Film Review: Life is Beautiful

Roberto Benigni

This film is a fable about the Holocaust. It is not an authoritatively researched impeachment of anti-Semitism like the massive documentary *Shoah*, it is fabulous,feigned and false.The film *Schindler's List* presented Schindler as a trickster who used bribery and panache to help Jews escape the camps; in *Life is Beautiful* Roberto Benigni, its director and star, uses comic methods to maintain love and psychological survival.

The film begins with courtship and marriage. Roberto wins his princess by springing a series of delightful surprises on his beloved; he defeats his love-rival via the old slapstick egg on the head routine, and he keeps his fascist friend friendly by telling him riddles.

When terror comes, when his family get transported to the camps, the film eschews sentimentality and turns farcical, the pace and invention of farce such an appropriate expression of panic. Roberto tries to turn the concentration camp experience into a wonderful competition, a magical game of hide-and-seek for his child. He uses all the tricks of comedy: mimicry, agile acrobatic turns, ingenious timing, cross-dressing and the logic of fantastical illusion and role-play to keep the child innocent of the real purpose of the concentration camps.

The moral of this fable is that to survive psychologically we need to stay true to our values and our energies; we need to be sophisticated enough to keep our innocence intact. It is recorded that many more Jews who maintained their religious observances survived the camps than did those who lapsed on them. When the child in *Life is Beautiful* realises that he has finally 'won the game', I cried at the utter, utter murderous waste of the Holocaust, but on reflection I felt glad that the comic spirit had impinged on the dreadful desolation of the concentration camps in this film. Please, see it.

Dave Jones

The Art of Storytelling

Nancy Mellon
Element Books, 1998, £8.99, 182pp.

This book has been around for some years both in the States and over here under the title *Storytelling and the Art of the Imagination*, and is reissued this year under its present title. Its author has much to teach about how to evoke and shape stories, using people, puppets, props and themes and scenarios, but there is a difficulty with her book, for me and perhaps for other British readers, due to a cultural block about what comes over as inbuilt hype.

Restaurants that tell me they will serve morning-fresh dew-washed baby lettuce alongside home-baked granary wedges stuffed with traditional honey-roast ham rouse less enthusiasm in me than those which list ham baps and leave me to find out whether they're good to eat. *You are one with the universe of sounds; you can listen for their vibrations within you*, says Nancy Mellor. There must be many readers who are delighted by such statements. I become curmudgeonly in the face of them. There's a culture block here, no less and no more.

With that acknowledged, I was attracted by the overlap of styles that Mellor has put together to make a storytelling mode or set of modes. Dramatherapy and psychodrama and playback theatre are all components of her inventions. As often, the use of Moreno derivatives goes along with imaginative practice. A device she uses to great effect is to present story exercises in frames, where they are easy to pick out. Her psychotherapeutic experience shows in such a schema as *Resistance is a threshold ... Picture resistance as a door. See the door and door frame as vividly as possible. Is it locked? ... Then make up a story about someone who is able to open the door and step across the threshold.*

Another of these schemas suggests telling what happens when an unwise wish is made in a fairy story. So the stories are not all geared to happy-ever-after. But the mythic and fairy-story manner is mostly present, and sounds useful in giving storytellers freedom to surprise themselves with the spontaneity of their inventions in a world of archetypes and magic.

Part of the recurring magic of storytelling is this paradox: when the overt intention is to string together a pack of fancies, or in the common parlance, lies, then truth sometimes springs out as if of its own accord. Dreams and stories seem to be next door to each other in the mind in this way. Any book which can help people free their capacity for storytelling is to be valued, for the pleasure of the stories themselves, and for the cathartic and therapeutic possibilities suggested for therapists ready to experiment with fresh ways of working.

Gaie Houston

John Bowlby: His early life

Suzan van Dijken
Free Association Books, 1998, £15.99, 214pp.

It can be hard to remember the field in which a writer came to his ideas. A supervisee saw this book on my table and gave a half-smile and looked at me, apparently checking whether John Bowlby was a writer in fashion, a writer to grimace about or praise.

