The Spirit of Man: A Vision of Transformation for Black Men and the Women Who Love Them

Iyanla Vanzant
Harper San Francisco, 1996, £8.99

Iyanla has written four best-sellers and has guided many people to seek and strengthen their spiritual connection. The book reaches out to black men and the women who love them, to embrace the energy within the self.

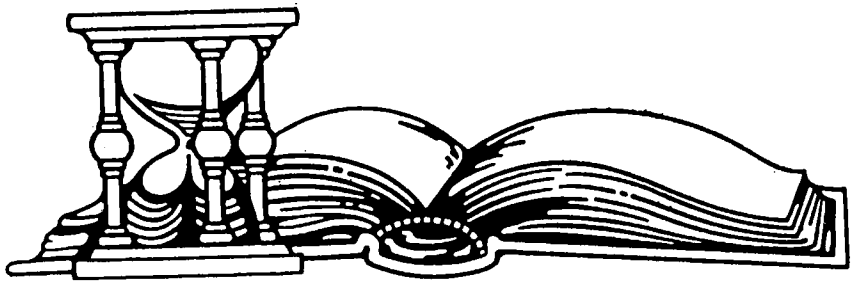
Following the principles of spiritual transformation Iyanla Vanzant guides the reader through a process of self-analysis. Limiting beliefs that arise in black men are challenged. You are taught how to nurture the spirit of truth and reframe your internal processes and behaviour. She clearly writes a positive message of empowerment, how to delve deep and overcome negative energies. The author has first-hand experience and her teaching can lead and guide those who need to see the light at the end of their tunnel.

The aim of this book is to provide insight and self-discovery, a disciplined approach that can be utilised to analyse yourself, to look into ingrained attitudes and align them through the spirit of atonement. The author challenges the intrinsic issues that confront the brothers. She relates to a spiritual understanding of how to come to terms with life though the spirit, presenting an opportunity of transformation through practical, easy to understand self-help exercises. This is a complete and totally healing process that can enable one to surrender past issues or difficulties by developing a concrete foundation which is grounded in the spiritual laws that govern life.

Iyanla addresses a form of empowerment which offers you the courage to recognise and dig deep into your spirit consciousness, learning how to understand and accept yourself and those around your domain and how to comprehend truth and experience freedom, joy and peace, embracing a new way of thinking.

A wonderful and inspiring book. Chapter by chapter I could visualise the process of 'cultivating your garden' in order to have a good crop.

Fitz Douglas



Are you Sitting Uncomfortably? Windy Dryden — Live and Uncut

Windy Dryden
PCCS Books, 1998, 160pp, £10.50

There is no doubt that Windy Dryden's provocative and challenging collection of lectures left me sitting uncomfortably. Many of his beliefs and practices differ widely from my own as a person-centred practitioner, yet his pragmatic good sense and logical rigorous approach are patently effective. He gives examples of meticulously considered and energetic approaches to his work with couples, with obsessive compulsive disorders and with low self esteem, showing evidence of his clients' development and change. His down to earth wisdom caused me to re-examine and question my own beliefs and practice repeatedly.

Windy Dryden's style is completely unpretentious and open, and he is prepared to share his own experiences. For example, he describes how rational emotive behaviour therapy helped him to overcome his stammer. He acknowledges that his embrace of REBT ideas might have been influenced by the fact that, as a loner, he wished to flout received wisdom. More seriously, he is very aware that this problem-solving approach suits his particular personality and works best both for him and for his clients. I like his unheirarchical belief that as a counsellor he needs to make his concepts and practice explicit as well as ethical, and that he always seeks 'informed consent' before working with a client. At the same time, he acknowledges that, whether we like it or not, we do influence clients. He advocates that we 'give counselling away' and as an ideal aims to educate clients to become their own counsellors.

This approach has its roots in one of his own early experiences of therapy. As a trainee he went to his first therapist suffering from low-grade depression. When he asked the therapist (Kleinian) what his approach was, the response was 'I wonder why this is important to you?' and then 'You seem to want me to feed you'. He did not question the therapist further, believing him to know best, though these remarks continued to puzzle him for months to come and he did not find the therapy helped his problem.

His subjects range from 'Why self-help books don't work' and 'I do not help clients raise their self esteem' to the provocatively titled 'Looking for the good in Hitler and the bad in Mother Teresa.' All his essays contain sensible and rational concepts, such as the following: we need to challenge our own distorted belief systems; we have to be proactive if we wish to sustain desired behaviour changes; and people are not polarised into extremes of right and wrong but we encompass a mixture of the two which we need to come to terms with. He also stresses the constant fluctuation of our thoughts, feelings and behaviour and the need for the therapist to respond flexibly.

