REVIEWS

John Heron developed Co-counselling in Britain as a variation of Re-evaluation Counselling, was a founder of the Institute for the Development of Human Potential (IDHP) and started the Human Potential Research Group (HPRG) at the University of Surrey. He has been a focal point for experiential learning and anti-professionalisation. He now lives in Tuscany. Denis Postle of the IDHP wrote this extended review of the book in which John Heron presents his personal view of psychology.

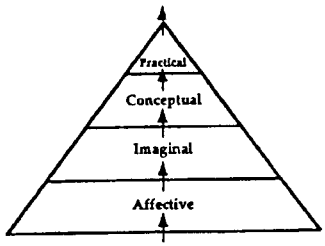
Feeling and Personhood: Psychology in Another Key

John Heron's new book

Feeling and Personhood is one of the fruits of a tradition of experiential learning in the UK in which John Heron has been a centre of energy and influence. It's a work of symphonic richness. An orchestral score of a book in which theme and counter-theme contrast and cohere. Not surprisingly it makes a lot more sense if, like me, you have heard the music, had experience of the tradition in action. For that reason, if no other, the exercises at the end of each chapter are an essential ingredient of the book.

Ten years ago I recall chiding John Heron with not having written a book about the tradition he was building. I now see that my request was premature. *Feeling and Personhood* is a detailed account of the psychology that has been off-stage in Heron's papers and books on facilitation, working with clients, co-counselling and educational policy. It also mounts a critique of such apparently diverse matters as Ken Wilbur's Atman Project Jung's four functions and Kolb's learning cycle, to name only three. It argues cogently that each of them is flawed.

The basis for all this is a long and detailed account of what it means to become a person. Heron offers several maps of this process, distinguishing at length between 'affective', 'imaginal', 'conceptual' and 'practical' modes of the psyche. These are held within a powerfully coherent up-hierarchy metaphor (see diagram below) in which each of the modes nourishes and shapes the mode above it.



A large part of the book is devoted to the presentation and elaboration of this scheme. There are chapters on each of the modes and the polarities which Heron sees within each of them between individuating and participatory, roughly personal and collective. What I felt to be a dense elaboration of this in a chapter on the psyche and its worlds, leads eventually to a very useful outline of different kinds of knowledge corresponding to the affective, imaginal, conceptual and practical modes of the psyche.

There is a brief section on the metaphysical beliefs on which the theory of the person is based. This includes sections subtitled 'Is there anyone there? ' and 'Blight from the East' and it leads to a chapter in which some familiar features of the psychological landscape are demolished.

Throughout the book Heron constantly, and for me successfully, holds the tension between the process of becoming a person and the transpersonal context in which this is embedded. He insists on an emphasis on the One (Universe) within which the Many (beings) resonate and through whom are manifest all growth and development. He shows how, in the light of this deep holding of distinction — within unity, monopolar spirituality of any kind is oppressive. Not least because having an Absolute Priority, whether herein or hereafter, denies the value of love between beings. As though, for human beings consisting of around 80% water, the experience of wetness was fundamentally out of reach to all but a few of us.

In the light of Heron's critique of monopolar spirituality, Ken Wilbur's Atman project becomes Ken Wilbur's Atman projection,

> ". . . a misbegotten enterprise, a deluded distraction from absolue' Spirit, a pursuit of a false infinity, a self-defeating cosmocentric inflation, and the cost to be paid is in terms of thousands of other substitute selves who believe it, being seduced into further distraction precisely at the very moment they imagine they are being shown a way of liberation. This is deep treason indeed."

Jung's four functions are shelved as inadequate, consigned to the archives, useful in their time but now superseded.

> ". . . Jung has confused the field for too long. He never really got down to a radical, phenomenology of psychological functioning, to a bedrock view of the different modes of the psyche's being."

Kolb's learning cycle is shown to be natrower and more restricted than at first sight it may have seemed.

> "Whereas Jung contaminates his basic four functions of feeling, intuition, thinking and sensation by imposing arbitrarily narrow limits on their definitions, Kolb takes his four modes of feeling, perceiving, thinking and behaving as basic, does not define them or augment them . . . he has then to tack other modes such as intuition and imagination, in an unsatisfactory way,

on to this structure tō makes up for its limitations."

This critique is a small, later, part of the book but I mention it at length because for readers who have had doubts about the formidable schemes we have inherited from Jung or who, like me, have been hypnotised by the sheer erudition of Ken Wilbur, Heron provides a better basis for navigation.

Meeting what there is to offer in the book requires study. After the main dish at the banquet, the up-hierarchy metaphor for modes of the psyche, subsequent courses include cycles of learning and living and spirals of decline and emergence.

One of the best bits of the book for me is the section where Heron develops the up-hierarchy metaphor into a map of the ego which he sees as a state of personhood prior to becoming a person. For Heron ego embodies a restricted cycle in which the emotion of the moment drives imagery (projection), that supports labelling, that drives action.

Heron shows that this is the tip of the personhood iceberg. Becoming a person rather than only such an ego requires awareness of the remainder of the iceberg that is out of sight beneath the surface. This means integrating what Heron calls the participative aspects of the psyche. Along side personal emotion there is participative feeling, through which we resonate and empathise with each other and the environment: alongside projective imagination there is intuition, through which we perceive wholes, alongside discrimination there is reflection, through which alternatives are weighed; and alongside action there is intention through which we set and pursue goals.

