

Humanistic Alchemy Prospectus 2014-16

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Introduction

Humanistic Alchemy is a response to the needs of these times. It offers a unique combination of elements from four strands of the Human Potential Movement: bodymind, transpersonal, expressive arts & eco-social - fused into an integrated programme for transformation, healing and self-actualisation.

Ancient alchemists sought to turn base metals into gold. Humanistic Alchemy gives participants a unique opportunity to engage in their own personal transformational process. The 'alchemical' outcome will be an exponential acceleration of both personal development and the capacity to facilitate others. To turn your personal material into gold, however you conceive that.

The Course consists of 21 weekend workshops over 2 years, including a week-long rural residential in the second year. Led by Guy Gladstone and Amadis Cammell, assisted by twenty-two workshop leaders from a variety of disciplines, HA is based on prevailing transformational paradigms and grounded in humanistic activities, while challenging current cultural attitudes.

Purpose

HA is like a large house with many interconnecting levels and corresponding passageways. There are many entrances from and many exits to the world beyond.

This course is not a stand-alone qualification to work as a facilitator. Nor can it be presented as a qualification in any one or more of the modalities presented. That would miss the point - the validation here is of cross-disciplinary versatility and the de-professionalised experience of a tried and tested capacity for solidarity. However it is conceived as a very significant guarantor of sufficient experientially-based interactive capacity; and will function as a substantial, or even main component, in various applications that course participants may have in mind for their working lives/careers/voluntary efforts.

The multi-modal experiencing within a stable ongoing course community is designed to engender new ways of working, new combinations of your existing and yet-to-be developed skills. Skills-practice is embedded in the course through each workshop having a component of peer-facilitated practice (PFP).

Course members may want to go on to qualify in more specialised modes in a variety of existing disciplines. In which case this course will function as a clearing house through which members become clearer as to their eventual destination.

The course will thrive on the polarity between individual aspiration and the maximising of capacity for community.

It is projected that participants will be sufficiently intoxicated by this two-year experience that they simply cannot stand the idea of returning to a state of alienation; and will feel compelled to find their own way to reproduce the states and spaces of enhanced intimacy, creativity and commitment accessed through HA.

This is work on the wild side. HA is also one of the first initiatives to be explicitly an exodus/defection from a, nearly-captured by the state, mainstream of psychotherapy and counselling. That mainstream is antagonistic to HA's counter-cultural notion that in a personal growth movement everyone is potentially a carrier of that movement.

HA also turns its back on the parasitic business model of the mall, in which five look-alike shops are next to each other but in competition. HA prefers to follow the wisdom of the bees whereby all flowers get cross-pollinated. The cooperative thrust is foundational to the HA vision.

The course will take its members to an edge where they will see a place, a vista, that neither the mainstream psy-field trainings, nor New Age spiritualities, nor mainstream society itself (the middle ground) can show them. It will take members towards the common ground, the psychological and ecological common ground or commons; which is never the current middle ground, though in years to come the middle ground may be pulled towards the commons of today.

Here HA's prediction draws on turbulence theory to substantiate its synergistic and alchemical properties. In the light of these reflections HA graduates can count on an attractor factor beyond the obvious. HA graduates will insist on the right to reset the path that others set. If stuck in a thicket of prickly holly (e.g. the irritation from the holier-than-thou, either New Age or corporate) you would do the same instinctively. In this analysis there are two antagonistic models of growth: the limitless, individualist, capitalist model and the sustainable, communal, ecological model.

HA anticipates the time when the luxury of choosing between them will be over.

Ethos

We are bringing together what we consider to be some of the most cutting-edge and progressive methods and perspectives for personal and communal development. Common to them all are the humanistic attitudes of being undogmatic, matrixial, open-minded and open-hearted. We embrace all that collectively promotes growth, exploration and psychological healing in a free, curious, enquiring and tolerant way.

We hark back to sentiments prevalent thirty to forty years ago, where personal, social and spiritual potential was regarded with keen interest as the next great frontier of human exploration. We anticipate, as did the original pioneers of the human potential movement, that if offered the basic means for self-exploration, unhampered and unfettered by conformist pressures, the human soul will be free to grow as only it knows best. What is more, group dynamics better position us to reanimate our dormant communal faculties.

