The Future of Counselling and Psychotherapy

Stephen Palmer and Ved Varma (eds)
Sage Publications, 1997, £12.95

As some of the dozen contributors to this book acknowledge, prophecy is a difficult art. One way of circumscribing the task is to think mostly in terms of the particular brand of counselling or psychotherapy generally practised by the writer, but this approach is not necessarily the most enlightening for the reader. For example Albert Ellis on the second page of the book says, 'I predict that the future of cognitive-behavioural therapy will be most promising.' Whatever his intention, the implication here is that he feels competitive, reinforced by his statement in the next paragraph: 'In the field of sex therapy CBT has practically taken over.'

When I took up the book I imagined it would concentrate less on the warfare between brands of therapy, and more on what might be happening in the world over the next decades, and how appropriately counselling and psychotherapy might be addressed to those developments. Long ago a trainer I respected in the States said that the task of this profession should be to do itself out of a job. There is not much going on in our society at the moment to make it seem likely that the mental health of the nation will make us imminently redundant. But unless the direction of our work is towards empowering people to take care of themselves, it follows willy-nilly that we are engaged in self-interested iatrogenic perpetuation of a kind of powerlessness.

That being my opinion, I was admiring of those chapters which took a wide view, notably those by Jeremy Holmes, Pat Milner, Andrew Samuels and Brian Thorne. Holmes calls for an integrative, broad-based, non-partisan approach to what he supposes will be the increasing mental distress of the next years. As a psychiatrist he looks at that discipline as well as those in the title of the book, and also to the neurosciences, in order to find a way of working complementarily. He warns of the possibility of narrow disciplines and rivalries, with psychiatry simply a psychosis service, and the hiving off into the luxury trade of some counselling, unless means are found to offer it to the less moneyed who are often the more troubled.

The counselling practice which is now attached to many GP surgeries is an example of this opening out towards needs other than just privately funded distress. And the five- or six-session limit which tends to be a constraint on this kind of counselling underscores the prediction of a number of contributors, that short-term work will become the norm, though not the desideratum.

Brian Thorne's chapter stands out for its blend of the concrete and the intelligently speculative, suggesting that any cultural malaise will afflict, indeed is affecting, the profession as well as the laity. Self-interest, fear, hypocrisy and self-protection he predicts will bring about the

disintegration of therapy, unless there is an active and aware struggle to prevent it. The analogy with medicine comes to mind. The Patients' Charter has certainly improved some professional practice, but has also led to so much vexatious litigation and demoralisation of doctors that defensive medicine is ever more widely practised, money is wasted and trust has flown out of the window. The Codes of Ethics and Practice and the attendant complaints procedures now in place for counsellors and psychotherapists have similarly had some good effects on practice, but it is arguable that these are almost outweighed by the sort of threats that Brian Thorne describes, in personal and convincing terms.

His remedies are attractive. They include reliance on presence as a therapeutic quality, and integrity in the person of the worker. This development sounds, in the particular terms he uses to describe it, as if he sees counselling very much taking the place of religion in the years to come.

Here there is an overlap with Jeremy Holmes' prediction that psychotherapy will increasingly need to be in dialogue with religion. He points out that Buddhism, which he sees as a secularised, non-theistic form of religion, already infuses some psychotherapeutic practice, both in its perceptions and in such matters as using breathing to alter mental states. John Rowan supports the vision of therapy as a path to the sublime, seeing Primal Therapy as a holder of values and intimations which will be set aside if the main stream of therapeutic intervention becomes short-term, problem-centred and judged only on apparent cost-effectiveness.

Norcross and Neimeyer also forecast a redefinition of much counselling into short-term work, based less on particular schools than on eclectic or integrated strategies. Their own interest is in promoting research and, as importantly, integrating it into the teaching of student counsellors who will do the short-term work. In this they overlap with Douglas Hooper, who says: 'Provided we take for granted the overall commitment to the betterment of the community, then the therapeutic *collegium* must respond to the effective and efficient management of this episodic practice work. The priority must surely be to abandon much of the silliness [of arguing the distinctions between counselling and psychotherapy].' Hooper calls for a 'super-ordinate' regulatory body which would negotiate new structures for the common purpose.

This book can be seen as a read-out of a number of attitudes within the profession, and within current society. Some are partisan or competitive, occupied with the self-justification and proselytising that is likely to lead to in-fighting. Others see the larger task, the aware repositioning that needs to happen when the world is moving on.

