Serious Mental Illness: A family affair

Gwen Howe
Sheldon Press, 1997, £6.99, 152pp.

This book is one of the latest additions to the very useful *Overcoming Common Problems* series from the Sheldon Press. Gwen Howe has written three earlier books on aspects of schizophrenia, but her own background is not referred to anywhere in this volume.

The book is fairly comprehensive and aims to throw plenty of light on the nature of schizophrenia and manic depressive illness for the benefit of those affected and those who care for them. It has a list of resources and advice on further reading at the back. It will be useful for people who need an introduction to the whole subject and seek practical and factual information about the many implications of these conditions. I like Gwen Howe's emphasis on finding practical measures to take in attempts to prevent further breakdown, and simple 'house rules' to help manage difficult behaviour.

She adopts the prevailing medical view about mental illness, that it is most commonly attributable to abnormalities in brain chemistry as a result of genetic predisposition or brain injury. She is very critical of the ideas so prevalent in the 1960s and '70s about dysfunctional families driving people mad. She says these have now been entirely discredited. Well, very largely, but she leaves out an important factor researched by Dr Julian Leff at the Maudsley Hospital, that people at risk of breakdown cannot stand much intensive face-to-face contact and 'high expressed emotion' in their environment.

She is severely critical of the often slow and cumbersome business of getting afflicted people the treatment they need when they need it. She attacks social workers who, under the Mental Health Act 1983, not only have the task of assessing patients but are also, other than the nearest relative, the only people who can make application to a hospital for the sufferer's admission for further assessment and/or treatment. The reason for this lies in the social worker's duty, defined in legislation and guidance, to seek the 'least restrictive alternative' and to protect the potential patient's civil liberties, but Howe is shocked to think that social workers should ever disagree with doctors.

Many sufferers relapse after discharge from hospital because they soon refuse to continue treatment, and I share Gwen Howe's strong views about the importance of getting it going again in order to try and prevent further breakdown.

She refers briefly to groupwork she has herself been involved in with patients, but does not mention groupwork for relatives and carers, which can be an enormous support to them. Limitations apart, I still recommend this book, which is much more helpful than not, to all those who are sadly having to face for the first time the reality of mental illness in their family.

Margaret Novakovic

Soul Therapy

Joy Manné
North Atlantic Books, 1997, $13.95

Joy Manné is a breathwork therapist. Breathwork is a technique which teaches how to regain the natural breathing pattern with which all healthy people are born. More relaxed and unrestricted breathing leads to an expanded ability to access the inner self. Unlike most other psychotherapy, breathwork enables access to memories from the beginning of life, back to birth and before. Since so much of our personality is formed during the first part of our lives, this aspect of breathwork makes it an exciting and very different technique. It can help us to reconnect with the very roots of our existence — to reach the very depth of our soul. Working with a technique such as breathwork is therefore not only exciting, but can at the same time be extremely demanding. When someone gets in touch with such deep layers of the personality, it takes an honest and courageous therapist to accompany them on their journey.

This is what soul therapy is all about — learning to distinguish between the different kinds of therapy and, more importantly, to realise that true healing comes through spiritual development. On the one hand we have ego therapy — therapy from the head or the ego, that deals with the human psyche on an everyday, rational level. On the other, soul therapy — therapy from the heart and soul, where there is no known limit to how deeply someone may be transformed. Soul therapy creates harmony between ego and soul. When you set out to do soul therapy, you also set out on a Soul Quest: 'Ego seeks to find the meaning of its life: who it is, where it comes from, why it is the physical child of its physical parents, what lessons it is here to learn, what its life-task is. This is a Soul Quest.'

In crisp and clear language, and with a large portion of humour, Joy Manné takes us through the many aspects of the patient–therapist relationship and brings to our attention the many weaknesses and pitfalls of conventional psychotherapy as compared with soul therapy. 'On the Soul Quest,' she says, 'we are all teachers, we are all therapists, we are all students, we are all clients. We all have something to teach: it may be as simple as sharing our knowledge or giving useful information; it may be a special insight or observation; it may be sharing an important experience. We all have something healing to offer: it may be as very simple as common sense or practical advice; it may be a period of quiet and receptive listening. We are always learning, wherever we are on our Soul Path.'

