Editorial

The First Five Years of 'Social Theory and Health'

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The first two issues of '*Social Theory and Health*' were published in the second half of 2003, making the present issue the concluding one of an opening 5-year cycle. The feeling among the editors is that it has been a good, even exciting, start. Founding a quarterly international journal involves a considerable commitment of time and energy and must surely always carry with it a hint of doubt or anxiety. An enterprise of this kind must succeed by three criteria: first, it must have a credible and readily identifiable mission – point and purpose; second, it must engage colleagues and interested parties as contributors and readers in often already cluttered intellectual arenas; and third, its publishers too need to catch an early reassuring whiff of commercial viability. Well, our confidence in the venture has steadily grown. The flow and quality of papers has been encouraging and a reasonable range and balance of 'types' of contribution has been achieved. The journal's mission to help to bridge an intellectually spurious gap between theory and research in the health domain has remained pivotal.

In 2006, Nikolas Rose delivered the inaugural '*Social Theory and Health*' annual lecture. His title was 'The politics of life in the twenty-first century – molecular biopolitics, somatic ethics and the spirit of biocapital'. True to its title, the lecture addressed issues of pressing urgency in rich sociological vein (see the first issue for 2007). The second lecture in this series was given recently by Mike Bury, who spoke on 'Care transitions: reality or rhetoric?' Drawing on collaborative research with David Taylor, this presentation too ranged broadly over matters of key concern for physicians and other health care workers, as well as for social scientists. It interrogated the rationales for, as well as the impact on health professionals and patients, of reforms to the British National Health Service since the 1980s. The lecture will be published in '*Social Theory and Health*' later this year.

Particularly exciting for us as we enter the second of what we hope will be many 5-year cycles is a formal affiliation with the European Society for Health and Medical Sociology (ESHMS). This is marked by the appointment

of Guido Giarelli, current President of ESHMS, and Siegfried Geyer to the Executive Editorial Board, where they join Johannes Seigrist, a reassuring presence since the inception of both '*Social Theory and Health*' in 2003 and ESHMS in 1984. We welcome this affiliation and are confident that it will only sharpen the commitment to our mission. While we will continue to welcome submissions with an abstruse, even 'grand', theoretical orientation (after all, where else might their authors go?), we anticipate a steady growth in papers close to the interface of empirically anchored theory and theoretically informed research, and from heterogeneous disciplines.

Notwithstanding an encouraging first 5-year cycle and the fillip of the ESHMS affiliation, there are disciplines, topics and 'parts of the world' that are as yet under-represented in '*Social Theory and Health*'. This is not just a matter of extending the reach of recognized European and North American approaches to issues of health, illness and healing. Enough has been convincingly said about noisy, self-confident, even neo-colonial, Northern theory to invite explorations of hitherto quiet, subdued, post-colonial Southern theory. We continue to look forward to more submissions from colleagues in developing societies and will do our best to support contributors whose first language is not English.

Finally, it is our responsibility and pleasure once again to extend our thanks to those of our colleagues who have stood patiently by us on our Editorial and Advisory Editorial Boards, and to that wider circle of colleagues from across allied disciplines who have acted as referees for a growing number of submissions. No journal is viable without collegiality, and in the academia of the 21st century such collegiality can easily become the object of corporate suspicion; our sincere thanks.

**Graham Scambler,
Paul Higgs and
Richard Levinson**