

## BOOK REVIEWS

**PSYCHOTHERAPY, INSIGHT AND STYLE: The existential moment**  
by Len Bergantino. Allyn & Bacon 1981.

This is a delightful book about being a young humanistic psychotherapist and learning the craft. It is written in a very personal style, which is not afraid to get quite theoretical at times, but on the whole sticks to experience and to the practical.

Bergantino has met or worked with or studied seventeen different therapists, and he makes it clear what each one had contributed to his own style and approach. The selection is interesting, including Wilfred Bion, Martin Grotjahn, the Polsters, Jim Simkin, Walter Kempler, George Bach, Albert Ellis, Harold Greenwald, Milton Erickson and Carl Whitaker.

Some very interesting points are made along the way, which take up some of the issues which therapists discuss when they are together, such as diagnosis, for example:

Diagnosis and assessment are the second major political issue. Nearly all of the therapists I have written about in this book did therapy with me at the beginning of the first session without any formal assessment procedures. They did not give me any psychological tests. Only one gave me a preliminary assessment interview. And Milton Erickson had me write my name, age, occupation, education and marital status on a piece of paper - which took about one minute. My style, like that of my mentors, is that of beginning to respond immediately to patients. There is no formal assessment in terms of how assessment is customarily viewed, although I do use psychological testing when I feel there may be possible brain damage. In these cases patients agree that this information will be beneficial.

This seems quite straightforward, but Bergantino is also ready to face some of the paradoxes of therapy, and the way in which the process necessarily involves certain contradictions:

While I am talking about liberation and authenticity of response - culminating in existential moments - I also consider the differing shades of authenticity. For example, the appropriate response may be as tricky as it is genuine. Being tricky and authentic

can be two sides of the same coin. Being an authentic trickster will not destroy the patient's confidence if the therapist's heart is in the right place.

Many examples are given of the way in which this works out in practice, and in general this book is rich in extracts from therapy sessions and group work.

The one criticism I would make of this book is that the author starts off with a concept - the existential moment - which it looks at first is going to be a very deep and interesting theoretical construct, with some promise for getting to the very kernel of the therapeutic process. But as the book goes on, and the term is used in more and more different contexts, it gets vaguer and vaguer, and eventually it becomes obvious that it has no content whatever. It is just used as an OK-work to grant approval to anything which Bergantino happens to like. I found that a bit disappointing.

But really the main virtue of this book is that it gives a warts-and-all odyssey of a young man who genuinely wants to learn and develop as a therapist and as a person. It could be very useful to anyone who is on such an odyssey, or who may be about to start on one, after some basic training as a therapist. It certainly gives one an enormous respect for the number of things which can work in therapy, and the variety of approaches which are possible and legitimate.

I can't resist giving the shortest definition of neurosis and cure which I have ever seen. Bergantino quotes Edward Smith as paraphrasing Helmuth Kaiser as follows:

The universal psychopathology is the attempt to create in real life the universal 'illusion of fusion' (the illusion that one is not alone but is fused with others). The universal symptom is 'duplicitous communication' (failure to be "behind one's words"). The universal treatment is straightforward (nonduplicitous) communication.

That may be a bit swift and oversimplified, but it certainly makes one think. There are a lot of little gems like this scattered through the book, and the author is not too proud to give credit to all the people who have contributed to his own development. The chapter on Bion is particularly good.

Really this book is a "must" for anyone starting out as a humanistic psychotherapist.

**John Rowan**

**THE DON JUAN PAPERS: Further Castaneda Controversies** by Richard de Mille (ed). Ross-Erikson 1980. pp.518 £5.95

This is a lively, provoking, hard-hitting and ultimately totally convincing book by 27 authors, all going to show that Castaneda's books about Don Juan are fiction rather than fact.

Richard de Mille, although he is the same de Mille who wrote that excellent early book of therapy exercises entitled "Put your mother on the ceiling", comes across as an unlikeable character who clearly has a nervous and almost messianic mission to prove Castaneda wrong - but the evidence collected here is so convincing that one is forced in the end to award him game, set and match.