Drawing on her thorough knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures and Eastern philosophy and wisdom she presents a whole list of 'soul quest skills', some of which are quite unheard of in conventional therapy. 'Skillful' items on this list include ethics, self-responsibility, character manage-

ment, awareness, gratitude, loving, energy hygiene, empowerment and vulnerability, consciousness, transformation and body skills. There is little doubt that soul therapy stands for a new and exciting approach to psychotherapy.

Like so many new and unfamiliar discoveries, breathwork is often met with a lot of fear and suspicion. Is it safe? Does my therapist really know how to help me? Is she or he qualified to do this work? Joy Manné looks at these aspects and explains why there isn't, shouldn't be, even, a straightforward answer to this kind of question. This, of course, does not mean that breathwork therapists are less responsible than others, or that they ignore their influence on other people. The whole answer is just much more complex than the common debate will make it. In breathwork, for a number of reasons, the conventional patient–therapist situation is avoided. Instead, emphasis is put on creating more equality between therapist–patient (in fact the word 'patient' is never used, but rather 'client'). From the very beginning, the client is made to see that he or she is about to embark on an inner journey, rather than being 'treated' by the therapist. This puts the client much more in charge of events, as well as more responsible for the outcome, and makes the therapist much more of a guide and travel companion than an authority who decides what will happen.

Joy Manné describes her book as a 'cookbook' for those who want to become 'master chefs' or 'alchemists'. And just as a cookbook is essential reading for any would-be master chef, so *Soul Therapy* is compulsory reading for all therapists whose ambition is to grow at the same rate as their clients/patients, indeed for anyone who wants to set off on their own soul quest or accompany someone else embarking on theirs. It is essential reading for all of us, providing both the guidance and the techniques we need for this important inner journey. Regardless of our present state of mind, whether or not we have ever contemplated turning to psychotherapy to get by better in our lives, we all have the same longing deep inside — to find out more about ourselves, to set out on our soul quest. Before you do this, make sure to get a copy of *Soul Therapy*. It will be the best travelling companion you can have.

Gunnel Minett

Which psychotherapy? Leading exponents explain their differences

Colin Feltham (ed.)
Sage, 1997, £12.95, 224pp.

I heard two messages loud and clear throughout *Which psychotherapy?*: that the raging conflict between practitioners of different therapeutic approaches continues unabated, and that the differences may well be irreconcilable.

Colin Feltham himself postulates that if 'any fixed therapeutic ideology is ulti-

mately as insane as any personal delusional belief' then 'we are at least as resistant to examining our therapeutic truth claims as our clients often are to examining their long-standing and unproductive narratives.' A sobering thought! Feltham has nevertheless invited eight distinguished practitioners to examine such truth claims. Each has been asked to address twelve different questions, aimed at identifying the distinctive qualities of their own approach and demonstrating how it has been arrived at. The result is a book that will allow both experienced practitioners and trainees to become familiar with and compare the current thinking of these well-known people.

Some of the approaches, such as Bozarth's person-centred one, Clarkson's integrative psychotherapy, Ellis's rational emotive behaviour therapy and Heaton's existential psychotherapy, are already common knowledge, the subjects of books and the bases of training courses. Others, such as Langs' communicative approach (a revisionist version of psychoanalytic theory) or Mahrer's experiential psychotherapy, seem less well known in Britain. (Incidentally I wondered at the omission of psychodynamic therapy, in view of its popularity and widespread practice.)

Each practitioner explains their deep conviction that their own method 'works' better than others and can back this up with evidence from case histories and/or research. Ironically, even Clarkson, the passionate advocate of integration and rejector of 'schoolism', is dismissive of those who do not believe in the 'relationship as the common factor' and that 'all competent and developing psychotherapists are always integrating'. The evidence from this book shows that many are not.

I found one of the most interesting aspects of the book to be the personal experiences which led each practitioner to their current position. From John Rowan's primal experience as a 'gray dome' and Stephen Palmer's adolescent experiments with hypnosis to Bozarth's teenage experience of exclusion from the social norm group, there were fascinating insights into how our own experience shapes us as counsellors.

Whilst reading these eight chapters I was struck by the recurrence of many themes such as actualisation, empowerment, the centrality of the relationship and the validity of client experience; but I was also struck by the vehemence of some therapists' opposition to others. Ellis's attack on the transpersonal and Rowan's rebuttal of the 'mechanistic' are just two examples.

I must conclude that the very passion of these opposing and sometimes exclusive convictions may be the well-spring for the efficacy and achievements of these eminent practitioners and trainers.

