

Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. 20, NOS. 1 & 2, 1–6
<https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i1and2.03>

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: <https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international>

EDITORIAL

Keith Tudor,^{*1}  Karen Minikin,²  and David Pavón Cuéllar³ 

¹Professor of Psychotherapy, Auckland University of Technology, Aotearoa New Zealand

²Principal, Insights—South West; Leadership team, Black, African and Asian Therapy Network

³Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Morelia, Mexico

We are delighted to be writing this editorial—the first under the journal’s new owners, the Black, African and Asian Therapy Network (BAATN); and the first as a new co-editing team. For my part (Keith), having edited *Psychotherapy and Politics International (PPI)* for the past 10 years, I am delighted and relieved to welcome Karen and David as co-editors—ngā mihi mahana ki a kōrua | warm greetings to you both—and to say that I am looking forward to handing over the editorial reins to them during the rest of this year, at the end of which I will be stepping down as editor. For my part (Karen), I am looking forward to working with Keith and David this year. I am also relieved to have Keith’s support and experience as a dear friend and colleague and am very much looking forward to collaborating with David. I hope this will be an innovative time for the journal, a time to encourage and support new authors and editors, whilst also gaining the benefit of having experience and some familiarity as a support. For my part (David), I hope to help maintain the rhythm of work that Keith has sustained all these years, always respecting the freedom, originality, and pluralism that characterises this journal. The crucial thing for me is that the journal remains open to critical and politically engaged articles that find little or no place in other periodicals on psychology and psychotherapy. I would like to include more texts from outside the English-speaking world, especially from traditionally marginalised groups and regions in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. In any case, I trust that all this will be possible with the invaluable support of Karen and Keith.

*Contact details: keith.tudor@aut.ac.nz

THE TRANSITION

Now writing in a collective voice, we firstly elaborate some aspects of the transition of the journal news and, secondly, introduce this double issue.

As reported in Keith's last Editorial (Tudor, 2021), after 20 years of association with *PPI*, Wiley decided not to continue to publish the journal, following which and after a number of discussions, we decided to move to open access publishing and are delighted to be doing so through the good offices of Tuwhera Open Access Publishing, under the auspices of Auckland University of Technology. ('Tuwhera' is the Māori word for 'open'.) At the same time as assuring the basis of the journal's continued publication, Keith was in dialogue with Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility (PCSR), with which the journal has had a close association since its inception, and with BAATN, both about funding the costs of the journal (i.e., the position of an editorial assistant), and ownership. In the end, PCSR withdrew and BAATN agreed to take responsibility for owning and running the journal. Notwithstanding the complexities of such a transition, we have managed this in good order and time, with the following results:

- We have new owners who have both a respect for the journal's history and a clear vision for its future—see the Announcement preceding this Editorial (Ellis, 2022), and who are funding the employment of our editorial assistant (see below).
- We have a new look to the journal that reflects this and acknowledges our commitment to diversity and pluralism—personally, politically, and professionally, in psychotherapy and in this publication.
- We have a publisher who is committed to open access (see <https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz/publications>), which is congruent with the journal's politics, and who supports a number of other journals (see <https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz/publications/peer-reviewed-journals>).
- We have taken the opportunity of this transition and having more control over the publication to increase the number of issues of the journal from three to four per year, beginning with this double issue. We plan to publish in February, May, August, and November each year, and to continue the tradition that Keith introduced of having special issues (for news of which see below).
- We have retained our unique sections; thus, in addition to the high-quality, peer-reviewed articles that form the major part of each issue, we will also have editorials, guest editorials, controversial discussions, talks, notes from the front line (which may or may not be peer-reviewed), and reviews (of various forms of media), as well as art and poetry.
- We have a new editorial team, comprising three co-editors, which we are planning to extend to four from next year.
- We have reorganised and streamlined the editorial board so as make it more reflective of activist scholars in this area—of psychotherapy, politics, and internationalism—and have asked the members of the editorial board, both old and new, to be more involved in

promoting, reviewing submissions for, and themselves contributing to *PPI*. We haven't finalised the board yet, so expect to see the published list (in the journal information and on the journal's website) expanded over the next two issues.

- We have engaged the services of Angie Strachan as our new editorial assistant—ngā mihi ki a koe | warm greetings to you, Angie, welcome to the journal. Angie has already proved invaluable in seeing us through the transition from Wiley to Tuwhera, and in getting this first double issue to publication.
- As part of the transition, Wiley has passed on all back issues of the journal, which Tuwhera will upload onto the journal's website, thereby making *PPI* fully searchable across its 20 years, 60 issues, and over 400 contributions: all within one site. We are planning that this work will be completed by the end of the year.

