

New Departures for Self and Society

RICHARD HOUSE, DAVID KALISCH and JENNIFER MAIDMAN

Self and Society Editorial Collective 'Elect'

A bright future is being planned for the journal we all love, say newly appointed editors Richard House, David Kalisch and Jennifer Maidman

As advertised elsewhere in this issue, we are delighted to announce that as from next Summer 2012, *Self and Society* will be taken into the next phase of its existence by a newly appointed editorial collective – namely, ourselves. We see this as an exciting opportunity to develop this much-loved journal in a number of innovative and stimulating ways, and in this brief article we wish to introduce ourselves briefly, and perhaps more importantly, to ask you, the readers and subscribers, to tell us how you would like to see the journal develop. More on this later.

We'll begin by setting out some provisional ideas that we've already developed. Please note that none of these are by any means set in stone, and are open to development and organic emergence. As the new editorial collective, we are as open as we can be to considering any suggestions for productive ways in which *Self and Society* can develop. Notice, first, that we are already calling *Self and Society* a 'journal', and not a magazine. We'd like to adopt a new sub-title for the journal – viz. 'International Journal for Humanistic Psychology'. This is by no means a grandiose delusion: our vision, along with the AHPB board, is that *Self and Society* become a prominent international forum for Humanistic Psychology and associated practices, covering developments right across the globe. We agree with one of the AHPB board, who recently wrote that 'we all have to work towards managing the tension between remaining humanistic and modernising, and that is not easy!... We could be in danger of getting too caught up in the business end of things and I think we need to be very mindful that whatever actions we take, we must act in accordance with our humanistic principles.'

This seems to us to be crucial. As the new editors, we are the very last people to be mechanistic ‘professionalisers’ – for over the years, we have each, in our different ways, been very critical of over-professionalisation that sacrifices the ‘soul’ and core values of humanistic work on the altar of respectability, fashion, one-sided academicism, political correctness or professionalised self-interest. In terms of the future of *Self and Society*, our overriding aim is to make absolutely sure that we stay true to core humanistic values – yet within that, to present humanistic practice and theory to the world in such a way that conveys our gravity and central (‘third-force’) importance to the therapy and wider community. After all, humanism was founded back in the 1950s, at least in part, to reign in the excesses and imbalances of both psychoanalysis and behaviourism, and to reclaim the human values that both first and second ‘force’ approaches were in danger of forgetting or jettisoning – and the new editors share the view that this is still an historic task of Humanistic Psychology, that’s just as relevant today as it ever was.

So if we can find a way that fully honours both Heart *and* Head in the new *Self and Society* (if that’s not too Cartesian a metaphor), we can – and are determined to – end up with the best of all worlds, and show the wider ‘psy’ world just why there is such a need to continue the perennial ‘post-professional’ attitude and sensibilities that Carl Rogers, Ivan Illich and others so brilliantly proclaimed back in the 1970s. We are currently working on a detailed proposal for the form that a renewed *Self and Society* could take, and **we wish to invite your contributions to this emerging process**, because only by initiating such a listening process will we have at least a sporting chance of creating a journal which responds to the wishes of the readers, as well as satisfying our own editorial vision.

Now to list briefly some of the ideas for new sections that we’ve had in our discussions to date. First, we envisage an extended editorial structure to the journal which will include (at a minimum) Associate Editors, Special Honorary Editors, a new Editorial Board, a Book Reviews Editor, and an Ethical Dilemmas Editor.

Next, we envisage a journal with perhaps 3–4 more ‘popular’ articles per issue, and a similar number of substantial peer-reviewed (academic) papers per issue. In this way, our aim will be to preserve the alive, engaging aspect of the current *Self and Society* that we all love, and also introduce a more formal academic section in the journal, which will enhance the status and gravity of Humanistic Psychology and the humanistic therapies in the wider professional world. Far from seeing this as selling out to professionalisation, we see this as an acknowledgement of the realities of many humanistic practitioners, especially those working in the NHS who would

benefit from their orientation having a far more prominent status and legitimacy in the professional and academic literature and community. We cannot emphasise sufficiently strongly that this new departure will be one that *complements* the existing journal, and will not in any way replace, side-line or extinguish the ethos of the *Self and Society* that has existed so successfully over a number of decades.