Val Simanowitz

A Little Book of Women Mystics

Carol Lee Flinders (ed.)
Harper San Francisco/HarperCollins, 1995, £4.99, 106pp.

This small, neat book contains many short extracts from the spiritual writings of six visionary women: Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Julian of Norwich, St Catherine of Siena, St Catherine of Genoa and St Teresa of Avila.

Each of these teachers was connected to the monastic way of life in different ways during medieval and Renaissance times. Their prayers, poems, advice and lessons span five centuries, from the early twelfth to the late sixteenth. They all emphasise traditional Catholic images.

Non-Catholic readers may find some passages tedious and the book may be more appropriate for devout Catholics seeking more contemplative directions. Some of the visions described are ambiguous and surrealistic and have parallels with similar Sufi texts. I felt uplifted by the descriptions of ecstatic spiritual experience and enjoyed the various references to 'light' throughout the book. Each of the six holy women were seeking the light of religious knowledge by consciously withdrawing from the desires of the world.

The word 'love' is mentioned frequently. Although many of the instructive passages may seem 'heavy' to us here in the late twentieth century, the quest for a loving connection with the divine and a search for holy wisdom are relevant to every era and have profound messages for us today.

Helen Williams

An Introduction to Object Relations

Lavinia Gomez
Free Association Books, 1997, £15.95, 240pp.

Object relations theory is all about the development of consciousness in early infancy, and the foundations laid for subsequent evolution of the personality. It 'places relationships at the centre of what it is to be human'.

The literature on this subject is a minefield of potential confusion for the beginner, because different eminent authorities have expounded sometimes conflicting hypotheses. In this book Lavinia Gomez attempts to clarify the situation by offering an overview of the principal theories, showing how each developed in its historical context.

Part 1 devotes a chapter to each of the main figures: Freud, Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, Balint, Guntrip and Bowlby. There are biographical sketches of each, followed by an exposition of their ideas. What I found particularly interesting and illuminating was the way in which each one's

thesis was linked to his or her own personality and experience of childhood. For me this provides an explanation of how such eminent people can come up with theories of the development of, for example, the infant psyche which differ so much in essential details or in emphasis. The implication is that each theory is partial, in the sense that it is true in some, but not necessarily all, cases, and that one needs a knowledge of all the theories in order to have a comprehensive understanding of early development.

The shorter Part 2 has only three chapters, and deals with the application of object relations theory in practice. The sometimes disparate views described in Part 1 are drawn together, and there is a speculative forward look at future developments.

This book is informative but not heavy going, and can be recommended both to novices and to those already well-versed in object relations theory. Its chief value is in its excellent clarification of the whole field in Part 1, which enables one to distinguish the major theoretical threads from each other and to place them in the context of the background of those who first proposed them.

Hazel Guest

The Shadow King

Sidra Stone
Nataraj Publishing, 1997, £12.95, 200pp.

I do not measure up in a patriarchy, and I am dispensable in a matriarchy, so I am pleased when either of them is put in its place, as Sidra Stone does magisterially in this book about the 'inner patriarchy'.

Sidra Stone is the co-founder with her husband, Hal, of Voice Dialogue, a beautiful formula for experiencing and researching archetypal energies within ourselves and between each other in bonding patterns. It is full of variations, counterpoint and improvisations, like music-making. About the 'inner patriarch', she says that he is taught to women unconsciously by their mothers and remains disowned in their unconscious to devastate their lives, unless he is brought out of the shadows into awareness.

Sidra Stone has brought out and owned the patriarch in this book, having worked with him both alone and with other women whom she respects and admires. She gives advice that has been successful both for her and for them on how to deal with him. The antidote to the inner patriarch's idealising and denigratory power is to adopt his own strong qualities, so that he no longer feels he has to control and protect daughters, wives and mothers and demean women and their partners. Her advice is to own and cherish complementary and other non-patriarchal energies, both tame and wild. Her subtle and judicious mind clarifies the contradictions in the patriarch's prejudiced and dualistic thinking. She certainly gets to know and

even befriends, if not sleeps with, her enemy.

Sidra Stone has the psychologist's penchant for lists and vignettes but not, thankfully, for quotes from her extensive book list. She recommends two books but does not use extracts from them — instead, she quotes from dreams and archetypal energies. She is an optimistic writer. Her optimism does not come only from her privileges and gifts, but, I believe, from her celebration of the rich variety of archetypal energies and of how we can resolve conflict by celebrating sameness and difference inside and between us, so that we can become more fully human and equal inside and out. I love this book.