To me he is a writer to praise, for bothering to observe properly, and then to research properly, and to make known his beliefs and findings so that there has both in and since his time been growing acceptance that children suffer when separated from their mother or mother-figure. Today that finding seems so obvious that it is easy to shrug at it. But in 1951 (*1951*, not 1915) a researcher sent by Bowlby to observe young children in hospital reported, 'I found myself caught up emotionally in the resistance of the doctors and nurses to what seemed to me very obvious — that young patients were in states of extreme distress.' Until this theory was put forward, it seems, many grown-ups managed, wherever convenient, to ignore the realities of children's experience.

Freud saw the attachment of young children to the mother as cupboard love, as a matter of physical survival. It was a bold assertion, in that context, to suggest otherwise, and all the more so in the face of such a colleague and contemporary as Melanie Klein, who maintained with great insistence that object relations were an internal matter of the child's phantasy, and not to do with the real mother, father, or anyone else. Yet Klein was Bowlby's mentor and supervisor for several years, during which time it seems that he did not properly grasp this aspect of her beliefs. When he saw a distressed child brought to the clinic by a nervous and distressed mother, Klein put aside his suggestions that the mother should be treated as well as the child.

Some of what Bowlby says sits uncomfortably with New Labour's eagerness to return mothers to the workplace and provide nursery accommodation to that end. Brought up himself more by nurserymaids and nannies than by his mother, Bowlby construed early parenting in terms of female figures and, typically for an upper-middle-class British child born in 1907, saw his father as a distant figure. Even on long holidays each year in Scotland, John was aware that the children were accompanying their parents there on an adult holiday, rather than being themselves the focus. He also noticed that although their mother indulged her boys she had little interest in her daughters, to the point that if the boys caught a salmon, champagne was drunk in celebration; if the girls caught one, the fact was ignored.

This review has so far been dominated by the content of this book. That is no doubt as Susan van Dijken would wish; it represents a favourable comment on the interest of her subject matter, which appears to have been painstakingly researched. But she is Dutch, and her English is oddly cast at moments. Moreover in every chapter she holds to the same academic formula of introduction, main section and conclusion, which reads a bit dryly and repetitively in a biography, more suited to a book concerned with an exposition of ideas and research. The overview on the last chapter is for the most part a précis rather than an extension of the material already presented. Even so, the notes begin on page 164, so the book is not extensive.

One of van Dijken's main findings is that Bowlby's views on the damaging effects of separation and loss on young children had already been formed in work carried out in the 1930s, rather than as a result of the distressing task he had in the early days of the Second World War, organising the evacuation of children from London. She reminds us of his work with young thieves, and his linking of their behaviour to love and loss. She comments on his apparent high-handedness with colleagues at times. What does not emerge, but is there to be speculated upon, is how far his theory of the need for a small band of intimates to be maintained throughout life was a reflection of his own experience. Bowlby himself was probably too busy making a case for the importance of first relationships to be able to give the sort of emphasis to peers that most modern writers do. (See, for example, J. Dunn's *Young Children's Close Relationships: Beyond attachment*, or the Rutters' *Developing Minds: Challenge and continuity across the life span.*)

But what is generally so astounding and worthy of respect in Bowlby's work, as with that of other great contributors to understanding, is that he withstood such heavy and overwhelming personalities as Melanie Klein and Anna Freud; that having learned from (quite short) experiences of work with troubled children and wise teachers, he persisted with his hypotheses when the climate of opinion was unwelcoming. If society is to evolve into more stability, Bowlby's findings deserve to be exposed to more of the public than have heard of him hitherto. And perhaps his ideas, like those of many early theorists, should be respected as an evolutionary mutation in psychological theory, rather than discounted by later thinkers who stand on his shoulders in order to see further.

Gaie Houston

Person-centred Counselling and Christian Spirituality

Brian Thorne
Whurr, 1998, £17.50

This impassioned book explores the central themes of Christian spirituality, dramatically unfolded and explored within the person-centred counselling arena. Brian Thorne's narrative demands attention because his 'sermons' confirm his rich experience and his own struggle and clarity in making sense of the whole business of living out an individual life. His book attempts to provide a spiritual backdrop for the meaning of 'helping' in the Rogerian sense, and the understanding the counsellor brings to the part he or she plays in the therapeutic relationship.

