## REVIEWS

## *A Guide to Humanistic Psychology*

*John Rowan, AHP*
*Ring 0171-431 7113 (AHP) or 0181-983 1492 (AHPP) to place your order.*

For only £3.95 this new edition of *A Guide to Humanistic Psychology* comprehensively answers one of the most perplexing questions to be asked by a prospective client: What exactly do you mean by humanistic psychology? A short volume, it is well-structured and complete, a boon to our cognitive processes and a pleasure to absorb.

This should surprise no-one who is familiar with John Rowan's books. John is a reader's writer. He satisfies your need to know more, to feel that every source has been considered, to feel that your most searching questions have been anticipated and resolved. He does this in a very natural way, free of academic pretension though demonstrating a very academic completeness. He is open about his own opinions, respecting your right to assess them in the light of your own experience.

This latest edition of his guide is a masterly example of his skill, characterised by the confidence and conciseness that can only be displayed by those to whom a subject is very familiar.

In 24 short sections John covers the theory and practice of humanistic psy-

chology and psychotherapy. This includes sixteen different approaches such as person-centred, gestalt, drama approaches, body work, the transpersonal and so on. Each section summarises and evaluates the approach and provides an annotated booklist for further reading. These booklists alone could save you massive amounts of time and money.

I have just one minor complaint. Book-held information comes in many densities and many guises. The information here is of a very high density but its guise, while adequate, is uninspiring. The AHP(B) and AHPP, the joint publishers, must look to enhance their presentation values with future publications. Oh, and for those of you who bought the first edition I am assured that this is a very substantial enhancement and well worth the replacement price.

*Christopher J. Coulson*

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## *The Blue Room*

*Inger Agger*
*Zed Books, 1994, £32.95 hb £12.95 pb, 138pp.*

Inger Agger, a clinical psychologist, interviewed forty refugee women from the Middle East and Latin America for a research project. All the women had been exiled after experiencing persecution and torture in their own countries, and had sought asylum in Denmark. This book is their testimony, an account of their fight against oppression, their experience of torture, abuse and isolation.

Ms Aggar defines their resistance to oppression as an attempt to move the boundaries set by their social and political cultures. The book follows the women through the symbolic 'rooms' of their experience in 'the women's house of exile'. Starting in the Daughter's Room of adolescence, where girls first disturb their society's boundary by maturing sexually, to the Father's Room, in which the young woman is both human being and property. Then to the Cell, where the state takes over as oppressor, torturing and abusing. Eventually, through the healing process of imparting their experience in the various 'rooms' as testimony, they emerge onto the Veranda, a place of transition into the everyday world. By allowing the women to speak directly to us, via transcripts of their testimony, Ms Aggar makes us forcefully aware of some painful truths. The abused feel shame; survivors feel guilt; the escape from oppression is not the end of the nightmare.

There is plenty here to interest the clinician as well as the general reader. The text is well indexed, and the women's stories are balanced by a clear presentation of ethical, psychological and political issues. The structure, taking us through the series of 'rooms', provides a boundary around the rawness and fragmentation we are required to witness.

*Juliet Lamont*

## The Mystery of Goodness

*Mary Nicholas*
*Norton, 1994, £25, 226pp.*

Mary Nicholas challenges the whole notion of value-free psychotherapy — not just that it is not possible but that it is not desirable. The idea that moral issues and judgements should be put to one side, in the name of professionalism, seriously distorts the therapeutic endeavour.

Moral concerns are part of life and integration of personality is hardly aided by treating them as forbidden areas of discourse. 'For the therapist to demur from discussing the oughts and shoulds of genuine moral concerns is insulting to, and frustrating for, the patient'. (p 11) Dialogue on such issues should be a natural part of any psychological exploration.

The author stresses that of course the therapist's personal morality must never be imposed on a client, any more than any other personal judgement, but she is struck by how extraordinary it is that therapists should feel it an unpardonable 'sin' if they share a moral opinion or define a situation in ethical terms. This is the legacy of the scientific tradition in psychotherapy which has placed such weight on the artefact of the neutrality.

Far from shying away from such matters Mary Nicholas believes that therapists should dare to reframe psychological difficulties within an ethical context, asking outright questions such as 'Do you think that you were being fair to her when you did so and so?' Incidences are cited of breakthroughs in treatment when this moral dimension was brought into focus, not in an accusatory way, but respectful of the potential goodness lying within each of us. She considers group therapy especially rich in the opportunities it affords to enhance moral sensitivity and thus the quality of life for the individuals concerned as well as that of the larger community. In her view therapy has a moral function and is in part a moral education.

