

BOOK REVIEWS



John Rowan looks at an important 1980's book

Handbook of states of consciousness, Benjamin B Wolman & Montague Ullman (eds) Van Nostrand Reinhold £54.50 hb 1986

Here we have twenty chapters, by twenty-seven authors altogether, on many aspects of a very fascinating topic. It is very uneven, with some chapters very clear and others very obscure, some quite light and others rather heavy, some making important new points and others rehashing old information. It is divided into three main sections: Theory (seven chapters); Manifestations (eight chapters); and Accessibility (five chapters).

The first four chapters, by Roland Fischer ('Toward a neuroscience of self-experience and states of self-awareness and interpreting interpretations'), Jon Tolaaas ('Transformatory framework: Pictorial to verbal'), Samuel McLaughlin ('Dimensionality and states of consciousness') and Ernest Rossi ('Altered states of consciousness in everyday life: Ultradian rhythms'), did not really grab me very much, but the fifth is by John and Helen Watkins, on the topic of 'Hypnosis, multiple personality and ego states as altered states of consciousness', and represents a very fine summary of this difficult area, with some useful suggestions.

The first chapter in the second part of the book is by Francis Jeffrey, on 'Working in isolation: States that alter consensus'. It deals with the isolation tank as used by John Lilly.

Then comes another chapter by Pattison and Kahan, with the addition of Gary Hurd, on 'Trance and possession states'. It makes a useful distinction between ego-syntonic and ego-dystonic trance states, the one actively sought for in most cases, and the other coming unbidden.

After this comes one of the most interesting chapters in the book, where Benjamin Wolman talks about 'Protoconscious and psychopathology'. He suggests that we should introduce the idea of the protoconscious, as a realm of the psyche which lies between the conscious and the unconscious.

When one becomes aware of another person's feelings without any possibility of proving or disproving them - as, for example, in telepathic experiences - he is neither in a conscious nor in an unconscious state; his mental state is definitely protoconscious. (p.313)

He suggests that a good many meditative states are in this realm of the proto-conscious. And my own view would be that some states found in the therapy room are also protoconscious, particularly in those instances where the therapist and the client seem to share in the same image or bodily sensation, what Andrew Samuels (1989) has called 'embodied countertransference'.

Then we get a chapter by Stanley Krippner and Leonard George on 'Psi phenomena as related to altered states of consciousness', one by Claudio Naranjo on 'Drug-induced states', one by Roland Fischer (again) entitled 'On the remembrance of things present: The flashback', one by Thomas Budzynski on 'Clinical applications of non-drug induced states', and one by Roger Broughton on 'Human consciousness and sleep/waking rhythms'. This completes Part Two. Part Three begins with a chapter by Patricia Carrington on 'Meditation as an access to altered states of consciousness', which has some very good remarks on the ego. There follows a chapter by Montague Ullman on 'Access to dreams', which makes some of the same points as are dealt with rather more fully by Robin Shoet (1985).

Then we get an excellent chapter by Elmer and Alice Green on 'Biofeedback and states of consciousness', which makes a very useful distinction between the transpersonal and the extrapersonal. The transpersonal they define as "beyond the normal limits of the ego and the personal unconscious, into universal, divine awareness." The extrapersonal, on the other hand, is "beyond the normal limits of the ego and the personal unconscious, into cosmic nondivine awareness." The transpersonal has to do with things like the higher (or deeper) self, contact with god-forms and so forth, while the extrapersonal has to do with things like telepathy, spoon-bending, out-of-body experiences, hypnagogic images, channelling and so forth.

The last two chapters are by Judith Malamud on 'Becoming lucid in dreams and waking life' and by J H M Whiteman on 'The mystical way and habitualization of mystical states'.

What is curious about this whole book is that there is no mention anywhere of Ken Wilber, and this results in a feeling of wilful ignorance about some of the transpersonal states which are described here. But there are certainly some good chapters, and for anyone interested in these matters it represents a solid resource.

