The Handbook of Psychotherapy

Petruska Clarkson and Michael Pokorny (eds)
Routledge, 1994, £16.99 pb, £45 hb, 541pp.

The Handbook for Psychotherapy does what Routledge's previous *Handbook of Counselling* (1989) did for counselling. It demarcates the territory, proclaims its diversity, and celebrates the now increasing points of convergence between the different approaches that comprise psychotherapy in the UK. Unlike the excellent OU handbooks which are designed to point up the differences between diverse therapeutic approaches, the organisation of the current volume focuses on the diversity of settings and modalities in which and through which psychotherapy is practised today.

The book is divided into five sections. The first indicates the nature, range and different types of therapeutic relationship (Clarkson) and also, for once, early on includes an excellent chapter on how practitioners can do their own process and outcome research. Section two focuses on issues of culture in psychotherapy: gender, race, sexual orientation. Section three focuses on the 'modalities' of psychotherapy, namely individual, marital, group, child and family psychotherapy; part four focuses on the settings, from organisational through to individual private practice; and section five on contemporary issues including power, sexual abuse, the 'forbidden zone' in therapy, PTSD, forensic and bereavement work.

The contributions come from a wide variety of backgrounds — cognitive, analytic and humanistic — with the general emphasis on points in common that make for good practice. The readership aimed for is somewhere between the intelligent lay reader and the practitioner and, in view of this spread, a glossary of technical terms might be a useful inclusion in future editions, although Clarkson's introductory chapters do cover a lot of the basic history and terminology in a clear and informative way.

I was particularly moved by Judith Hassan's vivid account of her work, originally through the Jewish Welfare Board, with Holocaust survivors. Her humility, willingness to learn from her 'client group' and corresponding willingness to surrender a 'knowing' position have implications, I feel, beyond this particular 'setting' and issue. I also enjoyed the more theoretically based challenge of Louise Embleton Tudor and Keith Tudor's radical account of power, authority and influence in psychotherapy, and Bentovim and Tranter's exceptional clinical contribution on working with survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

The volume contains two appendices on the structure and workings of UKCP and this perhaps accounts for the semi-official designation in the title. The editors make it clear in their preface however that the volume is not intended to be fully definitive or representative of psychotherapy as it is practised today but more 'a

sampling of the wide diversity of the voices in the field'. This goal the handbook achieves exceptionally well and many trainers, practitioners and people in, or considering, training will find it a useful and generous resource. Hopefully one or two sceptics will read it too and like, be challenged by, re-evaluate what they see.

David Kalisch

The Achilles Syndrome: Overcoming the Secret Fear of Failure

Petruska Clarkson
Element Books, 1994, £8.99 pb, 180pp.

This is an excellent self-help guide for the general reader on issues concerning competency and pseudo-competency in various areas of modern life. 'Pseudo-competency' Clarkson describes thus: 'In each case there is a fundamental discrepancy between people's own sense of their competence or worth and the perception of others of this competency. There is a sense in which they fear that they are always covering up some secret but fatal flaw . . .' (pp 4 and 5). The ancient myth of Achilles is used by Clarkson both tellingly to name the syndrome and to highlight and deepen each chapter of her lucid exploration of the many facets of this syndrome, particularly as it plays out within a culture and organisational system that rewards bluffing and 'getting away with it' and discourages coming clean and admitting 'I don't know how to do this'.

Clarkson traces the roots of pseudo-competency to pressures in childhood which structure a pride-in-achievement/fear-and-shame-of-failure mentality which the wider adult culture supports and reinforces. However her concern is less with 'why' than with how to recognise and heal the wounded place. Through a series of well-chosen thumbnail cases and clusters of self-help exercises and experiments at the end of each chapter, Clarkson carefully plots a route to self-diagnosis and recovery that is amiably free of psychological jargon, nit-picking and contentiousness.

Based on workshops that she ran originally in the 1970s, Clarkson takes us on a tour of Achilles in childhood, in education, as parent, lover, artist and healer that is both well-rounded and engagingly compassionate. I particularly valued her input on learning cycles and would recommend the book not only to people who self-identify with the syndrome but anyone involved in teaching and caring work where issues of competency — false and real — arise.

David Kalisch

The Discursive Mind

Rom Harre and Grant Gillett
Sage Publications, 1994, £10.95, 180pp.

This is a book about a new paradigm for psychology; I picked it up with eager anticipation. It opens with an excellent review of developments within the discipline of psychology, summarising succinctly their philosophical roots, and giving a compelling case for the need of a 'second cognitive revolution'.