We will also be looking closely at the journal's design – we think it needs to be bigger in size, more like a 'normal' academic journal size, but perhaps being slightly smaller than this norm. A good analogy might be the *Guardian* newspaper's current size in relation to its broadsheet competitors.

It seems very likely that subscription rates will need to be overhauled; but we trust that an expanded circulation will in time finance at least some of the expansion of the journal, meaning that the subscription rates hopefully won't require a substantial hike – and we'll certainly do all we can, along with the AHPB board, to avoid this.

Finally, we've also had a number of ideas for new regular sections in the new *Self and Society* – namely:

- A 'Topical Debate' section
- An 'Opinion' section
- Special Guest Interviews
- Ethical Dilemmas section
- Humanistic discussion threads
- A 'Client Voice' section
- A Psy-Society section: politics, society, culture and Humanistic Psychology
- Conference/Workshops reports
- The Humorously Humanistic Corner
- Trainer's page
- AHPP news section
- Notice Board and Classifieds
- Humanistic Retro Classics – book review essays
- A Regular Cartoon
- 'Humanistic TV' – links to an online presence, e.g. the letters page could continue online in a readers' forum, links to blogs, downloadable talks, Youtube etc.
- New literature listing: listing of latest books relevant to Humanistic Psychology

Something about the New Editors

David Kalisch writes: I've been involved with Humanistic Psychology, in one way or another, since 1973, when I started my first therapy with a Canadian Gestaltist at Community Growth Centre, in those distant days when Humanistic Psychology was to be experienced, breathed, felt and expressed rather than a course of study leading to a Diploma, with an experiential component attached. I underwent my first experiential trainings in Humanistic groups in the 1970s in North Devon, where there was no set reading, no written assignments and no Diplomas as such. What a different world!

More recently, I've been on the Editorial Board of *Self and Society* since David Jones took over the editorship, and I felt honoured, daunted and challenged when Richard invited me to join him and Jennifer in a new Editorial collective for the journal. This is a new venture for me and I look forward to the journey ahead with a mixture of trepidation and excitement.



I've been in private practice in the South West of England for nearly 25 years, having informally trained in Neo-Reichian Gestalt in the late 1970s and subsequently, more formally, in Core Process Psychotherapy in the late 1980s. I work with individuals and couples and have been a Supervisor for nearly 20 years. I started my therapeutic practice essentially as a Group Therapist running groups at a Mental Health Centre in Exeter, and my own Gestalt Groups in various venues in the South West.

From 1990 as Director of The Centre for Humanistic Psychology and Counselling, I developed and ran courses for Exeter College in Gestalt Therapy, Counselling Skills, a one-year Introduction to Humanistic Psychology and then a two-year Diploma in Humanistic Counselling which ran successfully for many years, under different tutors. With colleagues Andrew Forrester and latterly Jenny Dawson, we then concentrated on developing and running Professional Trainings in Gestalt Therapy and, more recently, Gestalt Groupwork, and have also run, in the past, introductions to Gestalt and other shorter personal growth courses.

The main influences on my therapeutic approach are Gestalt Therapy, bodywork approaches, modern trauma approaches, transpersonal work and psychoanalytic and existential thinking.

My intellectual interests encompass – at varying degrees of depth – literature, politics, economics, sociology, philosophy and neuroscience. Sattipattana and Zen Buddhism provide a spiritual practice and perspective, and are a profound influence on me personally and on my practice.

On the political level, I have contributed, particularly in the early days, to the movement against the statutory regulation of Counselling and Psychotherapy and was naturally pleased to see the current Government give up its plans to regulate a profession that in many respects is doing quite a good job of regulating itself.

I am an Affiliate member of UKAHPP, have served, briefly, on the board as Southwest representative, and am an ordinary member of BACP. I am a qualified and accredited EFT practitioner.

Outside of these spheres, my interests are: my increasingly large family, football (watching, alas no longer playing), music (playing and listening), golf, gardening and travel.

Jennifer Maidman writes: Surprised and delighted as I was to be asked to co-edit this journal, I initially felt acutely aware of my own lack of a ‘track record’ in the humanistic field. I’ve always made my living as a musician not a therapist. Then it occurred to me that it might be exactly this sense of being outside a professional (and increasingly *professionalised*) therapy world which could prove useful in the role.