References

Samuels A (1989) *The Plural Psyche* Routledge, London

Shoet R (1985) *Dream Sharing* Turnstone, Wellingborough

Play Therapy With Abused Children, Ann Cattanach. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1992 £18.95 160 pages

This is a book not just for therapists working with children, but a very useful book for all professionals working with children, especially social workers, teachers and clinical psychologists. I am not suggesting that people should use the book as a teach- yourself-how-to-become-a-playtherapist tool, but rather that in reading the book which is very simply presented, and written in a very accessible way, it will expand with understanding of those working with children about to use children can make of play.

The book explores the uses of play therapy with abused children as a way of helping them to heal their distress and make sense of their experiences. The author, Ann Cattanach, who has developed and supervised play therapy courses in Holland, Greece and England, and also works as a therapist for several Social Service Departments in London, shows that play is a development activity, and a creative process that enables children to express themselves and explore their identity in relation to others. It also shows the reader that for many abused children certain areas of the child's experience is more easily communicated through play. Much of the book describes the children's experiences through the case histories presented, but the book also explores the rights and needs of children; the meaning of play, Child Development Theories and play, ways of starting play therapy, the setting, materials and boundaries and the play therapy process. As a mother and trainee therapist I found the book very informative and moving, and it set me wondering as to why we don't use play as a therapeutic intervention with adults as well.

Penny Corke
London

The Personal Management Handbook: How to make the most of your potential, John Mulligan. Sphere, London, 1988, 68 pages. Price: not known

This review is a bit late. I have been trying to write it for a long time now, and it seemed time to send it in at last.

The thing is, I started of the best of intentions. I made notes like- "page 12- first exercise very hard and demanding. Credited to John Heron, but it comes from psychosynthesis. Page 15- Guided fantasy- much too hard as presented, and again not credited to psychosynthesis. page 17- exercise says make a branch pattern, but we have not been properly introduced to branch patterns, only to worms. Incredibly hard exercise, virtually impossible to do on one's own. page 18- at last a feasible exercise..."

In this way I got as far as page 53, and I thought - I really must finish this soon. It is a small book, attractively produced, well illustrated, I am sure there must be some good things in it. But whenever I picked the book up, it annoyed me all over again. For example, there is a brief version of Eugene Gendlin's Focus-

ing technique on page 61, but it is so truncated as to be almost impossible to do effectively, and not credited to Gendlin.

I think basically, like so many self-help books, this would be a good book to use as the basis for a course, or a number of courses, where each thing could be explained more fully, and encouragement given to complete the exercises, and opportunities for feedback given, and so on. But as a book I think it is unreadable and unworkable, and I think would be a source of frustration to anyone who attempted it.

For workshop leaders only.

John Rowan

A Psychotherapist looks at an 1980's book on sexual abuse by a mother

When you're ready - A Woman's healing from her childhood physical and sexual abuse by her mother, Kathie Evert and Inie Bijkerk, Launch Press 1987.

This book is by a woman, currently a therapist, who was physically and sexually abused by her mother. It is the raw, painful story of a woman healing herself from an abuse which threatened the very fibre of her being. Kathy Evert uses extracts from the diary she kept during the course of her healing journey, some of it alone, most of it accompanied by her therapist, Inie, to chronicle the process of stripping away to the core and subsequent rebuilding which happened. This form makes for immediacy and emotional intensity, and a real sense for the reader of accompanying her.

The role of her therapy - weekly three-hour marathons where she spontaneously regressed and re-experienced the traumas of her backwoods childhood - is absolutely central. Kathy's courage in facing the pain, confusion and humiliation of her early life in this very direct way is quite remarkable. The book evokes that force in human beings which seeks the light; a very real sense of the powerful energy in Kathy which moves her relentlessly towards healing, and demands that she move through the fear and resistance which occur in the unravelling.