I welcome Mary Nicholas's debunking of neutrality; also her insistence on openly naming and daring to explore moral concerns in therapy. Attention needs to be drawn to the folly of banning a dimension of human life which plays such a central role in any notion of self as well as our interaction with others. It is salutary that it should seem so bold — a measure of the stranglehold still exerted by the power we give to the scientific and medical traditions which we, in our culture, revere above all other approaches. I felt the book got bogged down somewhat when describing cognitive theories of morality. I became distracted by the flaws and limitations of the theories when really they weren't important to the thrust of her offering. I also found the automatic causal explanation of every psychological disorder (traced, without exception, to parental behaviour) irritating — although I am aware this would not bother many people.

What stood out for me was the distinc-

tion made between guilt and shame. Guilt is related to a specific act whereas shame envelops the whole personality. It is crucial, therefore, that the therapist who challenges a client in the intensely vulnerable area of personal morality do so without evoking her shame. This requires great skill and grace. Shame not only paralyses us but is morally counter-productive. The more shame we feel the worse we tend to behave.

In a sense this books deals with the shameful in our profession — making moral judgements. That is perhaps because we see such activity, in our hierarchical framework, as loaded with the dangerous weight of our superior authority. Only with humility can moral matters be fruitfully explored together, but it is time we gave ourselves and each other permission to think and speak in moral terms at relevant points in the course of a therapeutic journey.

*Jill Hall*

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## *NVQs and the Assessment of Interpersonal Skills*

*Janie Whyld*
*Whyld Publishing, 1993, 103pp.*

Janie Whyld is a trainer and NVQ verifier with a knowledge of counselling skills. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are a Government initiative aimed at giving people the opportunity to gain qualifications by demonstrating their competence on the job. Interpersonal Skills are required to be demonstrated to a certain standard in all NVQs. In higher NVQ levels (3-5) many of these skills are similar to counselling skills, but 'they are applied in non-counselling situations, i.e. where the intended outcome is something other than helping people with their own problems'. (p.34)

This means that trainers of people in counselling skills would be interested in this manual as well as 'anybody who is interested and concerned about the development and implementation of NVQs — trainers delivering candidate induction, assessors, internal and external verifiers, staff of awarding bodies and the NCVQ, members of lead bodies, consultants developing standards and candidates'. I would add, people who may have to make a presentation on NVQs, as this manual provides an excellent critique of the present state of the art of NVQs. Of course NVQs are being revised rapidly and so this edition will become redundant. Since the NVQ in counselling is to be published in 1995, anyone interested in how to get this NVQ may benefit from reading the book — however, I suggest some supplementary NVQ experience would make it even more useful.

One of the difficulties Janie Whyld addresses is how difficult it is to assess interpersonal skills as they are about process not products. In the manual she offers some creative and practical ideas. She

gives examples from various occupational areas. Readers may be particularly interested in the occupation of 'Development Trainer'. (p.62) There are also jargon sheets and exercises for the collection of evidence which would help anyone embarking on an NVQ. The layout is clear and there are 7 sections: 1-3 deal with NVQs, accreditation and evidence; 4 deals with G NVQs, used in schools; 5 looks at interpersonal skills in over a dozen occupational roles; 6 offers help with candidate induction; 7 (the conclusion) is upbeat while explaining the weaknesses and strengths of the NVQ system.

I liked 7.3: 'pleasingly . . . most of the standard place a heavy emphasis on what are considered to be progressive issues around environmental considerations and antidiscriminatory practices'.

She gives a thoughtful appraisal of the resistance to NVQs, some of which may be to do with wounding to high-status roles. For example, it may take more skill to teach people and children with special learning difficulties than highly intelligent university students. Janie Whyld writes 'I would suggest that most university professors would have much more difficulty meeting the standards relating to competence in facilitating the learning of others than most child care assistants'. (p.100) Nevertheless the skills do have to be filled out with 'underpinning knowledge'.

