The Bystander (An End to Innocence in Human Relationships?)

Petruska Clarkson
Whurr, 1997, £15.00 pb, 170pp.

This book invites us to take responsibility. I'd like to think that everyone reading it would be inspired to do something about the world they live in and the relationships they are part of. That 'something' can be interpersonal, local, organisational, political, environmental, global or any other arena in which our relatedness is manifested. This perspective is predicated on the principle that we are in relation with our world. It is a philosophy that underpins various psychologies and which is confirmed by the findings of quantum physics that our very existence makes a difference.

When we are bystanders we deny that we are in relationship and that we have any responsibility or obligation to others. Clarkson quotes Rinzler: 'We feel and act as if we are in fact disconnected physically, spiritually, ecologically and morally from ourselves and from the universe. We behave as if we were each isolated and separate.' It's time, if not overdue, for us to pay serious attention to our individual and collective neglect of this dynamic.

In the commonly understood meaning of 'bystanding' we choose not to become involved in a situation where someone else is under threat, possibly of physical danger, possibly of unjust treatment. We have a host of reasons and justifications for our behaviour (and in any case some of our prime motivations may be out of awareness). Clarkson elaborates thirteen stereotypical bystanding patterns, for example: 'It's none of my business', 'My contribution won't make much difference' and 'I'm only following orders'.

One chapter looks at bystanding in counselling, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. 'An insistence on a spurious "neutrality", a lack of appreciation for the role of values, the development of professional and regulatory societies and the preoccupation with competency all seem to be driving practitioners further and further away from dealing with real people in the real world and more towards a self-absorbed, overly rigid, somewhat hypervigilant kind of defensive practice.' The notion of neutrality and the lack of explicit values in many people's practice of psychotherapy blind us to the fact that the well-being of individuals, society and the planet are interconnected. This may be a fact of life for those who have taken ecopsychology on board, but is outside the realm of many people's awareness, let alone action. The setting-up of the organisation Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility and the fast growth in its membership are heartening signs that many of us practitioners want to take our understanding of relatedness and apply it outside our consulting rooms.

Paradoxically, I have found it difficult to review a book on a subject I feel strongly

about; there is so much that I could draw attention to and inevitably I will have omitted here discussion of topics that others would find more interesting. I think it's an important book. One of its strengths for me is the dimension of the field in which Petruska Clarkson considers her theme. I applaud wide-ranging discussion when the subject is relatedness. We can benefit from the depth and breadth of the author's thinking and reading.

In reading the book I followed the route my interests took me. I started with the preface and then went to Chapter 9, as suggested for readers not already familiar with Clarkson's seven-level model of epistemology, experience and processing of meaning. Then I read the appendices (bystanding issues in the five kinds of therapeutic relationship, a summary of some of the main points of the book used specifically within organisations, and a summary of a protective behaviours manual developed in the USA). Next I went to Chapter 8, which is about bystanding in counselling and psychotherapy. After that, I read Chapters 1-7, which explore bystanding and its context, including the dramatic structure of human life, bystanding patterns, and 'From "Bystanding" to "Standing By"'.

Perhaps my circuitous passage through the book explains why I'm left with the impression almost of a collection of related but free-associated discussions rather than the strict development of a theme. I don't think it matters anyway, and in any case, maybe it's impossible to write in a linear fashion on a subject like this.

In the preface, Petruska Clarkson says that she hopes the book is a call to self-questioning. It was for me and I find it hard to imagine that it wouldn't stimulate thought and action in most readers of *Self & Society*.

Ruth Finer

Client Assessment

Stephen Palmer and Gladeana McMahon (eds)
Sage, 1997, £27.50 hb £11.95 pb, 208pp.

