Implausible Professions: Arguments for pluralism and autonomy in psychotherapy and counselling

Richard House and Nick Totton (eds)
PCCS Books, 1997, £14.99 pb, 348pp.

At last a book on counselling and psychotherapy that demands to be read. A book that wasn't commissioned by Sage, isn't written by big name trainers for captive counselling students, but one that is compelling, uncomfortable, uneven, likely to be unpopular in some quarters, and is unequivocally passionate, committed and honest. It is edited by Nick Totton, who was one of the founders of the Independent Practitioners' Network, and Richard House, one of the main campaigners in *Self & Society* and other journals against 'didactic professionalisation', meaning top-down accreditation *à la* UKCP, BAC, AHPP. Contributors include John Heron, David Wasdell, Richard Mowbray, Brian Thorne, Guy Gladstone, Andrew Samuels and Peter Lomas. Several articles have appeared before, but many were specially commissioned.

Overall the case for pluralism and autonomy is well made. It can no longer be gainsaid that the argument against some kind of statutory registration/regulation of counselling and psychotherapy has been well and truly won, and that that outcome is not currently a shot on the board. However, the main impetus of this book lies not in mopping up this old battle but in promoting and exploring alternatives to hierarchical accreditation and to the conveyer-belt model of counsellor and psychotherapy training now in vogue, two

developments that the fear of some kind of statutory regulation has done so much to promote. The book also sets out to restate a set of values, from the ground up, capable of generating alternative practices in peer networking, complaints management, non-hierarchical accreditation and other related issues. In the burgeoning industry that counselling and psychotherapy training has become, an industry that has threatened to turn counselling and therapy into a 'job like any other', it's good to be reminded of the vocational impulse that used to lie behind both counselling and training, and of just how easily the well of vocation can be poisoned by the fear-driven process of professionalisation. For many people and organisations the message comes too late — but for newcomers to the world of counselling and therapy this book offers hope that there is an alternative.

What you get here is a lot of what Virginia Satir once called 'levelling' — telling the honest truth. The essays may be of variable quality and the levelling may occasionally take the form of a gratuitous swipe or overgeneralisation, but where these different practitioners come together is in a kind of passionate freedom to tell the truth, a quality excluded from much of the 'merchandise' that masquerades as psychotherapeutic literature today. In particular the budding counsellor and

therapist gets the chance to hear the inside story of Guy Gladstone's fascinating journey into the work; also Brian Thorne's deep confusion over the state of 'Counselling UK plc' today, and Nick Totton's insightful account of psychoanalysis as an enlightenment practice. Richard Mowbray is as lucid and calm as ever in his demolition of the register builders, and it is good to read Heron's and Wasdell's early *Self & Society* articles and to see that the analyses in them are as compelling now as they were then. It is also good to be able to reread the scholarly and wide-ranging contributions of Richard House to this debate.

The merit of all the essays is that they combine to mark out, beyond the city walls of the bureaucrats who have appeared in order to take therapy over, an alternative ground for practitioners to cultivate and guard, and they show that on this 'common land' good crops will still grow if we only remember how to tend them. Together they also demonstrate the persistence in many humanistic practitioners of a deep tenacity and groundedness that resist the creeping 'McDonaldisation' of the treatment of contemporary woe that the professionalisation process has ushered in.

The bureaucrats will no doubt try and do a damage-limitation exercise by ignoring this book; or else by scoffing at its occasional academic inadequacies, polemicising against the polemic in some of its articles, or worst of all recommending it in order to 'stimulate debate' (but not action) on the part of their trainees and novitiates. Don't be fooled! The case against both statutory and voluntary registration and for a creative pluralism and autonomy grows stronger and broader, and both strength and breadth are beautifully represented here.

David Kalisch

This is an important and valuable book covering many of the topics that define the philosophical and professional context of psychotherapy and counselling. It raises several questions that every practitioner ought perhaps to have considered and answered to their own satisfaction. These include: Is psychotherapy an art or a science? Is it necessary to be autonomous and motivated by true personal conscience? Is it sufficient to be word-perfect in theory and technique? Does a given training bear any relationship to what makes therapy effective?