This book could be alternatively titled *Using Counselling Skills Training to Help People get NVQs.*

*Margaret Davis*

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## *Using Counselling Skills to Help People Learn*

*Janie Whyld*
*Whyld Publishing, 1993 (second edition), 76pp.*

This booklet was originally a handbook for course tutors on the RSA Certificate 'Counselling Skills in the Development of Learning'. At the end there is a handout of the assessment criteria. The manual encourages teachers and trainers to use a facilitative approach to teaching rather than the traditional didactic method. In the introduction, Janie Whyld explains that in the last twenty years there has been a shift to Rogerian ideas. As Carl Rogers wrote in his book *Client-Centred Therapy* in 1965, 'If the creation of an atmosphere of acceptance, understanding and respect is the most effective basis for the learning which is called therapy, then might it not be the basis for the learning which is called education'. (quoted on p.23)

The idea is to draw out people's skills and knowledge rather than filling them with information. The relationship between teacher and learner is based on personal equality rather than a powerful expert with a dependent student. Curriculum-led teaching has changed to student-centred learning. The learner has the ultimate responsibility for what learn-

ing is chosen, as does the client in counselling. However, the manual offers a model of psycho-education rather than psycho-therapy. For example, it focuses on blocks to learning rather than on any interpersonal problems which may be behind them. I think a section on how a teacher might refer a student to professional counselling when the blocks are severe would have been useful, and perhaps more on professional support for the trainer.

It contains material for formal input and student reading, exercises for classwork, suggestions for assignments for assessed course work and ways of producing performance evidence for NVQs. She also addresses the issues of control, dealing with disruption and some ethical issues, as well as the facilitative teacher's techniques of talking and questioning. Finally there is a chapter on feedback and assessment (how to do it effectively) and a useful list of resources.

I enjoyed the section on learning theories and blocks to learning because it covered so many models, including neuro-linguistic programming and, new to me, David Kolb's theory developed in the 1970s. At Leeds University this was combined with Jung's personality styles to produce the author's favourite model. Pages 31-34 are devoted to worksheets and handouts using it. Two models which underline Janie Whyld's approach are transactional analysis and assertiveness training. The manual does not deal with counselling skills development but does give a chapter on 'Examples of Counselling Skills used to Help People Learn'. I was pleased by the sentence 'tutors would most probably concentrate on the development of skills and self-awareness before they go on to the application of skills to help people learn'. (p.5) She points out that she uses the ordinary words trainer and teacher in different examples but means 'facilitator of learning' in both cases.

Janie Whyld uses a model which includes building a relationship so the student feels confident, encouraging people to take control of their own learning by assessing themselves, knowing how and when to ask for information and deciding what steps to follow. The three stages she classifies as Relationship Building (by being respectful, understanding and genuine), Exploring and Clarifying (using microskills such as summarising, open-ended questions, confronting, and so on) and Action Planning. This is somewhat similar to the Egan model but omits any reference to the unconscious. Stage 3 is largely a cognitive approach. This process would be required to gain an NVQ.

The section on equal opportunities interested me. The author points out that since course tutors and participants generally do not act in a fascist or sexist manner, there's an assumption that these issues do not need attention. Yet 'there are still great inequalities of achievement in present school leavers, between boys and girls and (between) those from different class and ethnic backgrounds'. From my own experience as a trainer I have found sessions focused on topics such as disabil-

ity, race, gender and sexual orientation very revealing and thought-provoking. We are not always as liberal as we aspire to be.

I believe this manual would be useful to all teachers and trainers whose philosophy is based on a client-centred approach and who also have some cognitive counselling skills. People who have experience of using counselling skills would find this helpful as a trainer's manual. Other people may need to take a counselling skills course to fully appreciate the booklet. It would certainly help trainers of the RSA certificate.

*Margaret Davis*

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## *The Reluctant Adult: An Exploration of Choice*

*Jill Hall*
*Prism Press, 1993, £9.95 pb, 250pp.*

This important book's central idea, 'the victimhood archetype', engages directly with fundamental philosophical questions around free will and determinism — issues which are surely central to the psychotherapeutic enterprise, but which have been unduly neglected. Jill Hall addresses these issues in a compelling and challenging way that by far transcends the simplistic approach that humanistic thinking sometimes adopts in its approach to the issue of personal responsibility. She challenges the very notion of causal thinking, arguing that the cause-and-effect approach to explaining (psychic) reality inevitably leads to a deterministic conception of the person, with its associated characteristics of blaming and victimhood.

A full *experiential* engagement with the dynamics of victimhood is, I believe, crucial in fully understanding the import and implications of Hall's ideas. From the Kleinian standpoint, perhaps we all spend much of our lives desperately trying to avoid the previously unbearable experience of ourselves as helpless victims of a persecutory, potentially annihilating environment — the behavioural correlate of which deeply unconscious imprint is that of blaming (m)other rather than taking responsibility for our own experience. In order to transcend the blaming syndrome, the capacity to tolerate psychic pain, and to derigidify our defences against it, become crucial in the process of personal integration. It is surely only in experiencing fully our own victimhood that we can begin to transcend it, and take the first hesitant steps towards true choice and full personal responsibility. This is perhaps the central implication of Hall's book — and it is a deeply uncomfortable one for all of us.