The "kid" inside her is a tangible presence in the book; she demands to be heard and held, first by the therapist, and by Kathy. I found it a very vivid portrayal of the state of the inner child and found the therapist's relationship with her inspiring. I am full of respect for this woman, who often found herself "breaking the rules" and having to simply trust the process. There is a very strong sense of the relationship between the two women and the kinds of issues which came up between them and how they were dealt with are the stuff of good therapy.

At the end of the book, after Kathy's story, there is an afterword by Inie, the therapist, who describes some of her own process in the journey. She reveals her compassion and honesty admitting how often she herself felt terrified and dreaded the impending session. Through it all her touchstone, for herself and

her client, is to "trust the process". She discloses some of what she sees as her mistakes, which is both useful and heartening.

The book raised some interesting questions for me as a therapist; how willing and able am I to relate so directly to my clients' experience and not defend myself from its uncomfortable reality, by taking up a position, however subtly, as "healer" or "therapist"; how honestly can I be present for someone's inner child, offering an authenticity which challenges me not to simply act into the counter-transference? Kathy Evert's insistence on her therapist not taking notes or recording the sessions, because she did not want to be viewed as a "case" to be kept in a file, also poses a valid question about record keeping and to what extent our records influence how we perceive our clients, and therefore how we relate to them. The very labels, "client", and "therapist", can set up a dynamic which does not serve the interests or wholeness of either party.

It seems as though sexual abuse in childhood has finally reached the public forum, and the scale of it is horrifying; what is being increasingly revealed at present is that what is perhaps the final incestuous taboo - abuse by the mother, is more common than we care to believe. It is no longer fitting for us to assume that it is uncles, fathers, grandfathers and brothers who sexually abuse young children. This book is part of lifting that taboo and allowing something the mind and heart can hardly bear to contemplate, to be acknowledged and shared. It is not a comfortable book, but it is one that is full of hope; it is a useful addition to the bookshelf of anyone dealing with the issues around abuse, whether in their own experience, or on "the other side", accompanying clients or friends (there is a lot about the role of her supportive friendships) on their healing journeys.

Angela Willow
Totnes

The Unmanifest Self - Transcending the Limits of Ordinary Consciousness, Ligia Dantes, Asian Publishing, 1990. £8.95

This book aims to create deep understanding of the need for total change in humanity. It does not aim to transform anyone. The process of transformation is in nature itself, in the universe, in the energy that is eternal.

The Unmanifest Self is an unusual book in that, unlike most New Age literature, it offers more questions than answers about the nature of transformation. In fact, Ligia Dantes regards her work as an antithesis to the present glut of teachings on transformation and enlightenment, most of which, she argues, merely replaces one kind of conditioning with another.

Instead she challenges us to see beyond the limited ways in which the mind usually operates by inviting her readers to engage in a process of self-enquiry, gently posing a series of open ended questions for contemplation and continually reminding us to trust our own experience.

Like Krishnamurti and others, Ligia Dantes describes transformation as "a process of deep change in the functioning of the organism's structure. It is a psycho-physiological revolution, analogous to the change of the chrysalis into the butterfly." The challenge is to become

"deeply, totally aware; aware with your whole being of this need for change at the root of your functioning as humanity ... to experience yourselves as humanity rather than simply as individuals."

Although Dantes makes it clear that her book is not intended as yet another source of information and techniques, she suggests that "objective self-observation" is required if we are to see the truth about ourselves. This involves living without reference to our accumulated experiences and images of the past, discovering ourselves in the very act of living itself.

"The importance of objective observation - without belief, judgement, or evaluation, without an authority telling us how to do it - cannot be overemphasised. We have fallen into various traps of conditioning and we need to awaken and see these traps, NOT to better ourselves or to be superior to any other person, but to contribute to humanity as a whole".

Having trained in both Freudian and Jungian psychotherapy, Ligia Dantes brings a refreshing approach to spirituality which this book successfully conveys. The chapters on 'Hidden Pathways of Emotion' and 'Fear: From Memory to Observation' are particularly helpful. A second book is currently being prepared and she has been invited to lead a short retreat in England during Spring 1993.

Paul Swann