BOOK REVIEWS

THE TACTICS OF CHANGE: DOING THERAPY BRIEFLY by Richard Fisch, John H. Weakland & Lynn Segal. Jossey-Bass 1982, pp. 302 £12.95

This is a practical book of advice from a group associated with the Medical Research Institute at the Stanford University Medical School, the best-known member of which is Paul Watzlawick, who helped to write the earlier book **Change**, which came out in 1974.

The titles are strange in a way, with their emphasis on change, because the one thing these authors are not interested in is real change: what they are interested in is adjustment.

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> The general goal of therapy is to eliminate or sufficiently reduce the complaint the client comes in with. (113)

> The purpose of brief therapy is to influence the client in such a way that his original complaint is resolved to his satisfaction. (127)

That seems very clear, and just to make sure, the word "complaint" is defined in such a way as to leave no room for deeper concerns or more radical change:

> Our inquiry focusses on the chief **complaint** or complaints of those seeking help, in behavioural terms: "**Who** is doing **what** that presents a problem, to **whom**, and **how** does such behaviour constitute a problem?" (70)

The method generally adopted is to interrupt the behavioural cycle in some way, so that repetitive false solutions can be abandoned. Often this is done in what seems to me an unashamedly manipulative way, such as commiserating with each partner in a couple seen separately, making the client feel like a worm if he or she does not go along with the therapist's suggestions, lying to clients and so forth. Often it is done with great ingenuity.

> For example, one smoker for whom a hypnotic approach was ineffective was induced to make a simple but iron-clad contract with himself. He could smoke whenever he wanted, but if he took even one puff, he then had to get up in the middle of the night and chain-smoke one pack of cigarettes. (136)

There is also a lot of ingenuity expended in keeping the therapist in control of the situation, even while apparently taking up a "one-down" non-expert stance. It is emphasized over and over again that the therapist must increase his or her manoeuvrability, while controlling that of the client. For example, supposing that the therapist realises that what has been going on up to now in therapy is ineffective, a U-turn can be made, switching to a different or even quite opposite approach. This can be done

> by referring to a consultation with another, "more experienced" therapist. The "expert therapist" is usually unnamed, and the explanation is given that the consultant is much too busy himself to be involved beyond the one consultation . . . This type of U-turn can be more influential if the therapist also adds: "Now here is a point the expert raised that I don't really understand, but he said that you would". This can increase the probability that the patient will accept the point since it allows him to one-up his therapist by joining a coalition with the respected expert, in having an understanding superior to the therapist's. (170)

This is a very explicit book which tells you exactly what to do as a therapist in a number of different situations - especially at the start of the therapist-client relationship. There is a chapter on interventions and another one on termination. There are three full-length case histories with verbatim extracts for clarity. I think any therapist could learn something from this book.

In Wilber's (**No Boundary**) terms, this book is operating purely at the "mental ego" level, not at the "Centaur" level nor at the "transpersonal" level. This means that it is not humanistic in any sense. As long as this is understood, it can be a very useful addition to the list of things which a good therapist should know about.

James Crippledini

FREUD AND PSYCHOANALYSIS by Richard Stevens (1983). Open University Press, Milton Keynes. £4.95

It is through the kind of insights *"which psychoanalysis can offer, opening ourselves up to possibilities, coming to terms with the need to both accept and create what we are, and working with the contradictions of existence rather than striving to deny them, that each of us can learn to take up with a little more courage and imagination our own role in understanding and creating ourselves". (p.148)*

This is the concluding statement of Richard Stevens' book, which to my mind exemplifies the fundamental attitude which informs the structure, content and tone of the entire book. Psychoanalysis is an intensely personal enterprise, the quest for meaning and purpose in the light of the honest and painstaking examination of everyone's own experience. This is how Stevens interprets the spirit of Freud's work, as do Fromm, Reich, Laing and Sartre among others who have taken the emancipatory, revolutionary thrust of psychoanalysis as their point of departure for a continual process of the re-evaluation of Freud's ideas in the face of the vicissitudes of human history and the evolution of ideas.