As a trainer I was particularly interested in his reflections in his final essay 'Looking for the good in Hitler', when he warns of the dangers of trainees suppressing their feelings in the training arena. He wishes trainees to be able to express negative feelings in the large group even if these are sexist or racist, as then they will not hide them from themselves. Unless they can do this, such feelings cannot be explored and integrated into the totality of the person. This resonates strongly with me, though I still ponder about how I can achieve it!

This series of lectures is clear, enthusiastic and stimulating, but for me it veers too much to the pragmatic, leaving out a spiritual and creative dimension. As it is originally a series of lectures it is also unavoidable that a number of the ideas are frequently repeated, though usually in a different context. I can recommend it for its humanity, refreshing energy, readability and thought-provoking ideas.

Val Simanowitz

The Resonance of Emptiness: A Buddhist Inspiration for a Contemporary Psychotherapy

Gay Watson
Curzon Press, 1998, £4.00

This scholarly book conveys some of the essential aspects of Buddhism, and shows its relevance for a re-examination of the philosophy and practice of psychotherapy. This goes well beyond identifying the already established and recognised strands of Buddhist influence in psychotherapy (in the work of Jung, Perls, Maslow *et al*), or more recent attempts to map Buddhism *as* psychotherapy. This book offers a Buddhist inspired framework for thinking again about the philosophical ground and goals of psychotherapy, in the context of contemporary Western intellectual and spiritual dilemmas.

The wide range of philosophical perspectives (Eastern and Western) encompassed could be daunting, but Watson writes with clarity and precision, and has an unswerving ability to pinpoint and summarise key issues in a highly readable way. The intellectual territory dealt with is huge, linking two topics. Each of these has its own history, view of the nature of how things are, each has deep roots which contain undercurrents and echoes that go back thousands of years. Watson does not quite convey a full sense of this historical evolution. She does give a remarkably succinct summary of the more recent Western thinking that emerged into psychotherapy and contemporary philosophical discourse, and of the major phases in the long development of Buddhist teachings. She does this in a way that seems to pull into focus what could be described as an emergent 'Buddhistic view' within the European intellectual tradition.

Watson emphasises the fact that Buddhist philosophy and psychology is derived from, and interwoven with, *spiritual practice*. In this, it offers a link back to a profound spiritual grounding through the embodied, meditational awareness practice that is central to Buddhist enquiry, but that is 'quite alien to Western philosophy, which almost entirely separates itself from questions of practice and of embodied experience.' Western philosophy and much of Western psychotherapy has predominantly favoured the thinking mind. Buddhism offers not only a way of *thinking* about experience, but also a *re-experiencing* of experience, in such a way that reconnects and embodies the spiritual, the philosophical, and the psychological. This connects it with psychotherapeutic approaches which attempt to integrate the different aspects and layers of conscious experience, though its roots are in a spiritual practice that draws on deeper levels of unconditioned awareness to penetrate the processes involved in the arising of consciousness itself. It brings *contemplative awareness* to a central place in the healing process.

The key Buddhist teachings, which have huge significance for the practice and understanding of psychotherapy, are outlined here. They include the fundamental questioning of the nature of experience, which is embodied in the Four Noble Truths and the doctrine of Dependent Origination, dealing with how we experience, rather than what. At the heart of these teachings lies the doctrine of *sunyata*, which is the emptiness of inherent existence — 'the lack of inherent, separate self of all things, persons, phenomena.' This realisation opens up a profound shift in our relationship to arising experience. It offers a means of *seeing through ignorance*. This ignorance is the way in which we narrow our consciousness and cut ourselves off from the very aliveness of our experience. We do this by identifying with our ideas, concepts or narratives about who we are and believing ourselves to be separate from the world of which we are a part. Through *sunyata* we can reconnect with 'brilliant sanity'— our aliveness, and openness to how things truly are, and our inherent potential for 'enlightened mind'.

The implications of this are not just for psychotherapy as the healing of individuals, but link back to the societies and communities which are the matrix for our experience of ourselves. The fundamental re-assessment of the concepts of self and human identity explored here provides the frame for a psychotherapy which moves beyond the narrowness of 'separate individual experience' towards a genuine sense of interconnectedness, and the non-dual nature of experience.