I’ve experienced many aspects of the ‘Human Potential Movement’ over the last 35 years. Struggling to come to terms with my identity as a transgendered teenager at a time when trans-people were effectively invisible, I encountered my first therapist around 1975. I was in regular psychotherapy (well-meaning but not very helpful) for a couple of years. Disillusioned and confused, I went to Los Angeles in 1979 to attend Arthur Janov’s Primal Institute. There, I dived into the deep end of intensive one-to-one sessions and primal group work. Divisions between ‘practitioner’ and ‘patient’ were less rigid then. ‘Primal people’ started working with each other as soon as they felt ready, bypassing the need to have a ‘professional’ present. It was common, too, for therapists to attend group as ‘patients’ themselves, dealing with whatever feelings emerged along with everyone else. Of course many mistakes were made and lessons had to be learned, sometimes through bitter experience. Nevertheless, it alarms me that alternative approaches are



being marginalised or deemed unethical by an increasingly risk-averse and infantilising tendency within society.

Of course there is a need for greater awareness of individual circumstances and vulnerabilities than used to be the case, but is it not more respectful and authentic when such things as boundaries and ways of working are explored and negotiated in an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect rather than being imposed by god-like therapists and regulators through professional diktat or worse, political expediency? The latter seem to run the risk of iatrogenically replicating within therapy the very institutionalised inequalities and crazy-making double-binds which generate so much distress in the first place. It was these kinds of concerns which motivated me to participate in the Alliance for Counselling and Psychotherapy. Thus it was I met Richard, with whom I co-authored a number of letters and papers and who subsequently asked me to join the S & S team.

To cut a long story very short, I eventually had six years of excellent psychotherapy with a humanistic practitioner, have travelled all over the world as a musician and producer and met my wonderful partner, also a musician and counsellor. I've done three trainings myself, including a Diploma in Humanistic Counselling, worked as a volunteer counsellor in the NHS and I have a very small private practice alongside numerous musical activities. I'm on the Diversity and Human Rights group of a major NHS trust, and I act as an Independent Advisor to Kent Police. I have considerable faith in the potential for respect, empathy and genuine encounter to act as agents of transformation in the world. I also have a deep appreciation of the role which the transpersonal/spiritual dimension can play in accepting our human limitations through ten years of participation in, and service to, a Twelve Step fellowship.

In these challenging times, humanistic ideas do seem to me to be at work in the culture even though there is often a lack of awareness of their origins. Perhaps, as Peter Cook said, 'I'm very old fashioned'. But I think not. I actually believe the tide may be quietly turning against the mechanistic, one-size-fits-all view of the human condition. The world seems increasingly hungry for the vision and the authenticity which a humanistic approach has to offer. It seems somehow apposite to finish with the words of my friend and mentor Mary Ann: 'Just remember', she said, '....individuality is not a disease!'

Richard House writes: In the academic world, I've been a Senior Lecturer in Psychotherapy, Counselling and Counselling Psychology at the University of Roehampton since November 2005, and have worked as a 'counsellor' (my preferred

term) in NHS, voluntary and private practice, and as a supervisor, for around 20 years. I teach modules on Person-centred Therapy, Psychoanalysis, Existentialism and Phenomenology, Post-modernism, Counselling In Education and Critical Psychology, and I have a wide range of research interests, including the professionalisation of psychotherapy and counselling, critical/post- psychiatry, the politics of 'evidence', early-years learning and policy-making, the psychodynamics of learning and teaching, research and the 'audit culture', and holistic/transformational and post-structural/postmodern approaches to learning, education and research.

My therapeutic orientation is broadly integrative, but my practice is deeply rooted in humanistic thinking, with other strong influences coming from post-modernism and phenomenology, Winnicottian psychoanalysis, and the transpersonal (especially Jung's and Rudolf Steiner's cosmologies). My accreditation and accountability are through the **Independent Practitioners Network** (IPN – the Leonard Piper Practitioner Group), of which I was a co-founder in 1994, and which was set up to create a non-didactic, non-institutional accountability framework which is consistent with the core values of therapy work.



I'm also a founder-member of, and an active participant in, the **Alliance for Counselling and Psychotherapy**, an independent, cross-modality organisation of therapy practitioners committed to helping protect the diversity and independence of psychotherapy and counselling. As many readers will know, the Alliance campaigned strongly for several years against the Health Professions Council's (HPC) proposed statutory regulation of the psychological therapies, and we had what was, for us, a major victory when the coalition government decided to drop the HPC regulation proposals. The Alliance has recently launched a new campaign, challenging the unscientific bias shown towards CBT by the Department of Health's NICE clinical guidelines for psychotherapy and counselling through its IAPT programme.

