

in conjunction with the Philosophy Special Interest Group in the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Philosophy and Humanities Section of the World Psychiatric Association and the International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry.



The 6th RD Laing Conference
Practice or Process?
The Divided Self in
Psychotherapy

Hampstead Town Hall, London, Saturday 22nd October 2011

This conference will explore philosophical and practical approaches for a more thoughtful, authentic and inclusive approach to psychotherapy that avoids twentieth-century splits and divisions and respects the full diversity of the experience of human distress.

Official Programme

Programme

09.00-10.00

Registration and refreshments.

And chance to view Studio Upstairs artworks and browse the book stall.

10.00-10.10

Welcome and introduction.

Dr Bruce Scott

On behalf of the Philadelphia Association and Conference organising group

10.10-11.00

Psychotherapy as a craft.

Dr John Heaton

Philadelphia Association

Chair: Dr Miles Clapham, Philadelphia Association

11.00-11.50

Self discovery and integration from a spiritual perspective.

Jane Clark

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabî Society

Chair: Professor Bill Fulford, Warwick Medical School

11.50-12.40

It only counts if it can be counted and what cannot be counted, can be discounted: psychotherapeutic practice in an audit culture.

Dr Lucy King

Philadelphia Association

Chair: Miranda Glossop, Philadelphia Association

Ontological Insecurities

Throughout the day an exhibition of work by artists from Studio Upstairs London and Bristol. Works for sale. A film will also be shown during the Lunch break.

Curator, Douglas Gill

12.40-13.50

Lunch

And a chance to view Studio upstairs artworks/film and browse the book stall.

13.50-14.40

Transcultural psychiatry and the myths of culture.

Dr Gavin Miller

University of Glasgow

Chair: Barbara Latham, Philadelphia Association

14.40-15.40

**Reopening the original bond between I and You: Swapping
animated images for abstract terminology.**

Em Cooper

Director and Animator

Chair: Kate Gilbert, Philadelphia Association

15.40-16.50

The House or Way-ing...

Dr Leon Redler

Philadelphia Association

Panel Discussion with:

Rosalind Mayo, Psychotherapist, *Chair of the Philadelphia Association*

Jane Clark, *Senior Research Fellow Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*

Steven Blunden, *Chief Executive Childhood First: Providers of Therapeutic
Communities for Children and Young People.*

Gavin Sneddon, *Counsellor; Former Philadelphia Association Community House
Member.*

16.50-17.00

Concluding remarks

Professor Bill Fulford, Warwick Medical School,

On Behalf of conference academic sponsors; *Philosophy Special Interest
Group in the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Philosophy and
Humanities Section of the World Psychiatric Association and the
International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry.*

Rosalind Mayo, Chair of the Philadelphia Association

ABSTRACTS

& Biographical information of speakers and events

Psychotherapy as a craft.

Dr John Heaton

Philadelphia Association, London

Theories tend to float safely above the pain, distress, and conflict of neurotic life and its treatment. Wittgenstein argues that therapy is best understood as a skill, not unlike the 'phronesis' of artistic knowhow. Skills enable us to navigate our way in the world and understand others, without requiring us to have a general theoretical explanation of the mind.

John Heaton is a member of the Philadelphia Association and a psychotherapist. He is a founder member of the Guild of Psychotherapists and was Director of Training in the Philadelphia Association for many years. He was editor of the Journal for Existential Analysis for seven years and his publications include: *The Eye: Phenomenology and Psychology of Function and Disorder*; *Wittgenstein for Beginners*; *Introducing Wittgenstein*; and *Wittgenstein and Psychoanalysis*. His most recent publication is: *The Talking Cure: Wittgenstein's Therapeutic Method for Psychotherapy*.

Self-discovery and integration from a spiritual perspective.

Jane Clark

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, Oxford

The mystical tradition of Islam developed a highly sophisticated and detailed understanding of our spiritual/psychological nature and our potential for completion. This talk will concentrate on the particular tradition which sprang from the writings of Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240), looking first at his articulation of the essential nature and function of the human being, and secondly at his conception of the 'way' through which we can move from a sense of separation and division to an experience of integration and wholeness.

Jane Clark, B.Sc., M.Phil (Oxon), is a Senior Research Fellow of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society in Oxford, and also a teacher of students with specific learning difficulties. She has been involved in the study and translation of Ibn 'Arabi's works for more than thirty years, and is particularly interested in their relevance to contemporary thought. She was the editor of *Beshara Magazine*, a founder editor of *The Journal of Consciousness Studies*, and co-editor with Willis Harman of *The New Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*.

It only counts if it can be counted and what cannot be counted, can be discounted: psychotherapeutic practice in an audit culture.

Dr Lucy King

Philadelphia Association, London

Over recent decades the concept of audit, once confined to the field of financial accountancy, has spread its web so widely that it is now seen as if indelibly-fused with accountability. Both considered as required parts of 'Best practice'. In this paper I want to

look at some of the problems this raises for psychotherapy as a form of praxis – i.e. a practical rather than theoretical or productive science. I also want to put into question, the too-easy distinction made between ‘scientific’, evidence-based medicine (including here, technically based forms of psychotherapy such as CBT), and essentially dialogic and less structured, forms of psychotherapeutic practice. Pointing here to the enduring potency of the placebo effect and the apparent loss of potency of many medical drugs over time.