The whole movement, already begun, towards the integration of the insights and methods of different schools represents a response to change that several contributors applaud and see extending. Maybe if a clear methodology can be found for this process it will be one that takes into account the proper anxiety of many practitioners: that the clarity of their concepts or

methods will be contaminated by what they fear could be a cut-and-paste approach to training and practice. And it may be, too, that much pride and certainty will have to be sacrificed through the admission that contradictory models of mind and vastly different therapeutic methods may all nevertheless lead to good outcomes for people seeking help.

It is appropriate and important that there should be some discussion of the regulation of the profession, and its relation to allied ones. I found it disquieting when these issues seemed of less interest to contributors than the minutiae of their own school's history and present. But overall this is a book worth reading for the depth and the width of much that is written in it, and not just as a hologram of the present state of the profession. Many contributors give evidence of the self-examination, the awareness of the environment, the largeness of vision and the strictness with self that are prerequisites for humility and learning. They look cautiously forward, both to what might be reached through the profession's best work, and to the reductionist, production-line future that might be a worst outcome of regulation, of confluence and complacent self-interest.

And they provoke new answers to the questions all counsellors and psychotherapists need to set themselves, and answer:

'What are we doing?'

'How are we doing it?'

And, most importantly, 'What are we doing it for?'

Gaie Houston

Alchemy: The art of transformation

Jay Ramsay
Thorsons, 1997, £9.99 pb, 219pp.

Alchemy is best known as the ancient science of turning base metal into gold. But it is really much more, a path to self-knowledge with a contemporary relevance. It has age-old pagan roots, and is known in some form in many cultures. It is about the spiritualisation of the body, and the embodiment of spirit, unity and synthesis.

This is a delightful book, in many ways. Jay Ramsay is a poet, teacher and therapist, and his writing is imbued with a poet's vision. There are many quotes from other poets, as well as his own original contributions. The book has numerous illustrations based on 16th- and 17th-century engravings. It is thoroughly researched, with numerous references, advice on further reading and information about courses and therapy. The book sets out to be a step-by-step guide for those wishing to follow the alchemical process of change and integration, and offers a few suggestions for exercises one can undertake alone. I would have liked more of these.

Ramsay draws a great deal on the work of Jung and Marie Louise von Franz. The

language is often full of mystical imagery, not always easy to follow, but repays rereading. It ends with two bonuses, a chapter entitled 'Rosa Mundi', a prose poem of intense beauty, and a chapter on 'Alchemy and Tantra', blending East and West.

I recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in or curiosity about alchemy, and their own spiritual evolution. It is a book to savour slowly, and very rewarding.

Margaret Novakovic

Crunch Points for Couples

Julia Cole
Sheldon Press, 1997, £6.99

This is an efficient and sensible book, if a little dry. Its nine chapters interweave the subject matter, from 'The growing relationship' to 'The breakdown of your relationship' via 'The cycle of change' and 'Children, and their impact on your relationship'. The first chapter, 'The cycle of change', naturally accompanies us through the whole book. We are sensibly reminded that life is change and that there are 'unhelpful responses' and 'helpful responses' to every situation we might find ourselves in. These different responses are offered in the first few chapters, but are then dropped. Case histories, however, are used in most chapters and very helpful and illustrative did I find them.

Much of the book is common sense but no less useful and encouraging for being set down in print, and in a manner that the most recent recruit to common sense might understand. The section on step-family life is particularly welcome to this reviewer who, when it mattered, could find next to nothing written on the subject.

Julian Nangle

Healing the Male Psyche: Therapy as initiation

John Rowan
Routledge, 1997, £15.99 pb, 285pp.

Reviewing John Rowan in *Self & Society* is a bit like painting Picasso or having Delia Smith to tea. But his latest book might almost have been written for me, a middle-aged male undergoing a social and psychological transition symbolised by counselling training. So I thought I'd have a go. John's own reviews are never superficial, but they often read like first impressions: how else could he get through so many? Mine will also be first thoughts, on a book that I know will repay closer study.

