

S&S's Final Editorial

This is the final editorial for *Self & Society* journal, the first issue of which was published over half a century ago, in 1973. I have very mixed emotions about writing it: on the one hand, it's a great honour; but on the other, it's also a moment of great sadness and regret.

I thought it would be interesting to re-visit the late, great Vivian Milroy's very first editorial in the journal, published 51 years ago as I write (volume 1, number 1, pp. 2–3; [doi:10.1080/03060497.1973.11086302](https://doi.org/10.1080/03060497.1973.11086302)). In that piece, Vivian wrote of the then new journal on the scene, 'I think we have something new to say and something which is not being said by any other publication'. At the risk of grandiosity, I think perhaps we could still say the same thing today within the field of Psychology, 51 years on from that first issue – which makes it especially poignant, perhaps, that this 'new, distinctive voice' is now about to embrace silence.

It is positively eerie to be reading this 1973 editorial today as I write, as in many ways it could well have been written for the world of 2024 in which we now find ourselves. Here are some more excerpts from Vivian's inspiring 1973 editorial for us to bathe in and reflect upon:

...This is a time of change; a time of impersonal technological power groupings in which the individual may feel himself alienated, devalued and impotent....

This is an age when, we are told, two out of every five people will be faced with mental problems of varying seriousness or complexity. ...[T]he conventional wisdom of the medical profession is completely unable to cope. Psychoanalysis, even if there were enough practitioners, is quite beyond the economics of most people requiring treatment. Drug therapy is the G.P.'s reach-me-down answer, but may raise as many problems as it solves. Quite apart from the field of therapy, there is the question of quality of life. For hundreds of thousands of people, the difficulties they face in modern life may not be enough to make them seek therapy, but nevertheless may cloud and diminish their enjoyment of life.

...Humanistic Psychology can help a great deal... those [people] who just find life dull and unsatisfactory.... [It] is about people. One of the fundamental things about people is the need to communicate and the benefit they can derive from communication. We hope to be a true and effective channel of communication.

I think it would be difficult to deny that for the past 51 years, *Self & Society* has indeed provided Vivian's yearned-for 'true and effective channel of communication'. And rather than be down on ourselves at this time of mourning and loss for what has been, I would equally like to celebrate the extraordinary achievement of the roll-call of editors who have managed, over a span of half a century, to publish a journal about what is (more's the pity) a relatively minor part of the Psychology field as a whole. Please take a

bow, all (in alphabetical order – starting, of course, with our great founding editor):

Vivian Milroy; John Button; Alexandra Chalfont; David Jones; Stephen Joseph; David Kalisch; Maxine Linnell; Jennifer Maidman; Fran Mosley; David Murphy; Gillian Proctor; Neill Thew.

I want to say something here about the closing of S&S and the AHPb. Our journal / magazine has always been a members' publication, which also had a few subscribers only who weren't actual members of the association. In the (comparatively) free cultural era of the 1970s and 1980s, the AHPb, and Humanistic Psychology in general, were thriving – with a great deal of innovation, experimentation, free thinking, anti-institutionalism and so on. At its peak in the early to mid-1980s, there were well over 1,000 association members.

But from the early 1990s, credentialism and regulation-mindedness came on to the cultural and professional scene, coinciding (not coincidentally) with the rise of the toxic Audit Culture across society more generally (see, for example, <https://tinyurl.com/2ezb9537>); and many/most of these new values and practices were anathema to HP. Yet as part of society, HP itself was of course adversely affected by this cultural trend, to the extent that in the early 1990s the AHPb split (with some acrimony, it has to be said) into the AHPb and the Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners (<https://ahpp.org.uk/>) (the latter being practitioners who embraced credentialism and accreditation, and who actually sought the regulation of the psychological therapies). With Nick Totton, in 1997 I co-edited a book strongly challenging this trend (see <https://tinyurl.com/y7zcrhhx>); and one of my archive choices in part 2 of this final issue, by Juliana Brown and Richard Mowbray, very much speaks to this issue – as, of course, does Richard Mowbray's iconic 1995 book *The Case Against Psychotherapy Registration* (see <https://tinyurl.com/yfcs4nkd>).

So, this rise of what I call 'regulation-mindedness' was anathema to many humanistic psychologists (myself included); and though the AHPb did carry on after the split, it never really recovered from the splitting off of the AHPP and its new members. And so perhaps inevitably, given the cultural circumstances and inexorable cultural trend, AHPb membership has been in steady decline since the early 1990s – and at the end of 2023 it had fallen to an unsustainable 200 or so. And with HP being an increasingly minor branch of Psychology in general (with the latter continuing to be overwhelmingly positivistic / empiricist / materialistic), there just doesn't seem to be the demand for a journal like S&S in the Psychology world to make it a viable independent publication.