Dave Jones

White Gloves: How we create ourselves through memory

John Kotre
Norton, 1997, £9.95 pb, 276pp.

Although this book contains a wealth of information about memory, its origins, distortions and loss, and includes physiological and psychological knowledge, it is rather frustrating. A great deal of research is mentioned, but references to it are only itemised in notes at the end, with the bibliography, and an amazing amount refers to Kotre's own work and other publications not readily available here.

The white gloves of the title refer to Kotre's discovery in the attic of his musician father's gloves. These become a symbol for the father's lost musical ability, since in America he undertook heavy manual work to support his family. Kotre presumes we all have mislaid familiar memories which could be explored if we can find such symbols.

Kotre also explores some controversial areas of memory, including supposed distortions from stories or myths we have been told of our childhood. As you would expect, he writes about false memory syndrome, a very controversial subject since physical and sexual abuse is rarely witnessed and so often denied. He doesn't accept the concept of repression, or give denial much credence. Although as counsellors we may show empathy for relatives who maintain they have been wrongly accused, it is the victims who are more likely to be our clients. Whether hypnotists can install 'false' material is another matter. Memories, if not true, are not memories but stories. Kotre does quote various people who have pointed this out.

Altogether a disappointing book, since the subject is such an interesting one. The case material is certainly the most valuable part.

Betty Gould

Love After Death: Counselling in bereavement

Mary Jones
Jessica Kingsley, 1995, £6.95 pb, 67pp.

I am not sure to whom this little book is addressed. Maybe it would help the newly bereaved; I can't believe it has anything to offer experienced counsellors or students. There are much better books available which explore the subject in more detail, but there's no bibliography, not even addresses for Cruse, although the author works as a counsellor for them.

Betty Gould

A Mother's Eye: Motherhood and feminism

Anne Roiphe
Virago, 1997, £10.99, 269pp.

When I was pregnant with my first child, I remember scouring the bookshops on the Charing Cross Road for a highly recommended book on breastfeeding. At last I spied a sign that read 'Books for Women'. Relieved and tired, I walked in and asked to be directed to the section on breastfeeding. The sales assistant stared at me, and with what I imagined to be a pitying look gave the following reply: 'This is a feminist bookshop! We don't sell books on breastfeeding!' This was when I first became aware — in my naïvety — of the bizarre divide that exists between feminism and motherhood. This is the paradox that Anne Roiphe tries to embrace in her wonderful book *A Mother's Eye.*

Anne Roiphe is a journalist and author of seven novels. Her articles have been published in *Vogue, Working Women* and *Redbook* and she writes a regular column in the New York *Observer.* She experienced an unhappy early marriage, divorce, and many difficult years of single motherhood before remarrying. Her second husband is a psychoanalyst and paediatrician. Roiphe has three daughters, two stepdaughters and a raft of grandchildren. Gail Sheehy describes her on the cover as 'a grandmother of feminism'. Roiphe shares how she spent many years in psychotherapy in an attempt to resolve the legacy of her own childhood and to better cope with the trials of mothering. All these experiences contribute to the richness of this book, which I would highly recommend, not just to women who are mothers, but to every person, male or female.

A Mother's Eye is written in six chapters which cover, respectively: the collision course between the history and ideals of feminism and the often prosaic realities of motherhood; guilt and what it does to us (in my view the most powerful and moving chapter); the whole fathering issue and how politically, economically and emotionally women and men have often been pitted against each other; the reality of the

nuclear family; the cost to men and women of organising family life; and finally some visions and suggested models for another way of living.

This book succeeds on two levels. Its first impact is as a gripping autobiography, taking the reader from an emotionally neglected childhood in fifties suburban America to the present day and the author's struggle to encompass a straggling, so-called 'blended' family — without being pulled apart in the process. Its second strength lies in Roiphe's ability to educate the reader about the history of feminist ideas. She is always careful to distinguish between the historical facts and the spin that was put on them at the time. She also owns her personal opinions in such a way that the reader is always free to agree or disagree.