To challenge, as she does, the prevailing wounded-child orthodoxy will no doubt be unpalatable to many — and for this reason alone this is a courageous book. In the corpus of psychotherapeutic ideas, there seems to be a profound and

scarcely recognised confusion around the whole question of free will versus determinism (which parallels a wider cultural confusion); and Hall sheds new light not only upon this crucial lacuna, but also upon questions concerning personal identity, the boundary between self and other(s), the place of *spirit* in human beingness, the development of human consciousness . . . and, ultimately, the evolutionary status of the human species.

In any adequate account of the human predicament, the ideas set out in this book must surely take up a central position. However, a fully articulated and credible understanding of human choice, and our deeply imprinted propensity to emphasise our lack of it, must surely take some account of abuse and its effects on the (de)formation of the human will — and must therefore struggle with the complexity of a reality in which we are perhaps both in some sense determined and also free to choose our own futures. Yet this book simply had to be written; and the exploration of the problem of personal responsibility and choice within the field of psychotherapy can only really begin in earnest now that these views have been articulated.

Soberingly, it could well be that engagement with the victimhood archetype may be the only hope for our future healthy evolution as a species.

*Richard House*

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## *The Political Psyche*

*Andrew Samuels*
*Routledge, 1993, £45.00 hb £14.99 pb, 380pp*

This is a brilliant book. Every so often there comes along a book which sheds a whole new light on a subject, and this is one of them. It is original, insightful and surprisingly readable.

His first chapter is about the resacralisation of politics. Now resacralisation is an unusual word, which to the best of my knowledge and belief was first used by Maslow. It means to make sacred that which used to be sacred but which had been secularised and made ordinary. Samuels says that there is a whole movement towards the resacralisation of the culture, coming from the Green movement, from feminism, from creation theology, from some of the New Age thinking, from the new physics, the biology of morphic resonance and so forth.

But he points to a fatal error in much of this work. He says that 'resacralisers cannot stay pure, above, or outside the economic world. Disgust cannot be transcended to order; there is no shadow-free politics.' This is important. Samuels is too sophisticated to be taken in by the promise of instant success offered by some of these strands of thought.

In the next chapter he has much to say about subjectivity, how it has been down-

graded in most of our discourse. But in psychotherapy it is respected and taken seriously and disciplined. And now he says that in politics, too, our subjectivity must be reframed and re-evaluated. Our feelings, our sensations, our wild fantasy even, must be taken seriously, disciplined, and used constructively to inform and inspire our politics. He has a very full discussion of the possible dangers of this.

One of the dangers of therapy, of course, is that it may divert the feelings which could be used to change the world into a private examination of private troubles and private solutions. Samuels has a spirited answer to this in his third chapter:

I do not agree that therapy inevitably siphons off rage that might more constructively be deployed in relation to social injustices. In fact, I think that it is the reverse that often happens: experiences in therapy act to fine down generalised rage into a more specific format, hence rendering emotion more accessible for social action. (p .51)

These themes are then taken up into a spirited discussion of Machiavelli and the Trickster. (I read in the paper the other day that John Major was reading Machiavelli!) Chapter 4 covers this ground in a sparkling way. All the lessons thus learned are applied, in the next chapter, to environmentalism.

Part 2 of the book is about the political person. In Chapter 6 there is a good discussion of gender confusion and gender certainty, in which Samuels again casts some fresh beams of light. He does not like the Lacanian — or the Jungian — certainty about gender, which he thinks reinforces the status quo. He says that nurturance is a male capacity — just as aggression is available to women — and does not require anything 'feminine' for its coming into being.

The next chapter again shows how conventional thinking can lead us astray when we think about men, fathers, what is male and so forth. He castigates the simplified thinking which says that male aggression is due to male hormones, and therefore inevitable. He says: 'Gerda Siann found that the evidence does not show any clear and unambiguous relationship between male hormones and the propensity to display violent behaviour or feel aggressive emotion. Siann points out that environmental and social variables have a good deal to do with the secretion of male hormones and also emphasises evidence that discovered a role for female hormones in violent behaviour and aggressive emotion.' (p.156)