The book also explores the structure of the therapy industry. It demonstrates how the therapy 'establishment' works against individual autonomy. It exposes the fallacy in the claims of various 'governing bodies' to protect the public. It reveals counter-therapeutic tendencies and highlights the absurdity of segregation by modality. Finally it looks at matters such as the handling of complaints. Its suggestions here might sometimes be overoptimistic but are always worthy of further examination.

Regardless of their topic the majority of contributions here are intellectually solid and thoughtfully rooted in the kind of humanistic philosophy that the AHPP has

articulated in its core belief statement. For me, the most effective contributors are those who write from the practical experience of trying to remain true in a society that frequently puts expediency before truth. *Implausible Professions* stimulates, educates and challenges the reader at every turn, and could easily become a core text in any psychotherapy training.

There are some discordant features, however. The collection is avowedly partisan, and one or two authors seem both naïve and patronising in their assumption of their own 'radical' superiority. Variations in the intellectual, philosophical and psychological strengths of the 24 contributors test the reader's ability to adapt to unevenness in all three dimensions.

Ultimately, however, the editors' rainforest approach (as one of the contributors might describe it) helps highlight both context and issues all the more clearly. This is not some smooth political offering but a very human, very rich compendium of research, thought, feeling and experience. The many quotes and references mean that probably a hundred or more voices are all singing the same song: a powerful chorus. This book makes it easy for us to develop our own response by delivering hundreds of hours of the preliminary hard work for less than fifteen pounds. Buy it now.

Christopher J. Coulson

The Inner World of Trauma

Donald Kalsched
Routledge, 1996, £45.00 hb, £14.99 pb

In this book Kalsched explores the inner world of dream and fantasy imagery which can be met with in people who have suffered severe abuse. He has a theory that the very images which people construct to defend themselves against the extremes of abuse — the Protector archetype — become also a Persecutor. 'And here we come to the crux of the problem for the traumatised individual and simultaneously the crux of the problem for the psychotherapist trying to help . . . the Protector/Persecutor is not educable. '

Kalsched considers that this discovery helps explain two facts which are all too well known in the therapy world: that the traumatised psyche continues to self-traumatise from within, and that victims continually find themselves in outside situations which will retraumatise them.

In Part 1 the author uses clinical case histories to illustrate his ideas, then moves on to a discussion of the ideas about trauma held by Freud, Jung and the Jungians. In Part 2 he explores various fairy-tales and myths, reinterpreting them in the light of his theory of the Protector/Persecutor archetype. My guess is that this is the sort of book which will appeal best to those who find value in the psychical truths hidden in myth. But all therapists will gain from the exploration of trauma in Part 1.

Fran Mosley

Buddhism and the Art of Psychotherapy

Hayao Kawai
Texas A & M University Press, 1996

Hayao Kawai is a Japanese clinical psychotherapist who is also trained in Rogerian and Jungian psychotherapy. He trained and worked in Japan, the USA and Switzerland. This book comprises four lectures. It is thoroughly Buddhist, thoroughly psychotherapeutic, and thoroughly delightful. The fundamental Buddhist question, 'What is the Self?' appears in every chapter in a different form.

The first chapter is called 'Buddhist? Jungian? What am I?' Kawai was not a practising Buddhist, but returned to Buddhism and to his Japanese roots through his work. The account of how he introduced dream analysis, sandplay and the idea of therapy to Japan is fascinating, as is his description of the power, both positive and negative, of the Great Mother, and therefore also of the personal mother, in the Japanese psyche: a Japanese therapist has to carry the projection of the Great Mother. Chanting the garland (*Avatamsaka*) sutra of the Kegon sect taught Kawai that 'in Jung, you reach the dream world starting from the modern ego; in Kegon, you seem to be right in the middle of the dream world from the beginning'. We are used to the notion of the Australian 'dreamtime'; the idea that chanting Buddhist sutras gives entry to the Japanese 'dreamtime' is new — at least, to me.

Chapter Two is called 'The ten oxherding pictures and alchemy'. Kawai compares the famous oxherding pictures with the *Rosarium Philosophorum* pictures of alchemy and with a contemporary version painted by a Japanese woman. (If only the reproductions were better, and in colour!) These sets of pictures illustrate the search for the Self. Kawai compares the appearance of the *anima* or feminine in them, and in the Western and Eastern psyches. On this theme, he discusses a Japanese complement to Freud's Oedipus complex, the *Ajase (Ajattasatthu)* complex which the Japanese psychoanalyst Heisaku Kosawa proposed to Freud in 1931. This story emphasises the mother-son relationship in which, through a mother-goddess who forgives all sins, 'the 'murderous trait' in the innocent child is melted by the 'self-sacrifice of the parents'.