This is not a work of propaganda at all; in fact it is the very opposite. Roiphe shows how her conclusions have grown out of a tension between her external world of feminist activism and her internal world of feeling and relating. It is as if she takes us by the hand and races with us through time, showing us first the politics and then how they impacted on her as a woman and mother. So we visit America in the 1950s. It is a time of social conformity and Anne's mother's dread of divorce is slowly but surely stifling her spirit, Anne watching helpless as her mother dulls the boredom with alcohol. Then it is the late 1960s and the spirit of free love is in the air, Roiphe a divorcee tiptoeing out of orgiastic parties earlier than she would have liked in order to relieve her daughter's babysitter. The 1970s, and some feminist activists are declaring war on men; women can do it by themselves, the rise of Superwoman . . . while at night and alone Roiphe holds her young daughter who is sobbing yet again for her absent father. The 1980s, and the awful truth of child sexual abuse is coming out of the woodwork, increasing anti-male feeling: 'A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle'... Roiphe sits in a committee meeting reading a report on high cholesterol and worrying about her second husband's diet, even though he is the cook in the family.

Anne Roiphe's writing style is almost breathless, as if the book had to be written in a hurry — in an attempt to get it all down on paper before the time runs out. This style I think, reflects the experience of many working mothers, frequently rushing to fit things in before 'time' is called. She does not write coolly from a distance, but takes us right into the secret heart of her family and home, forcing us to look at what is so often skated over. She shows a family where there is hatred as well as love. There is envy, fear and competition and all the time a terrible all-pervading guilt. Her writing is heartbreaking at times and so honest in its portrayal of the drudgery and pettiness of mothering. Her autobiographical passages are passionate and full of life. I love the way she throws in impromptu lists:

- Things I did wrong
- Things my children have done that frightened me
- Things I have been proud of in my children
- Things my children have done that have hurt me

Because of Roiphe's awareness of the bigger picture, the reader starts to see that this is not just one woman's family, but all women's families to a degree.

The last segment of the book suggests that men need to be brought back into the family, not to replace a mother out at work, but to stand alongside her as her ally. This may then deflect and defuse some of the tremendous resentment that children feel towards their mothers and mothers towards them when they are the primary carer. Roiphe uses what she has learned from psychodynamic theory to argue her case. Being brought up primarily by a mother perpetuates a certain emotional distance in men towards women (an almost inevitable consequence of the boy having to separate from a female carer in order to identify with male role models) and in women it can foster a destructive competitiveness towards each other. Shared parenting brings shared opportunities to escape to the world of work, shared opportunities for self fulfilment, shared experiencing of the frustrations and joys of child-rearing. It takes the onus off women and reinstates men in their true role in life, as the protectors and lovers of their families.

Roiphe's final appeal is for all of us to have more compassion, to help create a society that is more synergistic. Let me leave the last word with her: 'It seems that the clash between feminism and motherhood is an artificial one. Mom is not a dowdy harpy perched on the roof of her house, glaring at her departing children. But it would be nice if the world outside her house gave a little bit of a damn about what went on inside... All we can do at the moment is recognise our limitations, consider our flaws, watch our backs. Try, child by child, home by home, for a little human happiness.'

Jessica Woolliscroft

The Physics of Angels

Mathew Fox and Rupert Sheldrake
Harper Collins, 1996, £9.99, 226pp.

This wonderful book brings together 'old' wisdom and 'new' expansive thought; brings together the creative and knowledgeable minds of the biologist Rupert Sheldrake and the theologian Mathew Fox, and the writings of the sixth-century Syrian monk Dionysus the Areopagite, the twelfth-century German abbess Hildegard of Bingen, and the thirteenth-century philosopher–theologian St Thomas Aquinas, to create dialogue in a fascinating, mind-stretching, yet easily readable style.

Angels are regarded by both Sheldrake and Fox as innumerable as stars, possessing similar qualities of light and energetic fields of energy, comparable to photons; and, as transmitters of revelation (in terms of increased consciousness, rather than the narrower definition of handing down dogma), are described as connectors.

Indeed, in a curved world (perhaps this

book could be read to the accompaniment of Terry Riley's 'A Rainbow in Curved Air') both writers suggest 'in and out' are more useful terms than 'up and down', and find Arthur Koestler's notion of holarchy more useful than hierarchy, discussing notions of soul (the anima), process (atoms are more than 99.9 per cent empty space) and energetic fields of force that are more profound than, yet manifested in, matter. As a therapist, I immediately draw the parallel of relational process. As they write, 'The water is in the fish and the fish is in the water.'

Rupert Sheldrake re-presents his theory of morphic fields ('energies that determine form and organisation') and the philosophy of holism (after J. Smutts), of nested hierarchies and patterns where the whole is always greater than the sum of the parts.