The authors, appreciative of Wittgenstein, maintain that the most fruitful way to reach an understanding of human nature is the careful scrutiny of how people use language in living situations. Such activities are the ground on which a mind is built and the millieu in which it operates. With no awkward mental entity to bother about, nor inaccessible mental events to confound investigation, the study of discourses presents sound observable material that is not limited to the purely objective. Meanings are both socially constructed and highly personal. Although relying on conventions and 'rule-following', they are also flexible and amenable to creative adaption. Here we have a socially based subjectivity.

Selfhood (a subject which, as the authors point out, has mostly been ignored by psychologists) is defined in an interesting way. Each human individual stands at a unique intersection point of human discourses and relationships. Located thus, the psychological subject is continually moved to make sense of things — to construct meanings — and this activity informs his or her behaviour. Action is seen as intentional and the individual as a self-defining agent within the constraints and opportunities afforded by their particular culture. The more richly adaptive these cognitive constellations are, the more mature a person could be said to be and the greater their experience of freedom.

I was delighted that the shortcomings of a causal approach to psychology were so eloquently argued. The authors are adamant that psychological properties (thoughts, feelings, beliefs) are not straightforwardly causal and, although language is socially acquired, our personal applications of meanings are not socially determined. Agency and choice are affirmed with an unusual freshness of exposition. However, I was left with the overriding impression that we are primarily an intellectual species — little attention is given to the physicality of the psychological subject or the energetic movement of emotions.

'It is a main thesis of discursive psychology that episodes in which psychological phenomena are brought into being by the use of non-linguistic signs should be analysed as if they were through and through linguistic.' (p.99)

But what troubled me most was the commitment to devise an exploration of our humanness that would do away with any mystery. Spirituality was never ad-

dressed, although it features in discourses all over the world. An informative tapestry was woven with great erudition on the interpersonal (or 'horizontal') level of experience but the 'vertical' was left untouched. Given their assumption that psychology should be treated as a science, the authors go as far as they can to include the complexity of human experience, and this is to be welcomed. What I personally welcome even more is that they reveal how necessary it is to let go of that assumption. Until we do so we shall not be able to recognize ourselves in any account, however ingenious, and a truly new paradigm will elude us.

Jill Hall

Living Illusions

Michael Jacobs
SPCK, 1993, £9.99, 201pp.

Michael Jacobs brings his formidable scholarship and learning to bear on juxtaposing and bridging psychology and spirituality.

This book is a radically revised edition of his first attempt published under the title *Towards the Fullness of Christ* which is now out of print.

He writes: 'My argument is that the different forms which beliefs take, the various ways they are expressed and the psychological attitudes that accompany them, have similarities across different patterns of belief and in the different people who believe them.'

Using various formulas, in particular that of James Fowler with whom he compares and contrasts models by Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg and Tillich, he clearly maps stages of belief and development in a fair and open-minded way providing many helpful parallels and contrasts; at the same time leaving the reader room to differ and evaluate. He provides a guide through the maze of study and thought in psychology and religious belief.

The book rewards further reading and rereading though I suggest it could be made even more readable with fewer parentheses, sometimes seven on a page, and less reference to what is or is not contained in each chapter.

In a book such as this I immediately turn to the index to see if my favourite authors are included in the writer's point of view.

I would have liked to have found references to Abraham Maslow and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and the primacy of love. Love is arguably the most dynamic force in the evolution of growth. In spiritual and psychological development it is crucial. Supposing as babies we actually have a memory, a blueprint of this love to which we so obviously respond, would this not provide a more accurate perspective from which to gage development?

Bronwen Astor

Paradoxes of Gender

Judith Lorber
Yale University Press, 1994, £20 hb, 424pp.

This is a big book written by a researcher in the field, who shows extensive scholarship in the area. It is also a vigorous book, pulling no punches. She makes her position clear from the start: 'Gender is wholly constructed, symbolically loaded and ideologically enforced.' She describes her political outlook as: 'feminist deconstructionism'.

She starts off by undermining all the usual conventional assumptions about gender, and quotes a bewildering array of different physiological and psychological factors which can vary right across the board. There are all sorts of intermediate genders. And: 'There is no core or bedrock human nature below these endlessly looping processes of the social production of sex and gender, self and other, identity and psyche . . . For humans, the social is the natural.' (p.36)

There are some very good remarks along the way, such as 'Clothing hides the sex but displays the gender'.

This paves the way for a very strong statement of the ways in which gender is enforced. There is no such thing (we have now learned in the first few chapters) as a fixed and simple boundary of gender, and yet these boundaries are made firm and fixed by our culture, patriarchal as it is. The patriarchy finds it very convenient to have just two sexes, so two sexes it is, whether it makes sense or not.

