

REPORT

Celebrating John Rowan – London, 12 January 2015

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This exciting new era in the history of the AHP, with its charitable aim of promoting Humanistic Psychology, was launched with a party held at the Open Centre in London, with Professor Andrew Samuels as Master of Ceremonies. There was much to celebrate: not least AHP's new partnership with Routledge; a new series of AHP monthly workshops; the honouring of John Rowan with a special *Festschrift* issue of *Self & Society* – the final publication of AHP as an independent organization; and the conferring on Andrew Samuels of Life Membership of AHP by John Rowan.

The launch event and workshops were organized by the new AHP Board – Roselle Birkbeck, Dina Glouberman, Richard House, Serra Pitts, Victoria Room and myself. It felt important to underline the mission of AHP: to sustain the continuing promotion of Humanistic Psychology, with its engagement in exploring human capacity and potential, so as to enhance both the individual and society. This seems as pressing as ever in the light of difficult times on a global level. Connection between people with all their differences is vital. So, as well as *Self & Society*, there will be innovative monthly experiential-participative workshops, with leading-edge theory and round-table discussions, which are intended to promote the aims of AHP in a lively and exciting way, engaging people from all walks of life.

This inspired development has arisen in part from the commitment and hard work of Richard House and David Kalisch, the co-editors of *Self & Society*, who both spoke about maintaining the quality of the magazine, and of the great deal that had been agreed with Routledge. They expressed the indebtedness of the Board to Beverly Crouch, the paid administrator, who will continue to oversee the membership base, which is crucial to sustaining the organization. They also expressed the Board's immense gratitude to Carrie Bremner whose stunning and effective designs have immeasurably enhanced the quality of the journal. Her services will sadly no longer be required, as all layout and design will now be undertaken by Routledge.

Ian Challand, Routledge's Publishing Editor for their Behavioural Science journals, said that it was a great moment for the publishers. *Self & Society* would sit very comfortably with other therapeutic publications already produced by them. He made clear how keen Routledge were on the enterprise of collaboration with the AHP, and the production of a journal of such high calibre under the continuing leadership of its current editors and editorial board.

The editors' work was once again reflected in the special *Festschrift* issue celebrating John Rowan's 90th birthday and acknowledging his massive contribution to Humanistic Psychology in Britain over many decades. It was a total surprise

to John, who attended the gathering without any idea of what was about to happen! His ignorance was evident in his expression, as the issue was distributed to those gathered. He was honoured by some of the contributors who were present – Jocelyn Chaplin, Dina Glouberman, Andrew Samuels, Ernesto Spinelli and James Traeger. Each of them gave their own tribute, describing how John’s presence in the Humanistic Psychology field had affected them personally, and how much John had contributed to the history of the development of Humanistic Psychology in Britain. Ernesto Spinelli referred to himself as being the ‘odd one in the pile’; yet he was most enthusiastic in his honouring of John, notwithstanding their acknowledged differences.

John’s wife Sue, who did a huge amount of work in helping make the event happen and was instrumental in keeping the event secret from John, also paid her own personal tribute. She spoke of the big impression John had made on her when they first met, and of his continuing importance in the field of Humanistic Psychology.

The proceedings were completed with John Rowan conferring Honorary Life Membership of the AHP on Professor Andrew Samuels. John, being rather lost for words with his own honouring, did not praise Andrew Samuels particularly effusively (see below). He said in a rather understated way that AHP wished to acknowledge Andrew’s selfless hard work behind the scenes that made the Routledge deal possible; Andrew has indeed been hugely supportive of David Kalisch and Richard House as *S&S* editors in numerous ways, including his long-standing membership of the journal’s editorial board.

The remainder of the event, which was attended by 40 people, was taken up with talking, eating, drinking and celebrating. The warm, convivial, and optimistic atmosphere certainly bodes well for the future of the Association of Humanistic Psychology.



Figure 1. Multitude.



Figure 2. John Rowan and Richard House.

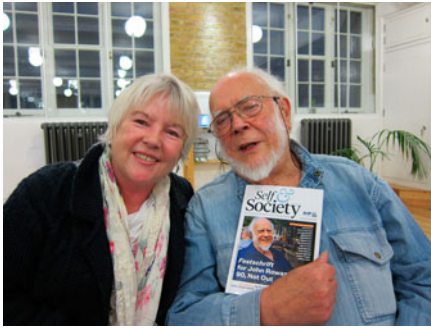


Figure 3. John and Sue Rowan.