This is a multi-layered book. It combines the political, in a clear and confident

handling of the main issues of gender politics from a male pro-feminist point of view; the psychological, with, in particular, a wise and compassionate account of men's emotional development and the obstacles thereto; and the didactic, incorporating a good deal of explicitly educational material on the theory and practice of psychotherapy and counselling from an integrative but ultimately humanistic perspective. The book is articulated and held together by reference to the stages of medieval alchemy; this is sometimes revealing, sometimes faintly irritating, but at least on a first read it helped carry me along from chapter to chapter, as the author no doubt intended, without wondering too much where he was heading.

By the end a lot of ground has been covered. A rather Jungian sense of purpose emerges, but the usual comprehensive Rowan bibliography attests to the breadth of his sources. Throughout, the writing is suffused, sometimes directly informed, by his own personal experience.

The book's main theme, well reflected in its title, is that in a world still dominated by patriarchal structures (albeit beginning to crumble), the route to authentic non-exploitative masculinity, seen as essentially in service to a feminine life-principle, lies through a potentially painful but ultimately liberating symbolic process of initiation, for which therapy provides an exemplar.

John Rowan consistently and persistently reminds us that the playing field for the sexes is not level, and that for both men and women the given is already a problem. He puts in a good word for Andrew Samuels' notion of acceptance of increasing gender confusion, but returns to the idea that men can still be men. His view of the authentic role for man as consort to woman, who is seen as somehow prior or superior ('the Goddess'), is to me an interesting and novel one, but this may be because I have never read his 1987 book *The Horned God*. He criticises the Iron John type of men's movement precisely because it sets up an ideal image of man unrelated to or even cut off from woman; it is interesting to note that the latest American fundamentalist men's movement to hit our newspapers specifically excludes women from membership.

This must be right: over-emphasis on one sexual pole disguises the relational nature of sexuality itself. But I am left wondering whether Rowan leans too far towards acknowledging the primacy of the feminine principle, and thereby devaluing the male identity. He may be right to emphasise the wound that a man must acknowledge before he can become whole; but he is almost suggesting that we can never be as whole as women — shades of Freud!

The process of initiation into authentic manhood is presented concretely in a variety of ways. As well as mythological reference points, John Rowan gives us models of ritual, of consciousness-raising in groups and of group and individual therapy. For my money he could have gone a little further into the latter area and the typical issues arising: at one point he tantalisingly cites an interesting list of seven essentially psychological factors which interfere with men's friendships, but only

looks in detail at one of them. The chapter on training for male therapy gives copious but unattributed rubrics on the competences required of a trainee therapist, but adds relatively little of specific relevance to therapy with men.

But these are minor complaints and do not undermine my appreciation of the generous feast of ideas which this book provides. This is, I feel, vintage John Rowan, in which many of his already familiar themes and interests (the critique of psychotherapy, new paradigm research, mapmaking, the transpersonal) are brought together to contribute to an overall message of great significance. And the texture of his writing seems richer, stronger, more personal than ever. I noticed a number of remarks to cherish and mull over, for example: 'Prolonged dependence on the therapist is a form of resistance', and 'Grief is often a man's first adult acquaintance with strong emotions'.

This is a book I am glad I bought. I enjoyed reading it, and there are bits I know I will go back to. It is recommended reading for men, particularly those who have an interest in therapy or have started to question themselves. I'd like to believe that women could learn from it too: perhaps we could hear from a female reviewer?

Martin Haddon

Transforming the Pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatisation

Karen W. Saakvitne and Laurie Anne Pearlman
Norton, 1996, £15.95, 159pp.

Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the aftermath of suffering

Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun
Sage, 1995, £15.50, 163pp.

These two books both deal with the effects of trauma. They throw quite different lights on the subject despite the similarity of title. *Transforming the Pain* is about the deleterious effect there may be upon workers who spend their time helping people who have suffered psychological trauma. Thus there are quotations from professionals who lost their confidence in life or at work, became ultra-conscious of safety, very wary of leaving their children with baby-sitters and so on. This phenomenon the authors call 'vicarious traumatisation'. *Trauma and Transformation*, on the other hand, is a review of the available evidence about how the experience of trauma can, in some cases, have a positive growth-promoting effect in people's lives.

The two books are also written in con-

trasting styles. *Transforming the Pain* is, as its subtitle says, a workshop book. Of its type it is competently put together. It is not difficult to imagine participating in or even running the type of workshop described. Of course, it participates in the limitations of such a book: matters are not pursued to great depth and the conceptualisation of issues is rather over-simplified, but this is what is needed for a workshop and it does make the material accessible. The theoretical basis, such as it is, is provided by a brief description of 'constructivist self-development theory'. It is a practical book, one which may well help workers who are exposed to clients reporting traumatic events, especially workers who are not very well supported professionally or are under-trained for the job, but which is not likely to offer a great deal to the experienced counsellor or therapist unless they want ideas for running a workshop.