There are contributions from seven other counsellors as well as the editors in this useful collection of articles on various aspects of assessment. They include looking at various counselling practices in terms of the appropriateness to the particular client or group of in-depth psychotherapy, Rogerian, Gestalt, cognitive-behavioural and rational emotive therapy. Attention is given to the importance of initial assessment and its difficulties, especially in the areas of medical and psychiatric history, and to family and other relationships. It is also pointed out that many people are referred for counselling without any prior knowledge of what is involved, so it is important to set out how we work and what our goals are. In fact, goal-setting with the client's involvement is the main theme in many contributions.

Berni Curwen provides a very useful guide to the major categories of psychiatric disorder, looking for various symptoms of suicidal intent, or the history of previous attempts, symptoms commonly associated with drugs and psychological symptoms allied to physical illness.

'What does the client want and need?' is, as ever, a good place to begin, since consultation is not necessarily a mandate for therapy, and this is related to knowing what therapies can achieve, and their limitations. 'Not doing harm' is often forgotten, and the skill to refer to others when out of one's depth is rarely taught; an area unfortunately omitted from this book. Referral is often felt as a rejection and requires therapists to be very honest about their own limitations. It is important to be able to admit to inexperience in certain areas — family or group therapy, for instance. The use of questionnaires for assessment, for both therapist and client, is often suggested and may be of interest, but personally I feel questionnaires are very time-consuming and not always appropriate.

Each chapter ends with 'Practice Points' and these provide appropriate reminders for counsellors, summarising the points made, especially in terms of re-evaluating progress with the client at frequent intervals. Carole Sutton, for example, focuses on reviewing and evaluating therapeutic progress and her comments are amongst the most practical in this book. She points out that in the proliferation of models of counselling there appear to be a few key processes which underpin effectiveness. These are (I summarise):

- A relationship of warmth and trust, including understanding and respect for the person
- Support and acceptance, especially in facing painful events, past or present
- A release of tension or reduction in anxiety, so that problems can be admitted and faced
- Sharing skills and knowledge which enable the person to understand themselves better, improve relationships, and achieve their goals

I would add increased self-esteem, which is fundamental to most counselling and therapy.

Looking again at much of the detail in these articles on assessment, both initial and ongoing, I can see the advantage of practice in a centre where counsellors represent different disciplines, although of course most of us work eclectically and draw on many disciplines. I do wonder, however, how appropriate the 'six-session contract' is in terms of goals; this limitation is increasingly common where public funds are involved. It is often only at this stage that important underlying issues are revealed, for denial and avoidance, not to mention repression, operate strongly in therapy, and setting limited goals at an early stage may be to collude with defences.

Betty Gould

Personal and Professional Development for Counsellors.

Paul Wilkins
Sage, 1996, £25 hb £10.95 pb,184pp.

This is a helpful guide for newly qualified counsellors. It gives some comprehensive ideas and tips for further development, especially in terms of attending other short courses and supervision from someone of a different counselling discipline, and very clear explanation of the hurdles to be crossed before accreditation by BAC. Unfortunately there is only the briefest mention of Richard Mowbray's book *The Case against Psychotherapy Registration*, no reference to the Alternative Practitioners Network, and nowhere any talk of the problems around protection of clients from exploitive practitioners.

I do like Paul Wilkins' suggestions that several counsellors meet to share joint supervision and use 'co-counselling' on issues arising from stresses endemic in professional practice. In fact he is very strong on the need for personal growth and ongoing supervision, at least at regular intervals, on meditation, exercise and other interests as ways of taking care of oneself. A good general bibliography too, but often rather scant recommendations for reading in various disciplines. On the whole a useful book.

Betty Gould

Creative Visualisation: How to Tap your Hidden Potential

Ronald Shone
Thorsons, 1997, £6.99, 160pp.

What I particularly liked about this little guide to creative visualisation is Shone's explanation of how pain is experienced physiologically. He suggests visualising cutting through the nerves of the muscles with a pair of shears — much better than cold compresses, meditation, relaxation or any other mind-over-matter techniques.

