three were AHPP members, and our influence was enormous.

From all this we can see that, AHPP has been a leader rather than a follower in the field of humanistic practice. We are now moving into the field of accrediting supervisors and trainers, and it remains to be seen how effective we shall be in those areas. The AHPP is unique in the world: no other country has an umbrella organization which covers the whole range of activities characteristic of humanistic psychology. When I go to the big Old Saybrook Two conference in the USA in May, I shall tell them about AHPP and what it is and does, and shall bang the drum a bit about what we stand for and the events we are putting on.