De Mille makes it clear that he is not saying that the books are nonsense or useless - at least, not the first three. He makes a distinction between validity and authenticity. Validity, for him, refers to the correspondence between the content of a scientific report and some established background of theory and recorded observation. Authenticity, in his discussion, refers to the provenance of the report: did it come from the persons, places and procedures it describes? An anthropological report (**Journey to Ixtlan**, under another title, was Castaneda's Ph.D thesis at UCLA) can be authentic and valid (like Opler's **An Apache Life-Way** or Meyerhoff's **Peyote Hunt**), inauthentic and invalid (like von Daniken's **Gold of the Gods**), authentic but invalid (like Turnbull's **The Mountain People**) or valid but inauthentic, like the first three Don Juan books.

Incidentally, de Mille also blows the gaff on some other books which fall in the category of being fiction dressed up as fact: Anson's **The Amityville Horror**; Lamb's **Wizard of the Upper Amazon**; Rampa's **The Third Eye** and twelve other books; Schneebaum's **Keep the River on your Right**; Storm's **Seven Arrows**; and Wongar's **The Track to Bralgu**.

The most curious part of the whole thing is how the professors on Castaneda's degree committee have still not recanted. One of them, it turns out, was Harold Garfinkel, the ethnomethodologist. I can understand how an odd and awkward character like this might hold the line, just to raise difficult questions about appearance and reality. But the others on the committee - Walter Goldschmidt (anthropologist), Clement Meighan (archaeologist), Robert Edgerton (anthropologist and ethnomethodologist), Philip Newman (cultural anthropologist) and Kees Bolle (historian of religion) - seem to have less understandable reasons for adhering to their original decision to award a PH.D degree in anthropology for a work of fiction, which had already been published commercially under another name.

This is really a quite enthralling bit of detective work, with clues coming together from all angles. I found it quite extraordinarily readable. And it's cheap, too.

Brian Rainbow

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**FIRST CHILD, SECOND CHILD . . . WHAT YOUR BIRTH ORDER MEANS TO YOU** by Bradford Wilson and George Edington. Souvenir Press 1982 pp 286 £7.95

This is an interesting and very accessible book on the psychological significance of birth orders. The layout and use of the second person singular throughout is strongly suggestive of a book of horoscopes. There are separate chapters on the only, oldest, middle and youngest boys and girls. Then there are chapters on all the possible two sibling combinations e.g. older brother of a younger sister, or younger sister of an older sister; plus chapters on twins and the large family.

The American authors are both practising psychotherapists. They draw their material from clients, personal acquaintances, family, neighbours, relatives and friends and from published research on the subject. This is given in a list of suggested reading at the end of the book. They stress that the material doesn't loan itself to "nifty packaging". "We see no point in resorting to speculation simply for the sake of uniformity". Consequently the book reads somewhat patchily with more than twice as much comment for instance on the only child than on the middle child position.

The proof of such a collection of character observations seems to be in how well they match up to reality. In my own case as the older brother of a younger sister I felt they did pretty well in some respects. They describe my family role as encouraging me to be 'princely . . . cool, calm and collected' and/or emotionally repressed. Emotionality, noisiness, messiness etc. are likely to be seen by someone in my role position as female qualities suited to a younger sister. In other respects they seemed to miss the mark completely, venturing to guess that I was likely to be a chronic non-recaller of dreams for instance when in fact the opposite is true.

The situation is complicated of course, by the fact that there are not many pure types: oldest children began as only children, middle children were once youngest children, one can simultaneously be both an older and a younger sister, and so on. Family dynamics and

role pressures change during the course of growing up. It is usually necessary to read several of the chapters to get an idea of the influences which were likely to have been at work.

To my mind the most exciting chapter of the book is the postscript. Here the subject is broadened to include a consideration of how parental birth order can effect the way they relate to their children. The authors remark that both parents and grandparents "can and often do treat their own children more like brothers and sisters than offspring, despite the generation gap and the obvious age differences". To illustrate this they offer a complex and fascinating three generation family analysis of one of their clients. Here I am reminded of R.D. Laing's technique of 'mapping' family relationships, and of James Hillman's comments on the psychological role of ancestor worship in pre-Christian and oriental cultures.

As the authors say the book does not purport 'to be the final word on the subject'. It is however, a stimulating introduction to what is shown to be a rich and complex area of study.