Chapter Three is called 'What is *I*?' Kawai italicises this 'I' to indicate that it is 'pointing to my being as a whole. This includes everything: conscious and unconscious, my body and perhaps other elements . . . so this "*I*" is filled with things not ordinarily known to me . . . Nevertheless we ordinarily use the word "*I*" as if what it designates were completely self-evident.' After some discussion of Freud's ego-id, and Jung's ego-unconscious oppositions, Kawai presents Japanese stories to illustrate that where Westerners have tried to understand *I* in relationship to Ego, 'Asians have tried to understand its relation to the Being itself before the division of self and other'. He goes back to the garland

sutra with his question and explains non-Self nature: 'Such terms as 'nothingness' and 'emptiness' do not signify an empty world of no things, but rather a world that contains infinite possibilities for being. '

Kawai compares the Buddhist concept of Interdependent Origination (*Pratitya-samutpada* — for some unknown reason the 'tya' is wrongly separated as if it were a word on its own) to Jung's concept of synchronicity, and contrasts it with the Aristotelian model of cause and effect. While Jung and the West look upon consciousness from the standpoint of Ego, Buddhists look upon it from the standpoint of the emptiness achieved through chanting and meditation. The chapter finishes with a discussion of egocide, in contrast to suicide.

Chapter Four is called 'Personal and impersonal relationships in psychotherapy'. Kawai explains how he learned how to have both kinds of relationship with his clients. Here his inspiration is the 'awakening of faith' in the *mahayana* sutra whose key term is *tathagata-garbha* , which he says is usually translated 'Suchness' and which he claims means the Mind. (Here there seems to be some confusion of terms, as *tathatā /tvā* is the Sanskrit term usually translated 'Truth' or 'Suchness.') This concept inspires Kawai to 'relate both to the superficial and the deep layers of consciousness at the same time, and to pay attention to the details of external reality but simultaneously place no special importance on any of it. '

Another concept from this sutra which has inspired him is that of *alaya-vijnana*, which he uses in a different sense from the same term in classical Buddhist thought to mean 'the harmonious unity of Non-being-destruction and Being-destruction; not one but not different'. Kawai uses these concepts in his own way to describe a relationship between 'awareness' and 'no-awareness'. I have always had a hard time with these *mahayana* concepts both in philosophy and psychology and I do not understand them any better through Kawai. As he says, 'Perhaps because I am Japanese, I have the tendency to value not understanding as slightly more important than understanding.' Perhaps by not understanding I am doing what he intends the reader to do! When at the end of the chapter Kawai says that 'clients' complaints are similar to *koans*, at least for the therapist', I am with him all the way.

This gently written, unpretentious book is to be read and reread. Kawai's case histories are insightful, and the Buddhist stories he uses to illustrate his position are well chosen.

Joy Manné
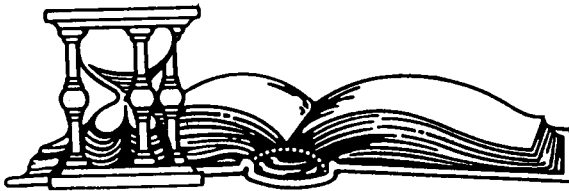
Workplace Counselling

Michael Carroll
Sage, 1996, £14.99

Michael Carroll, from his direct experi-ence of working as a consultant, trainer and supervisor for theEmployment Assistance Programme (EAP) and as or-ganiser and tutor of a Diploma in Counsel-ling at Work, has once again written a clear, concise, easily accessible and thor-oughly useful book, this time on the sub-ject of workplace counselling.

