



Editorial

Richard House

Editor of *Self & Society*

Warm (very late) Spring greetings, dear members and readers. Editor's confession time again: this issue is again unduly late – and for a cacophony of reasons. But as it happens, it's perhaps not a bad thing that it *is* late – because if this issue had gone out in March, we'd have completely missed the cataclysmic impact 'on both self and society' of the coronavirus. As it is, this issue of our online magazine contains – I hope you think appropriately – a significant amount about the C-virus and its impact therapeutically, professionally and societally.

Also, this issue was due to be a print issue (and which we now publish two per year); but because of the C-virus, we've gone for the far easier circumstantial option of another online version this time; so the next two issues are planned to be print issues – virus-allowing, of course.

On Sunday 5 April, I heard a medical doctor 'expert' on BBC radio maintain that '...We're going to have a mental-health epidemic alongside the coronavirus epidemic'. Whatever one's view of the veracity and justification for effectively crashing the global economy in response to the C-virus phenomenon (as I'll call it), there is no doubt that what is currently unfolding is already having a massive impact on people's emotional and psychological well-being – and will quite possibly generate enough

client referrals to keep therapists/counsellors in work for years to come. Being a therapist could well be one of the most lucrative growth sectors in the economy, post C-virus. So what is currently happening across the globe has massive professional as well as personal implications for readers of this magazine and beyond.

Finally, the AHPb board decided that because of the highly unusual situation in which we find ourselves, we'd make the whole of this issue open access online. With so many people stuck at home still, we wanted to provide a public service in bringing 'psy' issues into people's homes in an easily accessible way. Normally, significantly less than half of the online magazine is open-access; and we hope that our subscribers won't mind this one-off gesture from the AHP towards the extraordinary circumstances currently prevailing.

My perennial worry that there's just too much of my own writings in the journal I edit continues, and is something I continually struggle with. Being a congenial writer oneself and also the editor of a journal is a tough combination to hold. I'd be delighted if I had enough material to cut me out of the picture – but that never quite seems to happen (interpretations on a post-card, please!...). Anyway, I've yet to receive any complaints

from members about my prominence in the magazine; but if you do have some, please do write to me, and I'll re-double my effort to reduce my writing presence in the journal.

The other issue I struggle with is having a preponderance of male writers – yes, we've been here before, too. I can only think that the issue is that I just know more men than women in the psy world – which, when I reflect on it, is true. So I certainly need to try harder here – but *please*, can women readers who have writings they'd like to submit please send them in, and I'll happily give them top editorial priority – thank you.

I think we've managed to put together another mouth-watering feast for you in this issue – articles, interviews, regular columns, review essays, reviews and poetry. In an issue in which psychosocial, self–society interface issues understandably predominate, **Melita Rova, Del Loewenthal, Betty Bertrand** and **Catherine Altson** refreshingly break this trend with a very substantial IPA research article on the place of love in therapy relationships. This paper is a great exemplar of the excellent work coming out of Del Loewenthal's Research Centre for Therapeutic Education at Roehampton University, and it gives empirical substance to a theme that humanistic psychologists and therapists speak of a great deal in their work – and which has often been explored in this journal over its 48-year history. I think we would all concur with their evocatively beautiful conclusion that 'love cannot be grasped but in glimpses. However, it is ever present like a light that permeates the space in between objects, bodies, figures of language, thoughts and psyche. By acknowledging it, we enter possibility.'

Next in the articles section, an old friend of *Self & Society*, **Jim Robinson**, writes on 'Politics, Psychology and Spirituality', in an article that spoke directly to my own struggles around questions of spirituality and political commitment and how they can sit together, and which I found enormously helpful in articulating those struggles. This panoramic article on our current political-cultural-spiritual conjuncture had me nodding kindredly all the way through. Jim's proposal for an international enquiry committed to developing our philosophy of the meaning of human life – an

'Institute for the Understanding of Human Nature' – is one that will quite possibly become increasingly relevant, and even prophetic, as our current cultural, political and spiritual malaise deepens in the future. For Jim, 'These struggles are an essential part of this staggeringly beautiful evolutionary process which gives us the potential to consciously embody Consciousness and Love and Presence, in the act of the universe becoming conscious of itself'. (Note that Jim's article was written before last December's UK general election, and so should be seen in the context of the major defeat of the political Left in that fateful election.)