Lucy King originally worked as a research biologist but then went on to train as a psychotherapist with the Philadelphia Association where she remains closely involved with its teaching programme. She has a private psychotherapy practice in Cambridge having recently retired from the Cambridge University Counselling Service where she worked for many years. She is a founder member of the Cambridge Society for Psychotherapy. She has edited 3 three books on psychotherapy: *Committed Uncertainty: Essays in Honour of Peter Lomas*, *The Future of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* (with Rosemary Randall) and most recently, *Rethinking Audit Cultures* (with Christina Moutsou).

Transcultural Psychiatry and the Myths of Culture

Dr Gavin Miller

University of Glasgow, School of Critical Studies

Transcultural psychiatry seems superficially to address concerns about the limitations of biomedical accounts of mental illness. However, my suspicion is that transcultural psychiatry has inadvertently imported an outdated, reified notion of culture. In this paper, I use a number of “thought experiments” in order to articulate what seem to me to be the problematic premises of this contemporary psychiatric movement.

Gavin Miller is Senior Lecturer in Medical Humanities and English Literature in the School of Critical Studies at University of Glasgow. He has recently been working intensively on the overlap of psychotherapy and spirituality in Scotland, and is also writing a monograph, *Science Fiction and Psychology*, for Liverpool University Press. He is the author of *R.D. Laing* (2004), and has had work published in the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, *History of the Human Sciences*, and *History of Psychiatry*.

Reopening the original bond between I and You: Swapping animated images for abstract terminology.

Em Cooper

Director and Animator, Cambridge

A phenomenological approach such as Laing’s involves getting inside someone else’s skin; a rich journey of discovery involving partaking in the fears and dreams of others. I will be showing two films: *Laid Down* (2007), shot from the point of view of a newborn baby, and *Confusion of Tongues* (2010) which was inspired by Ferenczi’s 1932 paper and explores identification with the aggressor in a child’s experience of abuse.

If the medium is the message then how is communication through film different from a written or spoken explanation?

Em Cooper is a director and animator who combines live action film with oil painted animation to make films inspired by psychoanalytic subject matter. Her films have been widely embraced by the psychoanalytic community and used in seminars at The Tavistock and other training organisations. *The Nest* has recently premiered at Cambridge and Vancouver International Film Festivals, *Confusion of Tongues* had its debut at Brooklyn Film Festival and her first film *Laid Down*, opened the 4th European Psychoanalytic Film Festival in London in 2007. DVDs of Em's films will be on sale during the day.

The House, or Way-ing...

Dr Leon Redler

Philadelphia Association, London

Panel discussion with:

Rosalind Mayo, Psychotherapist, *Chair of the Philadelphia Association*

Jane Clark, *Senior Research Fellow Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabî Society*

Steven Blunden, *Chief Executive Childhood First: Providers of Therapeutic Communities for Children and Young People.*

Gavin Sneddon, *Counsellor; Former Philadelphia Association Community House Member.*

The title 'The House', given to the panel discussion intended as the last event of the conference, refers (or so I take it) to the dream, possibility, history, approach and/or (desired and actual) outcome of households intended as therapeutic, whatever that may mean... and extends to whatever may transpires between us in the course of our in-house talks and discussion on the day.

I've invited the panel members to meet, in a spirit of congeniality and conviviality (a spirit much desired, valued and aspired to by Ronnie Laing) to consider, re-view and reflect on what might be (at) the heart of the matters that matter, or ought to matter, to any of us wishing happiness and the causes of happiness, and freedom from suffering and the causes of suffering, for those we meet along our way, (*including* ourselves and each other), and inclusive of all (and therefore including all of us in-house, and beyond) today.

Perhaps we can consider an alternative, and not too enigmatic, title that may be more attuned to all these concerns: *Way-ing...*

Leon Redler trained in medicine in New York and came to London in 1965 "*to take my chances with R D Laing*". In 1970, as Kingsley Hall closed, he co-founded the Archway communities (shown in the film *Asylum*, directed by Peter Robinson and featured, with other documents from KH and Archway, in Luke Fowler's show at the Serpentine Gallery, London, 2009).

He practices as a psychotherapist and mediator in London. His publications include: *Just Listening, Ethics and Therapy*, (with Steven Gans), Xlibris, 2001; *Open, Empty and Other, in Contemporary Buddhism, Vol. 1, No.1, May 2000*, and assorted book articles and journal papers, including on RD Laing (most recently in the *International Journal of Psychotherapy*, Vol. 15, No. 2, July, 2011, available at the conference).

Ontological Insecurities

Exhibition of Work by Artists from Studio Upstairs

Curator Douglas Gill

Studio Upstairs is dedicated to exploring complex human experience through the practice of art.