As most members will remember, Routledge did in fact buy the journal from us in 2015, and owned it for two years – and in the process they had the whole 45 years of the journal digitised. But they came back to us in 2017 and said they no longer wanted the journal, as it wasn't breaking even (another symptom, no doubt, of the sadly minor interest in HP in the academic Psychology world). So Routledge/Taylor and Francis gave S&S back to the association in 2017, and we've soldiered on with it since then, until early 2023, when we very reluctantly decided that the time had come to close. One upside of this sad situation is that we do now have the whole 51 years of the journal digitised – and that is now being handed over to the US AHP (<https://ahpweb.org/>), who will henceforth house the journal archive on their website – which we're delighted about, as it's a massive (research) resource for anyone interested in HP and associated fields of interest.

S&S has always been a critically acclaimed journal/magazine – over the years I've periodically received emails from members saying that it's by far the best journal in the therapy world. But

anti-regulation/accreditation is not a fashionable position to take these days with fear saturating modern culture, and I very much see the demise of the AHPb and S&S as a symptom of modern cultural circumstances and trends. We do write about all this in our Introduction and Conclusion to the 2017 anthology on Humanistic Psychology that David Kalisch, Jennifer Maidman and I co-edited for Routledge (see <https://tinyurl.com/mvnje4s2>).

I also want to say something about social media. Undoubtedly, the association and the journal have done far less on social media than we could have done; in fact, we've done pretty much nothing at all! In my experience, this 'techno-inactivity' commonly goes with the territory of humanistically inclined folk – i.e. to the humanistically inclined (me included), social media is anathema, and over the years, we've essentially had little if anything to do with it. Yet we realise – painfully in my case, it must be said – that in this day and age, when all one's competitors *are* actively engaged in the social-media world, if you aren't, then you're going to be at a considerable competitive disadvantage – and we've undoubtedly suffered from this, too.

This final issue of the journal has needed to be made open access online, as we did not, alas, have the resources to produce a final paper issue. This is double-edged: first, I know how many members greatly value having the paper version of the journal; but on the other hand, we've had just so much high-quality material to include in this final issue that it has needed to be divided into three separate parts. Overall, it has involved many months of work by the intrepid Adrian Barker and myself, and having an online version *has* allowed us to publish articles that are far longer than would have been possible in a print version. Furthermore, although it was not my conscious intention at the time, perhaps its appropriate that the final print

issue of S&S was the bumper anniversary issue that you all received in 2022.

Part 1 of this final issue (<https://tinyurl.com/45cvxewj>), published in the Autumn of 2023, consisted of nearly 50 pages of great contributions to our symposium titled '50 Years of *Self & Society* and Humanistic Psychology in Britain: Further Retrospectives and Prospects'. Many if not most of you will have read this symposium as you read this, and I can only commend it to those who have yet to read it. For me it reflects the great strengths of Humanistic Psychology (HP) – with its richly diverse voices, and openness to facing critical viewpoints too. There is certainly no such accusation as 'Bringing HP into disrepute' in this journal! As my great hero William Blake had it, 'Without contraries is no progression' – and in my view it's essential that HP never shirks from welcoming and reflecting upon its critical voices. For me, this our final issue, taken as whole in its three parts, is a great advert for what Humanistic Psychology at its best is all about, and what it has to offer to a world in crisis and undergoing profound transformation.

Paul Barber captured the views of many when he wrote, 'Society needs those of humanistic persuasion now more than ever. It needs to hear a regular stabilising Humanistic voice'. Yet there are also critical voices – like that of the excellent **Colin Feltham**; and some contributors, like **Jill Hall** and **Jen Turner**, bemoaned the academic direction the journal tended to take in its later years – specifically when it was bought by Routledge for several years in 2015. As editor I must take some responsibility for this tendency, coming from a scholarly academic background myself (as well as from an experiential, encounter-group one.) And some of our contributors positively welcomed more academic styles coming into the journal – for example, **Brigitta Mowat** and **Keith Tudor**.

When the Routledge buy-out of S&S was being negotiated around 2015, David Kalisch, Jennifer Maidman and I as co-editors did hold our ground in the negotiations against some pressure to turn S&S into just another peer-reviewed academic journal. And in mitigation, I can say that even in its Routledge days, *Self & Society* has never been anything like as 'academic' as the two other main humanistic journals in our field – Sage's *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and the APA's journal, *The Humanistic Psychologist*.