Next, **Geoff Lamb** takes us on a journey abuzz with an insect metaphor for the peculiar work therapists do, in 'The Therapist as Gadfly'. For Geoff, the gadfly image's relevance is that it connotes 'stirr[ing] [people] up and get[ing] them moving'! I hear distinct echoes of David Smail here: 'If therapy helps clients to question their own internal status quo, it is almost inevitable that these clients will start to question that of... [the] society... within which they experience the psychological distress which brings them to therapy in the first place'. In drawing a clear distinction between 'status quo therapy' and therapy geared to genuine transformation, Geoff strongly eschews 'helping [clients] to fit back into a system that is psychologically, as well as socially and economically, dysfunctional'.

Next, and deepening our psychosocial theme in 'How Unexpressed Grief Affects Our Politics and Our World', Alliance for Counselling and Psychotherapy friend **Gavin Robinson** explores the ambitious and enormously prescient theme of 'how loss and grief and our ability to mourn can affect the power structures in society'. Gavin looks at the notion of 'political grief' and the personal and political impact of loss, and thence on to *the paralysis of thinking* that seems so prevalent in the current conjuncture, and thence on to our human resistance to change. He then creates three case studies to exemplify his arguments and explorations, his main intent being to empower the relatively powerless; for we need 'a more connected political system where those who feel helpless can express [their] feelings using words we can comfortably connect to. Then we can learn

to transcend the discourse of the potential anomic outcomes in a meaningful way, rather than using the same kind of language of the powerful, which can be meaningless for the majority of the population.’ I was personally delighted to see Gavin citing Felicity de Zulueta excellent book *From Pain to Violence* (1st edn) – very few books have influenced me more than this one.

Our next article signals the welcome return of the USA’s **Elliot Benjamin** to these pages, with his reflections on ‘Humanistic Dialogue between the US and the UK: Change the Rhetoric!’, in which he pays much deserved tribute to another old friend of *S&S*, Brian Thorne (whose poetry is also featured in this issue). For Elliot, Brian’s heart-felt plea for ‘a change in rhetoric from hatred and violence to compassion and love’ made a profound impact on him; and in his immaculately referenced article Elliot returns to a major preoccupation of many of us – the reality of life under the politics and policies of Donald Trump – a theme he brought to the AHP series of London humanistic café events last year. Let’s hope Elliot is right that Maureen O’Hara’s optimistic view that we are currently ‘witnessing a transformative insurgency at the core of which is a new consciousness’ will prevail.

Finally in the articles section, in ‘The Human Crisis Created by the Politics of Greed’, intrepid researcher **Mo Stewart** offers us a panoramic retrospective of a decade of untiring research into successive UK governments’ systematic demolition of the welfare state in the current age of neoliberal policy-making. Mo’s exhaustively referenced article ‘reveals the human consequences of the adoption of neoliberal politics, and the influence of corporate America since 1992, that guaranteed the creation of the preventable harm of the UK disabled community who are unfit to work’ – a psychosocial issue of supreme relevance for all practising therapists. At this point I should mention the first of two ‘irregularities’ in this issue of the magazine. It is our practice never to reproduce material in the journal/magazine that has been published elsewhere. However, here we have an exceptionally rare breaking of this rule in publishing Mo’s article, commemorating as it does a decade of path-breaking research. This brilliant, hard-hitting article is quite obscurely published,

and we’re delighted to be able to reproduce it in the magazine, by kind permission.

We then have our first collection of poems, by esteemed Dorset poets **Faysal Mikdadi** and **Susan Walpole**, in their welcome poetic debut in the magazine. (In the Summer issue, we will be reviewing Faysal’s edited collection of student poems, *Inspired by Thomas Hardy* (Roving Press, 2019).)

Next, in our interviews section we have two in-depth interviews that span the Atlantic, with existential themes very much to the fore (and with more of my own voice figuring than I’m happy with). **Kirk Schneider** will be known to many if not most of our readers as one of the foremost leaders of Humanistic Psychology in the USA. A leading US authority on existential-humanistic therapy and psychology, past president of the Society for Humanistic Psychology (Division 32) of the APA (2015–2016) and recent past editor of our ‘sister’ journal, the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (2005–2012), Kirk takes us on a journey that ranges widely and deeply across the commitments and practices of existential-humanistic therapy, US style (as I term it), and not least, the role of existential-humanistic and existential-integrative approaches to therapy and psychology in today’s challenging times.

Former *Self & Society* reviews editor and doyen of editing special theme-issues, **Manu Bazzano**, will certainly need no introduction to our readers – writer, therapist and supervisor, with a background in philosophy, Zen and rock music. My interview with Manu is typically and deliciously left-field, with Manu respectfully but firmly deconstructing and thus challenging any unhelpful ‘regimes of truth’ that lurked, hidden from most people’s view, in the questions I posed to him. Ouuccchh! There’s never a dull moment in a conversation with Manu – as the AHP discovered when he led a humanistic café event in London last year on the provocative theme (for humanistic psychologists, anyway!) of ‘Against dialogue’. Not-thinking is, thankfully, impossible when engaging with Manu Bazzano; and the interview ends with these heartfelt words from me: ‘I whole-heartedly love your

complicating of things, Manu.... And please don't start taking the mainstream tablets, ever.'