Brian Thorne does not mince words. He challenges us to stay with the intimacy of the language of Christianity, to consider the possibility that the moment of being 'whole and holy, fully human' (surely the central hope of a person-centred philosophy) is the moment of grace, when as unique individuals we belong and are at home with our very core. This is rightly to be applauded as the counsellor's mission and hope, but the book moves us a leap of faith further, in daring to suggest that in this moment of grace we are actually the 'incarnation of the divine'.

The chapter 'Reflections on Jung and Rogers — the Two Carls' provides meaty food for thought. The spiritual journeys of each man are presented vividly, with questions and answers tussled with at each part. Indeed as Thorne strives to weave together his sense of the struggle of his respective heroes he openly grapples with fresh possibilities for linking and lighting up his own spiritual tapestry. Learning to love oneself, the hard road towards self-acceptance, discovering new ways of being loved and being loving in mind, flesh and spirit are heralded as the *only* way to give shape and meaning to the human condition.

The more my own faith, both as Christian and as counsellor, was challenged in this book the more I was compelled to read on and on. The language is clear, the dramatic examples are many and the depth of the author's experience is spelt out. I invite even the unbeliever to chew his book over. Even practitioners who choose not to see the human condition in terms of Jesus will find that Brian Thorne provokes a stirring of their philosophical basis. It may be easier for us all to leave questions unanswered and simply gloss over the actual context of our 'helping', but I believe that anyone who reads his book will feel dared to step into some fresh and unknown space, to follow his lead in the godly dance to wherever such a leap might take us.

Julie Lane

Medicine Women — A pictorial history of women healers

Elisabeth Brooke
Thorsons, 1997, £9.99, 127pp.

I enjoyed this book very much. Elisabeth Brooke traces the history of those women who have been in the forefront of healing throughout the centuries and explains both their privileges and their plights. We learn that women have been healers from the earliest times, skilled in herbal remedies, surgery and midwifery, often discovering and inventing cures far in advance of their male colleagues.

This most attractive book presents a great many facts in a genial format. There are 34 full-page illustrations, mainly in colour, and 40 smaller pictures interspersed with fascinating and enlightening text. The graphics and layout have been beautifully designed to delight the eye, and present historical information and relevant quotes in a spacious form. I found that this gave me the mental space to contemplate what I was reading.

Elisabeth Brooke's text explores her subject from a variety of aspects: the Goddess as healer, with ancient rituals; the healing Church, which alternately respected and despised women with medicinal skills, first establishing them as doctors, midwives and nurses, then destroying their right to practise; the education of women medics and the enormous struggle they have had for equality with their male counterparts; persecution and prejudice; and finally, public health hospitals, such as that set up in London solely for women by Elizabeth Garrett Anderson.

The pictures in *Medicine Women* help us to identify with the roles of these healers. From illuminated medieval manuscripts, woodcuts, reliefs and engravings we have immediate reference. The Renaissance and 17th-century drawings highlight methods of childbirth and how women helped each other. The 19th-century paintings and photographs record Florence Nightingale and her work, along with that of several other brave women, while the 20th-century photographs focus on Marie Stopes, Maria Montessori and Mama Lola, a Voodoo healer.

Elisabeth Brooke also brings us up to date here with therapeutic touch, now widely recognised and accepted as a vital part of complementary medicine. In the context of the present holistic approach to healing, her book provides relevant inspiration from the traditions of women throughout the ages. I can thoroughly recommend it.

Helen Williams

Referral and Termination Issues for Counsellors

Anne Leigh
Sage, 1998, £12.99, 150pp.

I approached reviewing this slim book with something of a sigh: yet another skills book, yet another 'how to do it' tome. So I thought I'd best read Anne Leigh's introductory remarks, to discover why this book was conceived and born, in the hope that I would also be able to differentiate my pre-assessment conceptions from hers.

But it was not to be. As I read on, the book, despite much useful common sense and good practical teachings, revealed itself to be a very 'worked at' and rather low-grade academic work, a kind of expanded student essay, one that lacked colour, vibrancy or real passion for life. What emerged was a largely dull read, with opening sentences like 'The counsellor may, for instance ...' Oh spare me, please, another dry essay that sounds like a bored teacher trying to work up some enthusiasm for class 4E on a wet Friday afternoon!

I did however wake up and bristle at the patronising put-down comments on Carl Rogers and the centrality of relationship in therapeutic work. For example: 'Although the relationship between the client and counsellor is *usually* [my emphasis] of the utmost importance, it may not be potent enough for some client difficulties. Sometimes expertise in a certain area such as behavioural desensitisation for phobic conditions ... is necessary for some clients.'

