

AHP Co-chairs' Page

Alexandra Chalfont and **John Rowan**

Alexandra Chalfont

I heard someone who designs shopping malls quoted on the radio today. He pointed out that a way of getting people into shops is not to have any doors – at least, not immediately noticeable ones. People would wander along window displays, look round and suddenly find they were inside rather than outside the store. Do we do this elsewhere in society? Other gathering places, such as some churches, seem to have the opposite strategy. Doors are often closed, and seem to announce that entry is only at given times, and not necessarily to all.

What about the gathering places of Humanistic Psychology? Are we building our doors and windows increasingly large and airy, or small and heavy? When are they opened or closed, and to whom?

This issue of S&S doorsteps as our conference takes place. Collaborating with the UK Council for Psychotherapy is a first for us, and a first for them. We are holding sessions to address a wide variety of themes, given by colleagues from a variety of modalities, some of which have grown apart over time and perhaps even distanced themselves from what has been traditionally viewed as essentially humanistic. What, though, as we look to the future that we all influence in one way or another, will we understand as 'essentially humanistic'?

I hope this conference and gathering will initiate more collaborative conversations to follow. There is certainly enough in the programme to share, to inspire and to fire our motivation for further development and co-operation. What I think we can say with certainty is that we all espouse a 'whole-bodied' psychology, as Kirk Schneider calls it in an article to appear in the forthcoming Winter issue, and our meeting feels like a 'whole-body' meeting. It would seem appropriate to our time that we regard wider vistas, and that our conference contributes to a movement within our psychology which opens doors to the many ways of humanistic working, and 'incorporates them as part of its awesome tableau'. 🍷

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John Rowan

The September conference is so exciting; it reminds me of the atmosphere surrounding the first European conference we held, in 1977. This conference, entitled 'Self Renewal' was very successful. About 200 people turned up, and seemed determined to make it a high-energy event. Five major presenters failed to turn up, and nobody seemed to mind too much. The schedule of lectures and workshops was in a continual state of flux. But some very important ideas were put forward. One presentation on 'A basic qualification in psychotherapy' sparked several efforts in the next year or so to start up training institutes with the humanistic approaches. And another on 'Research in the human sciences' started in motion the formation of the New Paradigm Research Group, and its later publication of the book *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research* (Wiley, 1981), a trail-blazing compendium which had a big influence on the development of qualitative research in this country. The next year saw the inception of the European Association of Humanistic Psychology, which put on a very successful series of international conferences, in Geneva (three), Paris, Rome, Zurich, Barcelona and (in 1984) the University of Surrey at Guildford.

I hope that our forthcoming September conference will have some of that trail-blazing energy, though much has changed since those days, and I do not anticipate the same sort of international outcomes. However, it may perhaps happen that new initiatives are set off in one way or another – certainly, the quality of some of the presentations is likely to lead to some new avenues being explored. My own presentation is designed to upset anyone who thinks that spirituality is well handled in this country. We shall see what happens! 🍷

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