THIS ISSUE

Turning to this issue, we are delighted to introduce a genuine double issue comprising seven peer-reviewed articles (including a controversial discussion), a talk, and a book review, the first three of which represent different aspects of what Totton (2000) identifies as politics *in* psychotherapy.

The first article, 'Spheres and civilization' by Christopher Justin Brophy explores connections between Freud's politics of the psyche, as reflected in his work *Civilization and its Discontents* and Plato's Aristophanes as presented in the dialogue, the *Symposium*. In a genuine tour de force, Brophy argues that Freud draws heavily from the human origins myth of Plato's Aristophanes to expound his own political theory. Specifically, Brophy draws our attention to certain psychical (psychic) conflicts that lie in *Civilization and its Discontents*, i.e., the desire to return to an earlier state of psychic existence, the erotic drive, and the death drive which, Brophy argues, are originally articulated in Plato, along with their application to politics. Brophy's skill and the major contribution of this article is not only in making and exploring these connections, but also in applying these to contemporary concerns and questions.

The second article in this issue also explores psychoanalysis, and is another tour de force; in this case, it is a psychoanalytic critique of capitalism, in which the author, Julien-François Gerber, sets out to strengthen what he refers to as the recent psychoanalytic 'turn', or, more accurately, 'return' to the study of capitalism and its alternatives. He does this by identifying thematic strands—libidinal repression (which he refers to as Eros), repetition compulsion (Thanatos), the hedonistic will to power (Ahriman), and narcissistic rationalising (Lucifer). Gerber bemoans—perhaps somewhat controversially—that the psychoanalytic study of the economy has never formed a 'self-conscious field of inquiry', which this article seeks to remedy.

The third article in this trilogy, 'Listen with love', by Tom Denyer, Kat Wade, Matthew Whitney, Divine Charura, and Gillian Proctor, explores anti-racism dialogue in psychotherapy and counselling training. In addition to representing an important focus on racism and anti-racism, we welcome the fact the article is based on research, which the journal has increasingly promoted in the past five years (see Rodgers & Tudor, 2017). Using a thematic analysis of letters written by a cohort of psychotherapy and counselling students, in response to an anti-racism letter by Professor George Yancy entitled 'Dear White America', the article identifies and explores five themes: of connection (whereby participants were willing to challenge their racism), disconnection (being unwilling to challenge their racism), anger, disappointment, and empathy.

Following these articles on different aspects of politics *in* psychotherapy, the next two articles report on examples of the politics *of* psychotherapy.

In the first, another research article, 'The politics of humanitarian aid', Lorien Jordan, Desiree Seponski, Amber Kelley, and Nea Krpo offer a case study of the use of eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) in Cambodia. The article starts from the position—and analysis—that the global expansion of psychotherapy through humanitarian aid is a political act, and offers some detailed justification of this with regard to the role of international aid organisations in decision-making about therapeutic care, and the privileging of certain therapeutic modalities. This particular study focuses on the experience of the practitioners who have to navigate the conflicts created by political acts and decisions, and suggest that Cambodians working as psychologists become dependent upon and caught between competing aid organisations.

In the next article, Bert Olivier offers a different kind of case study, that of the current coronavirus 'pandemic'. Before expressing ideas that go against the prevailing views on the subjective factor of events, the author reflects on how prejudice has influenced the responses of society, governments, and the media to contagion, and defends himself in advance against readers who might judge his article to be particularly biased. Then Olivier recalls Leonard Shlain's characterisation of the 16th century witch hunts in western Europe and finds a similar kind of 'mass psychosis' in the global reaction to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, a delusional psychosis on a massive scale induced by endemic fear of lethal contamination and fed by governments and by the World Health Organization. The author wonders what psychotherapy could mean in these conditions and, inspired by Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Ian Parker, ends up by conceiving the clinic as a space in which there is room for personal revolt against mass psychosis on the horizon of a revolutionary option with an anti-capitalist orientation.