There are also chapters on using imagery in business situations and as a memory aid; creative visualisation in sport and to overcome shyness; and realistic goal-directed visualisation complete with practical steps for achievement. There is some discussion of the Self, left and right brain hemispheres and the use of dreams in increasing creativity. But however practical all this advice may be, it lacks the inspiring visualisations of Shakti Gawain's *Creative Visualisation* or Mariechild's *Mother Wit*. Still, I do like the idea of taking some large shears to my back.

Betty Gould

Beyond Therapy: The Impact of Eastern Religions on Psychological Theory and Practice

Guy Claxton
Prism Press, 1996, £9.99 pb, 352pp.

There appears to be an ever-growing interest in Buddhism among psychologists and psychotherapists. Many of us have been meditating regularly for years and know how useful the practice is for maintaining sanity in a stressful world. But for many, spiritual traditions smack of orthodox and rigid religious practices. In this wise book various writers look at the contribution of eastern traditions as systems for understanding and promoting deep personal change. The relationship between meditation and therapy is explored, presenting a variety of positions, experiences and dilemmas. There are three papers examining crucial notions of 'Self' and how this concept may be changed by experiences of 'altered states of consciousness'; Fraser Watts describes the 'spiritual psychology' of Rudolph Steiner, while Martin Skinner looks at G.H. Mead's ideas on self and relates them to Zen. Others explore the psychology of Buddhist teachings and the Mahayana school.

The second half of this interesting collection of essays focuses on the application of Buddhism to mental health care and psychotherapy. Tibetan Buddhists have long regarded 'self-cherishing' as the 'devil with the head of an Owl'! Love and compassion and empathetic involvement with others are preferred, together with emphasis on calm, mindfulness and positive social attitudes. 'Watching how one makes oneself suffer' is a very useful practice for us all.

The practices described can be viewed as specific behavioural strategies from Buddhism which have relevance to current therapy and have existed for two thousand years. Guy Claxton investigates them with particular reference to their application in cognitive-behavioural therapy.

However it must not be supposed that meditation is always appropriate for distressed people, since on the path to spiritual growth our own mucky petty emotions and thoughts often produce periods of inner turmoil. Claxton points this out in his summing-up: 'The spiritual traditions offer an invitation to psychotherapists to see their training as experiential and continuous... [and] their value to clients in terms of qualities of *being*, rather than the skills and techniques of *doing* or the conceptual understanding of *knowing*.' I really like that, and also the cautionary note that such traditions may help to 'prevent us from polluting the rich harvest of insights with our own overenthusiasm and half-baked preconceptions'.

A stimulating book with good notes and references for further reading.

Betty Gould

Adult Bullying

Peter Randall
Routledge, 1997, £12.99, 163pp.

Peter Randall investigates adult bullying using a sociological approach to understanding the factors that create the various types of bullies and their targets, and the inevitable merger of the two.

Some of the case studies are terrifying. At times the relentless malevolent bullying of children by parents and peer group brought tears to my eyes. However, the book deals mainly with adult bullies, as the title indicates: the bully in the neighbourhood, the bully in the workplace, the bully in the community. They seem to be everywhere. Randall offers advice on how to manage, even stop bullies from causing mayhem and destruction, and how to help their victims realise the part they themselves play.

I particularly liked the chapter on 'Creation of the victim personality' which describes childhood experiences of victimisation and traces this into adulthood. Sexual harassment and female bullying are only briefly discussed. I would have appreciated a much wider horizon here with more research into gender and racial bullying.

The chapters seemed to be arranged in a nonsensical way and I can only surmise that they were written at different times and the author then decided to put them together for a book. Where are the editors of yesteryear? Still, social workers, counsellors, business people, managers, parents and others who have to deal with such situations will all find this worth reading. As an awareness-raising learning experience it has value, too. When I finished it I had a queasy feeling as I thought about the fine line between being prescriptive and bullying. I wondered if there is a Gestapo secreted away inside all of us lying in wait for the unwitting victim?

