

*Letters for the next issue of S&S should be sent to the Editors by 21st January 2011 - Eds.*

I want to congratulate the editors and contributors on the *Autumn Self and Society*. Recently, I have found myself opening my copy with increasingly less enthusiasm, and I was especially wary this time, preparing myself for another journal bursting with articles devoted to regulation - much as I greet another larger format journal that regularly lands on my mat. But I was knocked out by the last issue. Hooray! The mag seems to have rediscovered its passionate counter-mainstream roots.

I really enjoyed the care with which words describing humanistic therapeutic activity were used. And in the spirit of that care-full passion I want to join in and reinstate one word which I feel we may be in danger of losing. I understand the argument about moving towards the 'Post-professional', but I don't think we want to react too hastily this word. In fact, I am in favour of redeeming the word *professional*.

Admittedly the word is beleaguered with difficulty, linked as it is in the UK with class and wealth, and thereby inevitably with dominant status, and now with NICE's triumphant revenge of materialistic empiricism. And yet the word has a very light side, too. I am thinking of how the adjective *professional* connects us with our need for competence and skill, and indeed with the pleasures associated with skilful practice. In a previous 'incarnation', I once earned my living as a carpenter, and I am also a very amateur musician, and in these disciplines skill is an essential starting point for the creative process built thereupon. Professionalism is therefore a genuine aim of the aspirant.

Humanistic therapy maybe an art, hopefully even a subversive one, but it still has to be done skilfully, otherwise we risk being associated with the worst of the New Age. Being professional about our work has nothing to do with hiding behind diplomas or accreditation; it has nothing to do with excluding the personal field. But it has everything to do with employing technical skill and experience, as well as, I suggest, the ability to reflect on where we have to look outside our chosen field, however challenging that may feel.

I know this from my own experience, where my first training in existential soul-work was not enough for me to work effectively with sexual abuse and no help in trying to intervening in relationships

issues. As a supervisor, I too often see the effects of workers who have been instructed to eschew models involving transference repeatedly fail to help those clients who make unconscious appeals to them. Even if you are dead against 'labelling' you have to acquire some skills in appraising ego states, so that you can make an appropriate compassionate intervention to someone for whom your more favoured kind might fall by the wayside or even do harm. Professionalism in these examples requires our curiosity as to how others do it.

A recent episode with post-graduate students reminded me how we won't be forgiven lack of professionalism, even if it's associated colleagues who fail to grasp the point. It seems to me that professionalism becomes increasingly important if we are re-owning something of the passion for this art of the kind of career where we try to meaningfully respond to an other, who like us is simply trying to make sense of life. It does not mean we believe we are *experts* but that we understand and take responsibility for the creative advantage of being just outside the system to which we are responding.

As a 'very amateur musician' (in other words, one who loves music, but does not do it for a living, and may not be much good at it) I recently experienced for the first time what it was like to play alongside a thorough professional. It was not a question of his virtuosity, nor of showing off, but I was in awe of a quiet dedication funnelled through years of experience, study and enjoyment towards making the entire group sound work. It was for me was a brilliant example of how skill, virtuosity, feeling, and appropriateness can meeting an other to produce a creative third – more than the sum of the parts. So I suggest humanistic practitioners should not over-react to the word *professional*, but instead see ourselves proud to practise passionate professionalism!

Finally, while I have your attention, may I ask readers a few questions? Does any one else have fantasies about changing the magazine's font and the heavy justification style? Do you think they make the pages look somewhat amateurish? And lastly, do any other contributors sometimes wish to have some feedback from readers? I have often wondered over the years whether anyone has been drawn to read any of the books I have recommended in my *Shelf Life* column.

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Dear S & S people,

Thank you for a fabulous collection of articles. I feel so grateful to have this journal as a forum for such wonderfully diverse perspectives.

Jen Turner (Canada)

## **The Human Renaissance Day**

Thanks so much, Alexandra.

You, John, Julian and Windy, Dina, Brigitta and the rest of the team facilitated a true renaissance of AHPB.

I loved hearing John's history of the organisation and the history of his own process. It's been so instructive how, over the years, John has given us exercises which introduce us to the different stages he has realised along his journey. This time it was the five minutes dialoging with our Essential Self which led so well into Dina's work. The incredible intentionality it takes to meditate every day for ten years!

I was greatly helped by Annie's work with Windy. I was thrilled to be the recipient of Dina's healing process!

I used Windy's method for facilitating the lessening of anxiety with a client yesterday and it bore such fruit for her! And I used Dina's phrases in emailing my son over a situation which is very painful for him.

All good wishes

Esther (Esther Zahniser)

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## **More Renaissance and Revitalisation?**

I felt I received precious gifts at the "Renaissance Day" on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, my first AHPB meeting. I pick out as one example, Dina Glouberman's two minute exercise, in which we listened and were listened to "both with compassion for your pain and limitation and with respect for your magnificence" as we contemplated a dreaded event. I found myself vividly, as though it were actually happening, standing in front of an open grave crying and mourning the (possible future) loss of someone who is very dear to me. That experience has made a difference in my life so thank you.

I am glad to be a member of an organisation with a "reborn" energy. There is another organisation I belong to, which I hope will revitalise itself in the next couple of months. That is the Institute for the Development of Human Potential. IDHP has a substantial history of providing support for the facilitation of training courses and events in personal development work. It uses the powerful Self and Peer Assessment method which may result in amazingly creative thinking. Some readers will know of its Diploma and Certificate in Humanistic Psychology.

IDHP has no constitution or officers and no policies on particular issues apart from its central purpose of supporting the running of courses. Individuals speak for themselves (which is what I am doing now) and not the organisation. It can provide an exciting and creative environment for new ideas to develop and if you like that idea and would like to join or rejoin, then now is the moment to do so, via [www.idhp.org](http://www.idhp.org)

I hope you will at least consider it and let me know if you wish.

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