Trauma and Transformation is a more academic work (about 350 references compared to *Transforming the Pain*'s 16). It is a comprehensive review of research, with a final chapter which draws out practical implications and offers advice. Amongst the advice offered, predictably, is the importance of support groups, and here we do perhaps have a useful link between the two books, since the one documents the need for support groups and the other describes how to run one. *Trauma and Transformation* does not assert, however, that relationship is by any means the whole story; in fact it draws our attention to something important and not at all obvious, namely that trauma is not all damage. There is certainly room for more studies of the positive function of suffering in personal growth and also for material which highlights the characteristics of a successful response to life. As the book concludes: 'Even the worst traumas can result in transformation. The process is a long one, perhaps with no end. Supportive others are very helpful in this journey, but eventually, one's own peace must be made with the event.'

David Brazier

Imagination, Identification and Catharsis in Theatre and Therapy

Mary Duggan and Roger Grainger
Jessica Kingsley, 1997, £14.95, 150pp.

There are a number of positions one can take about the relationship between theatre and therapy. One can view methods like drama-therapy and psychodrama as fundamentally psychotherapies which happen to use drama as their medium of communication. At the other pole one can see the theatre itself as the essential therapeutic element. This book aims to add weight to the latter viewpoint. It does so in a very erudite — some will think too erudite — style: the main argument does sometimes seem to get a bit lost under the volume of reference and sophistication of

language. Nonetheless this is a celebration of the power of theatre to move and heal us and to present to us the world of archetypal imagery in ways that enable us to both identify and distance ourselves.

Theatre engages us in what is 'other' through a process which the authors call 'secondary identification'. We participate in an 'as if' world. At the same time 'one of the main . . . functions of theatre is the objectification of the image'. The authors are arguing that it is these very theatrical effects that enable us to change our lives. Theatre 'brings before us the archetypes that we have ignored or neglected and invites us to enlarge our awareness through our contact with them.' Therapeutic process is shown to reflect the 'pre-liminal', 'liminal' and 'post-liminal' phases of ritual: shifting out of everyday reality; sharing and catharsis; and evaluation and internalisation. In this thesis, therapy is a special case of theatre and theatre is a special case of ritual, the whole project being one of achieving and managing transitions between worlds. A valuable addition to the literature.

David Brazier

The Way to Freedom

The Dalai Lama
Thorsons, 1997, £7.99, 181pp.

The Tibetan people in exile face the difficult task of keeping their culture and beliefs intact. This book is one of a series by the Dalai Lama that contributes both to this task and to that of bringing those beliefs to the attention of a wider Western public. It is well written and lucid: the kind of book that one can either read from cover to cover, or dip into at random and always find something interesting. This is in large measure because it follows the framework of a traditional Tibetan work, the *lam rim*, which describes the stages of the path to enlightenment. Those more familiar with Tibetan Buddhist teachings will find this a valuable addition to existing commentaries on the *lam rim*; less detailed than some, but nonetheless insightful and the more accessible for being short. Those less familiar will still find it a valuable introduction to Tibetan Buddhism There are also numerous references to the position of the Tibetan people and the Dalai Lama's views on the failures of communism, which he attributes to its conflict-based philosophy and lack of genuine altruism.

Some of the beliefs described in *The Way to Freedom* will strike many Western readers as questionable. Substantial sections are given to teachings on karma and rebirth. The Dalai Lama believes in hells, in the possibility — indeed likelihood — that one may be reborn as an animal, and in the existence of a 'bardo' condition after death in which one has a body rather like that which one has here on earth. This system of metaphysics may appeal to you, or it may not. In any case he does concede that the matter can never be proved one way or the other. There is also a substantial sec-

tion on ethics, much of which is clear and useful, though the matter-of-fact way in which homosexuality is dismissed as 'non-virtuous behaviour' strikes a jarring note. We must allow that the Dalai Lama is expressing a traditional viewpoint and be aware that these are the views of one school of Buddhism, not of Buddhists universally. I found myself in accord with the overall sentiment of the book, while unable to support many of the details.