In part two we get a very full account of all the ways in which this works out in practice: in the family, in the workplace, in leisure activities, everywhere. There is a particularly full discussion of domestic work. Virtually all the statistics given here are American, which is a pity, because it will enable some of us to evade the issues by saying that maybe it is different over here. But I do not believe that the patterns are much different at all. The figures on gender segregation at work are quite extraordinary: 'An analysis of 645 occupational categories in 290 work organizations in California found that over three-fourths of the women (or men) would have to be reclassified to degender the occupational categories, and that 96 percent of the 10,525 different job titles were gender segregated. Only 8 percent of the 50,838 workers shared job titles with a member of the opposite gender.' (p.195)

There is a good discussion of the way in which women have come into various occupations, but instead of that meaning that they get the same goodies that men got in those occupations, it means that the occupations change in the direction of being less valued and less rewarded. Someone summed this up in the memorable phrase — 'Women get a ticket to ride after the gravy train has left the station'.

Part three is all about the struggle to change these distortions and unfairnesses, and the ways in which change is resisted by those who run the system at present.

Men can undercut women at work in a variety of ways: condescending chivalry, supportive discouragement, friendly harassment, subjective objectification, radiant devaluation, liberated sexism, benevolent exploitation, considerate domination or collegial exclusion. (p.237) These status productions, as Lorber says, are all part of doing gender. In doing gender, men are doing dominance and women are doing deference.

And she makes the point that the well-known double burden of work inside the home and in the work force remains a significant barrier to women's political activism.

The time needed to serve in organizations, go to meetings, learn political skills, cultivate mentors and sponsors, and do the infighting and campaigning necessary to advance a political career would constitute a third job. (p.256) So women are also handicapped in their struggle to change the system.

In the last chapter the author suggests some possible lines of change which could be considered. Some of these I think are quite unlikely to be adopted, and a few seem absurd, but on the whole it is a brave attempt to say something definite.

This is a book which needs to be on the shelf of everyone who is seriously interested in the position of women in today's society: it is a real achievement.

John Rowan

Treating Survivors of Satanist Abuse

Valerie Sinason (ed)
Routledge, 1994, £14.99 pb, 320pp.

This is well-produced and readable book, edited by an experienced psychotherapist, and published by a reputable house. It deals for the most part with one particular problem: what does a psychotherapist do when faced with a client who claims to have been abused by members of a satanist cult? There are various definitions of ritual abuse in this book, the best one of which seems to me the one put out by Finkelhor and his associates in 1988: 'Abuse that occurs in a context linked to some symbols or group activity that have a religious, magical, or supernatural connotation, and where the invocation of these symbols or activities, repeated over time, is used to frighten and intimidate the children.' (p.294)

What seems clear from this book is that such symbols can also frighten and intimidate therapists. The stories told by these clients, whether as children or as adults, can very easily get through to the therapist, who may find him- or herself having dreams or nightmares about the subject, being unable to switch off at the end of a session, getting seriously worried about the factual status of the allegations, experiencing headaches, indigestion and nausea and much else. There is conscious

revulsion and unconscious countertransference, both.

As one goes through the book, reading short chapter after short chapter by highly reputable and seasoned contributors, the impression grows that here is something hard to deal with indeed, no matter what one's original position on the matter. One looks for additional support, additional supervision from someone who has been through this thing themselves. And here comes a problem. Who do you call in? Do you call in a Picture 1 person, or a Picture 2 person? Let me explain. It strikes me that there are two versions of the picture about satanist abuse. 'Look here upon this picture and upon this.'

1. The first picture is of a rather patchy and unsystematic occurrence of separated and diverse events, mostly to do with rather eccentric and unusual people with sadistic tendencies and a certain family structure. All the checked and attested cases seem to belong to this group. I am thinking particularly of the data given by Tim Tate at the end of Chapter 23 of the book, and of the research findings of Professor Fontaine published by the HMSO this year. It seems very clear from the latter that ritual abuse is quite a diverse affair, as can be seen very well from the chart on page 22, which shows that ritual elements such as killing babies, drinking blood, eating faeces, mentioning the devil, using robes, putting crosses upside down and so forth are each used in only a small proportion of the cases. In other words, there is no general pattern.