Figure 4. Ian Challand and Anna Nangle.



Figure 5. David Kalisch and Julian Nangle.



Figure 6. John Rowan, with Joy Mueller and Andrew Samuels.



Figure 7. Ernesto Spinelli and Andrew Samuels.

The day of the *Festschrift*

John Rowan

Psychotherapist in private practice, London, UK

I was bowled over by the day, which had surprised me completely. To see so many old faces was a gift I had not expected. Most of them were friends, but there were one or two whom I would count more as enemies, or at least as pretty far from being friends. They tended to come from the 1970s, which was the great decade of my initiation into the human potential movement. At the beginning of that time I was an introvert, but by the end I was an extrovert – Humanistic Psychology, particularly through group work, created this miracle, which of course Hans Eysenck said was impossible.

One of the nicest contributions was from Jocelyn Chaplin, who reminded me of the days of the Serpent Institute. This was a remarkable organization, which lasted for four years, starting in the Year of the Serpent, which we thought was auspicious. This was a serious course in counselling and psychotherapy, based on a foundation of Goddess spirituality. We always had an altar in the main room, and hangings created by Jocelyn herself, and we organized trips to Avebury, to West Kennet and to Silbury Hill, sacred sites that meant a lot to us. We invited people like Caitlin Matthews to give weekend workshops. But in the end, the mounting list of requirements defeated us, as the field of psychotherapy tightened up and became more bound by regulations of one kind or another. Also it has to be said that both of us were pretty busy with other work, and did not have the full dedication that turned out to be necessary.

It was lovely to see Ernesto Spinelli, who has been a good friend to the AHPB, although coming from a different discipline altogether. I like him very much, and it was good to see him there saying nice things. Others who deserve a mention include Denis Postle, who has been such a stalwart in the political area; Tom Feldberg, who has cropped up several times in my life, always in a positive fashion; Morty Schatzman, who again seems to keep turning up in various roles; Dina Glouberman, who keeps on appearing in my life, and always reminds me of Skyros, where I ran workshops for three consecutive years, and also conducted a very interesting research project. Then there was Richard Stevens of the Open University, who always has these incredible Christmas parties, ending up with everybody singing ‘The Twelve Days of Christmas’, and Julian Nangle, who runs the poetry section of *Self & Society*, and is a friend from way back.

Other conversations resulted in the recall of the origin of the AHP in Britain, which was a conference on Social Psychiatry, organized by Joshua Bierer, who was a fascinating person in this area, with quite a political orientation and a lot of interests in all directions. I remember that the AHP in the States kept on contacting us, and even at one point sending a plenipotentiary to enrol us at a fee, as a proper Chapter in the American AHP. But we resisted these blandishments, and held fast to our resolve to be independent. I believe I was the only person to actually sign up as a member of the original AHP in California, and I went to a number of the conferences they held in various centres, including Princeton, Stanford, Snowmass,

Montreal, Vermont and others. I often contributed to *Perspectives*, which was the AHP newsletter going to all members. One year it was proposed to hold their annual conference in Britain, and I was made a Vice-President in prospect of this, but the communication difficulties were immense, in the days before the internet was really working properly. I did have a separate modem, but it was slow and not really reliable enough for the job in hand. So the idea fell to the ground. But I did meet and mingle with people like Rollo May, Will Schutz, Jean Houston, Carl Rogers, Ilana Rubinfeld and of course Alvin Mahrer, who became quite a friend until I offended him by my critique of one of his books. At one point I was told that Carl Rogers was going around with a copy of the book *Human Inquiry* under his arm, which pleased me no end.

At present the AHP in the States seems to be in trouble: their website is even worse than ours, which is saying something. I am trying to find out more, but with no success so far.

One of the failures of the day was that I forgot that I was supposed to give effusive praise to Andrew Samuels while investing him with Life Membership of the AHP, for his statesmanship in marshalling support for the Routledge bid (now successfully achieved). I would say that without the activities and good faith of Andrew, the AHPB might not have survived, the threats were so great. It seems that without him, this might never have happened, and this is quite remarkable. So I was supposed to praise him to the skies, and it was a great disappointment to me that I forgot completely to perform this task. Perhaps I can apologize to him here – sorry, Andrew!

I would also like to praise Richard House and David Kalisch, who beavered around with a will. And not forgetting my wife Sue, who apparently did a huge amount of work in contacting people and making the thing happen. I am sure there were others, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all!