I am also a committed campaigner on psychosocial issues in and around childhood, being a founder-member and active participant in **Open EYE**, a campaign with a high media profile formed in late 2007 to challenge certain aspects of the government's compulsory pre-school curriculum, the Early Years Foundation Stage. I've also worked in publishing as an editor for some 30 years, and my published books include *Implausible Professions* (co-editor, Nick Totton; PCCS Books, Ross-on-Wye,

1997/2011); *Therapy Beyond Modernity* (Karnac Books, London, 2003); *Against and For CBT* (co-editor, Del Loewenthal; PCCS Books, Ross-on-Wye, 2008); *Childhood, Well-being and a Therapeutic Ethos* (co-editor, Del Loewenthal; Karnac Books, London, 2009); and *In, Against and Beyond Therapy* (PCCS Books, 2010).

I am passionate about a lot of things; but my greatest passion of all is to create a space in which *all* voices can be heard – even if at least some of those voices are saying things that I don't personally like. This is a core principle that I wish to bring to my editorship of this journal and its wonderful history – for as one of my greatest heroes, William Blake, so poignantly wrote, 'Without contraries is no progression'.

An Editorial Dialogue

RICHARD: We decided to end this article with a conversation between the three of us, partly because we were a bit concerned that our previous individual pieces might convey an overly individualistic ethos, which is certainly something I personally wish to avoid in the future direction the journal takes. For me, the journal needs to faithfully 'walk its talk', and to be about self *and* society, without either being unduly privileged over the other. We also wanted to end this article on a co-operative, dialogical note, to model, perhaps, the inter-subjective ethos which we each bring to the journal in our different ways. Talking about 'society' leaves me wondering about groups and groupwork; for one of my hopes is that the new journal can make a major contribution to helping put groupwork back on the map. Several of my humanistic colleagues (Guy Gladstone, Jill Hall, Nick Totton) are still running very successful groups, but I think groupwork has been in quite steep decline for 20 years or so, and that's something I'd really like the new journal to engage with and try to make sense of. I'm wondering what you think about the groupwork issue, David and Jennifer?

DAVID: I'm not sure that humanistic groupwork *is* in decline – maybe that's something that needs research. I suspect that the context of groupwork has changed, but here in Exeter, for instance, there is a lot of groupwork within the NHS and voluntary sector, and quite a bit going on in private practice too. Quite a lot of this is humanistic based, even if it's not advertised as such in bright lights. However, a lot of the practitioners who run these groups are trained in one or other humanistic perspective – Gestalt, Transactional Analysis (TA), Person-centred etc. – although they may have become, interestingly, dis-identified from the humanistic 'brand name'. I suspect that part of the success of Humanistic Psychology over the decades is how absorbed it's become into the NHS, voluntary and private sectors, so that it's no longer easy to recognise it

distinctively as such. This may apply to humanistic groupwork as well, unless Exeter and Devon are totally unrepresentative of the rest of the country.

RICHARD: That's really interesting – and also reassuring, David. My experience of groupwork was mainly encounter and men's groups in the 1980s and early 1990s, so perhaps my concerns about decline are rather narrowly focussed; and also as you say, perhaps there's a sense in which we've 'won a battle' here in that many of the principles and practices of humanistic groupwork have actually been organically absorbed into mainstream group working, even though they aren't actually labelled as such – I'm thinking of John Heron's work, for example. As you say, David, this needs some research – maybe one of our readers would submit a research paper on this to the new journal! What's your experience of this, Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I would tend to share Richard's view that humanistic groupwork has lost ground since I was first involved, but maybe, as David implies, this is a matter of perception and personal experience, and a great deal has been absorbed into the therapeutic mainstream and become invisible. To the extent that it may have declined as a self-development/growth type activity (as opposed to an essentially remedial one) I think that's a pity, as groups have unique qualities – they are by no means 'second best' or some sort of adjunct to one-to-one work. I sometimes get the impression this is how they are seen. Individual work has its own strengths too, but the experience of authentic encounter within a group seems to me uniquely valuable. It can be very challenging and rewarding, for instance, remaining connected to and grounded in our own experience amidst the multiple subjectivities and complex demands of a group situation. But I'd add that there are hundreds of groups happening every week in the non-professional field. Twelve Step, with which I'm very familiar, is still, I suspect, the largest sector. There are probably 20 or more regular weekly Twelve Step groups running just in my immediate locality – there are thousands nationwide – and the ethos is arguably broadly humanistic. It's people taking responsibility for their own growth and choices, growing in relationship with other human beings, and also honouring each other's unique individual experience of the transpersonal. Perhaps this is part of the challenge – to reach people who might already be 'doing Humanistic Psychology' without even realising it!