No, Anne Leigh, I really can't go with you on this one, because the arrogance of your dry, clinical words affronts me, and because if I were your phobic client I'd feel I was being told, firstly, that I'm in some psychological way undeserving of a relationship with you, and secondly, that I need to be 'desensitised' — that I'm just some nuisance who has got his knickers in a twist over some trauma.

And so the introductory chapter goes on, as indeed does the rest of the book; a mixture of hectoring and didactic proselytising that both irritated and quickly bored me. The writing style is stiff and dry and arid, like the text. I was, however, touched at last by Anne Leigh's closing remarks on 'why this book', and I quote: 'This experience [of counselling] ended disastrously for me when my counsellor decided that I needed to see someone else, because she identified too strongly with my issues, and she ended the counselling abruptly.'

Ouch. I really felt for her, reading that, and now understood why she felt she had to write this book. But it is not a cathartic book. Anne Leigh never gives catharsis a chance. Instead, as is all too familiar these days, it's once again 'I've been hurt', so wheel in more rules, more strictures of practice, and in so doing, lose the magic, the poetry, the 'realness' of the therapeutic relationship. No wonder then that Anne Leigh, from a place of hurt, proscribes and minimises both Rogers and the therapeutic relationship, and that both are sorely missing from this 'counsel by the rules' book.

Yet despite my comments and reservations, there is much good practical sense here to commend this book to students, in particular, and to poorly or inadequately trained therapists. As Anne Leigh says, although referral ('referral on', as it's more commonly known) is an important issue, there is little reference to the topic in current therapeutic literature. She refers to both the arrogance and the 'narcissistic trap' that counsellors can fall into in supposing they can 'deal with everyone and everything'. Highlighting this topic, and also that of ending (I don't much care for 'termination' — sounds sort of sci-fi and impersonal), is clearly a worthwhile project.

There are chapters on 'The Beginning Phase', 'Medical Referrals', 'Alternative Counselling Referrals', 'Referral Issues' (in the middle phase), 'Problems and Considerations' (in the ending phase) and 'Ethical Considerations' (regarding referral and termination issues). And it's all good, plain, practical, sensible and useful stuff. Just written rather boringly, and with little feeling for the warm, loving transpersonal relationship between therapist and client. A clinical, sort of manual-type book, more suited I thought to the mechanistic therapist who I guess is unlikely to be reading either this review or indeed this publication.

I fear this is a dull book, because Anne Leigh invariably hides behind the rule-bound skirts of the BAC parent and rarely dares to come out from under its protective cloak. Once again, then, the reader is being offered a do-it-by-the-rules method that minimises the healing relationship so sadly, so increasingly feared by practitioners today; fearful of complaint, and fearful of rejection by the growing power and dominance of the drive towards therapeutic professionalism.

John Sivyer

Developing Gestalt Counselling

Jennifer MacKewn
Sage, 1997, £14.99, 262pp.

Developing Transactional Analysis Counselling

Ian Stewart
Sage, 1996, £12.99, 214pp.

I sometimes wonder why some of us still refer to ourselves as Gestalt or TA therapists, or indeed any other title of orientation as reflected in the titles of these two books. Surely from the perspective of the consumers, our clients, such titles are meaningless? What is evident from reading both books is that the authors are sensitive, well informed, thoughtfully caring and experienced, generic therapists. However, that is where any similarity between the two ends.

Firstly, Jennifer MacKewn's *Developing Gestalt Counselling.* As if to evidence the accuracy of the more inclusive, encompassing term of 'therapist' Jennifer MacKewn is referred to as a psychotherapist in the 'blurb', with only one mention of her gestalt involvement in seven lines of biography. And then again, in her opening Preface and introductory writings, she refers to the concept of 'contemporary *integrative* gestalt' and the book is addressed to therapists 'of *all orientations* ... or those who wish to *integrate* gestalt' into their current practice (my emphases).

She develops this point further by stating that 'I especially want to convey how flexible and adaptable gestalt can be, allowing the practitioner to incorporate all manner of ideas and insights from other forms of therapy and from different fields of expertise within the integrative frame of field theory.' And later, 'I am also suggesting that counselling and therapy need to go beyond individualism, beyond even human intersubjectivity and address issues of the field in which we live — our interdependence with the natural world, our responsibilities for the economical and cultural conditions of our times as well as our responsibilities towards the other species which cohabit our earth.'