And so much more. The meeting of physics (Einstein) with theology (Jesus Christ) at last, reflecting the great leap forward in late twentieth-century thinking, brings together spirit and matter, philosophy and religion, science and theology, psyche and cosmos, celestial spheres with human *chakras*, and reunites astrology with astronomy, to form an integrated, whole science of creation, life and the universe. Here is the notion of something of the stars in all of us ('We are stardust': Crosby, Still, Nash and Young). Sheldrake and Fox write of us, indeed of all matter, as reflections of the soulfulness of the universe.

I read this book alongside Paulo Coelho's *The Valkyries*, in which the Brazilian writer describes his forty-day sojourn in the Mojave Desert, searching for his own personal angel; a book about the transformative power of self-discovery and psychotherapeutic journeying towards healing.

The Physics of Angels contains a wonderful philosophical/scientific/theological discussion for those therapists, particularly the existential and transpersonal amongst us, who wish to meet our clients in a profound, 'soulful' way and thus avoid psychological reductionism; and also for those of us who, like Paulo Coelho, regard life as a journey and wish to partake of both a collective and a creative wisdom to help us along our way. An inspirational book.

John Sivyer

R.D. Laing: Creative destroyer

Bob Mullan (ed.)
Cassell, 1997, £18.99 pb, 431pp.

This is more of an appreciation, really, than a book review. I really liked this book a lot: I am probably one of the very few who have actually read it from cover to cover. It is so bitty, so easy to dip into. I found so many quotes I loved and found useful and wanted to remember. Douglas Kirsner, in his contribution, quotes some words which Sartre contributed to one of Laing's books: 'Like you I think that we cannot understand psychic troubles from outside . . . I believe also that one cannot

study or cure a neurosis without an original respect for the person of the patient... I maintain, like you I believe, mental illness to be the issue that the free organism, in its total unity, invents to live in an unliveable situation. For that reason, I attach the greatest value to your research, in particular to the study that you have made of the family milieu taken as group and as series — and I am convinced that your efforts contribute to our approaching the time when psychiatry will be, finally, *human*.'

Kirsner says that Laing held that treating persons as things implied that one inevitably reached conclusions about things and not people. (Yet still much psychology does just that.) He quotes Laing as saying: 'I'd be prepared to take seriously such terms as "disorder". Some people's minds are in a state of self-confessed or self-admitted disorder or unorder or alternative orderings of the world, metanoid transformations, what is taken to be possible and not possible, what has happened and what has not happened, what's real and what's not real, and so forth. And it is a perfectly decent human activity to decide, say, to put one's two-cent piece in as a contribution to the common weal, to have a go at trying to make a contribution to a lessening of this particular type of human suffering, mental and emotional suffering. That's what I am on about.'

There are some interesting pieces about being in therapy with Laing. Jan de Villeneuve says: 'If one was in the midst of something with Ronnie, the session would go on for a few minutes, which meant that there was often a bit of a wait before going in to see him but you knew you would get your 50 minutes or more eventually... If Ronnie had a tight schedule for any reason (an evening appointment or a plane or train to catch, for example) he would always let you know: 'Jan, we have to finish exactly on time today, whatever you are into.' He seemed totally fair, to have real even-handedness. I felt it was an infinitely safe place to be *me*...' Once he did nod off for a few minutes, she says.

Leon Redler draws some parallels with Buddhist meditation: 'Buddhist meditation practices include basic mindfulness of experience, one's own and, where possible, relevant and/or desirable, that of another. Ronnie encouraged similar unjudgemental mindfulness of experience. Any judgement was to be included within the scope of mindfulness rather than limit or distort it. He was a master at depicting, describing, compassionately inquiring into and seeking to understand experience, inviting others to be co-conspirators in such ventures.'

Michael Guy Thompson contributes a particularly interesting piece, in which he goes at length into Laing's notion of experience. 'Experience' is a word which Laing often uses and obviously regards as very important. 'Laing believed that anything one is *capable* of experiencing couldn't be toxic or pathogenic. Instead, it is the *denial* of experience that elicits the distortions in consciousness we typically associate with psychopathology. Hence anything that we're prone to experience must have an intelligible purpose.'