We stand by our vision in which we place great confidence. This vision is born out of years of experience and witnessing the many positive impacts of this model of growth.

The tenor of this course is one of offering, orienting and facilitating. Preconceptions of where one is meant to arrive after this two-year experience will be kept to a minimum. No specific modality will be advocated above any other, simply the common thread that runs through the workshops and

groups. This is the provision of a forum where one can explore ones being from a multitude of perspectives in order for each to find their own unique destination.

In this respect Humanistic Alchemy aims to traverse the zone between existentialist and essentialist paradigms, represented respectively in the fields of psychology and spirituality. Polarised notions such as the mundane and the sacred, social and natural, ego and soul are deconstructed to discover their common ground.

The orientation of Humanistic Alchemy as a movement is one of fostering a spirit of adventure and building community spirit. In our consumerist culture both have suffered major set-backs for the last 30 years. The capacity of individuals to feel integral members of communities, and so function effectively within them, has also been severely compromised.

Our aim is to foster the personal skills and faculties that enable a greater relaxation, connection and satisfaction in communal situations. We believe the need for this is bound to grow in the coming years, as we increasingly recognise the impending social, environmental and spiritual challenges our civilisation is facing.

An academic mind-set, focussed on professional validation and mainstream social acceptability, hampers the transmission of a human potential ethos. We have structured this course with this in mind. Our strategy is to sidestep these preoccupations and also, along the way, to challenge the celebrity-obsessed narcissistic illusions prevalent in our culture. These fantasies deny the simple pleasures of a down-to-earth human existence and the fundamentals of spirituality, that an ordinary life and love in your heart are the keys to fulfilment.

Structure & Contents

Humanistic Alchemy is 21 weekend workshops, all with a preliminary Friday evening and a follow-up Monday morning meeting. There is also a week-long rural residential in the second year. While allowing for diverse intentions and an only minimally preconceived process, it will provide an extended forum for psychological and social healing, authentic spirituality and reconnection with our bodies and the natural world. This is a post-modern interpretation of the traditional alchemical project, based on prevailing transformational paradigms and grounded in humanistic activities.

The themes of the workshops are four strands of the Human Potential Movement: Bodymind, Expressive Arts, Ecosocial and Transpersonal. The conjunction of these four elements is addresses during pre and post weekend groups. These continuity sessions are conceived as holding the ongoing process of participants.

Bodymind

These modalities all work directly with the reality of the body; its life-force, attitude, sensations and emotions. Long-forgotten feelings and unmet needs repressed deep in our body are accessed,

processed and integrated. The animal within, demonised for centuries, is given its rightful place so that our passage through life becomes more congruent with our evolutionary heritage.

Expressive Arts

These activities take many varied forms due to our capacity for creative and artistic interpretations of the human condition. This is also where we can relax, interact, play and enjoy manifold expressions. Healing and transformation come in ways hitherto unknown and unforeseen.

Eco-Social

These workshops introduce cutting edge perspectives and pathways to commitment in our relationship to our environment. The natural and social environment has a marked effect upon our psyche, both consciously and unconsciously, yet is often ignored or scarcely addressed in mainstream psychology.

Transpersonal

These practices connect us to and embody states of being beneath and beyond the personal; the matrix and the canopy. Both traditional and contemporary interpretations of spirituality and essence are explored. A space is fostered for enquiry into the meaning, purpose and significance of our human existence.

Continuity Sessions

Primarily this will be a space for process and integration. By this we mean firstly we will be attending to the medium-term response to the previous weekend. Secondly this will give an opportunity for course members to address significant recent life developments. Thirdly it will begin to provide an orientation for the upcoming weekend. Finally, this is the space for the quintessential synthesis.

Assessment

The course ends with a self and peer assessment process. On completion of the course we expect a flourishing community committed to making a difference. HA participants will be supported in their ongoing trajectory through membership of AHA (Associates of Humanistic Alchemy). See our website for further details.

What to expect

Expect the unexpected: contents and processes will touch you in unforeseen ways. These could enthuse or intrigue you as they open fresh vistas of perception and new possibilities of being. They could even have profound life-changing impacts. One thing is for sure: how you are affected will be unanticipated and unique, your own genuine response. These shifts will be internally generated rather than something imposed from outside. Where you arrive at the end of the course will be a new beginning. It would be unrealistic and unhelpful for us coordinators and facilitators to expect you to achieve specific outcomes; more accurately, we are providing many varied catalysts. It is for you to take your own particular path of personal and transpersonal development.