I guess in a field as richly diverse and accepting as HP, pleasing everyone all of the time could easily qualify as the fifth of Freud's 'impossible professions'! But I must also confess to being stung over the years by the occasional barb directed at HP – that it is 'flaky' and theoretically superficial. As an 'academic' humanistic psychologist with a strong interest in the philosophy of science and the social sciences, I took some exception to these jibes, and as editor I felt it important to show how HP does indeed have a robust and philosophically defensible, thought-through foundation. If, as editor, I have veered a bit too much in that direction for some readers' and members' tastes, I can only apologise.

Part 2 of this final issue (<https://tinyurl.com/wr6byu8c>) went online in January just gone, and it came out at an extraordinary, scarcely believable 200 pages in length. An incredible feat of endurance and will-forces, this, by our brilliant journal designer, **Adrian Barker**. Heart-felt thanks to Adrian from us all. And I hope that the sheer size and quality of this issue made the long time you had to wait for it to appear more than worthwhile. I won't do my normal practice of introducing every piece in the issue, as this editorial would become inordinately over-long. But I do want to say this. For me, it has been an absolute dream to have the outstanding **Paul Atkinson, Manu Bazzano, Martin Cohen and Miki Kashtan** (and previously, **Skeena Rathor**) writing

regularly and so generously for the journal. I'm convinced that Manu (Bazzano) is the best critical writer in the whole therapy world at this time (and that's some accolade). I'm also convinced that Miki (Kashtan) is pretty much peerless on the planet in terms of her ability to engage with the complexity of the human condition in our struggles to make a better world. Having experienced decades of group facilitation myself, I can safely say that I've never experienced a facilitator with Miki's skill, sensitivity, insight and emotional intelligence.

Martin Cohen is a great populariser of complex ideas – his book on paradigms (<https://tinyurl.com/bdkhfdcu>) blew me away when I first read it, as did the great interview he generously did with me for the magazine (see <https://tinyurl.com/394fctbv>). Martin has been so generous with his great writing for the magazine, and we all wish him well as his brilliant writing career unfolds. And Paul Atkinson is a man with a bigger heart than pretty much any therapist I've ever met. There's no better person to have been writing about the 'politics' of therapy, and I fervently hope that Paul – and indeed the others I've just accoladed – find suitable vehicles for their future writings, as this journal closes.

My online introduction to part 2 said the following:

...Pride of place is taken in part 2 by a special symposium on the late, great Ivan Illich – surely one of the greatest critical humanistic thinkers of the last century. We also have a host of other great articles from old friends of the journal, together with a long interview, several review essays, and some choice selections of personal favourites from the S&S archive.

I'm especially thrilled by the Ivan Illich symposium, which has already received favourable attention around the world from the growing field of 'Illich Studies' (see, for example, <https://journals.psu.edu/illichstudies> and <https://thinkingafterivanillich.net/>). Special thanks are due to perhaps the world's leading Illich scholar, Canadian writer and

journalist **David Cayley**, who went well beyond the call in his support for the symposium; a heart-felt thank you, David.

Other features of part 2 are contributions from some of our oldest and most esteemed friends, **Paul Barber**, **Gaie Houston**, **Julian Nangle** and **Brian Thorne**, and from our American friend **Elliot Benjamin**; and some very considerable pieces on *humanistic education* (including early education). And in the archive section, I'm delighted that our chair **Lucy Scurfield** chose legendary jazz guitarist **John McLaughlin**'s 2021 article 'Music and Spirit'. John was kind enough to tweet the link to his article once it went online, and as I write it's already had well over 3,000 shares – surely an online record for S&S! – except, that is, for the interview that David Kalisch and I were thrilled to have done with John back in 2015, which, to date, has had 3,633 downloads on the Routledge website (see <https://tinyurl.com/sy79bdxw>).

Finally, we come to part 3 of this final issue of the journal. It starts with an excellent theme symposium guest-edited by **Sue Wright** and **Gülcan Purser**, and evocatively titled 'Therapists' Journeys of Transition and Transformation: Who Can We Become? – Where Are We Going?'. This substantial symposium is dominated more by psychodynamic than by humanistic thinking. But *Self & Society* has always been open to, and has generously acknowledged the commonality between, different therapy approaches; and in her article 'Care-givers and Care-receivers', for me the theme's co-guest editor Sue Wright sums up the humanistic view perfectly when she writes:

It is the quality of presence we offer – our outstretched hands, our com-passion (or feeling-with), along with a genuine interest in what is going on in someone's life – that makes a difference..... I am thinking of... the need to adopt a way of working that is an expression of reverence, of doing what we do in a 'sacred' way.