Thompson also makes the point that Hegel, too, sees experience as deeply important: 'This dialectical process' [says

Hegel] 'which consciousness executes on itself — on its knowledge as well as on its object — in the sense that out of it the new and true object arises, is precisely what is termed *experience*.' Experience in this sense is brand-new. It is a vision of the unexpected — it violates my familiar view of things by forcing something fresh into my consciousness. 'In other words, since experience subverts what is familiar, it changes everything.'

Thompson makes another very interesting point for the conventional view of Laing's philosophical position. 'Though most people identify Laing with the existentialist camp, he actually saw himself as a twentieth-century Sceptic. This explains, for example, the lack of a 'Laingian theory' (the Sceptics were opposed to theory in principle), and also helps explain why Laing never presumed to "know that much about mental illness", the basis (or even the existence of!) psychopathology, and never claimed to have developed a treatment method that could claim to repair whatever difficulty a given patient presented to him.'

Andrew Feldmar has some interesting things to say about Laing's presence. All through the book ex-patients have been saying that they always felt Laing to be really, really present with them, and that this was one of the most remarkable things about him. 'Near the end of his life, Laing often talked about the practice of co-presence. He defined it as the practice of non-intrusive attentiveness, a wholesome concern for each other's life and death. He wrote, "Terror of each other spells the extinction of each other. Communion is mutual extinction of mutual terror. It is joy in, celebration of our co-existence in the world we share, co-presence, our beings being together, completely, as we are." Co-presence, then, is being together lovingly. He continues, "To love the other is to see the other as he or she is, whether or not this is as he, or she needs to be seen, or as we feel the need to see him or her. All alteration of self, of other, making self and other other than we are is deception, not true love."'

Jan Resnick makes an interesting point about boredom. At one point he asked Laing if he were bored. 'He said he was neither bored nor not bored; it wasn't an issue. I had never before considered that there was a third possibility. It is well known, of course, that psychotherapy can open up further dimensions of experience that have hitherto remained closed off — especially in this sort of binary opposition. But for me this was a new idea. I had only *ever* been bored or not-bored. What could a third possibility possibly mean? In this moment I discovered Buddhism though without knowing it as such at the time.'

Resnick also has some interesting things to say about regression. 'Laing also showed me that with very regressed patients it was pointless to address them as if they were separate or grown-up adult people (even though they were). Psychologically, they might be very young and merged-in with oneself. This involved a way of speaking which took their psychic state fully into account. Many therapists fail to reach such clients once they arrive at this point, even if the therapy has been successful in enabling the regression. Laing

knew, somehow, what it was to be without boundaries, without identity. So frightening, so very fragile. For someone as tough and fierce as he could be, he brought to such encounters a delicate, light touch and a gentleness which could render those most vulnerable utterly safe. Secure. Held by a knowing look. Words spoken softly aimed just at the right spot.'

This is an enormously uneven book, with many ups and downs, but I hope I have conveyed the point that there are gems there if we care to look for them.

John Rowan

From Soul to Mind: The emergence of psychology from Erasmus Darwin to William James

Edward S. Reed
Yale University Press, 1997, £16.95 hb, 283pp.

'*From Soul to Mind* tells the story of this progressive narrowing of focus, the story of how psychology became a science, divorced itself from literature, and invented that most modern of concepts, the mind.' What we have here is no less than a complete rewriting of the history of psychology.

The writing in this book is of the first order, making it readable and easy to follow. And the scholarship is impeccable: the author seems to have read every word of every book written by the people he is writing about. He has read not only the English-language writers, but also the French and German sources. For the reader, this is like being given a ride in a luxurious car — we are hardly aware of the potholes and the muddy bits, and are carried forward smoothly and with no danger.

Leigh Hunt, Frankenstein and Percy Bysshe Shelley come in just as much as people like Helmholtz and Wundt. 'In his psychology, Percy Shelley has thus contrived to link experience and knowledge to love. Love is the motive force that pushes us to complete our incomplete selves, including our incomplete minds as well as our incomplete bodies and lusts. Erasmus Darwin and Percy Shelley offer not a clockwork Newtonian universe set in motion by an act of God but a material world animated by eros, from which comes the craving for knowledge as for reproduction.'

The author says modestly that this book is an essay, not a comprehensive history. This may be so, but it is certainly the deepest and most thorough examination of this fascinating story that I have come across, covering as it does not only the English-language but also the broader European scene. I would recommend it to anyone who is puzzling over the fundamental questions behind psychology — the philosophical and metaphysical questions which actually arise in every conversation about what human beings are really like.

John Rowan