The Benefits

The benefits should speak for themselves and that is what we intend to happen. Not that we are assuming what we are providing is the gospel truth, nor are we taking anything for granted. Simply we trust that you are bound at some stage, if not several times, to stumble across unforeseen personal and professional benefits.

Hence expect the unexpected; what you imagine to least touch you, may in fact have a life-changing effect. That is the beauty and overall benefit of this course: sooner or later you will experience something that will alter your perception of yourself and of reality. These moments are most likely to come laterally and spontaneously, at unforeseen times and in unexpected situations. Yet when they do, you know you have stepped into a previously unknown part of you, or have reclaimed a lost part of an old you.

Utterly novel spaces can open up within or appear around you. Tangible overturning of pre-conceived notions of existence becomes inevitable. Yes, this can happen; all you need is to be present, to catalyse deep shifts. Thus the full beauty of human existence, both the existential and the essential, becomes more apparent and available.

Those who are more spiritually-minded may uncover unfamiliar earthy and animal traits. Those more worldly may discover novel ethereal aspects of being. Those who have not explored their creative capacity may become not just actors and dancers, but also 'players' and 'movers' of life. Those who are self-reliant may realise the fun-damental importance of community, social interplay and the joy of bodies flowing as one - the beauty of the carnival.

Growth, nourishment, transformation; excitement, passion, surprise; awe, stillness, gratitude; grounding, relaxation, comfort; getting real, opening up, discovering your wild side; coming into your body, dropping into your feelings, surrendering to being; all these, and lots more, are potential benefits.

Aspirations

We the founders and advocates of HA aspire to work towards the following principles, philosophy and praxis. These are to:

Allow our reality to emerge from the core of our being and the source of all that we are.

Recognise the presence of a unified field of being; the underlying matrix of existence and fundamental connectedness of all life.

Aim for embodied presence, yet regard metaphysical and transpersonal dynamics as being as relevant as the physical and personal.

Trust the core self, its language of the heart, innate knowing and inner guidance.

Genuinely explore the diversity and depth of human potential, going beyond token gestures.

Engage with the desire for connection and intimacy; embrace the impetus for kinship, whether communal, social or spiritual.

Magnify rather than diminish our capacity for pleasure, sweetness and joy.

Free the 'animal within' and unshackle it from the religious disregard for our evolutionary heritage.

Accept what we are, warts and all, without the need for embellishments, apologies or excuses.

Bring challenging human traits to the foreground rather than keeping them in the background.

Loosen the bonds of shame which force us to live in denial of our needs, longings and natural impulses.

Encourage the 'inner child' to reveal itself, rather than blame, condemn or punish it.

Refute any ridicule, manipulation or exploitation of our vulnerable and loving nature.

Let down our mask of vehement individualism and own our fear and avoidance of contact.

Consider the dignity of the individual as paramount, regardless of personal or social shortcomings.

Challenge attitudes of conforming to prevailing social trends, whether out of convenience or intimidation.

Dare to show our capacity for unbridled emotion, exuberance, delight, play and natural cheer.

Treat this course, like life, as a journey, rather than as a fixated pursuit of goals, aims and objectives.

Support and assist the momentum of evolution towards self- actualisation and self-realisation.

In a nutshell: reach up to the supernal, down into the essential, out to the worldly, left to the intuitive, right to the rational, behind to our past and ahead to our future.

Ethics

The ethics of Humanistic Alchemy are:

Matrixial: no patriarchal structures, rigid principles and power systems. No hidden, faceless players behind the scenes whose intentions are unknown.

Principled non-violence: no deliberate harm during interactions. Prescribed processes such as cathartic or encounter work allow freedom for vehement self-expression. The corollary is that the speaker considers their impact on the other.

Ostracising and scapegoating are unacceptable.

Mutual respect: no dominating, controlling, manipulative behaviour to ensure your will or point of view prevail.

Mutual care: no condescension, humiliation or shaming when others are in fragile, confused, vulnerable, regressed or wounded spaces.

Commonality: no narcissistic agendas of self-promotion or cultivation of celebrity.

Self-reflection: willingness to reflect upon your actions and attitudes with the group, workshop facilitators and course coordinators.