Patricia Welles

Inside Counselling

Anthony Crouch
Sage, 1997, £27.50 hb £12.99 pb, 184pp.

Inside Counselling is written as a series of fictitious scenarios from the perspectives of both client and counsellor in supervision and in training, and from the author's own view. Anthony Crouch takes the core conditions and writes about them in an exposing and toughly honest way, both for himself and his readers. For the latter there are exercises at the end of each chapter designed to help us evaluate our own reactions to the situations presented. Crouch rightly urges us to find support when ex-

ploring our reactions, for they can bring up issues in a deeply personal way. The pains of reading creatively mirror the pains (and joys) of therapy.

The weakest extracts concern counsellor supervision. Personally I'd clock my supervisors if they were to call me 'my dear little supervisee'. The process of supervision itself is more than just giving a lecture to the counsellor on the dynamics of the counselling relationship. However, the book's strengths lie in a lively presentation of student journals, Crouch's own experiences, and his wish to engage with the reader. This combination encourages us to address our own sense of self, an issue that is at the heart of the book. Crouch also approaches the business of counselling research, challenging readers to consider the phenomenological experience of counselling. This is an excellent start to developing an empirical approach to therapy without losing sight of the client.

In keeping with today's trend of fitting the counselling model to the client, Crouch presents from very early on an eclectic approach that leads naturally to the ensuing chapters on the counselling relationship. Eclecticism is shown as a model that is not a mere mishmash of techniques, but one that, used with care, can meet a client's needs.

This is a dense book that is by definition self-consciously written. In describing the thoughts and feelings of both counsellor and client Crouch gives voice to aspects of self that are rarely seen in print. Perhaps a larger format would have been helpful, with space for readers' comments as they work at some of the exercises. The lack of bibliography irritates; have Crouch's ideas sprung ready formed from his mind? Methinks not. Nevertheless, this is a ground-breaking book and well worth having on any counsellor's shelf. I would give it two stars for presentation, five for originality and four for value for money.

Jen Popkin

Soul Food: Stories to Nourish the Spirit and the Heart

Jack Kornfield and Christina Feldman
Harper, 1996, £10.99 pb, 366pp.

This is a collection of short stories, parables and anecdotes from the world's wisdom traditions—Zen, Chasidic, Taoist, North American Indian, Sufi, Christian and others — brought together by two well-known western Buddhist teachers. It is a revised edition of their earlier *Stories of the Spirit, Stories of the Heart*. Like any such treasury, it is meant to be picked from and dipped into when the spirit moves one, or in conjunction with one's spiritual practice; hence the subtitle, *Stories to Nourish the Spirit and the Heart*.

For anybody who loved collections such as *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, Tales of the Hasidim* or the Mullah Nasruddin stories, this book is a surefire winner, containing some, but not too many, of the best known gems from these and other collections and also plenty of stories that the reader is unlikely to have

come across. There is a useful forward by Jon Kabat-Zinn and lovingly crafted introductions by the authors themselves to each of the book's three sections, Opening to Possibilities, Finding the Way and Living Our Truth. It would make a lovely gift, both for the savant of 'teaching stories' and for the newcomer to the wisdom traditions.

My own particular favourite story is the one about the little boy who is asked to give blood to save the life of his sister. 'Wait a minute,' he says — and so do I! Why spoil it, when you could read it for yourself?

David Kalisch

The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling

James Hillman
Transworld, 1997, £7.99, 332pp.

James Hillman is the most poetic and philosophical of psychologists. His new book, in a nutshell, uses the image of the acorn out of which grows the oak as a metaphor for soul. From his great inspiration, Plato, he takes not only ideas about soul, but also some rhetorical devices, especially a love of language as susceptible to conceptual analysis and metaphorical density. Hillman wants to remind us that a Soul theory can save us from being seduced by Nature and Nurture theories into retrospective, reductionistic and deterministic explanations of our lives. Our souls are going somewhere; they predate our birth, survive our death, choose our family and culture in order to flourish, and contain our fate. What a story to grapple with! He sees soul and genius as synonymous: so what if the genius of Christina Rossetti chose that particular father?!