It is a very quotable book. Some phrases that caught my attention were: 'It is by one practice alone that Buddhahood will be in the palm of your hand. That one practice is great compassion'; and 'A practitioner of the Dharma thinks daily about death'; and 'All the good qualities in this universe are the product of cherishing the welfare of others, and all the frustrations and confusions and sufferings are products and consequences of selfish attitudes.' There is much to commend and I particularly like the way that the author's personality comes through. At the end of the day it is the lived life that matters, rather than the system of belief.

David Brazier

Food and Transformation: Imagery and symbolism in eating

Eve Jackson
Inner City Books, 1997, £7.99, 128pp.

This book is not about the many food scares that have burgeoned over the last few years. Nor is it about eating disorders. Instead it addresses the meaning we attach to food, beyond that of a substance necessary to our existence. Eve Jackson sees our relationship with food as a 'constant interplay between the conscious and the unconscious', as evidenced by the myriad food references in our language appertaining to feelings, thoughts and endearments. This would be a particularly useful text for those working with imagery and metaphor. It is also a good introduction to some of the key themes in Jungian psychotherapy.

The book is structured as a journey through the digestive process, from the food chain to what's on the menu and on into the meaning of assimilation. The author has clearly researched her subject so thoroughly that at times I felt stuffed full with erudite references. For example, she gives the origin of the Egyptian lettuce's aphrodisiac properties as being its pointed head and semen-like milky flow. She has an intriguing thesis concerning the value of omnivorousness, suggesting its concomitance with our drive towards the exploration and handling of increasing ranges and quantities of knowledge. Certain forms of diet are examined, and while the author does not decry them, she does offer a challenge to the vegetarian movement in calling for greater discernment, suggesting that vegetarians must look at the inconsistencies in their proclaimed way of eating if they are not to fall into the

fantasy of being superior to meat-eaters.

Food and Transformation is not about eating disorders but does address some of these issues in its final chapter. Therapists working with this client group may argue with Eve Jackson's view that having easy access in the West to a cornucopia of treats infantilises the compulsive eater and is a sign of laziness. Perhaps this way of eating is a symptom of the search for the self-nurturing parent within the eater. It is a pity that Jackson fails to examine eating disorders amongst men, for evidence suggests that this is becoming more prevalent than ever before and is an important additional dimension to understanding the condition. However, she comes to an excellent conclusion that indicates a real empathy with those who have eating disorders: that in learning to understand what food and body-shape mean for us, and by engaging in the struggle, we are able to 'emerge into the light'.

Overall, a creative approach to the meaning of food, which puts it into the broader context of the ecosystem.

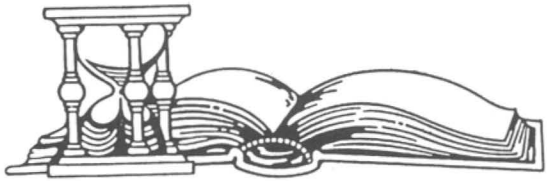
Jen Popkin

The Feeling Buddha: A Buddhist psychology of character, adversity and passion

David Brazier
Constable, 1997, £16.95, 205pp

David Brazier is widely read in the Buddhist scriptures of many traditions. He is also a practitioner and teacher of meditation in the Zen tradition, and a psychotherapist. This book shows a deep and humanistic understanding of Buddhist psychology. It is constructed around the Buddha's first sermon in which he set out the essence of his Teaching.

After an introduction which perceptively sets the scene of the Buddha's life and the influences upon him, Brazier considers the Four Noble Truths. The first of these is *dukkha* or suffering, which he prefers to translate as 'affliction' to avoid 'the sense of something predominantly psychological,' because many of the items the Buddha included as being 'dukkha' are physical and inevitably connected with existential reality. Brazier addresses the problem that 'many people get involved in spiritual practice . . . because they want to escape.' He points out that contrary to some popular ideas, enlightenment does not mean



freedom from suffering in the sense that no experience whatever can cause suffering to the enlightened person; rather it means 'a noble response to existential reality.'

The Second Noble Truth concerns the feelings that arise in us as consequences of *dukkha* — our response to *dukkha*. The Third Noble Truth Brazier interprets to mean containment of the causes of suffering. In considering the meaning here of the word 'noble' he makes the profound observation that a 'nobility principle' exists. As he so rightly observes, 'In the service of nobility, people will readily attempt the impossible'. Brazier's nobility principle has a true place in humanistic and transpersonal psychology.