2. The second picture is of a highly organised system of ritual, where satanism and witchcraft are mixed up and conflated, and where lines of command are quite well laid out. This is the picture laid out in Chapter 19 by Joan Coleman. I have to say that it seems to me a highly-coloured picture of a very dubious story. For one thing, satanism and witchcraft are two quite different things. Satanism is a Christian heresy, totally counterdependent on Christianity for its identity. Witchcraft is a pre-Christian Goddess religion, revived in the 1950s by Gerald Gardner and Doreen Valiente, and added to since then by people such as Alex Sanders in England and the Farrars in Ireland. A good book on it is *Drawing Down the Moon* by Margot Adler.

The question I am asking is — when you call in an expert, someone who knows about these things and may be able to help you when faced with a ritually abused client, are you going to get someone who sees Picture 1, or are you going to get someone who believes in Picture 2? If the former, well and good; but if the latter, all the problems are going to be compounded. The Picture 2 expert will insist, for example, that the abused client cut off all communication with his or her family. (See Chapter 19 of this book.) The psychological problems, bad as they are, may escalate into full-scale paranoia.

A question which arises then, and which is nowhere dealt with in this book, is this: If some of the stories are true, and others are paranoid fantasies, how do we tell which are which? This is important because of the difference in the psycho-

logical pressure on the therapist. If the therapist benignly entertains a fantasy and operates conscientiously and properly to work through it, the pressure on the therapist is within the normal limits, even though the details may be nauseating. But if the therapist believes that the story is true, and that there is indeed a huge network of powerful people working in a hidden and dangerous way, possibly to attack and undermine the therapy itself, that is well outside the normal limits. The client is convinced it is all real, and insists that the therapist does too.

So we have to think about the nature of reality. And one obvious thing is that that which seems real is not necessarily real in any consensual way. The positive visions of great leaders in the past seemed so real to them that they were inspired for the rest of their lives. Yet the visions were invisible, the voices inaudible, to anyone else. Why could not negative visions, negative voices, negative impressions, be just as real-seeming, just as influential, without being real in the sense of having actually happened? Most of us have had the experience of a dream which seemed very real, sometimes more real than most of the things which happen in the daytime. Some of us have had drug experiences which had an extraordinary and vivid reality at the time. But feeling real and being real are not the same thing. There is a good discussion of some of these points in Chapter 32, but not the crucial issue of whether Picture 1 or Picture 2 is the correct one.

A question which arises at this point is this: If Picture 2 is indeed a paranoid fantasy, where does it come from? Those who believe in its truth have no problem with this question — it comes from the actual experience of the survivors, and if we disbelieve it we are saying that the survivors are lying or deluded. But those who disbelieve it have somehow to explain how it could happen. A recent book by Jeffrey Victor called *Satanic Panic* (Open Court, 1993) suggests that it is to do with a collective guilt about the breakdown of family structures (which also accounts for the strength of the reaction to the Bulger case), about stressed lives where we have to put children into day care, about our inability to guide our children's choice of friends and entertainment (exemplified also in the current panic about computer porn), and even that we feel ambivalent about the children we most love, because they increase the burden of our stress. All this is made worse by the rapid and apparently permanent decline in the availability of jobs which can support a family.

Another possibility which occurs to me is that some of this material may actually be about the third Basic Perinatal Matrix described by Stanislav Grof. He has often referred to the prevalence of violent and sexual imagery connected with this stage of birth, where the baby is moving through the birth canal, what has been referred to as 'the longest five-inch journey in the world'. In his latest book *The Holotropic Mind* he says: 'The struggle in the birth canal involves extreme pain, an encounter with blood and bodily excre-

tions, along with excitement and sexual arousal. It can bring the child close to death, but holds also the promise of liberation and transcendence. All these elements are intimately interwoven with the imagery of 'serving the Dark God'. The connection between such practices and the perinatal level of the unconscious should be taken into consideration in any serious study of satanic cult abuse, a phenomenon which seems to be attracting the increasing attention of professionals as well as of the general public. Another important experience in the same category is the temptation by evil forces, a motif that can be found in the spiritual literature of many religions of the world.' (p.65) In other words, we have within us some incredible nastiness, and if this is projected on to the outside world we get paranoia. The nastiness is out there, in the satanic cults, with all their enormous influence and power.

There is another possibility, too, which should be considered as part of the story. In a few cases the impression of having been satanically abused may be a misunderstood spiritual awakening. It might sometimes come under the heading of a spiritual emergency, much as it has been suggested that UFO abductions could sometimes be seen as misunderstood spiritual awakenings. Keith Thompson points out that those who believe they have been abducted by aliens and taken up into flying saucers have been exposed to levels and dimensions of reality that are ordinarily hidden to human perception; they have often been profoundly transformed by their experiences. Through losing connection with their society they are in a state of liminality, betwixt and between. They cannot return to the culturally shared illusion of reality, which has been shattered by their experience, and have not succeeded in creating a new, more encompassing one. A therapist who took this kind of view of ritual abuse would treat the person as particularly privileged (though subject to temptations of ego inflation) by having their conventional assumptions broken, and now therefore in a position to recreate reality without illusion. This would be an initiatory journey in which the therapist could play a guiding role. I am not saying that this would apply in many cases, but it ought not to be ignored.