In his preface Michael Carroll writes that this is 'an exciting time for counsel-ling'. He goes on to argue that in addition to complementing the major schools with cross-cultural perspectives, we need 'a new awareness of context in counselling and the impact of the environment on counselling provision'; for despite Frankl's assertion that 'we all have the right to choose our reaction to what happens or is "done" to us', from his own work Carroll says he became 'painfully aware that many individuals were not responsible for what happened to them. As part of the wider community, they were often pawns in political games which left them power-less, defenceless, depressed and confused. '

From my own work on the effects of bul-lying at work and the pathologising of employees to avoid management responsi-bility, I personally welcome a book that helps to shift counselling out of the 'closet' and away from the medically analytical view of some post-Freudians who, ever since Freud's betrayal of believing the actuality of sexually abused clients, have tended to separate psychotherapy patients, in particular, from their context.

This book is also to be welcomed not only for expanding the horizons of applied counselling, but also for yet again reason-ing that a multiplicity of counselling styles and an integrative model are of the most use when offering the delivery and direct application of counselling into the 'real' world of our clients.

Carroll provides us with an introduc-tion to the historical development and an overview of employee counselling, fol-lowed by a review of various counselling models used in workplace counselling, then his own critical analysis of the debates and trends within this genre and, as he says himself, a central chapter summaris-ing how organisations can impact upon and influence employee counselling. His wealth of experience and research shines through in this chapter, in particular using Harrison's model of types of organisation; namely the four cultures of Role, Achieve-ment, Power and Support and quoting Lane on how each may view and use the provision of employee counselling. I thought his own anecdotal and illustrative story of a power culture most apposite. This was where the vice-chancellor of a sizeable university assumed that counsel-ling would only be for his students, expecting his staff to 'manage their own problems; and if they could not, then they needed to reconsider whether or not the

university was the best job for them.

Carroll's central chapter is accompanied by one on a model for introducing counselling into the workplace and another for practitioners working with individual employees. The concluding chapters are on evaluation, ethics and professionalism in workplace counselling, with an additional two on supervision and a possible training curriculum for workplace counsellors. This thorough investigation must constitute essential reading for anyone involved in the practice and delivery of an EAP into an organisation. I would guess it is destined to become a core text book. It is one I highly recommend.

John Sivyer

Identities, Groups and Social Issues
Margaret Wetherell (ed)
Sage/Open University, 1996, £14.95 pb, 368pp.

The nature of this book can be best understood by looking at the chapters in it. The first, by Hedy Brown, is entitled 'Themes in experimental research on groups from the 1930s to the 1990s'. The second, by Helen Morgan and Kerry Thomas, is 'A psychodynamic perspective on group processes'. Chapter 3, on 'Attitudes, social representations and discursive psychology', is by Jonathan Potter, and the next chapter, on 'Group conflict and the social psychology of racism' is by Margaret Wetherell herself. (Potter and Wetherell are of course famous for their work on discourse analysis.) Chapter 5, by Diane Watson, is 'Individuals and institutions: the case of work and employment'. The final chapter, again by Wetherell, is 'Life histories/social histories '.

What we have here, then, is an academic book on social psychology. What is interesting is to see how social psychology has moved on since I last taught it three or four years ago. The Hedy Brown chapter: no change, just a sober and conventional account of group work. The Morgan and Thomas chapter: quite predictable, again. In the Jonathan Potter chapter, however, we come on to something which will extend into the remaining three: an emphasis on social constructionism.

Now social constructionism has become a complex field. The basic case of social constructionism, as described for example by Kenneth Gergen, is that knowledge, scientific or otherwise, is not obtained by objective means but is constructed through social discourse. Hence the study of dialogue and discourse and text becomes extremely important. No single point of view is more valid than another, because all points of view are embedded in a social context which gives them meaning. However, within this general outlook there are a number of important differences.

For example, Kurt Danziger makes a distinction between light constructionism and dark. Light constructionism says that 'among those points of view which do not

claim a monopoly on the path to the truth, which do not prejudge the nature of reality, tolerance must be the order of the day. A thousand flowers may bloom, provided none of them is of a type that threatens to take over the entire field, if left unchecked.' Dark constructionism (often referring to Foucault) says that discourse is embedded in relations of power. Talk and text are inseparable from manifestations of power. While light constructionists such as John Shotter emphasise the ongoing construction of meaning in present dialogue, dark constructionists emphasise the dependence of current patterns of interaction on rigid power structures established in the past and protected from change by countless institutionalised practices and textual conventions.

