

***Co-dependence: Misunderstood — Mistreated****Anne Wilson Schaeff**Harper San Francisco, 1992, £6.50, 208pp*

What is co-dependence? According to Anne Wilson Schaeff it is a disease in its own right, one which is inherent in our cultural system and one which the majority of us suffer (though unaware of it). Counsellors and therapists are particularly prone to it but we increasingly perpetuate it through our ignorance of its symptoms.

The discovery of this 'disease' arose through Anne Wilson Schaeff's work with the family and friends of alcoholics and drug misusers. It became clear that it was a disease in its own right, unrelated to the influence of the chemically dependent relative and probably latent from a much earlier period, thus it merited its own specific treatment.

Anne Wilson Schaeff places the disease firmly within the attitudes, values and beliefs, current in contemporary society. It is engendered through family, school and church. Its characteristics are: a focus on rational, linear thought as opposed to feelings; 'external referencing', ie, people who lack a sense of self and who gain their identity by pleasing others, or through what Anne Wilson Schaeff calls 'cling-clung' relationships; perfectionism inculcated in families where children are never 'good enough', or in schools where exams and tests thrive on those who fail (take note Mr Patten); self-centredness, attributing

whatever happens to significant others as emanating from you; controlling, when much in the world is beyond control; and dishonesty, concerning your true feelings and values.

Anne Wilson Schaeff believes that treatment lies in the practice of 'living process therapy' and through following the 12 steps of the Alcoholics Anon/Narcotics Anon treatment programme. Counsellors and therapists need to recognise that they themselves are often co-dependents in their own personal relationships and through those with their clients. They should acknowledge the disease as both generic and specific to the individual thus enabling the client to explore his/her deep processes.

I find this book convincing in its identification of a phenomenon — co-dependence — which I had not previously recognised as an entity (I was amazed to find a whole section on it in a well-known bookshop!). I liked its indictment of the dangers of early-socialising as performed by family church and school and the comparison it drew between the sufferings of co-dependents and of women (see the *Women's Reality* review on the next page). It is simple and easily digestible though I favour its function in heightening awareness rather than its methods of counteracting the syndrome.

*Val Simanowitz*

## ***Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society***

Anne Wilson Schaeff

Harper San Francisco, 1992, £6.99, 208pp

In 1981 after 12 years as a therapist, Anne Schaeff recognised that her training ill-equipped her to work with women. She realised that the founding fathers of psychoanalysis and their followers had a deficiency model of women based on their deeply ingrained beliefs in male superiority. Whereas Freud attributed women's sense of envy to the lack of a penis, Erik Erikson felt that the solution to the deep 'cavern' of emptiness experienced by many females was to fill the cavern (womb/vagina) with a penis and babies. However, women themselves contend that the source of this 'vacant' feeling lies in the fact that their sense of identity is only established in relation to males. During their life cycle they move from being their fathers' daughters, to husbands' wives and sons' mothers.

Anne Schaeff decided to build up her own picture of 'women's reality' based on direct evidence from women clients and groups. She draws on no previous theories, but as a result of her own research advocates a particular approach to therapeutic work with women. Like Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, Anne Schaeff perceives woman as the 'other' living in the 'foreign white male culture' integral to it, and defined by it but not of it. The white male system is the way the world is, but that is not reality. It believes it is

the only system and is founded on a scientific method and belief system which makes it possible to control the world. Anne Schaeff compares it to pollution which permeates our atmosphere; women unwittingly absorb and internalise it, making it part of their identity.

Women's reaction to this hidden smog lies in the common ailment 'low self-esteem'. It never ceases to amaze her (and me) how often even overtly confident women express 'there is something wrong with me', '. . . whatever I do is never good enough.'

As we are polluted by what deceptively appears as pure fresh air, we become unable to trust our own perceptions and readily take on male-assigned characteristics '. . . crazy, sick, stupid, ugly, etc.' Only by attaching ourselves to a male can we absolve ourselves of 'the original sin of being female'. We develop our antibodies — coping strategies such as being good, fair, keeping the rules and understanding 'our' men.