I would have liked to see some topics further explored. Only passing reference is made to body psychotherapy and the huge relevance of work with body to a Buddhist based psychotherapy, though the physical body is recognised as one aspect of 'embodiment'. This is the case in both her account of Western psychotherapy, which should at least in part reflect the systematic suppression of this important strand within the psychoanalytic tradition, (so well described by Nick Totton in his recent book *The Water in the Glass*), and in her

account of Buddhism.

This book values the rich pluralism of Western psychotherapy, and draws on the contemplative wisdom of Buddhism to suggest a framework for thinking again about the practice of psychotherapy in a way that might allow some old certainties to be set aside. It maps an intellectual and practical framework for a deeper recognition of the spiritual within psychotherapy and is full of ideas that ask to be further explored. It is an enormously rich sourcebook for anyone interested in exploring what a Buddhist inspiration for psychotherapy might be.

Laura Donington

The Mystery of Human Relationship

Nathan Schwartz-Salant
Routledge, 1998, £19.99

This is a very 'special' book and like many 'special' books, it can be read on two levels. In this case, as either an informed, scholarly work on 'Alchemy and the Transformation of the Self and/or a wonderful prose-poem that both catches and understands the beauty and pain of living through relationship. However you read it, it is excellent.

This is a book then about human relationships, and the reader's relationship with it is thus crucial to an appreciation of it for, with all meaningful relationships, how we come to them invariably characterises and parallels our experience of them. 'Relationships are not only forms of exchange of energy and function between people but also living structures which regulate a person's sense of identity and well being. As living forms of exchange, relationships mediate between a person and his or her unconscious psyche, spiritual reality, family system, workplace and cultural life.'

Nathan Schwartz-Salant trained as a Jungian analyst and, as a practising psychotherapist, he draws on the insights of the ancient and imaginal art of alchemy that so fascinated Jung.

His book is full of teachings from both his theoretical researches and his experiences as a therapist. It is valuable both for appreciating relationships we hold with others as well as within ourselves. 'All people need a partner in the effort to individuate if this integrative path is to include love, aggression, and bodily life, along with a spiritual focus of values and goals. Rarely, if ever, can a person enter the path of creating and transforming a self without the fire and challenge of an ongoing relationship.'

The author writes clearly about containment in relationship; a containment that can be collusively stagnating, co-dependent and avoiding of change; or one which, through the experiences of chaos and destructiveness as well as beauty and growth, can offer a trust and meaning that supports the process of individuation.

Thus, for readers of this 'humanistically orientated' magazine, the exploration of alchemical change to encourage individuation of the self, *through* relationship, with others/another, will surely be an exciting experience.

Referring to what he calls 'Alchemy's Subject-Object Merger', the author writes: 'Engaging processes of the interactive field requires that the analyst does not take refuge in a scientific model of objectivity which is ultimately limited to sorting out the mutual projections of the analysand and analyst. Instead, the analyst must allow for the existence of an area of essential 'unknowing, an area in which one never knows if an affect of fear, anger, hate or love comes from the analysand or from the analyst. Rather, the analyst must only assume that such emotions exist as a quality of the interactive field characterised by an essential subject-object merger.'

He explains that this merger was an essential part of the alchemical process. That the alchemical approach to understanding the life of the soul and its relationship to the body and matter contrasts with modern, and especially scientific, approaches. Alchemy insists that the individual is an inseparable part of a larger unity. It does not conceive of an 'observing ego' considered as separate, but as part of a greater Oneness. The powerful links between the humanistic and transpersonal orientations are thus, whilst not specifically described in this book, nevertheless clearly stated.

Schwartz-Salant also discusses the dangers of the interactive field experience, the humanistic I-Thou relationship. As alchemists saw that their 'elixir' or 'stone' was both a cure and a prison, likewise the field as a 'third thing' can be a blessing or a curse. 'Dark states of mind' can be avoided, and we as therapists can fail to assess the structural quality of the unconscious couple. Here he means that therapists, in maintaining safe boundaries, and thus not acknowledging their erotic countertransference, can leave their clients holding all the pain, rage and despair of a union that could not be consummated. 'These analysands were only freed from this torment when the analysts could acknowledge their own suffering over the same issue'.

He says however, that the greatest danger of working within a 'shared field' is if the relationship between the therapist and client becomes of itself, the sole focus of attention. He advises therapists also to focus upon the dark, disordering stage (nigredo) that follows all intimate and united relationships (coniunctio).