Cor Baerveldt and Paul Voestermans make a distinction between weak social constructionism, which says that there can be such a thing as natural emotional responses (although these can become connected with a sense of self only within the context of a cultural system of beliefs and values), and strong social constructionism, which denies the relevance of physiological processes altogether. 'From this perspective, the states and functions of the body become a cluster of cultural instead of natural, that is biological, constructions.'

Perhaps the most radical form of social constructionism is that put forward by Paul Stenner and Christopher Eccleston, when they say that the more the distinction between the real and the discursive is examined, the more it becomes obvious that it is precisely what something means

for people and what it matters to them (both discursive questions) that constitute its reality. So their approach, which they call 'textuality', sees the usual objects of psychological inquiry as so many texts which we read and discuss, as opposed to fixed entities or essences which we strive to know. This enables them to question in a radical way the importance and even the existence of such things as attitudes, emotions, memory, personality, prejudice and thought.

So what is the form of social constructionism which Potter and his colleagues are using? I would say it is the weakest and lightest which I have seen so far. There is very little of the destructive critique for which other forms of social constructionism are famous — all is sweetness and light and mutual tolerance. And so it sounds very much like ordinary social psychology, in the end.

It is noticeable that in the chapter on work, which one would have expected to be fully up to date, there is no mention of human resources management, and no reference to transformational development. These things have been going since the early 1980s, and we should be told about them in a text which purports to be the latest thing on the subject. The one brief reference to the Hawthorne Experiment omits to notice the savage critique of this research which has come from the sociologists and historians of work.

The chapter on men and masculinity is better, with Bob Connell fully featured, but again there is no reference to the more spiritual approach to men put forward by Michael Meade, Joseph Jastrow, Kenny

Klein, Aaron Kipnis and others.

It seems that students at the Open University are still being restricted to a fairly pedestrian approach, and this is quite sad, I think. Don't even ask whether humanistic psychology is mentioned.

John Rowan

Authentic Knowing:
The convergence of science and spiritual aspiration
Imants Baruss
Purdue University Press, 1996, 228pp.

The best way in to this book is possibly via the words of Baruss himself, when he questions himself as to why he should be trying to speak both to the scientist and to the spiritual aspirant: 'Let me answer that by indicating the motivation for writing this book. It has grown out of teaching undergraduate courses in consciousness, humanistic psychology, and the psychology of religion, in which questions about the nature of consciousness, the meaning of life, and religious experiences are discussed. Because these courses are taught in the context of scientific psychology at a Catholic college, I need to simultaneously address the concerns of the scientifically and the spiritually oriented students without violating the sensibilities of either.

This sounds like a difficult programme, and from the evidence presented here it is completely impossible. What we get is just a jumble of disparate names, influences and arguments from which it is impossible to get a coherent message. In the second chapter (the first is a very brief introduction) we get taken from Heidegger to Carl Rogers to social psychology to cognitive strategies to the professional achievement of compliance to hedonism to Assagioli to subpersonalities to the will to the higher self to spiritual growth. The title of this chapter is 'Authenticity'. It ends with the words: 'Putting all of this together, let us say that authenticity is the effort to act on the basis of one's own understanding.'

Chapter 3 is entitled 'Science', chapter 4 'Transcendence', chapter 5 'Theory' (subtitled 'a theosophical model of reality'), and chapter 6 'Self-transformation'. All, except the last, which is about Baruss's workshop experiences and dreams, consist of this incredible farrago of material, strung together on the thinnest of threads.

There is an appendix which gives thumbnail biographies of six people. They are: Roberto Assagioli, Alice Bailey, Douglas Baker, Carl Rogers, Roger Walsh and Franklin Wolff. It is clear that the author has somewhat esoteric interests.

A sentence from the last chapter reads: 'Sometimes people imagine that spirituality is like floating down a tropical river, sipping a cold pina colada, while palm trees gently wave in the breeze. There are organisations which promise this type of tranquillity.' To which one is tempted to reply: 'Name one!'

John Rowan

Tales of Un-knowing

Ernesto Spinelli
Duckworth, 1997, £14.99 hb, 211pp.