So what are we to make of this book in the end. I think 'proceed with caution' is the best rubric in general, but we owe Valerie Sinason and her fellow contributors an enormous debt for putting all this material in front of us for the first time in such a convincing and professional way. As she and others point out, this field is not a popular one, and people who get into it are often regarded with suspicion by other professionals with whom they have to interact.

Just one tiny cavil. Virtually all the psychotherapists in this book are Freudians, and they often make a point of stressing their psychodynamic credentials. It would have been nice to have had some humanistic practitioners mentioned or invited to contribute.

John Rowan

Social Innovations: A Compendium

Nicholas Albery, Matthew Mezey and Pewter Ratcliffe (eds)
Institute for Social Inventions, 1993, £9.85 pb, 180pp.

This gives us the latest ideas and award-winning schemes from the Institute for Social Inventions. There are eleven winners of the Social Inventions Awards 1993, eleven items on education and children, eight ideas for improving relationships, two ideas on housing and two on taxation, five ideas on unemployment, seven on economics and business, six on welfare and public services, five on crime, ten on health and therapy, sixteen on the environment and ecology, six on technology and energy, six on transport and travel, thirteen on communication, five on art and leisure, ten on the international and developing world, nine on politics (except that one of these is entitled '554 ideas for Northern Ireland'), two on spirituality and cults, one on old age, fourteen on death and dying, four on promoting social inventions, and seventeen letters.

These ideas come from a variety of sources, selected by the magpie-like editors: I even found something of mine included, which was surprising. Excellent for anyone who thinks that there are no good ideas around.

John Rowan

Personality and Psychopathology: Feminist Reappraisals

Laura S Brown and Mary Ballou (eds)
The Guilford Press, 1992, 272pp.

Rather a misleading title, because the main thrust of the book is to say that psychopathology is not just about personality, but about living conditions and political realities.

Each of the main schools of psychotherapy is critiqued for its shortcomings from a feminist standpoint. The critique of humanistic psychotherapy struck me as particularly thin and inadequate. It only deals with Maslow, Rogers and Perls, and completely ignores more recent contributors such as Stan Grof, Al Mahrer and the more recent gestalt writers, who have laid so much stress on external factors. Even in the case of Rogers it ignores his large-scale organisational and political work, and the way in which the person-centred school has followed this up.

They do not mention the feminist deconstructionism of people like Judith Lorber, which is much more compatible with the humanistic approach of people like Mahrer. Neither do they mention the

work of Jocelyn Chaplin, which again offers a feminist way of using some of the humanistic insights as well as the transpersonal. It is interesting, by the way, that the word 'transpersonal' does not even come into the index.

Nor do they do justice to the way in which humanistic psychotherapy stresses the question of responsibility. If you take responsibility for your own experience, you can change it: if not, not. We cannot control what we do not own. This book says that the old slogan 'the personal is political' must now be supplemented by the new slogan 'the political is personal'. In both cases the important word, so far as I can see, is 'is'. This is an identity, not a mutual influence. When we are working with the personal, we are also working, perforce, with all the internalised political realities which have gone into making the person who and what she is. To say this is to challenge the subject-object dichotomy which so bedevils theory in this area.

There are chapters on object relations and self psychology (25 pages as against the humanistic 11 pages, and much better), Jung (a good discussion drawing heavily on the work of Demaris Wehr, but ignoring the more positive approach of Barbara Stevens Sullivan) and cognitive-behavioural therapy (quite critical, but offering hope).

Then we get a chapter giving us a whistle-stop tour of ethnicity, race, class and gender, emphasising diversity and social constructionism.

In Part 2 we get chapters on depression (victimisation appears to be a critical determinant of depression in women), schizophrenia (a full and fair discussion of all the many issues here), agoraphobia (including a good discussion of panic attacks), personality disorders (making some important points about abuse and oppression) and the effects of trauma (the longest chapter, with material on many aspects of trauma, but no mention of the trauma of birth).

There is a lot of good material in this book, but it does very often rush over issues rather quickly. Some of the omissions are quite curious, and the feminism in the book is not quite consistent. Suitable for the serious student, rather than the casual reader.

John Rowan