Amen to that. To my mind, Sue's article exemplifies beautifully how and why therapy, at its best, transcends labels, approaches, 'modalities', 'skills' and 'therapy wars' – and, crucially, theory itself! My reading of this journal since the late 1980s suggests strongly that this is something that Humanistic Psychology and *Self & Society* have always stood for. Sue and Gülcan's symposium also reflects very faithfully the *Self & Society* ethos, with its interspersing of evocative poetry with entrancing articles on a range of fascinating themes.

Elsewhere in this final part, we see great pieces from old friends of the journal, **Denis Postle**, **Brigitta Mowat** and **Derek Gale**, and a thought-provoking, anthroposophically informed article by **Matt Davies**. We also have two very important pieces that raise grave questions about the deployment of psychological techniques and behavioural science by the government during the Covid crisis – from **Drs Gary Sidley** and **Christian Buckland**. Here again, I like to think that right to the end, S&S has had the courage to go to places where other, more 'politically correct' journals (scared to ruffle any establishment feathers, perhaps?) have feared to tread. And finally, I've put together a substantial article of 'book notices', with details of books that we would have liked to review in the journal. If you're looking for some leading-edge books to read, it's certainly worth scanning through this feature of carefully chosen books.

Taken as a whole, then, what the three parts of this final issue of the journal depict is the tremendous diversity of HP – from **Jen Turner**'s visceral personal sharing of her own history in HP (in part 1) to **Elektra Mercurio**'s philosophical and closely argued article on Alan Watts' aesthetics in part 2, and the visceral account of sibling abuse sent in on behalf of an anonymous acquaintance by **Derek Gale** in part 3. In the Humanistic Psychology that I love and champion, there is a place for all these approaches and

tendencies, and I'm not going to judge one as being more or less valuable as any other. They are all expressions of the rich diversity of what it means to be human, and I warmly welcome them all! And I find myself agreeing fulsomely with Elektra Mercurio when he writes, 'Life is insecure; hell is security'.

Finally, there will no doubt be humanistic writers reading this who, now or in the future, will be looking for a suitable home for their writings in the field of Humanistic Psychology. The newsletter of the US AHP is always a possibility – do contact the President, **Carroy U. Ferguson** (*aka* Cuf), and/or the Executive Director, **Robert McGarey**, at <https://ahpweb.org/contact-us/>. And as most readers will know, the two most eminent humanistic journals – in the English-speaking world, anyway – are the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (see <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/jhp>) and *The Humanistic Psychologist* (see <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/hum/>).

Thank you, dear readers and members, for all your support over the years – and to the many hundreds of authors who have sent us your great writings for the journal. I am hugely grateful to our sister organisation, the US AHP, for housing the entirety of our journal's auspicious archive on its website, so that our beloved journal will be available for posterity, with its veritable goldmine of critical writings on psychology and therapy spanning over half a century. I like to think that if Vivian had been told in 1973 that this would have been the final outcome of that courageous, fateful step they took to found the journal all those years ago, he'd have been more than pleased with it.

Thank you one and all – and go well!

Richard House
Stroud
March 2024

ROLL-CALL OF EDITORS OF *SELF & SOCIETY*, 1973–2024

1973–1992: **VIVIAN MILROY**

1992–1993: **DAVID JONES**

1993–1994: **JOHN BUTTON & FRAN
MOSLEY**

1994–1998: **FRAN MOSLEY & DAVID
JONES**

1998: **FRAN MOSLEY**

1998–1999: **MAXINE LINNELL &
FRAN MOSLEY**

1999–2005: **ALEXANDRA CHALFONT
& MAXINE LINNELL**

2006–2008: **MAXINE LINNELL**

2008–2009: **NEILL THEW**

2009–2010: **ALEXANDRA CHALFONT**

2010–2012: **DAVID MURPHY &
STEPHEN JOSEPH**

2012–2014: **RICHARD HOUSE, DAVID
KALISCH & JENNIFER
MAIDMAN**

2014–2017: **RICHARD HOUSE &
DAVID KALISCH**

2017–2018: **DAVID KALISCH &
GILLIAN PROCTOR**

2018–2019: **GILLIAN PROCTOR**

2019–2024: **RICHARD HOUSE**