This is a book of case studies from a psychotherapist in the existential-phenomenological mode. Each case is accompanied by a good deal of theory, so much so that it is almost a textbook of therapy with extended illustrations. This impression is underlined by the fact that most of the cases are very short, either because some event truncated the process, or because the client cut short the therapy. To be precise, the count is: (1) 18 sessions; (2) one and one-third years; (3) several years; (4) 10 sessions?; (5) a couple for 5 sessions; (6) a year or so?; (7) 10 weeks?; (8) 6 months? Since Spinelli says he normally sees people for about two years, the disparity seems to need explaining. Perhaps the answer lies in the emphasis on theoretical points. Perhaps his longer cases would not afford such opportunities for extended disquisitions on death anxiety, un-knowing, transference, countertransference, the unconscious, encounter, the role of the therapist, the past as causal, memory, demystification, sedimentation, dissociation, dream work, the client as therapist, the couple-construct, existential choice, multiple personality, addiction, meaninglessness, diagnosis, relationship, fundamentalism, normal pathology, the body, being ill, perfectionism and turning on.

What is perhaps most noticeable about this book is its author's obsession with Freud. He goes out of his way to have little digs at psychoanalysis (which he says he practised himself in days gone by) and quite big discussions of the concepts of the unconscious. He is less preoccupied with humanistic forms of psychotherapy, though he does have the odd side-swipe at Carl Rogers' notion of empathy.

What I am left with is a piece of dream work in the Medard Boss tradition. My reading of Boss is that he talks a great deal about how his method of working is so much better than the psychoanalytic way, but that his own examples of dream work are not very excitingu, but Spinelli's example is genuinely electrifying and very moving, well worth the attention of anyone who works with dreams.

John Rowan

Escape from Babel: Toward a unifying language for psychotherapy practice

Scott D. Miller, Barry L. Duncan and Mark A. Hubble
W.W. Norton, 1997, $32.00, 244pp.

The authors start off by killing a few sacred cows. In particular, they kill the notion that brief therapy is any better than any other kind of therapy. It is not cheaper,

for example, because in practice the offer of extended periods of therapy is so rarely taken up—research shows that those who come for long-term therapy only stay for an average of six sessions. In other words, in practice there is a heavy dropout rate, which makes all approaches pretty equal. So different schools of therapy not only produce the same sort of results, they also cost about the same, give or take the vagaries of individual charges. Yet their mutual antagonism and criticism is marked and sometimes virulent.

The authors offer as a solution to this disunity a consideration of common factors: what makes therapies work must be something common to all of them. What are these factors? The first is 'extratherapeutic', or in other words what the client brings to the therapy before it even starts: 'The quality of clients' participation, their perception of the therapist and what the therapist is doing, determine whether any treatment will work. In fact, the total matrix of who they are — their strengths and resources, the duration of their complaints, their social supports, the circumstances in which they live, and the fortuitous events that weave in and out of their lives — matters more than anything therapists might do. Clients, the research makes abundantly clear, are the true masters of change in psychotherapy; they are always more powerful than their therapists.'

So this is the first factor we have to consider. The second factor is the relationship between client and therapist. A great deal of evidence from many sources confirms that the quality of the interpersonal context is one of the prime factors in all forms of psychotherapy. 'Strong and effective alliances are formed when clients perceive the therapist as warm, trustworthy, non-judgemental and empathic. '

The third factor is the practice of the therapist: the interventions used, the framework employed, the contract arrived at and so forth. This has a much smaller effect than the two items previously mentioned. And the fourth factor is the classic triad of expectancy, hope and the placebo effect — important in all healing efforts, not only in psychotherapy. The authors say that of these four factors, it is the first two, and particularly the first, which have the most effect. This makes it easier to see why there should be so little difference between the efficiency or efficacy of therapeutic schools: where they differ is mostly on the third factor, which is minor by comparison.

The next few chapters give further information about each of these factors, and include a great deal of case material; vignettes, and a couple of complete case histories using the ideas already outlined. This brings the whole thing to life and makes it clear that these are people who know what they are doing.

For anyone concerned with integration this is a very helpful book. It is very much up to date, and people in the field will be amused and encouraged by some of the brief references to Managed Care and Empirically Validated Treatments. Although it is not avowedly humanistic, it is highly compatible with humanistic approaches and is unlikely to offend humanistic practitioners. Recommended.

John Rowan