In this eminently sensible, practical and thought-provoking book Jennifer MacKewn takes gestalt light years forwards towards a synthesis and integration of psychological styles and away from what she describes as 'Perlism'. I agree with her: this is a book for therapists, not principally for gestaltists — whoever or however they still conceive of themselves. She also kicks into touch the ridiculous and surely now archaic notion of difference between counselling and psychotherapy, using both terms coterminously and alternating them throughout the book.

And finally, still in her polemical preface, she critiques the person-centred approach as emphasising human relationships to the detriment of our interdependent and ecological relationship with other species and Planet Earth: 'the elements of earth, sky, water, fire and a lived sense of relationship to rocks, trees, flowers and wild creatures [that enables us] to live meaningful, sustainable lives.' Agreeing with Hillman and Ventura, she argues that 100 years on from the birth of therapy 'the world is getting worse ... Counselling and psychotherapy do not seem to have fulfilled their early promise. Indeed (they) may have contributed to the fostering of a narcissistic culture.'

She expands this argument to note the lack of therapeutic interaction between individuals and the ecological, social and economical conditions of our times, asserting that therapy has 'emphasised the hurts which older generations and society have inflicted', showing us some useful ways to alleviate these wounds, but offering 'little guidance about how we can tend the wounds of society, of our ancestors or of the world'.

Jennifer MacKewn offers a different basis for counselling and psychotherapy, one that emphasises not the individual, alone, but the person in context, situated, as we all are, in the phenomenological reality of our own perceived environment. She reasons that as the ecological balance of the world is immediately threatened, a continued emphasis upon humanistic and person-centred approaches is proving fatal to many species and habitats and is likely to be fatal to the human species as well. Thus she challenges archaic person-centred paradigms in a way, I personally feel certain, Carl Rogers would have welcomed and embraced — for, as she concludes, existential phenomenology suggest there are many realities, many perspectives and many truths, and Rogers, in his emphasis upon the quality of listening to clients, surely encapsulated this in his three core conditions.

In inviting the reader to 'pick and choose' from the many and varied, always practical, hands-on approach chapters, be they exploring clients' contexts and cultures; developing a dialogic relationship with them; observing the therapeutic process through awareness and contact with them, often from a transpersonal perspective; or through the more familiar gestalt approach of embodiment, energy and resistance, Jennifer MacKewn hopes we will both enjoy her book and find it of use. This reader, commending the book to you all, has no doubt that both her hopes will be be fulfilled.

When it came to reviewing Ian Stewart's book *Developing TA Counselling* it was immediately obvious that it had a very different feel about it. For whilst it came from, I thought, the same stable as gestalt (that is, from a humanistic, empowering-the-client approach to therapy) it turned out to be, after the philosophical and creative approach of *Developing Gestalt Counselling*, a much more prescriptive, directive book, almost a mathematical manual of 'how to do it'. A painting by numbers, if you will, that had for me an air of sterility and 'fix it'.

Ian Stewart's opening sentence is: 'I offer you 30 practical suggestions on how to develop your effectiveness and ... to focus on helping people "avoid common errors".' What follows is a brief summary of TA that I thought clearly and concisely well written. Then there are the 30 practical suggestions, which as the jacket says 'provide much-needed practical guidance to such key areas as contract-making, time frames and the Process Model.' Fair enough, except that the didactic style of writing comes across as a sort of teacher/expert talk very much at odds with Berne's philosophy of empowering clients. It certainly has not left me feeling empowered as a therapist, rather 'taught' and confused. For example, turning to contract-making: Ian Stewart opens the chapter on this by stating that it is the area in which most frequently common errors occur in TA. 'When experienced transactional analysts make effective contracts, much of what they do is different from what the books have said they *should do*' (my emphasis). His remedy (which I applaud) is to write up what TA therapists actually do, but the problem for me is that he then substitutes one set of 'shoulds' for another. Maybe Stewart tapped into my script? Maybe he's written from his own? Whichever, or neither, I read it as Parent (mostly, to be fair, nurturing) to Child (and this free child did not respond in a very compliant manner!).