**Guy Lawrence**

**STEPS TO FREEDOM: Discourses on the Alchemy of the Heart**, by Reshad Feild, 1983. Element Books Ltd, 163 pp £5.50

I did not expect to pick up from Vivian's editorial couch, habitually strewn with heterocoloured review books, a publication suitable for my Lenten preparations. Nor did I suppose that Reshad Feild, stock-broker, folksinger, art/antique dealer and copywriter would lead me in the same direction as the Franciscans and Benedictines with whom I generally keep company at this time. Yet he did. His teaching about will, discipline and sacrifice provided a contemporary link with traditional Jewish and Christian experience, although, as founder of the British Sufi movement, his work was also illuminated by many references to Allah and his Prophet (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him.)

For Reshad's main warning to us, (and he speaks with special affection to humanistic psychologists), is that we may spiritualize the ego, instead of spiritualizing the heart. To avoid this we must "climb the ladder of sacrifice", until we come to "the point of giving up our will into the will of God, the point Jesus came to in the garden of Gethsemane".

By discipline, we develop the will which is needed for fulfilling our responsibility and obligation to humanity, both by dealing with our own character defects and through unselfishly learning to love others so that they are no longer just objects to us. "Without will", he says, "we are likely to develop habits and patterns of the past again and again . . . without will, we can lose so much of a certain subtle type of energy that the possibility of regaining the true possibility of our lives on earth no longer exists . . . we need will in order to complete a cycle that is made consciously . . . without will we are nothing and nothing is done . . . "

Reshad says that "unfortunately, very few teachers stress the need for will and discipline and that most of us feed our lower natures in repetitive and illusory ways so that we are unable to be truly loving or compassionate or of service to the earth which needs our care. He has a deep concern for the ecological healing of the world which depends on us developing a strict morality with regard to sacrificing the greed with which we devour its resources. Although the Greenham Women were not mentioned in the book, I found myself continuously thinking of their will, discipline and sacrifice, especially when it stresses that in order to create something, three forces are needed: the active, the passive and the allowing. How valuable a part of peace protesting is the allowing oneself to be carried away.

The book then devotes its most significant passages to the way in which this commitment "allows God to make himself love in us". We receive God, we receive his love, we receive love itself both passively and actively and if we allow it to grow in us, we can then experience "transfiguration" as Reshad terms it. Alchemy, he continues, is the fixing of gold in the heart, a famous Sufi saying reminding us that 'love turns copper into gold'. "Surrender", Reshad urges, do not "nest in the head", but open your heart like a rose, the rose which is perfect because it has been trimmed by pruning. Because God is love He can absorb all our pains and tensions, and we are told to put them "into the melting pot, the cauldron, which the Chinese call 'the Ting' ". Then, by alchemy, they are transformed. "All the theories in psychology of putting attention on our pains are merely lack of faith . . . What is asked of us is that we allow ourselves to be loved, we allow ourselves to be redeemed".

Yet redemption cannot take place without recognition, and it is here that Reshad's encounter with Gurdjieff and his philosophy of becoming awake and being aware of who we are and what we might become points to the intellectual tasks and physical activities which can help the process. Recognition and redemption are followed by resurrection.

"Then we may discover the essential self, the soul, which is made of the very substance of redeemed energy and which is that which redeems. Thus the Christ is found within, the alchemical marriage has taken place, and the real seeker is born. So the book ends, and although I have extracted from it only one of its many messages because this is at the moment meaningful to me, I think that **Steps to Freedom** may well be helpful to other AHP friends who, already on the Wilber way, want to walk a little further as well as retrace earlier paths of the mainstream mystics.

Yvonne Craig

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## JEALOUSY AND ENVY

### BRIEFING SHEET

*The following brief notes are intended to help you tease out your own definitions.*

- Envy stems from the desire to acquire something possessed by another, while jealousy is rooted in the fear of losing something already possessed.
- Jealousy may be defined as a feeling of displeasure which expresses itself either as a fear of loss of the partner or as discomfort over a real or imagined experience the partner has had with a third party.
- Envy is a two party relation, jealousy is a three party relation.
- Envy may seek to spoil the quality in another to remove the source of envious feelings.
- The triumph arising out of successful competition may be strongly determined by envy.
- Qualities in another person or thing may be real and impossible to achieve, real and possible to achieve, or totally imaginary. Mourning for loss, realistic planning or symbolic success may be indicated.

Fig. 1

\* See page 211