We learn to lie, either to play out our assigned women's roles or play the Thatcher game of being more male than men. Often we do not like other women, neither do we seek female support. We allow men to activate and reinforce such negative views of ourselves often through the use of physical strength or emotional

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abuse; those of us who do protest are labelled 'aggressive', 'castrating' or 'humourless'.

After Anne Schaefer has diagnosed the above and other ailments which women suffer through living in the white male system, she suggests some ways of working which could lead to healing. She considers that any woman's therapist must understand what it is to be female. She must validate her client's experience of her own reality and allow her the safety and freedom to blame or be a victim (roles usually criticised in therapy). Such expression will pave the way for her to pour out any deep-seated rage; if she can do this and realise that the world does

not disintegrate into chaos she can move on (often with other women's support) to take charge of her life. Anne Schaefer stresses that our present system is destructive to both men and women; it forces us into a static system of hierarchy and exploitation thus limiting our potential for growth.

Many of the points raised in this book gave me a sense of *déjà vu*. As one of the surviving 'feminists' of the seventies, I welcome the fact that the issues we raised so avidly then are re-emerging and that possibly without the label 'feminist' they will be accorded the significance they deserve.

Val Simanowitz

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### **Sharpham Miscellany: Essays in Spirituality and Ecology**

*The Sharpham Trust, Sharpham House, Ashprington, Totnes, Devon TQ9 7UT. Available from booksellers or from Sharpham Trust price £7+75p postage.*

As its title suggests this is a gathering of talks from the regular meetings and occasional colloquia occurring at Sharpham House in Devon. Though the recurring theme is Buddhism, it is by no means the only subject. There are talks on the I Ching, on Islam and Ecology, and those that do speak of Buddhist subjects often approach them in a comparative spirit. Indeed in an introduction on the philosophy of Sharpham, Maurice Ash likens environment to emptiness, and it is this spirit of connection that runs

through the collection. The intimacy of the setting is reflected in some of the most interesting essays which are also the most personal; Stephen Batchelor muses on an agnostic approach to reincarnation, and Shenpen Hookham and James Low speak of personal experience in relation to Buddhist practice. Sadly the book's editor, John Snelling, who contributed an interesting account of Buddhism in Russia, and the watercolour of Sharpham House reproduced on the cover, died shortly before the book went to press. He

has left us a most enjoyable and informative volume to read, return to from time

to time, and leave lying around for others to find and enjoy in their turn.

*Gay Watson*

## **Countering Objections to Anti-sexist Work**

*Janie Whyld*

*Whyld Publishing Co-op, 1992, £6.90, 26 sheets*

Are you a feminist whose spirit is flagging and whose creative energy is rock bottom? Does your political commitment require that you respond to objections to anti-sexist work even in your present tired state? Here is a pack which has been written to help you.

It comes in a set of coloured cards offering guidance on eleven interrelated themes, based on the following common objections:

- equal opportunities are unfair to men and boys
- the issue of sexism is too overwhelming and impossible to solve
- most women enjoy and benefit from sexism and do not want change
- equal opportunities means that women are in control instead of men
- sexism is natural and unchangeable
- the role of language is negligible in oppression
- sexism is trivial

The pack suggests 'three-liner' retorts which appeal to the intellect of the offender but can only be repeated with confidence if the knowledge (underpinning the ideas presented in the cards) is already in place. The retort deflects the offender's anger and grounds the response

in counter-examples.

It places the objection in the wider context of sexism as seen by the white feminist. One does get the feeling that 'women' equals 'white women'. There is one quote from Buddhist scriptures and reference to 'negroid ethnic group' in relation to natural differences. In fact some of the content does not apply to the majority of black women. The truth is that vast numbers of black women historically have had no choice but to take on responsibility of finances or their children would starve. If the pack is suggesting that the negation of that experience is sexist it does not make that explicit.

The pack tries to address long-term training for attitude change but does not make a clear enough distinction between that and the quick snappy 'on the spot responses'. Sometimes I felt it read like the former; other times like it was addressing the latter. Although two of the cards attempt to explain the objective and give a background to the cards I can't but feel anyone new to feminist ideas need much more before the cards can be used effectively.