Schwartz-Salant also draws especial attention to the victims of incest, noting that the intimate, loving therapeutic relationship holds out so much promise for healing, but only if the resulting end of the relationship is carefully managed. Victims of incest are particularly sensitive, he argues, and 'allergic to feelings of betrayal and abandonment which are inevitably present in the nigredo phase'.

Finally the author warns about the dangers of failure to recognise the trance states of the client who has been abandoned or violated. For, he argues, such clients tend to take the therapist's statements in a very literal way when the

therapist believe he or she is speaking in metaphors.

Schwartz-Salant's interest in alchemical thinking that is 'filled with strange metaphors and complex images' provides an illuminating insight into the way that a process between two people can develop and transform. By recognising and understanding the transformative potential in chaos (with which alchemists worked), therapists can be encouraged to work not just with the cause and effect that is so often revisited though the transference, but with the depth and mystery of the relational process. The alchemical 'in between' world is the domain of the subtle body, in which can be found the essence of relationship. And also, argues the author, the heart of psychotherapy: 'The analyst or interested individual who can engage these intermediate domains can begin to take the alchemists' words and pictures as serious attempts to describe contemporary psychic struggles and may find in these words and pictures some cogent insights and useful analyses'.

John Sivyer

Toward a New Psychology of Gender

Editors: Mary M Gergen and Sara N Davis
Routledge, 1997, £16.99

This is a brilliant blockbuster. Most of the essays in it come from a feminist constructivism. It is more sophisticated and more adequate than anything I have seen in feminism so far. It also contains some classics, such as the chapter on anorexia and bulimia by Susan Bordo. As well as all the excellent chapters by women, there are also some fine chapters by men: Mike Kimmel, Michael Messner and others in the men's antisexist tradition. There is a good critique of empiricist research methods, and some highly readable examples of qualitative forms of research.

A chapter by Sara Davis and Mary Gergen opens the book. They suggest that there are five qualities which the chapters in this book have in common:

1. Reflexivity in their approach to their subject matters
2. Knowledge claims are seen as continually developing, never reaching a permanent endstate
3. The authors continually affirm that they and those with whom they are working are identified with particular groups that influence their own formations
4. The search for new forms of cultural life is a central focus
5. Research endeavours should be contextualized so as to enhance their usefulness to people

It is immediately obvious that this is not like the old liberal feminism, it is not like the old militant feminism, it is not like the old spiritual feminism: it is something

quite different and new. And it can be quite critical of earlier formulations. For example, bell hooks is bold enough to take up the slogan '*The personal is political*' and take it apart for closer examination. She finds that it does not really say enough. It somehow seems to say that the personal can take the place of the political, and she wants more attention paid to the political as such.

The chapter by Leonore Tiefer makes some good points about the word 'natural' and how it is used in discussions of male and female psychology. By the time she is finished, we can only use the word with a painful awareness of its limitations.

There are some instances here of a kind of language imperialism, where it seems as though language is taking over completely, as if there were no other kinds of reality. Mary Gergen's chapter on 'life stories' contains a few instances of this, such as where she quotes Michael Sprinker as saying — 'Every text is an articulation of the relations between texts, a product of intertextuality, a weaving together of what has already been produced elsewhere in discontinuous form; every subject, every author, every self is the articulation of an intersubjectivity structured within and around the discourses available to it at any moment in time.' This goes much too far, it seems to me, as it does when she says herself: 'Language seems almost magical. Only through its powers to name can we identify our experiences and our persons. There are no social structures that bear upon us beyond this linguistic order. All that exists is within it.' Come off it.

Some of the chapters are a bit specialised. The one by Jane Flax is filled with so many question marks that it made my head spin. The one by Michelle Fine starts off well about adolescent females, but then descends into a morass of statistics. The chapter by Lesley Miles on heterosexual sex did not seem to say anything new.

Chapters on men tend to be very good. Michael Messner on male friendships (many men envy the comradeship of men in a team, but the closeness turns out to be illusory), Mike Kimmel on homophobia, Gerschick and Miller on disability and disfigurement, all have much to say that is exactly on target. The chapter by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Michael Messner makes the point that: 'in sum, as a widespread empirical reality, the emotionally expressive, nurturant, egalitarian New Man does not actually exist; he is an ideological construct, made up of disparate popular images that are saturated with meanings that express the anxieties, fears, and interests of relatively privileged men.'

One of the best chapters is by Susan Bordo, on anorexia and bulimia. This has quite a history, because it first came out in 1985, and has been commented on a great deal since. Bordo's own ideas have changed somewhat in the meantime, and anorexia is much more clearly distinguished from bulimia than it was at that date. But the essay stands as a deep and fundamental examination of all the issues raised by these eating disorders'.

