

AHPB Co-chairs' Page

John Rowan and Alexandra Chalfont

Well, the very enjoyable summer Festival is over as is the AGM together with a change of Co-Chairs.

Maxine Linnell and Sue Orton have stepped down after achieving the amazing feat of guiding us through that challenging period of restoring the association from impending demise to survival status. Both will continue to be involved in different ways, as will Marolyn Burgess, who has contributed hugely to the work of the Board, in particular in the Events group and the Self & Society group. Our warmest thanks go to them all.

We, John Rowan and Alexandra Chalfont, have stepped into the role of Co-Chairs.

We are kicking off our term of office with a **Humanistic Renaissance Day on 23 October**. Use the insert to book right away, or go to the website. Phone or email if you would like extra copies of the flyer to give to friends and colleagues. Our warmest thanks go to Windy Dryden and Dina Glouberman for offering a gift of their time as facilitators. Windy will discuss how his way of working with REBT (Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy) might be humanistic. This could open a new stream of dialogue with approaches sometimes understood to be outside the humanistic bandwidth and begs the question: what approaches might Humanistic Psychology embrace?

For me (Alexandra), the Society for Humanistic Psychology in the US, part of the American Association for Psychology, takes a view with which I, along with many others, strongly resonate:

'... the Society for Humanistic Psychology represents a constellation of "humanistic psychologies" that includes the earlier Rogerian, transpersonal, and existential orientations as well as the more recently developing perspectives of phenomenological, hermeneutic, constructivist, feminist, and postmodern (social constructionist) psychologies.'

How exciting if AHPB initiates more conversations across theoretical approaches, aiming to encourage a strengthening of humanistic values in practice: in health sectors, in management, in the social services and in education as well as psychotherapy and counselling.

What follows below is our individual take, seen here more with a wide-angle lens than microscopic focus. We would love to hear your feedback.

Write to chair@ahpb.org.uk.

Alexandra Chalfont
September, 2010

AC's metaphor vision for an AHPB future

You know one of those moments when suddenly an image clarifies a whole bunch of ideas? I had such a moment when thinking about how AHPB might develop. The image is a very simple metaphor, and a cliché; but to my mind it's a beautiful cliché, and it does the job for now. Hopefully it will inspire other, perhaps more helpful, notions or maps for representing the unfolding developmental shape of AHPB for the next decade.

Before I describe the metaphor, I want to note what I see for AHPB.

This organisation can hold all the potential that has been intended for it over the decades of its existence, and more: to educate and disseminate information about humanistic psychology, across all human and social areas which involve working through humanistic values; and to provide a relational space where anyone who joins us, whether individual or organisation, can find a place to make contact with others, to discuss and debate theory and practice, and to develop, incubate and activate ideas to become living realities.

Imagine a rainbow.

One end of this rainbow flows into the ground. The other disappears over the horizon, into the ether, into unknown space.

At the end which meets the Earth, we in AHPB meet each other, face-to-face. A perfect example is the Earth Festival we enjoyed at a tented conference centre this year is. Here AHPB feels like a friendly club. Human beings together, feet in the grass, sitting on haybales, workshops in yurts, singing, dancing, making music.

This is one end of the rainbow; as we move up the bow, our meetings become gradually more formalised. Workshops, serious professional conferences. Learning, sharing, developing.

Eventually, further up and almost at the horizon, we no longer communicate as bodies in the same small physical space. Here we are a network of minds in virtual space. Communication takes place through social media, email, perhaps in virtual conferences.

The rainbow thus traces the path of our relational space from earth-bound meetings to meeting in virtual space.

The colours, and the gradations between them, provide locations for the different areas of interest. Management, for example, might be found in the blue spectrum; psychotherapy perhaps in the violet; eco-psychology in the green; social work in the yellow, and so on.

In this way any individual or organisation interested in information or contact or cooperation with an individual or organisation in a particular area just clicks on the rainbow colour code.

That's the dream. I would love to see this rainbow eventually become so powerfully suffused with activity that it just turns into a strong spreading beam of white light. Fanciful, a bit mad? Probably. Do-able? What do you think?

Alexandra Chalfont



HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY RESURGENT!

Having read Alexandra's contribution, I thought it was incumbent on me to do one too, hoping that it would be complementary rather than competitive.

I see the AHP as taking a new direction, leaping forward to engage with others in the general field of human development. We have much to offer, but it is best done today, I feel, by engaging with others who are in the same boat. We are all under criticism from the mainstream culture because we are not willing to sign up to the rigid version of science which is being pushed by Government agencies and commercial interests worldwide.

At the same time we have to be careful not to be mistaken for New Age exponents. The great fault of New Age thinking is its inability to be negative. Yet in the real world there is plenty to be negative about – racism, sexism, ageism and all the rest. And some of it is tricky too, such as an idea of freedom that denies all need for limits or boundaries. So we stand for an ideal of human responsibility and response-ability that does not rush to these extremes, but tries to be fully and truly human.

This means that sometimes we find ourselves lining up with the psychoanalysts, our traditional foes, because we both reject the scientific straitjacket which is being offered so kindly. The Jungians seem even closer. The Adlerians are quite nice. The POP people are excellent. If we are to have a strong presence in this new world, we may have to rethink a great deal of what we have taken for granted for years.

Let us face this bravely and with enthusiasm. We have a world to gain!

John Rowan, August 2010

Self & SOCIETY

Reviews

In, against and beyond therapy - critical essays towards a post-professional era, Richard House, PCCS Books, 2010, pp. 384

... therapeutic space is one of society's last surviving bastions against, and refuges from, narrowly stultifying mechanistic thinking, and from the abusive compliance experiences that bring most clients to therapy in the first place. (p. 333)

What is it to be (a) professional? What constitutes mental and emotional well-being? And who gets to define these terms anyway?

This is a serious book, asking serious and pressing questions. Most obviously, Richard House is concerned with contemporary debates about the regulation of therapy. He is a highly effective advocate for a nuanced and principled opposition to regulatory intervention, either by the state or through the agency