*Ezra Blondel*

## ***Equal Opportunities in Group Work and Training***

*Janie Whyld*

*Whyld Publishing Co-op, 1992, £6.00, 30 sheets*

This pack is designed as a training module addressing the issues of provision, design, evaluation and delivery. It comes with a sample Training Plan, case studies and overhead transparencies. It is well suited to support competence-based assessment programmes such as DLB and RSA Certificate in Counselling Skills and Learning Support as each section ends with a list of examples of evidence which could be used to prove competence.

The pack is aimed at people who 'are involved in one area of equal opportunities and forget the implications of providing equal opportunities for groups which are not their speciality'. It suggests a list of groups which are considered to suffer discrimination in some way and offers a summary of some of the ways in which that discrimination operates and its effect

What is lacking, and to my mind essential, is the basis of inequality. Anyone

who is serious about equal opportunities but 'forgets' the implications for any disadvantaged group needs to be reminded of the roots of inequality and divisive strategies that are employed to main inequalities.

The many unexplained abbreviations may have the effect of 'excluding' and call into question the writer's equal opportunities practice.

The layout and structuring of the work leaves a lot to be desired. The four issues (Provision, Design, Delivery, Evaluation) are distinct, but the issues within them are less clear. The writing sways between discussion and tips for trainers. The case studies at the end could have been used more effectively to illustrate points made earlier instead of adding new issues. The reader is not always given a rationale for choosing the case studies but is asked to follow.

*Ezra Blondel*

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## ***With the Tongues of Men and Angels***

*Arthur Hastings*

*Holt, Rinehart Winston, 1991, 232pp*

This book is subtitled 'A study of channeling', and that is exactly what it is. Since there is already an excellent book on channeling, by Jon Klimo, the only

question at issue is — how does it compare with that?

The answer is that it is quite complementary, and that anyone interested in

this subject should buy both. The present volume has a good chapter on inner voices, which will be of interest to anyone bothered by this phenomenon, and a good discussion of subpersonalities.

The book is also helpful to anyone concerned with prophecy and God-given guidance or dictation. Many of the ques-

tions raised by fundamentalism are touched on in a useful way in this book.

Like all the others who have studied this field, the author comes to the conclusion that channeled information has to be treated with great discrimination, and not swallowed whole. A good book.

*John Rowan*

## ***Human Motivation***

*Bernard Weiner*

*Sage, 3rd edition 1992, £29.95, 393pp*

This is one of those curious American books which purports to deal with human beings while ignoring large chunks of their being. Weiner talks quite promisingly about machine metaphors and godlike metaphors of the person, but his idea of godlike is so limited as to be more like a different kind of machine. Rationality seems to be the nearest he gets to god. So expectancy-value theory,

which has swept the board in consumer research because of its down-to-earth accuracy, is godlike to Weiner. So is attributional theory and all theories of emotion. There is no mention of Maslow. The only question remaining is, would this book be good for passing exams? Here the answer is also no. The discussion of aggression is particularly weak.

*John Rowan*

## ***Developing through Relationships***

*Alan Fogel*

*Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993, £13.95, 230pp*

This is a very sophisticated and up-to-date book. At first it looks as if it is going to take the line that there is no such thing as the self. Everything that we experience happens at the contact boundary where organism meets environment, and in dialogical exchanges with other people. Lee McLeod has been arguing

much the same recently, in a discussion of Gestalt therapy.

But really what Fogel is talking about is a relational perspective, in which everything goes on between people in a particular context. Development is essentially a question of co-regulation: 'Co-regulation occurs whenever indi-

viduals' joint actions blend together to achieve a unique and mutually created set of social actions. Co-regulation arises as part of a continuous process of communication, not as the result of an exchange of messages borne by discrete communication signals. Co-regulation is recognised by its spontaneity and creativity and is thus the fundamental source of developmental change.' (p.6)

So what does Fogel say about internal communication? What about the question of subpersonalities, different centres within the person? He has some interesting things to say about this:

'These [imaginative] dialogues are with one part of the self and another part of the self: the self imagined at different times, in different places, or taking different narrative perspectives. In thinking, in other words, one is always telling or showing something to oneself. We do this because the inherently social nature of our experience leads us to create multiple

mental perspectives that are the parties to a mental discussion.' (p.132) This is very original stuff. It turns out that the author is not really saying, as it appears at first, that there is no such thing as the self. Rather is he trying to say something about the origins of the self, and about how the self is constructed. His most succinct summing up of all this is when he says: 'The self is the individual's participatory and imaginative cognition of co-regulated relationships.' (p.146)

The author has done a good deal of research on mother-baby interactions, and has much to say about this, correcting the views of Mahler and Stern. I found this very stimulating stuff, and well worth taking seriously.