In the next article, 'Meditation, critical psychology, and emancipation', Dániel Ványi argues that the original Buddhist notion of meditation can be regarded as an emancipatory practice, as opposed to being a legitimisation of oppressive social relations. The article both deconstructs

and constructs the self. Firstly, Ványi discusses the Buddhist notion of meditation as a practice of the deconstruction of the illusion of a substantial, i.e., separate, solid, autonomous self. Secondly, referring to theories of the social construction of the self, he argues that the notion of such a separate self is an ideology closely tied to social relations of power. Finally, Ványi concludes that, as a practice of deconstruction, specifically of the self, meditation is an emancipatory practice.

The possibility of emancipation is at the heart of the controversial discussion entitled ‘A critique of leftist gaming’ between Jan De Vos and Alfie Bown. The origin of the discussion is Bown’s book *The Playstation Dreamworld* and its critique by De Vos in *The Digitalization of (Inter)Subjectivity*. De Vos’s main argument is that the psychological conceptions underlying digital technologies, as well as their essential link with capitalism, would compromise the emancipatory anti-capitalist psychoanalytic project of ‘leftist gaming’. Bown’s response is to play an active role in the digital realm, get involved in games, look to the future, and take a stand against the capitalist structure inherited from pre-digital time, staying both in and out of digitality. De Vos ends with a reflection on capitalism that cannot completely digitise subjects, unable to fully incorporate them into its algorithms, and therefore needs them to be on the edge, between digitality and what comes before or outside of digital.

These articles are followed by a talk. This section was introduced a few years ago with a contribution from Bob Hinshelwood (2017), and offers readers the opportunity to read a contribution from a significant colleague in the field talking, as it were, directly to us. In editing these contributions, we endeavour to do justice to them as a published article, while retaining the original tone of the talk.

In this contribution, we are pleased to present—and honour—the work of the recently retired British-American person-centred psychologist, Maureen O’Hara. In this talk, based on a presentation originally given to The First International Online Seminar on the Person-Centred Approach last October, O’Hara presents her vision of what she refers to as ‘Academies of hope’. In it, she reminds us of the indefatigable commitment of Carl Rogers (with whom O’Hara worked closely for 20 years) to cultural transformation, humanisation, and peace. O’Hara suggests some defining aspects of the origin story of the person-centred approach, and critiques what she views as a certain retreat from these; and describes how this (original) cultural transformation project is still at work in the 21st century.

This issue concludes with a review by Erica Burman of the book *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation: Practicing Resistance in Palestine* by Lara Sheehi and Stephen Sheehi. The review summarises this cutting-edge book that reviews the challenges of psychotherapeutic practice and training in the context of ongoing oppression and trauma in Palestine. The themes of psychic alienation, anti-colonial struggle, and the case histories and accounts from practitioners working at the front line make this review a compelling read which offers strong support for the book.

As ever, we hope that you, the reader, find these articles stimulating, and, especially if controversial, something to which you might want to offer a 'contra', opposing, different, or diverse view.

LOOKING FORWARD

As we have noted above, the next, generic issue will appear in August, following which we have a special issue on 'War, Trauma, and Refugees: Psychopolitical Responses', the call for which is as follows:

Against the backdrop of the invasion of the Ukraine, this issue invites submissions from psychotherapists and those in allied 'psy' professions to consider the psychopolitics of war and its impact; present and intergenerational trauma; and the experience of being a refugee and/or working with refugees from war. This might include discussion of the terminology used in this field, for instance, regarding invasion rather than war, and 'forcibly displaced people' rather than 'refugees'. We are particularly interested in articles and other contributions – Controversial discussions, Talks, Notes from the Front Line, Reviews, Art and Poetry – about the differential treatment and different experience of people of colour in these situations and positions. The deadline for submissions is **31st July** and the issue will be published in November.

We are also planning ahead for issues next year and are considering special issues on gender, on neurodiversity, and on psychotherapy education and training, the call for papers for which will follow. Please feel free to submit articles for generic issues as well as these special issues.

REFERENCES

- Ellis, E. (2022). Announcement. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 20(1&2).
<https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i1and2.02>
- Hinshelwood, R. D. (2017). Reflection or action: And never the twain shall meet. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 27(1). <https://doi-org/10.1002/ppi.1401>
- Rodgers, B., & Tudor, K. (Eds.). (2017). The politics of psychotherapy research [Special issue]. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 15(3).
- Totton, N. (2000). *Psychotherapy and politics*. Sage.
- Tudor, K. (2021). Editorial. The 100th anniversary of Sigmund Freud's group psychology [Special issue]. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 19(3).
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ppi.1601>