In a brief discussion of Bettelheim's criticisms of the English translation, which has also come under fire from eminent French psychoanalysts, for instance Lacan and Granoff, Stevens shows how the medicalisation of many of the key terms in Freud's text leads to a tone of detachment and pseudo-objectivity that allows the reader to dissociate himself from precisely those ideas that are most conducive to touching a raw nerve; Strachey's translation, so to speak, has an anaesthetizing effect. 'I' becomes 'ego', emotional investment becomes 'cathexis', the mothers' womb becomes 'uterus', the forms of psychic life become 'mental apparatus'. By a sleight of hand an intensely human enquiry into our motives and conflicts becomes an almost positivist dissection of mental mechanisms, reified, and put under a scientific microscope.

But while the alienating language of the translation and a personal prediction among some of Freud's followers towards hero worship and orthodoxy is much to blame for the calcification of part of the psychoanalytic movement, the 'master' is not entirely blameless himself. In a chapter on Freud the man, Stevens shows how human, fallible and full of contradictions and ambivalence the 'great man' was. This portrayal of the complexities of Freud's personality is not however an exercise in iconoclasm, but rather a reminder of the universality of human frailty alloyed with courage, the perennial tension between what we are and what we might be.

Throughout the book Stevens maintains this attitude of questioning, of reminding us that every statement about the human condition, every attempt at theorising and generalising about human qualities must be seen in its historic context and that we must always be mindful of the personal tastes and proclivities of the person who is trying to communicate his or her construal of reality. There are no certainties, no unquestionable facts about human development and behaviour. Instead we are dealing with ways of seeing, ways of interpreting and making sense, always based on certain assumptions which we may or may not wish to share.

But this sustained attempt at qualification and contextualisation is never laboured and heavy handed. It informs everything Stevens says without leaving a trail of footnotes and ifs and buts. Rather it leaves its mark on the tone of the text which flows, somehow effortlessly, always immensely readable and lucid.

Stevens has provided us with a very concise outline of Freud's most important concepts and ideas, doing justice to the developments and changes in his theory construction while at the same time keeping close to everyday experience, inviting us to look at ourselves through Freud's eyes as portrayed by Stevens. He offers a succinct discussion of the concept of the unconscious, Freud's understanding of psychosexual development, the theoretical constructs underlying Freud's meta-psychology and the dynamics of psychic processes. This is followed by an exposition of Freud's notion of the continuum between normality and neurosis and an examination of the implications which all these theoretical considerations have for the practice of psychotherapy.

The psycho-analytic enterprise is then evaluated in the context of the methodological and epistemological difficulties which also beset experimental psychology and the human sciences as a whole.

Lastly, Stevens examines the import and impact of psychoanalysis on our everyday life and on our ever-evolving construal of our own humanity. To drive home the point that psychoanalysis is more to do with the development of tools for self-understanding and empathy with others than with the scientific analysis of human behaviour, Stevens adds an appendix of awareness exercises at the end of his book.

I enjoyed reading **Freud and Psychoanalysis** and I think it will make an excellent introduction for students of psychoanalysis and psychology alike, apart from being a stimulating book for anyone interested in developing greater awareness of how we all make sense of being in the world, more or less informed by a psychoanalytic vision.

Hilde Rapp

REAGAN'S AMERICA by Lloyd DeMause. Creative Roots Inc. 1984. pp.193 £15.95. (In the UK, Eurospan, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU).

This is a book of psychohistory, which will be most meaningful to those who have already discovered the same author's **Foundations of Psychohistory**, which was enthusiastically reviewed in **Self and Society** in May/June 1984.

It deals with history as shared fantasy. In his earlier work on President Carter, DeMause showed how the Iranian hostage crisis was quite explicable if we gave due weight to the way in which Carter was induced to carry out the collective fantasies of the United States population. All the apparent madness of it fitted in well to the analysis given.

Now with Reagan, the author goes on to show how he is much more responsive to the public mood than Carter was. He is much more ready to incarnate the public fantasies, bodying them forth in a way which makes him both master and servant of them. And this leads inexorably, in the view of the author, to the very high probability of a war in Nicaragua, as soon as some plausible pretext can be found. Not because there are American interests in Nicaragua, but because the public needs blood.