Space provision: space and time will be provided in the pre and post weekend sessions for anyone needing to work with issues, incidents and any significant events past, present, ongoing or arising.

Due consideration for keeping a balance between workshop content and personal process.

The overarching parameter for all our ethics is intention, reflection and full participation.

Course Dates

2014

12-15 September
10-13 October
14-17 November
12-15 December

2015

23-26 January
20-23 February
20-23 March
17-20 April
15-18 May
12-15 June
11-19 July or 18-26 July (Residential at Spirithorse)
18-21 September
16-19 October
20-23 November
11-14 December

2016

January-July dates TBA

Workshop Times

Friday: 7pm-10pm
Saturday & Sunday: 10am-6pm
Monday: 9am-12 noon

Venue

All workshops will take place at:

The Open Centre
188 Old Street
London EC1V 9FR

At the end of the first year there is a week-long residential at Spirithorse in Wales.

Workshops and Facilitators

The final list of workshop facilitators will be published on our website. Specific details of the workshop themes are available as separate downloads.

Course Fees

£5500 for the complete 90 days of the course. This can be paid in instalments over the 2 years. Once offered a place, you will be asked for a deposit of £1000.

Entry Requirements

Rather than set constricting parameters for entry in terms of prior occupational experience, Humanistic Alchemy would suggest that successful applicants are likely to combine a number of the following attributes:

Need a change and want to spread their wings that little bit further.

Like to work on themselves and espouse psychological and developmental exploration.

Want to deepen their capacity to connect and relate to others, especially in a communal setting.

Aspire to cultivate a trusting alliance with their inner self.

Are not afraid to explore the shadows of their psyche.

Feel ready to accept the truth of who they might be.

Are willing to discover their untapped potential and inner resources.

Are looking to heal their childhood wounds and the current consequences.

Long to live the life they might well have led had conditions been more favourable.

Wonder what is the next step, with a desire for their life to be different to the present state of affairs.

Are no longer prepared to tolerate socially entrenched resistances to true and lasting change.

Can conceive of an existence that is more authentic, genuine and fulfilling.

Want a new way of life - individually, socially, ecologically and ethically.

Will be at a certain level of disillusionment with a corresponding level of awareness.

People who basically are truth-seekers, body-lovers, emotion-animators, expression-celebrators, people-embracers, consciousness-expanders, self-enquirers and life-affirmers!

In a nutshell: reach up to the supernal, down into the essential, out to the worldly, left to the intuitive, right to the rational, behind to our past and ahead to our future.

How to Apply

Please contact us to register interest and arrange an informal conversation. Interviewing by the coordinators will establish the composition of each two year group with a view to ensuring viability within HA's parameters. The invitation to participate will be on the basis of a hybrid between the guest list for a select party and the shortlist for a group of explorers prepared for a two year expedition into new regions of consciousness. This is not the usual 'bums on seats' enterprise. HA only departs when a compatible group of the suitably motivated has assembled.

Who we are

Guy Gladstone

Guy is a humanistic psychology practitioner who has been working for 29 years with ongoing and weekend groups in London at the Open Centre, the long-established (1977) independent personal growth centre. He is accredited as a groupwork and bodywork practitioner by UKAHPP and is a graduate of three trainings: The Institute for the Development of Human Potential (2 years); The Institute of Psychotherapy and Social Studies (3 years); and the British Association of Analytical Body Psychotherapists (5 years).

Amadis Cammell

Amadis started his journey of personal and spiritual growth in 1975 and his professional exploration in 1981. Since then he has trained in various modes of healing, psychology and spirituality. Over the years he has researched various related philosophies and practices. These have been progressively combined to create an integral psychological and spiritual system known as Core Realisation. The main elements are Human Potential modalities, Oriental Medicine studies, Qigong practices, somatic and transpersonal approaches.

Richard Lawton

Richard has trained in a number of bodymind modalities, including process-oriented Deep Bodywork, Postural Integration and Somatic Trauma Therapy, and is one of the few people in the world qualified as a Master Practitioner of Pulsing Rhythmic Bodywork. He also has extensive experience of transpersonal practices, and blends this eclectic mix in Bodymind Integration. With additional skills in websites and design, he also guides the launch of HA2.

Contact Us

Write to us at:

Humanistic Alchemy Prospectus

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