Brazier also considers the meaning of the word 'truth'. Something that is true is 'real' and authentic and there is no reason to be ashamed of it. So there is dignity and no shame in the human condition, dignity and no shame in affliction, and certainly dignity and no shame in needing help when one is afflicted. There is no shame either in experiencing feelings, which Brazier calls response-ability. He prefers the word 'thirst' to 'craving' (conventionally both terms are used) to explain the reason why affliction comes into being: thirst is normal, and inevitable, and nothing to be ashamed of.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Path, the Noble Eightfold Way of Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right *Samadhi*. Brazier describes this path as 'the noble outcome of facing the reality of affliction and working through what then comes up for us in a courageous and authentic way'. He represents the practice as the difference between living the little story of our life — living on the ego level — and consecrating our life to living a wholesome Big Story, a great work that demands something of us.

On the question of whether Buddhism is a psychotherapy, Brazier argues: 'It is a therapy in the sense that it has a theory about how suffering comes about and it has a range of practices designed to alleviate this condition, and it is specifically a psychotherapy in that it sees the mind as playing a crucial role in this process.'

This book is written in elegant, simple language and is full of beautiful images that deepen one's understanding of the Buddha's teaching. There are etymologies that linguists would not accept, but then etymologising in order to enhance one's argument is older than linguistics, and the insights that these poetic etymologies lead to justify the means.

The Buddha's followers were concerned with how the Buddha's teaching was to be handed down. They asked him whether he wanted this to be in a fixed and unalterable metrical form similar to the scriptures of the contemporary Vedic tradition. The Buddha thought this was a foolish idea. Instead he required that his teaching be passed on by each practitioner 'sakkaya niruttiya' — in his own choice of words, his own language. In this book David Brazier has explained Buddhist psychology in his own words in a way that the Buddha would surely have approved. If you are interested in Buddhist practice and psychology, this is an indispensable book.

Joy Manné

Sandplay — Silent Workshop of the Psyche

Kay Bradway and Barbara McCoard
Routledge, 1997, £15.99, 232pp.

Sandplay is an enjoyable book because it is well presented and because it only contains success stories. It also provides the necessary background knowledge for interpretation of its case histories. Written as a first-person narrative, it refers mainly to the work of Kay Bradway, a Jungian analyst who retired in 1988. Barbara McCoard is a Jungian-orientated psychiatrist in private practice and a consulting editor of the *Journal of Sandplay Therapy*.

The main inspiration for sandplay was Dora Kalff, who showed sandtrays in 1962 at a conference of Jungian analysts. To begin with sandplay was for children only. Doris Kalff's first book was *Sandplay: Mirror of a child's psyche*, published in 1971

In *Sandplay* there are lots of coloured plates of the sandtrays produced by clients. A photograph is taken each time so that the meaning can be gradually got at. The miniatures used are the result of the individual analyst's research and choice, not compulsory stereotypes. There is no standard collection of objects for use in the tray. The personal uniqueness of each therapist's collection allows the client to interact with it as an extension of the therapist, and therefore the process remains within the framework of the transference. There is also a choice of materials for sandplay miniatures; some clients shun plastic miniatures and choose instead those made of wood, stone, metal, or clay. There is often a particular appreciation of shells, dried leaves, fruit pits, driftwood, sea-washed stones, dark lava pieces. 'Even the positioning of the sandtrays and the objects to be used in them vary with different therapists.' A high stool is available if the client wishes to sit down, but most people stand until the scene is completed.

When one analyst was about to retire her regular clientele chose turtles for their trays. Kay Bradway became very interested in the turtle and researched further. She tells us that 'some cultures believe that the turtle is holding up the entire earth', and that in 1975 scientists studying the remains of a 3,000-year-old ceremonial site in Guatemala noted that the rock there was shaped like the head of a turtle and that its snout was magnetic.

A glass stopper from Guerlain perfume is also used in the trays. I didn't know much about this, so I went along to the perfume department of a local store and tried their Guerlain samples: the two I was offered both had Japanese-sounding names, Mitsouko and Samsara. Of course these days the packaging is not always as luxurious, the latest stoppers and caps being not glass but red and black plastic.

It is not at all obvious that this book was primarily written by an elderly woman, but then I myself prefer an older style; I find it a lot more valuable than a younger, perhaps more glib way of looking at things.

