

Special theme symposium: Alan Watts, again

This is the second of two *Self & Society* symposia celebrating Alan Watts' (1915–1973) life and work. That the first symposium, published in December 2015, was not enough serves as testament to Watts' outsized historical influence on Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychologies (see Columbus, 2015a). Yet Watts is no mere bygone artifact. His writings and lectures now invigorate a new generation of readers, listeners, and thinkers. In the present year alone, for example, *Psychotherapy East and West* (Watts, 2017b) was reissued 56 years after its original 1961 edition, and Columbus and Rice's (2017) edited anthology, *Alan Watts – In the Academy: Essays and Lectures*, is newly available. Further publications include Watts' (2017a) lecture transcripts, edited by Mark Watts, entitled *Out of Your Mind: Tricksters, Interdependence, and the Cosmic Game of Hide and Seek*, plus Distefano and Machuga's (2017) *A Journey of Two Mystics: Conversations between a Girardian and a Wattsian*. Moreover, Watts' public talks were the subject of experimental research on critical discourse analysis (Dashti & Mehrpour, 2017), and *The Collected Letters of Alan Watts*, edited by Joan Watts and Anne Watts (2017), is slated for December release.

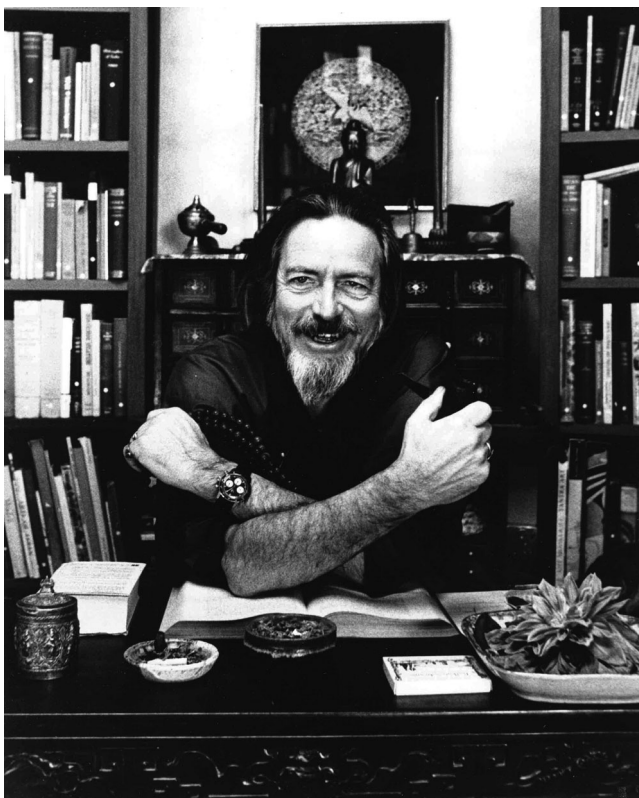
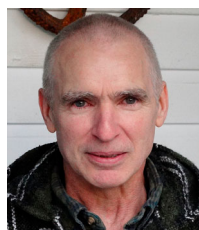


Figure 1. Alan Watts (1915–1973). Photo by Margot Moore. Used by permission of Joan Watts.

The present symposium includes five writings, beginning with Morgan Shipley's elucidation of Watts' psychedelic Buddhism and its therapeutic implications for post-World War II American society's existential malaise. Following Shipley is Colin Sanders' paper, 'Alan Watts and the Revisioning of Psychotherapy', focusing on the cast of innovative thinkers informing Watts' landmark text, *Psychotherapy East and West*. Next, Gerald Ostdiek considers Watts' philosophy of religion as 'biosemiotic ontology', that is to say, a functional process advancing organism–environment harmonization. Following Ostdiek is a paper with the self-explanatory title 'Jung Watts: Notes on C.G. Jung's Formative Influence on Alan Watts' by Ellen Franklin and myself. Concluding the symposium is Part II of my retrospective review of *Psychotherapy East and West* (see Columbus, 2015b, for Part I).

I am deeply grateful to the journal's editors, David Kalisch and Gillian Proctor, for shepherding the symposium to publication. Thanks also to the symposium contributors – Ellen Franklin, Gerald Ostdiek, Colin Sanders, and Morgan Shipley for their outstanding essays, and to several anonymous reviewers who offered invaluable insight and feedback. Finally, an immense debt of gratitude is owed to Jean-Claude van Itallie and the Shantigar Foundation for support of my writing and editing.


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