We also reciprocally invited Kirk and Manu to give a brief commentary on each other's interviews – so the result is that we have here perhaps the most extensive conversation between UK and US existentialism-humanism that exists in the recent literature. Long may this UK–US dialogue (or *anti*-dialogue, as Manu might term it) over existential-humanism continue into the future – not least in this magazine. Much gratitude goes to Kirk and Manu for enabling this crucial exchange to happen. And as always, we would welcome correspondence to the editor about the issues covered in these enthralling interviews. Manu's collegial but characteristically robust challenges to Kirk's interview might well be something readers would like to respond to.

Moving speedily on in this already overlong editorial, next, following a welcome poetic debut in the magazine by **Olivia Moune**, we have three regular columnists. First, we're delighted that former *Self & Society* editor **Gillian Proctor** is offering us a regular column, this time on the highly apposite theme of *existential crises* – with brilliant accompanying illustrations from **Krista Susman**. Next, we welcome back **Stuart Morgan-Ayrs** with a characteristically robust take on the C-virus crisis and the British government's response to it (no fence-sitting triangulation from Stuart!). And we also welcome back **Dina (Zohar) Glouberman**'s 'mystic humanistic column'. Of course the column-title is tongue in cheek; but as always, Zohar brings great wisdom to the complex question she's asked, about being a therapist under the C-virus.

In his letter to the editor, **Martin Levy** then rightly takes me task on my 'Metric Society' review essay in the previous issue. And following this we have no less than four substantial review essays: **Grethe Hooper Hansen** with an enthralling and characteristically provocative take on the second edition of Iain McGilchrist's modern masterpiece, *The Master and His Emissary*; **Richard House** on a new book by Lauren Devine that rightly challenges our most taken-for-granted assumptions

about safeguarding and the law that delivers it; **Daniel Tilsley** on what he terms 'one of the most iconic films ever made', *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922) – highly relevant in the context of the current pandemic; and finally, new friend of the journal **Faysal Mikdadi** reviewing my own new book *Pushing Back to Ofsted*.

The latter is the second 'irregularity' in this issue. There is without doubt an ethical question involved in a journal's editor including in that journal a review of her/his own book. As editor I don't feel especially comfortable publishing Faysal Mikdadi's expert review of my recently published book on Ofsted (England's schools inspectorate) in this issue. However, the book is at the heart of a legal case currently being brought against the forced closure of Wynstones Steiner School in January, and in that sense the book is of strictly time-limited significance (as I write, the full Grounds claim for judicial review against Ofsted has just been submitted – and considerable funds will need to be raised to cover the case's legal costs). In this context, I hope readers will forgive me the indulgence of publishing ex-Ofsted inspector Dr Mikdadi's review of *Pushing Back to Ofsted* in this issue. But perhaps I've protested too much – so I'll stop there.

Following another poem from our much-loved Poetry Reviews Editor, **Julian Nangle**, we then have three book reviews – from **Jay Beichman**, **Richard House** and **Geoff Lamb**, reviewing, respectively, a fascinating book on the psychic research of the father of American psychology, William James; Barry Richards' latest book on the psychology of politics; and another review of Bunzl and Duffell's important book *The SIMPOL Solution*.

Finally, and certainly not 'last and least', we have one of the AHP's and *Self & Society*'s most senior and esteemed elders, **Brian Thorne**, speaking to our hearts with two of his evocative sonnets.

All told, then, I hope this issue provides readers with much stimulation and food for creative thought beyond the normal conventions and

regimes of truth of therapy, psychology and modern culture. That is, and always has been, the intention of *Self & Society* – and with this issue, as a one-off, being free open access in its entirety, we warmly invite you to share the web link with all your friends and colleagues, so we can expand the reach of this journal and magazine as it approaches its 50th birthday.

I close with a much-deserved shout-out again for **Adrian Barker**, without whose expert design and technical skills this newsletter would not have got anywhere near your inbox! – and to **Lucy**

Scurfield, Dina Glouberman, Adrian Barker and **Anne Goodhew** for helping to keep the institutional flame of Humanistic Psychology burning brightly in the UK.

Wishing you all good health, existential aliveness and all the humanistic engagements you can manage in these challenging and unusual times.

Editorial contact: richardahouse@hotmail.com