I acknowledge that my review of this book incorporates a critical review of TA itself and the contradictions, whether conscious or unconscious, inherent in some of Stewart's statements. For example, he says: 'the assumption [is] that counsellor and client relate on equal terms', but this is followed by: '[the counsellor] develops an analysis of the client's problem ... and then intervenes actively in a planned and structured manner', which process is called '*treatment direction*' (my emphasis). Stewart also refers to protecting the client by a method known as 'closing escape hatches', which involves ensuring he or she 'makes and states an unconditional decision that she will never, in any circumstances, kill or harm self, kill or harm anyone else, or go crazy'. I wondered if this was actually as much a procedure (unacknowledged by Stewart) to protect the counsellor as for the sake of the client.

I am thus indebted to Stewart for his accurate (by comparison with my reading of other TA therapists) portrayal of TA and for exposing what I believe to be TA's lack of clarity — or, at worst, its disingenuous approach to the power imbalance that operates when the trained and effective therapist meets the distressed and often emotionally ignorant client. Transferentially, surely, this client meets the therapist, not from the Adult to Adult contractual standpoint that Berne and Stewart favour, but as Child transferring on to the projected Parent. If this Child is adapted and compliant, he or she may well sign up to TA's contractual method, but the contract will probably break as soon as his or her shit hits the fan.

If you wish to examine, investigate and enquire fairly deeply into TA, then this is a useful book. If your script is to be chiefly instructed and taught by teachers other than yourself, then avoid it, for this is a didactic tome that will only confirm and reinforce such a script; a book that lacks both humility and any real acknowledgement of the autonomous power of the client.

John Sivyer

Advocacy, Counselling and Mediation in Casework

Yvonne Craig (ed.)
Jessica Kingsley, 1198, £15.95, 255pp.

This book contains a collection of 18 papers, divided into two parts: the social construction of advocacy, counselling and mediation, followed by a much longer section focusing on the application of these three elements in empowering the client or group.

To begin with I was uncertain as to the particular readership that the editor, also a contributor, had in mind. Many of the contributors are academics, and the analyses they make are well informed by current research on practice and outcomes in their chosen fields. A spectrum of working methods is covered, mostly very thoroughly, with a wide variety of client groups (referred to by the clumsy title 'service users'). For example, there is child advocacy, student counselling, couples and family counselling and mediation, and mental health advocacy (this last by David Brandon, one of the best chapters and firmly based in his own practice and experience). Yvonne Craig herself writes on elder mediation, and there are chapters on victim/offender mediation, HIV/AIDS counselling, cross-cultural work and counselling for substance abusers. The book is thus a compendium of research findings and current practice in many areas and methods of assisting people, with the common aim of improving the quality of their lives. The last chapter describes the three-year 'Shaping our Lives' project, funded by the Department of Health and run by the National Institute for Social Work, for which research is currently being undertaken by the authors. They conclude that the quality of services will be determined by the extent to which individuals are enabled to meet their own expectations and enhance control over their own lives.

After my initial uncertainty about the target readership, I came to conclude that this is a timely and useful book, not least because it contains a great deal of practical information, such as names and addresses of relevant resources, which will be of value to both policy makers and providers of care. It would also be useful to those professionals seeking an overview to deepen their understanding of work going on with different client groups currently in 'other parts of the forest'. Advocacy, counselling and mediation may superficially appear to be separate disciplines, but the skills required need to come together in many situations. This book represents a thorough review of current practice and trends — I recommend it warmly.

Margaret Novakovic

Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honouring human experience

William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson
Sage, 1998, £14.99, 321pp.

Researchers are often guided by intuitions, fortuitous dreams and happy accidents. Until now, however, any researcher in the social sciences would have had to think very carefully before writing up such experiences formally as part of their final paper, for fear of being labelled 'unscientific'. It is ironic, then, to learn from this book that researchers in the so-called pure sciences are more open-minded. These scientists are not afraid to reveal how subjectivity guided their science. Listen to the cyrogeneticist Barbara McClintock: 'Well, you know, when I look at a cell, I get down in that cell and look around ... I found that the more I worked with them the bigger and bigger they got, and when I was really working with them, I wasn't outside, I was down there. I was part of the system.' Or the biologist June Goodfield: 'If you want to really understand about a tumour, you've got to be a tumour.' Or even the physicist Albert Einstein: 'Only intuition resting on sympathetic understanding can lead to these laws ... the daily effort comes ... straight from the heart.'

