

EDITORIAL

Although the four articles in this edition of **PINS** are quite diverse, there is an interlinking thread which runs through them, and it is the idea of identity. While Ronnie Miller's complex and fascinating theoretical account of *understanding* least easily fits the mould of identity, his account of the agentic elements involved in understanding, non-understanding, and not-understanding, certainly bear on the question of what it means to be a person. Quoting Gadamer who writes that "understanding is possible only if one forgets oneself", Miller engages us in a discursus of *who* (agent, self, other, ego) does the understanding, and what sort of psychological interaction would understanding entail. Miller's article (the second part of which will appear in **PINS 29**) re-invigorates the *psychological* and *human* (person) dimensions of cognitive psychology, which often seems too ready to escape into a form of abstract individualism. Miller not only avoids the theoreticism of much cognitive psychology, and cognitive science for that matter, but instead thinks through the methodological implications of understanding when he says "Method is the externalisation or objectification of consciousness and the reason why we cannot deal in neutral facts or theory free data is because to do so is to eliminate consciousness".

Moving onto a different register, namely psychoanalysis and the unconscious, Grahame Hayes wants to make a case for the potential usefulness of psychoanalytic theory and concepts in explaining social life. The first part of the article presents a *general* argument in favour of reading psychoanalytic ideas in a more *socially* engaged way. In the second part Hayes tries to demonstrate how the psychoanalytic understanding of identity formation might elucidate issues of violence in our society, and within this context the particular appeal that ethnic and racial identities seem to have.

Kerry McLuckie's article on transsexualism explicitly challenges the hold that binary notions of gender have over (sexual) identity. These binary oppositions abound in the theoretical conceptions of gender and sexuality: male / female; gay / straight; sex / gender; mind / body; pleasure / unpleasure. In discussing the sex re-assignment process McLuckie is able to show the contradictions inherent in trying to fix identity in narrow binary "positionings", as opposed to acknowledging the permanent openness of subjectivity. Her article presents a critique of modernist views of gender by engaging postmodern and social constructionist accounts of identity and subjectivity.

The final article in this edition of **PINS** is Lynn Dunstan's personal account of her counselling internship, and the range of interesting issues this experience raised for her in terms of her developing professional identity. As with McLuckie, Dunstan uses the ideas of social constructionism to think through the "positioning and re-positioning" of her identity. Dunstan notes that she "learned to be comfortable assuming a posture of

not knowing and not understanding". Becoming a professional (counselling) psychologist introduces the person into the realm of *expert*, and *expertise*, and yet it is precisely this transition to (now) being "qualified" which if properly negotiated indicates that the learning is only just beginning.

PINS 28 closes with a brief response by Len Bloom to Kevin Durrheim's review of his book **Identity and ethnic relations in Africa**, that appeared in **PINS 27** (2001). Here too the issues of identity are evident.

PINS will be devoting a special issue to the problems of *racism* in 2003. This special edition will be edited by Kevin Durrheim. A full-page advert and call for papers will appear in the next **PINS** (**PINS 29**, 2002). It is hoped that contributors should submit articles on issues of racism by **30 June 2003**, and that the intended date of publication of the special issue on racism would be November / December 2003.

Grahame Hayes