This is an important point, and reinforces the necessity of keeping an open mind. It is just this which is lacking in what Samuels calls the 'dry' father — the father who is formally committed to just one way of seeing the world and imposing that on the rest of the family. There is no passion in the 'dry' father, no aggression in any emotional sense. In such a family there is aggression, but it does not go anywhere. It is stuck. And Samuels tackles the question of the cultural value of reserve, found in England. Is it this that cripples the father? Is the Italian way, of much touching, better? He says: 'My reply

has been that it is not a question of how many times a day a father touches his daughter but of what the message contained in the touching might be. It has often turned out that I need not have replied at all because women in the audience have stated emphatically that (a) being touched frequently by a 'Latin' father is a sign of ownership not emancipation, (b) such touching does not make them feel erotically or socially viable but rather dependent, and (c) that the contradiction with their sexual oppression is what we should be focusing on. (p.164)

The attitude to men which comes across in this book is a critical one, not going along with the Robert Bly view that the basic male is quite unquestionable. Nor does Samuels go along with the view that men necessarily need male mentors to initiate them. He says: 'Do we have to view mentoring so literally? If I look at my own experience, the main mentor I've had has been feminism. I do not only mean females as such. I do not only mean specific theories, books or narratives. The phenomenon of feminism has operated in a mentoring way on me. I am sure I cannot be the only man in that position. I suggest that we need to deliteralise the notion of the mentor.' (p.192)

Similarly he says that one of the goals of the men's movement as exemplified by Bly, and I would add many in the recovery movement, too, is to try to make men feel good about being men. He says that he himself feels ambivalent about being a man. Perhaps feeling good is too simple.

In Part 3 the author goes on to examine the therapist. He did a survey of 600 psychotherapists in seven countries, including Freudians, Jungians and humanistic people. He asked them many questions about politics, including what political issues come up in the course of therapy. Number one on the list was gender issues, which on such a scale is interesting. The questionnaire asked how therapists responded to such material: did they deal with it on a symbolic and intrapsychic level, treating it as fantasy referring to the inner world; did they deal with it by exploring its meaning for the client, without any concern for its external reality; or did they explore it with the client as reality and real concern about the external world? There was much overlap, with a number of therapists adopting more than one of these approaches, but the overall figure for those who did deal with the issues raised as reality was 71%. The overall figure for those who did not deal with reality at all was 22%. These are quite surprising and exciting figures, which could not have been predicted. Therapists of the most rigid theoretical positions are far more political, far more open to discuss reality, than anyone might have supposed. There is of course much more in this chapter, about training and so on.

Chapter 11 has an interesting discussion of object relations theory and its relation to politics. Unfortunately he misses out here any discussion of the work of David Wasdell, which is very much in this vein. I think the whole discussion would have been stronger if he had taken his work into account.

Chapters 12 and 13 are all about Jung and anti-semitism. This is the blackest view I have seen of Jung in this context, and it seems clear that Jung was an anti-semite, not only in the general cultural sense in which most of his contemporaries were racist, but in a quite personal and individual way. He also had much sympathy with Hitler's views about leaders and nationalism. These are hard findings, and Samuels is to be congratulated on not flinching from them, but instead drawing out from all this some very positive views about nationalism, and how it can be looked at from a depth-psychological viewpoint. This is a very solid piece of work.

I felt very much at home with all this, and it seems to me that the humanistic approach is a form of depth psychology in the sense in which Samuels talks about it in this book. There is much for people involved with the humanistic approach to take and use in this book.

*John Rowan*

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## *Multiple Mind: Healing the Split in Psyche and World*

*Gretchen Sliker*
*Shambhala, 1992, £9.99, 261pp.*

This is an interesting book on subpersonalities by someone with roots in both Jungian analysis and psychosynthesis. The heart of the book is a set of three case histories, in each of which the concept of subpersonalities helped a great deal to produce a positive outcome. Sliker is very clear about the differences between subpersonalities, the real self and the higher self, and uses the work of Ken Wilber to help in this. She calls the real self by the title Centre, and has an interesting account of five stages in the discovery of this: 'In the first stage, Centre may be completely unrecognized . . . The next stage . . . is, then, its recognition . . . The third step is the return of the war of the subpersonalities . . . the understanding and skills of Centre are as yet weak . . . In the next stage . . . a commitment to the practice of Centre returns . . . like relearning a forgotten skill, the practice is undertaken in many forms . . . The fifth and last step is the actual development of the skills of Centre.'

This is the best account I have seen yet of this development, and it is well done. Someone got at the author and said 'What about society?'. This leads to what I feel is a weak part of the book, where she tries to make out a case for saying that the United Nations is the Centre, in relation to the nations as subpersonalities. She has a long discussion of the crisis over the airliner which was shot down over Korea in 1983 to illustrate this. But in the area of psychotherapy the author is much stronger, and I liked her careful discussions of the differences between Jung and Assagioli, which I think put Assagioli much more in the very strong position which is his rightful due.

*John Rowan*