Finally there is a section entitled 'What I look for in case reports' which ties this seemingly comprehensive book up nicely.

Joanne Webb

Be Your Own Counsellor

Sheila Dainow
Piatkus, 1997, £8.99, 170pp

Recently in the counselling world there has been a revived emphasis on the counselling alliance as quintessential to effective work (Petruska Clarkson *et al*). I am therefore somewhat disconcerted by Sheila Dainow's confidence (albeit based on some unnamed research) that being your own counsellor through the use of a self-help counselling book can be as effective as face-to-face counselling. Surely a book cannot equip you to offer yourself the warmth, empathy or alternative perspectives which arise from a trusting relationship with another human being!

Nevertheless this is a very clearly written work which moves through the processes of a counselling relationship offering a different approach at each stage. I think it would be an excellent preparation for face-to-face counselling for the uninitiated, as it outlines, in a jargon-free way, the methods and purposes of counselling, particularly as a means of working towards desired change.

Sheila Dainow illustrates each of her chapters with case studies and well thought out exercises. She leaves a space for reflection at the end of each chapter. She starts by proposing that we tell our stories, looking particularly at the significance of language from an NLP perspective. She moves on to suggest ways of examining our own history (from a TA perspective) and how to effect behavioural change; 'words into deeds', based on Egan. She ends with a chapter which emphasises the importance of the spirit as the core of who we are (the psychosynthesis approach) and this is a refreshing contrast to the rather concrete nature of the previous chapters. The book pauses periodically to stress that we need to relax, meditate and give ourselves space, and illustrates these ideas with exercises. A running theme is Rogers' concept that counselling can give someone the 'experience of becoming a more autonomous, more spontaneous, more confident person. It is the experience of freedom to be oneself.'

Although I am in sympathy with Ms Dainow's attempt to demystify therapy and enable laypeople to arm themselves with the 'expertise and tools' of the therapist, I contend that this book is far more useful as a clear, simple explanation of a range of counselling processes linked to a variety of orientations than it is as a self-help therapist. As a counselling trainer myself I consider it would make an excellent framework for introductory courses and that the exercises could be extremely valuable aids to self-understanding and insight, complementing work with a counsellor.

Val Simanowitz

Now Zen

Charlotte Joko Beck, ed Steve Smith
Harper Collins, 1995, £4.99, 83pp.

This delightful pocket-sized book provides an encouraging introduction to the thoughts and practices of Zen Buddhism. The three chapters, titled Root, Stem and Flower, provide a metaphor for individual spiritual growth. Charlotte Beck, an experienced teacher of Zen, combines down-to-earth examples of practical advice with amusing explanations of the philosophy. She describes the concept of 'zazen', explaining both its difficulty and its ease, its complexity and its simplicity. Using images of plant growth and flowing water, she guides us towards uncluttered ways of unhurried practice, showing us simple ways towards enlightenment while reassuring us that, at whatever stage we are in life, we are already on the Path.

Charlotte Beck explains that 'Zen is about an active life, an involved life', and demonstrates how to practise its stillness in the midst of business; how to make sense of a day that has both upsets and pleasures.

Now Zen not only teaches and uplifts us, but also reassures us that 'at every point we are doing the best we can'.

Helen Williams

Carl Rogers: A critical biography

David Cohen
Constable, 1997, £20 hb, 253pp.

This is the first substantial biography to appear on Rogers. There have been other books on him, but they deal more with his work than with his life, and say little about his relationship with his wife, which deteriorated somewhat towards the end; about his questionable use in his volume on marriage of confidential information on his children; or about his heavy drinking, which in his latter days amounted to something like a bottle of vodka a day. David Cohen has made use of the 140 boxes of material turned over to the Library of Congress after Rogers' death, which contain many thousands of notes and private musings, records of conversations and so forth. But he has not taken the opportunity to make a big fat volume: this is quite a slimline book, which covers the life fairly briskly and succinctly.

The biography is not in fact all that critical, the main thrust of its criticism being that Rogers was over-optimistic about the effects of his form of psychotherapy — a critique which could be aimed at virtually everyone in the field. It also points out that Rogers' method of dealing with problems in his own life tended to be to run away

from them, preferably to another city, and that he was generally bad at dealing with such problems in any case, preferring to keep them bottled up rather than express them to anyone else. On the other hand, the book does make it clear that he was held in almost godlike esteem by many thousands of people whose lives he touched in some positive way.