RICHARD: You've brought in another fascinating dimension there, Jennifer – that of professionalisation. I think you're absolutely right about the amount of groupwork going on that falls outside of the kind of professional/non-professional boundary that professional therapists/facilitators are so aware of. And I just love your final

point – wouldn't it be great if *Self and Society* could appeal to and reach some of these groups! I think that Humanistic Psychology is the natural home for folk who don't wish to become sucked into an over-professionalised therapy world, as many surely don't (and very likely with very good reason).

DAVID: Yes I agree – humanistic groupwork was part of the Human Potential Movement and it originally happened in Growth Centres, and the language was all about 'growth', 'awareness', 'personal development' and so on. Now there are only a few Growth Centres left as such, but via the counselling and psychotherapy training boom of the past 20 years, humanistic practice, principles and concepts have been disseminated out into the wider world via individual practitioners, and in the process individualised to fit the 'privatisation of psychological distress' model beloved of late capitalism; and the language has also changed, typically, as Jennifer says, to a remedial one. In the process, groupwork for personal development may have suffered, as you're both saying, and you could say that the humanistic 'brand' has lost some of its distinctiveness too – but not, I would argue, its influence, which is still very much needed, especially in this societal phase where the depth and interiority of the self themselves become objects of increasing alienation and commodification.

JENNIFER: I resonate with that phrase 'the interiority of the self'. It's that aspect of human beings which gets so easily trampled, not only through objectification but also when an overly scientific approach, by privileging the observable, measurable surface dimension of everything, devalues what is unique, experiential and soul-ful. I think that's part of my scepticism towards the professionalisation of the therapy field. It's not that practitioners shouldn't strive to be 'professional' in their relationships with people – of course that's very desirable, and counselling and psychotherapy obviously constitute a profession for some. What worries me is a discourse in which what we might call 'human condition work' is portrayed as *necessarily* requiring the intervention and expertise of 'qualified professionals'; this seems to run the risk of perpetuating an unhelpful gap between our lived experience of being-in-the-world and what the 'experts' tell us is 'really going on'. This can be very de-stabilising at best, or even abusive; it's certainly not very humanistic. Perhaps that's why so many people are doing their own thing in the 'self help' sector. To put it in Rogerian terms, it's about maintaining their 'internal locus of evaluation'.

RICHARD: Again, Jennifer, you've triggered off some big thoughts for me with this – and specifically around measurement and evaluation: for one of the areas in which I think there's a lot of humanistic work to be done is in how we can construct accountability processes (which might include 'evaluation' etc.) for humanistic work that stay true to

our core values, rather than betraying them. I think this would make a great theme issue for the future.

For me there is also a much wider question here regarding the tension within humanistic work between the 'professional', and what I sometimes call the 'post-professional' ethos. I've argued strongly for the latter in many writings, but I'm also aware that there are many humanistic practitioners in the field for whom professionalism and a professional setting are central to their work (I'm thinking of NHS therapists, for example); and I think that *Self and Society* must appeal, and be relevant, to *all* constituencies in the broad Humanistic Psychology field. I do think this is an issue that's not been engaged with nearly as much as it needs to be by our movement – i.e. to what extent (if at all) do professionalising values contradict core humanistic principles? – and to the extent that there is a tension (or even contradiction) here, how do we address it in practice? I feel another future theme issue coming on!...

So – Please get involved in the development of your new journal!

As already mentioned, we would like to invite your participation in the journal's development on two levels:

1. if you think you could offer editorial abilities to the journal and would therefore like to propose yourself as a member of the **new editorial board**, do contact us at any of the e-addresses below; and
2. if you should have any ideas for the content, style or design of the new journal, do please send them to us. They can either be endorsements of, challenges to, or developments of the tentative ideas we've listed above. Or they might be genuinely new ideas and innovations that we've not even thought of. All your suggestions will be warmly welcomed!

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We'd be delighted to hear from you.