Hillman uses case studies of famous geniuses to point up his thesis, but he wants soul to apply to everyone. He does not play down the human cost of genius; I cry whenever I hear the quavering, ardent voice of Judy Garland, for instance. He does not shun the image of evil genius, either, those who lack Eros energy, like the serial killer Geoffrey Dahmer.

Hillman generally uses his gift for conceptual analysis and logic in the service of psychological insights; here, however, he uses it in a more political vein, to argue that democracy is necessary for the elitism of genius to flourish (and that Plato was a democrat!). He is true to the spirit of his great mentor, Carl Jung, especially in his final chapter, which is as densely written as any fan of the Jungian style could wish. *The Soul's Code* illustrates the need that genius has for mentors; it also argues for it.

This is a clearly written book that could make each of us consider how our own genius, that spontaneous, autonomous gift is unfolding in our lives; soul could come to be seen as part of our humanistic potential, like the potential of Socrates to know when, where and how to ask the awkward question — and even know what that would be.

Dave Jones

On the Death of a Parent

Jane McLoughlin (ed.)
Virago, 1994, £10.99 pb, 194pp.

This is a collection of fifteen essays by contemporary writers about how they experienced the death of one of their parents — writers such as Nina Bawden, Maeve Binchy, Gillian Slovo and Bruce Kent. Many of the pieces express not only the pain of the death, but also the unhappiness of childhood memories which are stirred up by the death, or by writing about it. Fewer of the pieces express a simpler joy, of happy childhoods and appropriate deaths.

The essays contain a variety of experiences: parents who died while the author was a child, a suicide, elderly parents dying, sudden deaths and slow deaths... It can be consoling to read about other people's experiences of dying parents. It is easy to feel alone when a death happens, or to think 'Nobody knows what I'm going through'. I imagine that most readers would find something here to identify with. I certainly found this was the case, and quite often thought, 'Yes, that is something like what I felt' and even (what a relief), 'You had a worse time than me!'. For example, one author's mother had committed suicide, after which his grandparents brought him up, keeping from him the facts of how his mother died, so that he only found out from a friend that she had killed herself. He says: 'As a boy my isolation had been almost total because of the lack of candid witnesses. The suicide, the aftermath of grief, the reality of what had happened: all of it had been consigned to silence. As a consequence, I could sometimes doubt my past experience to the point of believing that I was mad or a liar or a large hole in the air.' I found it very moving to read about someone else's need for witnesses — something I experienced after my own mother died when I was a child; her death was hushed up in a similar way.

This book is all written from the heart. It offers 'a sharing of mind and spirit with men and women who have the power to capture their most intense feelings in words'.

Fran Mosley

Four and Twenty Blackbirds: Personae Theory and the Understanding of our Multiple Selves

Peter A. Baldwin
Bramble Books, 1997, £14.50 pb, 265pp.

The title of this book is a bit misleading. Firstly there is not much theory in it, and what there is is quite superficial. Secondly the author cannot make up his mind

whether he wants to talk about 'personas' or 'personae', and in fact uses the former term much more often than the latter.

There are one or two interesting quotes, for example: 'I am proceeding from the view that personality is protean, that our personas in active, observable play constitute our phenomenal reality, and that our "True Self" constitutes our noumenal reality. Further, when all personas are in harmonious co-operation in the fulfilling of our potentialities, we are realising existential reality in self-actualisation.'

The author apparently works as a hypnotherapist with some Gestalt, though his use of a 'vincular self' is remarkably similar to the 'aware ego' of the Voice Dialogue people. We are nowhere told how he induces a trance, and he used the word so vaguely that I am not sure whether he puts people into a trance at all.

There are copious case vignettes, and this is one of the major features of the book. But hardly any of them are verbatim, and this means that we are not at all sure about his actual interventions.

John Rowan