According to Heron the ego-bound person over-functions in the individual aspects of the psyche, emotion, imagery, discrimination and action and under-functions in the participative aspects of feeling, intuition, reflection and intention. Because the last four are mostly out of reach for egoic personalities, integrating them is hugely transforming.

So what's my assessment of the book? Words that come to mind rae 'treasury, essential, daunting, technical'. I would have welcomed a more accessible writing style, for example, more written down speech where this would not have undermined precision. I also would have liked more boxes or appendices to aid in navigation between the mainstream arguments and the tributaries. Here and there, through flourishes of a peacock's tail of linguistic colour, the book moves into what Heron has himself called 'seductive over-teach'. At these points the amount of elaboration not infrequently overwhelmed this reader's capacity to hold the line that was being pursued. And there are abrupt jumps into later material as in the 'worlds' diagram on page 19 that act like obstacles in the way of the mind's journey through the material.

I found a tremendous tension in *Feeling and Personhood* between the highly conceptual text, correctly preoccupied with precision and coherence and the very accessible oral, experiential tradition from which it comes. Heron resolves this through supplying dozens of practical

exercises which the reader can use to check out what is being asserted. While some readers may find the philosophical tone of the book resistible, part of the book's value, not least for the humanistic psychology tradition, is that it both seeks and delivers precision of definition and process. The flight from conceptual matters into emotional expression which often seems to be a feature of some aspects of humanistic psychology seems to me long overdue for redress. *Feeling and Personhood* provides both a cogent account of how and why this would happen and a map of the whole territory.

Reading a large part of the book in Vienna, a city which has seen the reduction of its Jewish population from 200,000 to 7,000, made me realise that I would have liked to see more on the downside of participative feeling, as in fascism, racism and other such isms. As it stands the text leaves me with the sense that feeling as resonance and attunement are a vehicle only for enlightenment. However, the attention Heron gives to distinguishing between feeling and emotion has provided me with an insight from which there can be no retreat.

Like many people within the humanistic psychology tradition I am primarily a practitioner. My preoccupations include deep concern at the practitioner registration activities of the UK psychotherapy trade association. I am concerned at the number of people I come across who are drifting towards what seems to be an ungrounded spirituality — who believe it's feasible and desirable to live wholly in the Light. I am alternately pleased and anxious at the progressive absorption of central humanistic psychology strategies and practices into the mainstream of social life and yet also aware that the deeper primal work is still taboo even for many practitioners. I feel the weight from time to time of the scandal of psychiatry. Above all I seek to drag the work of personal and professional development out from under the shadow of medicine and to show that education is a good enough and comprehensive enough way of structuring it. If you resonate with any of these concerns, I believe you'll find, as I did, that *Feeling and Personhood* is an excellent and very stimulating resource.

Getting Closer Sex, Love and Common Sense

John Button Optima, 1992 0 356 20566 5 £5.99

Even my well-theraped, enlightened friends still fall for the old myth — somewhere there is someone who can love them and make it all right, and if *only* they could find this person then the sun would shine every day, and they would never feel pain again. Our primitive needs and society's brain-washing combine to keep the myth going. So it can be very hard to take a step back and ask ourselves (and our friends and lovers) 'What do we both *really* want in this relationship? What can we *really* give each other? What do we *really* feel about things?'

John Button's excellent new book, *Getting Closer*, helps us to do just that — to get away from all the assumptions and ready-made truths and to think things through from first principles. He explores how, as we grow up, we learn to limit ourselves according to sexual

and romantic stereotypes, and are confused by inadequate and hypocritical sex and relationship education. He then explains that in fact we can choose, and that what many of us want may be different from the coupledom and monogamy we have learnt is the only way.

The secret of successful relating is honesty — with oneself and one's partner(s) — clarity, and negotiation. I should know: John and I have been lovers now for over two years, and for one year have lived nine doors away from each other. A perfect distance for both of us, except when he forgets the fish for supper and has to go back through the rain for it. But even the most comfortable relationships have their drawbacks.

Fran Mosley, Nov 1992

The Art of Joyful Living

Pierre Roche de Coppane and Jacques Pezé (translated from the French by Kenneth Holmes) Element Books, 160pp £7.99

This is a book about 'alternance'. This is a French word which those concerned prefer to the word 'alternation'. Alternance is a principle which the authors say is both simple and obvious. It includes inhale/exhale (breath), systole/diastole (heart), contract/dilate (eye), day/night, and so forth. It is the principle of rhythm, and we ignore it at our peril. Many of our hangups and problems are due to sticking too long with one side, and not letting the alternate take over when appropriate.

The authors even say that we do this when reading books — plodding on in a linear sequence, instead of flowing back end forth, alternating between different ways of reading the book — and they encourage us to read their book in this other way. "Above all, bear in mind that this book has not been written primarily to give you knowledge, but to give you movement."

They talk about time management, and how important the principle of alternance is to get full value from the time available. They say that fullness/emptiness is the basic alternance for good health, and that many people never allow a real emptiness to take place. As well as minor alternances, there can be major alternances, which change our whole lives. If we stick too strongly to our existing way of life, we may miss this chance when it comes along. We can strengthen our ability to alternate by practice. We can say to ourselves, for example, "I'm not going to let just any old thing take place in my life from now on." They talk about plants and animals, and how the principle of alternance applies to them too, if they are going to thrive.

They say that alternance is easier and less threatening than change — we can always go back to the other pole. We are talking about rhythms, not sudden breaks. There is a lot in this book, and the authors cover many different areas of life. A stimulating book, which has a lot to offer the reader who is interested in personal growth.

John Rowan, March 1992