One of the main tools which DeMause uses is fantasy analysis. He takes a speech or newspaper article, and extracts all those words, and only those words, which have a fantasy loading - all the metaphors, similes, feeling states, body images and other key emotional terms. (Details in Chapter 6 of **Foundations**). When we do this, we find the secret emotional message of

the speech or article, which is getting across to the listeners at an emotional level.

And the fantasy which emerges again and again is a foetal fantasy - a fantasy based on the traumatic drama of the foetus. It has four stages: Strong, Cracking, Collapse and Upheaval. The Strong phase, which usually comes during a new president's first year, represents a safe womb-surround where we can all be happy. The Cracking stage comes when the leader is seen as weakening and unable to control events; people start to feel crowded, hungry and breathless. There is scapegoating to deflect hostility from the leader. At the Collapse stage the leader comes under attack for being impotent to end the group's feeling of pollution, sinfulness and starvation. Group-fantasies of choking, falling, abandonment, disintegration, death and explosiveness proliferate in the media. Free-floating paranoid fantasies of unnamed poisonous enemies multiply, as the group attempts to project its own rage outward and to account somehow for its own feelings of turmoil. This Collapse stage ends only, according to DeMause, after a search for a humiliating other - an enemy who, in a moment of group-psychotic insight, is identified as the concrete source of the group's distress.

The final stage, Upheaval, can take several forms. There can be a regicidal solution, a martial solution or a suicidal solution.

The reason why DeMause calls this a foetal drama is because he sees womb life as more dramatic than most writers before him. Just as Melanie Klein saw that the infant could have dramatic fantasies about the Good Breast and the Bad Breast, DeMause urges that the foetus can have dramatic fantasies about the Nurturing Placenta and the Poisonous Placenta. It is these fantasies which are projected into the political arena.

This is heady, hearty, moving stuff, and it is fascinating to see how the detailed analysis of Reagan's speeches fits so well with the basic structure here outlined. This is a very exciting and disturbing book.

John Rowan

VIEWPOINTS FROM THE REAL WORLD by Gurdjieff. Arkana Paperbacks. 276 pp. £4.50.

This book comprises the recollections of students of matters that Gurdjieff had raised in his discussions. He lived from 1877 - 1949 and is highly regarded as a spiritual leader. He was a charismatic and demanding teacher who placed great emphasis on his students 'working'. 'The Work' had to be foremost. At one point in a discussion with a new student he said "Do you

feel how superfluous and useless words have become? Do you feel how powerless reason by itself is here?" One feels immediately that his teaching involved far more than words, it was an inter-action. The fact that he consumed, and insisted his students did likewise, vast quantities of red vodka on special occasions also suggests he was a man of the world and not only a mystic.

The aim of his teaching, as I understand it, was to create a situation where individuals could realise their limitations and hence surmount them. He emphasized personal growth and the here and now. It was his view that most people are only half awake and functioning from habit or custom. He felt healthy scepticism was a vital ingredient to achieve understanding and that conscious (self willed) suffering was necessary for growth.

In attempting to give an outline of his thinking, it is important to stress that Gurdjieff claimed (and I agree) that for an exact study an exact language is necessary. That is something that can only be created by understanding the individual; oneself and the other. This is not possible in the printed word. Gurdjieff suggests that we function from four centres. An intellectual centre, an emotional centre, a moving centre and a sexual centre. These centres communicate with the outside world and between themselves mainly through sometiong he calls the formatory apparatus.

The formatory apparatus is considered to be responsible for over 75% of our manifestations and perceptions. It is as though the apparatus had a pseudo centre for each of the real centres and acts in a mechanical way from habit and convention. It is as though the apparatus takes the messages like an answering machine (whether internal or external) and then plays a suitable tape response.

Of the remaining 25% of manifestations and perceptions Gurdjieff rather pessimistically allocates 50% to the moving centre, 40% to the sexual centre and 10% to the emotional centre. The intellectual centre is rarely used at all. He stresses that despite the major control by the apparatus and the unequal distribution between the actual centres, they all function. It is just that they cannot communicate with each other easily and that the formatory apparatus will often use a convenient stereotype.

This is a book which I strongly recommend both to those who are unfamiliar with Gurdjieff's work and to those who may have forgotten. To be contentious I would suggest that anyone who does not appreciate Gurdjieff does not understand, and those who dismiss him as too intellectual are working from their emotional centre.

Mark Matthews