This seems to me an important book, which is well worth wrestling with, and it is very much in tune with recent thinking in philosophy. It is well-written and readable, and has many interesting illustrations. Recommended.

*John Rowan*

## ***Innovations in Rational-Emotive Therapy***

*Windy Dryden and Larry K. Hill (eds)*  
*Sage, 1993, £15.50, 297pp*

This is a good book for those who are already wedded to the cognitive approach in some form, but it is as irritating as hell to a humanistic practitioner like me. The major annoyance is the first chapter, by Albert Ellis, where he says things like: 'RET has always been one

of the humanistic-existential psychotherapies.' (In support of this assertion he gives eleven references to authoritative sources, all of them written by himself).

It is also a self psychology, a constructivist therapy — in fact, you name it, RET either is it or does better than it.

Actually, of course, RET is one of a large (and getting larger) group of therapies which fall into the cognitive-behavioural camp. In terms of current sections within the UK Council for Psychotherapy, it would probably fit best into the Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy Section, though perhaps it might be better accepted into the Experiential Constructivist Psychotherapy Section, together with Personal Construct Therapy and NLP.

The rest of the book is a series of chap-

ters on applying RET to special groups of one kind and another: adult children of alcoholics; gamblers; chronic pain sufferers; traumatic stress disorder sufferers; performing artists; divorcees; disruptive mentally retarded people; people who have experienced sudden infant death syndrome; people with a fear of flying; addicts (no twelve-step programs here); and management consultancy (an inconclusive intervention).

I wouldn't like this approach applied to me.

*John Rowan*

## ***Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus***

*John Gray*

*Thorsons, 1993, £7.99, 286pp*

**T**his is a book for men to understand women, and women to understand men. It takes the bold stance that men and women come from different planets, which have completely different languages and customs. The problem is that they think they speak the same language, and should have the same customs.

This radical standpoint, by emphasising and even exaggerating the differences, enables us to take problem relationships as the norm, and good relationships as very unusual and hard to achieve. This book uses the language of myth to good effect. For example, on Mars if someone has a problem, they go into their separate cave and place a dragon at the entrance. No one is allowed in until the problem is solved. Then the dragon is

dismissed, and the person comes out with the problem dealt with. That is the Martian way. But on Venus things are different. On Venus, if someone has a problem, they talk to people about it, so as to get the problem seen from as many different angles as possible. In that process the problem gets transformed — sometimes solved, but sometimes seen differently and not needing a solution. This is fine, so long as the Martians stay on Mars and the Venusians on Venus. But when Martians and Venusians get together, the Martians try to get the Venusians to solve problems their way, and the Venusians try to get the Martians to solve problems their way. Trouble results. Frustration results. Arguments result, which may go on for a long time.



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The book goes on like this, with many other insights which seem to me very deep and very telling. It has a phrase book for translating Martian phrases into their Venusian counterparts, and vice versa. It has lists of things which Martians should never say to Venusians, and which Venusians should never say to Martians. It has many wise things to say about blaming. It has unexpected things to say about the different ways in which Martians and Venusians count up the points in the relationships, to check whether they are winning or losing.

It has to be said that this book is not political in any way. This means that it is unawaresly patriarchal in many of its

assumptions. But just as people criticised Juliet Mitchell for the same thing in her book on Freud — her answer was to say that Freud is accurate even if not politically correct — so here the point is that the society we live in is accurately dissected, even though the findings may be uncomfortable.

If you want to improve your relationship with someone of the opposite sex, I think you will get a lot of help from this book. So many things which we think are peculiar to our own troubles turn out to be absolutely par for the course, and quite treatable because of that, if we have the will.

*John Rowan*