Established in 1988 Studio Upstairs is a charity providing artistic resources and support to adults experiencing mental and emotional distress and in drug and alcohol recovery. These therapeutic arts communities are places where its membership has the opportunity to experiment in the company of others, free from contemporary art fashions, therapeutic interpretations and psychiatric diagnosis. Studio artists (which include artist volunteers and art therapists) are encouraged to exhibit their work and take up a place in contemporary art culture.

Douglas Gill was co-founder and until recently director of Studio Upstairs. He is a member of the Philadelphia Association in private practice, London and Bristol.

RD Laing in the news

Guardian Editorial, 26th August, 2011

Unthinkable? Rehabilitating RD Laing:

He's been unfashionable for decades, but in an era of big-pharma and proliferating diagnoses, is it time to reassess?

The trouble with great men or women who lead the kind of lives described as "colourful" is that they provide critics with a ready-made excuse to dismiss their work. At the same time, it's doubtful that someone like Ronald Laing, whose name is still disdained 22 years after his death, would have broken as much ground were he not arrogant, angry and unconventional. A psychiatrist born into the age of doctor-knows-best, Laing's questioning of every assumption about mental illness earned him derision, as well as a devoted following. His first book, *The Divided Self*, which presented schizophrenia as a rational response to intolerable experiences, was written at just 28. *Sanity, Madness and the Family* set out his most controversial idea: that family life plays an important part in the development of schizophrenia. This put him at loggerheads with an establishment that saw mental illness as a medical problem, not one that could be explained by society or patients' relationships. Laing may have alienated carers and relatives of schizophrenics, and been unrealistic about treatments. But he provoked scrutiny of psychiatric methods, and opened a rich seam of thinking about our civilisation's discontents to boot. He's been unfashionable for decades, but in an era of big-pharma and proliferating diagnoses, is time for a reassessment? A theatre adaptation of his work, *Knots*, this summer suggests new minds are interested. They'd do best to forget the baggage and let his remarkable writing speak for itself.

Response to the Guardian Editorial of 26th August 2011 published in the Guardian 6th September 2011.

Dr Bruce Scott, Philadelphia Association, London

RD Laing's ideas on psychiatry are neither irrelevant nor unfashionable:

His emphasis on patient care and choice has much to teach us about mental illness

Your leader column states that psychiatrist RD Laing has been "unfashionable for decades" and asks if it is time to "reassess" his ideas (*Unthinkable? Rehabilitating RD Laing*, 26 August). And you continue: "It's doubtful that someone like Ronald Laing, whose name is still disdained 22 years after his death, would have broken as much ground were he not arrogant, angry and unconventional ... Laing's questioning of every assumption about mental illness earned him derision, as well as a devoted following."

As a member of the Philadelphia Association in London, which Laing co-founded in 1965, I can assure you that his ideas are not unfashionable and have been studied for decades. Yes, he advocated that one should think critically about mental distress, calling into question the dogma of his time (e.g. the biological basis of mental distress, and its treatment). Yes, his

methods were often regarded as "unconventional", and he could be "angry". However, many believe he was "angry" for good reason, and his ideas are far from outdated.

Laing's books, such as *Sanity, Madness and the Family*, did "put him at loggerheads with an establishment that saw mental illness as a medical problem, not one that could be explained by society or patients' relationships". But this was to be expected; Laing was rattling the cage of an establishment with vested interests who did not like to be questioned or held to account.

Although Laing did help change attitudes to mental health and promote the value of psychotherapy to some degree, much of the change that has occurred is mere lip service: outdated and questionable psycho-scientific methods are still the tools of the trade for many psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists.

Laing's methods may not be to everyone's taste, but neither are today's fashionable antidepressant drugs, cognitive behavioural therapy and psychiatric care, nor recent ill-thought-out proposals for the regulation of psychotherapists by the Health Professions Council. The NHS professes to prioritise patient care and patient choice, but limits those suffering from mental distress to a diet of time-limited treatment options.

Indeed many psychotherapists and psychologists entering the NHS are told to be academic and scientific, but not to question the evidence-based approach – a Laingian double bind if ever I saw one. Further, since the introduction of the government's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme, many GP counselling services have been replaced, with little evidence to back such a policy other than "saving money".

So choice is limited, thoughtfulness is banished, and other options disregarded. Such developments would have angered Laing today – he was never so "arrogant" as to prevent somebody choosing his or her own method of dealing with mental distress. You assert that "Laing may have alienated carers and relatives of schizophrenics"; perhaps some, but others were helped greatly. And it is unfair to claim he was "unrealistic about treatments" when unrealism is alive and well in the NHS.

Final Paragraph below edited out by the Guardian Editorial Team

Laing's "unfashionable" Philadelphia Association (www.philadelphia-association.co.uk) still run community households, an introductory course in philosophy and psychotherapy, and a professional training course in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. We are also holding the 6th R.D. Laing conference on October 22nd of this year, in celebration of the work and legacy of R.D. Laing.