In case any reader thinks the debate on subjectivity versus objectivity is old hat, let me tell them it is still managing to create controversy on the letters page of the BPS *Journal*, where humanistic psychologists and experimental psychologists exchange letters on how to access information in a way that is valid scientifically, while retaining the essence of what it is to be human. Braud and Anderson's book answers points made by both sides of this debate. They give an excellent overview of the history and the philosophy of science, while managing gracefully and cleverly to offer a new paradigm for research in the social sciences. They have produced a 'both/and' solution to an 'either/or' debate. Like all new paradigms this includes both of the old approaches, but is also greater than them in offering a new way to think about and conduct research.

The point that Braud and Anderson make is that traditional *quantitative* research in social science, such as experiments and personality inventories, has systematically excluded our most illuminating, healing and exciting experiences, because such experiences cannot be replicated. At the same time the richness and variety of *qualitative* research, such as subjective first person accounts and interviews, loses out in terms of certainty and reliability of source. Braud and Anderson's argument is that the two are complementary; that accurate research in social sciences needs both to do justice to the human condition, and that research methodology is like a dance in which two partners are required, the qualitative providing richness of description and the quantitative verifying the descriptions with measurable facts. A report that includes only one or the other is, on these terms, only half of the story.

Braud and Anderson practise what they preach by introducing their book with personal histories of how they came to work in this field. The bulk of the book concentrates on five transpersonal research methods — integral inquiry; intuitive inquiry; transpersonal awareness in phenomenological enquiry; organic research; and inquiry informed by exceptional human experiences — and looks at how they have been used.

Many of the ideas expressed in this book have existed for some time. Liam Hudson's book *The Cult of the Fact* covered many of the areas mentioned in Braud and Anderson's introduction as to why a new paradigm of psychological research is necessary. However, what is original about this book is that it is immensely practical; it is really a workbook on how to set about conducting transpersonal research. Its other strength is that it is written with supreme confidence. There is no defensiveness in its presentation of ideas and solutions, it is simply written as if this way of conducting psychological research is absolutely valid, straightforward and obvious. The authors are sensitive to the demands of scientific rigour and clarify just when and where more quantitative techniques are appropriate. I strongly recommend it, not only to students of humanistic psychology but as required reading on any academic psychology degree course.

Jessica Woolliscroft

Wisdom Stranded

April Ryedale
Fountainhead Press, 1998, £7.70 pb, 136pp.

This slim volume is ambitiously labelled as the first part of a three-part epic to compare with Dante's *Divine Comedy*. It comes across more as a sort of novella in low-pressure prose, chopped up to look like verse, and incorporating one or two short verse pieces in a different font. The author says: 'I realised with a rush of illumination that I must birth an epic that focused on the nearly invisible feminine aspects of divinity.' She tells a family story, in abbreviated and abstract fashion, and moves regularly from mythological times to the present day. It is designed to represent 'a speeded-up version of human evolution from 1900 to 2040', and there is also a political angle to it with a passing relationship to South African politics.

I wish I could say something nicer about this book, because I have met the author and wish her well personally, but it did not really appeal very much to me.

John Rowan

Solution-Focused Therapy

Bill O'Connell
Sage, 1998, £11.99, 160pp.

Solution-focused therapy (SFT) was first developed in the USA by Steve de Shazer, and O'Connell continually refers to de Shazer in this book. It is a form of brief therapy, and therefore fits in with the trend which prevails today of moving more in that direction. Obviously this leads us to look very carefully at the underlying assumptions which are operating here. O'Connell summarises them as follows, after the work of Barrett-Kruse: (a) the view that self and others are essentially able (this view is common to most versions of therapy); (b) the acceptance of the client's definition of the problem (this is much more dubious, for reasons I will outline later); (c) the formation of the therapeutic alliance (this again is common to most approaches); (d) the crediting of success to the client (again very common); (e) the therapist learning from the client (this would need to be spelled out a bit more, but most therapists do learn from their clients, and many do admit it); (f) the avoidance of a power struggle with the client (this is common to the vast majority of therapies and therapists); and (g) the objectification, rather than the personalisation, of the client's behaviour. This last is a bit complex, but it seems to echo the view held in narrative therapy that 'the person is not the problem; the problem is the problem.'