This is essential reading for anyone who wants to meet the whole Rogers, warts and all, but those who want a more appreciative appreciation will still have to go to the excellent book on him by Brian Thorne, brought out by Sage in 1992.

John Rowan

The Psychotherapy of Carl Rogers

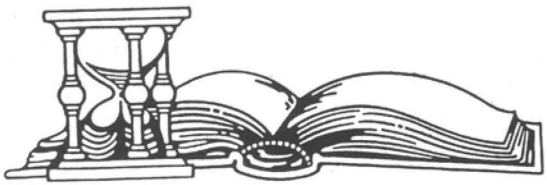
Barry A. Farber, Debora C. Brink and Patricia M. Raskin (eds)
Guilford Press, 1996, £27.95 hb, 383pp.

This is a magnificent book, outstanding and irreplaceable. The editors have not only gathered together some of Rogers' most revealing sessions, they have also collected some of the most accurate and disclosing analyses of them imaginable. These analyses are not only from Rogers enthusiasts, though all of them reveal a good knowledge of the man and his theories and methods. One of them, by a feminist, lays into him quite unhesitatingly for his unawareness of political and feminist issues. She also criticises psychotherapy more generally for its adherence to the ideal of autonomy, which from a feminist standpoint is quite a dubious aim. She goes on to make some telling points from a constructionist and postmodernist perspective.

There are commentaries from Nathaniel Raskin, Fred Zimring, Maria Villas-Boas Bowen, Peggy Natiello, Robert Dingman, Jesse Geller and Edith Gould, Jerold Bozarth, Leslie Greenberg, David Cain, Maureen O'Hara, Barbara Temaner Brodley, Samuel Menahem, Julius Seeman, and Adele Hayes and Marvin Goldfried.

For anyone who wants to know what Rogers actually did, as distinguished from what he said he did, or what other people assumed he did, this is a unique source. It is hard to imagine it being done better. For the scholar who wants to study the work of Carl Rogers this is an unrivalled opportunity to see the man in action, and to appreciate the many different points of view from which his work may be seen.

John Rowan



In the Therapist's Mirror: Reality in the making

Marilyn Wedge
W.W. Norton, 1996, $25 hb, 172pp.

Marilyn Wedge is a family therapist of the strategic persuasion, and is trying in this book to add on a constructionist slant. Her central argument is that all experience, even the experience of one's own self, is a construction of signs. She says the self that post-modern therapy has come to construct is the self as a multivocal sign, a semiotic self. She also makes considerable use of the philosophy of Ernst Cassirer.

Now to join these two approaches would be an important trick, if she could pull it off. The strategic approach is authoritarian and expert-oriented, while the constructionist approach is democratic and client-centred. To integrate these two would be triumph indeed. However, what actually happens in this book is that the strategic approach gets very short shrift, and is virtually subsumed within the constructionist rubric. 'The therapist cannot assume that a family system exists apart from the act of observation any more than the quantum physicist can assume a particle maintains a particular state before or after the act of observation. The family system the therapist constructs for the purpose of therapy is somewhat arbitrary, varying from case to case.'

The author is sharp enough to see that she can use the concept of a metaphor to go back and forth between strategic and constructionist forms in therapy. Both approaches use metaphor a great deal, and so, like Hermes, the metaphor can travel between the worlds carrying messages.

However, the author is clearly not humanistic. She wants solutions; she wants answers; she wants results: 'The question of whether one model is as good as another comes down to which model most effectively leads to a solution for the problem at hand. As we shall see, this attitude of mind has many similarities to the philosophical standpoint of American pragmatism.' Contrast this with Carl Rogers: 'An atmosphere of acceptance and respect, of deep understanding, is a good climate for personal growth, and as such applies to our children, our colleagues, our students, as well as to our clients, whether these be 'normal', neurotic or psychotic. This does not mean that it will cure every psychological condition, and indeed the concept of cure is quite foreign to the approach.'

Marilyn Wedge is quite prepared to give advice and even to guide clients in detail through their problems. The case histories she gives — and there are a number of very good ones in this book — again make it clear that she is not coming from a humanistic position, such as that of Virginia Satir. I got a little tired of the succession of success stories. But I think this would be an interesting book for anyone involved in family therapy.

John Rowan