There seem to be two quite problematic points here. Firstly there is the 'acceptance of the client's definition of the problem'. This sound very good at first: it respects the client, it represents a collaboration with the client, it is very democratic, and so forth. But as someone once said to me: 'The client's definition of the problem can be just as neurotic as anything else about the client.' The client's basic problems and hang-ups, in other words, can affect everything about the client, including their ideas about problems and solutions. It is not uncommon, for example, for a man to come into counselling and declare that he is coming out of a desire to be helpful, but the real problem is his wife. The solution is for her to change. It seems unlikely to me that solution-focused therapists never encounter this sort of thing. Indeed, on page 28 the author quotes de Shazer as making a distinction between visitors, complainants and customers which addresses it quite precisely. But he then proceeds to ignore this distinction. Similarly on page 31, he distinguishes between people with clear ideas about their problems, and people with broad, diffuse and poorly understood patterns: again he proceeds to ignore the distinction from that point on. On pages 117–8 he tackles the question of whether SFT therapists are naïve in that they take the stories clients present at face value, but he does not really answer it, rather avoids it.

The other problematic point is the one about the 'objectification, rather than the personalisation, of the client's behaviour'.

This is the situation where the therapist says: 'If your anger is the problem, let's deal with Mr Anger. Mr Anger is not you, he is an invader and a nasty person.' Sometimes, I would say, this is just the right approach. But sometimes it is not. And in any case O'Connell himself does not use this approach very much.

What comes across in general here is a rather pat set of values and methods. On page 86 O'Connell has a series of nine differences between the long-term and the short-term counsellor which betrays more prejudice against the former than understanding. So I think the approach he favours is too formulaic, too confident of its rightness, not respectful enough of difference and variation.

Any therapy which denies the existence of an inner life within the client, which denies the prevalence of mystery, which wants to place all the problems out there on a table ready to be dissected, is not really a human therapy in my book. It is more suitable for denizens of a part-human world, a world in which people are identical with the roles they play and have no inner self, no soul. In fact, the word 'self' does not even appear in the index.

The book is consistent in applying the same approach to supervision. This says that the therapist is no better off than the client. How sad.

John Rowan

An ABC of NLP

Joseph Sinclair
Aspen, 1998, £7.95 pb, 144pp.

This book originally came out in 1992, and this second edition has now been updated with the help of Stephen Bray. It is exactly what the title suggests — an alphabetical list of terms used in NLP, including a few potted biographies. It seems to be accurate and up-to-date, and would be helpful to anyone interested in NLP. Some of the heroes, such as Fritz Perls and Virginia Satir, will be familiar to people in humanistic circles; and it mentions gestalt therapy. It has a number of excellent cartoon illustrations by 'ALB' (Albert Saunders, now deceased). There is rather a strange version of authenticity, identified with congruence, defined as where 'internal beliefs, strategies and behaviours are fully in agreement and directed toward a purposeful outcome'. I don't think either Heidegger or Bugental would recognise such a description.

There is quite a long description of New Code NLP, which apparently is a more advanced notion than original NLP. In a couple of places, 'parts' are synonyms of 'subpersonalities', but subpersonalities do not have an entry of their own.

I don't think anyone could learn NLP from this book, but it might help to clear up difficulties in understanding other books or experiences in conferences or whatever.

John Rowan

Therapists' Dilemmas

Windy Dryden
Sage, 1997, £13.99 pb, 198pp.

This book first came out in 1985, and was generally hailed as being an excellent contribution to the field. I certainly enjoyed reading my copy, and wondered what changes would have been made to a revised edition. Would there be different dilemmas, would there be more dilemmas, would there be new issues arising in the 13 years since then? When I came to compare the two side by side, I was surprised to find that there was only one difference. Instead of a final chapter by Windy Dryden, entitled 'Further issues and tentative solutions', there was a final chapter by Tim Bond, entitled 'Therapists' dilemmas as stimuli to new understanding and practice'. This is a good chapter, looking back over the book and drawing out various interesting issues.

So I think the advice is very simple: if you have the first edition, don't bother to buy this one; if you haven't read the book before, it is still excellent and well worth perusal.

John Rowan

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