A chapter that particularly appealed to me was one by Jeanne Marecek on abnormal psychology. She says things like this: 'Their discussion of categories of disorders

portray them as if they were forged in the scientific laboratory, not in the fray of human relations and cultural contestation.' There is so much of this in psychology, and this book continually comes up with such discoveries.

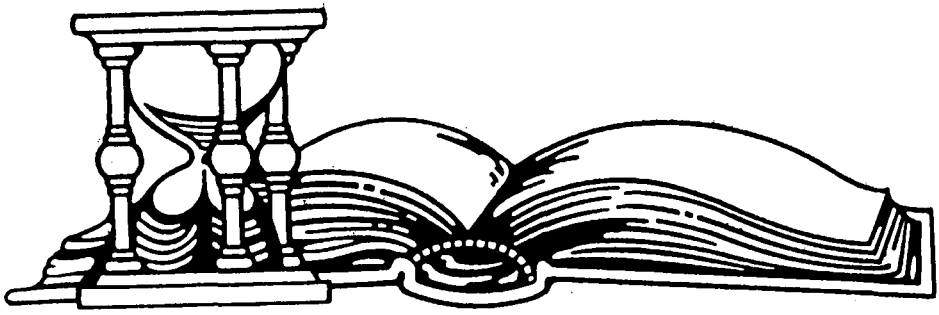
Another key chapter is by Susan Oyama, on essentialism, women and war. She has a quite brilliant examination of the feminist arguments here, arguing against the view that women are naturally more peaceable. She says — 'What I am saying is that analysis should be conducted in the interests of the eventual synthesis of a complex, multilevelled reality...'

Saving the best for last, one of the most exciting chapters for me was the one on love and violence, a study of relationships by Virginia Goldner, Peggy Penn, Marcia Sheinberg and Gillian Walker. Why do men appear loving and then descend to violence? Why do women go back to violent men? 'We decided to maintain a position of 'both-and', arguing that one level of description or explanation does not exclude another.' For example, are men sinners or victims? 'We believe that both are true: that male violence is both wilful and impulse ridden, that it represents a conscious strategy of control, and a frightening, disorienting loss of control.'

In discussing what makes a woman co-dependent, they are forced to discuss what, in our culture, makes a woman a woman. 'The central insight in all the new work about women is the idea that women form a sense of self, of self-worth and of feminine identity through their ability to build and maintain relationships with others... The daughter, like her mother, eventually comes to measure her self-esteem by the success or failure of her attempts to connect, form relationships, provide care, 'reach' the other person.' Understanding this makes it easier to understand that going back to a violent man can be experienced not as a failure, or as a submission, but as gender pride and self-respect.

It is hard to stop writing about a book as good as this one is. Everyone interested in these issues would, I believe, find it valuable. It casts a lot of light in a lot of murky areas and for me, at any rate, makes feminism seem once again vital and unique in its contribution to all our thinking about social and political matters.

John Rowan



Post-Jungians Today: Key papers in contemporary analytical psychology

Editor: Ann Casement
Routledge, 1998, £17.99

The title of this book is a bit confusing, because what we have here is not really post-Jungian at all, but Jungian. In fact, a better title for the book might be — 'Wrestling with Jung!' What we have here are thirteen chapters divided into seven parts, labelled Think pieces (Samuels from London and Zoja from Zurich); Individuation (Beebe from San Francisco and Casement from London); Clinical papers (Kalsched and Sidoli from Santa Fe); Fairy tales (Kast from Europe and Kawai from Japan); Ethnicity (Gambini and Papadopoulos from England); Gender (Springer and Young-Eisendrath from Vermont); and Academe (Tacey from Melbourne).

Andrew Samuels is beautiful as usual, and his chapter has so many felicities that it will I am sure be reprinted many times. He now has four types of Jungians, instead of the former three: the fundamentalists, the classical, the developmental and the psychoanalytic.

Luigi Zoja struck me as unreadable. John Beebe contributes a chapter with a mad plethora of footnotes. Ann Casement's chapter is readable but inconclusive: it has some good stories. Donald Kalsched's chapter on early trauma suffers from his not having read any of the LSD research of people like Grof and Lake: he just does not know enough to make it a good chapter. He does manage to say some interesting things in spite of that, as for example: 'If this hypothesis were valid, it would mean that a great deal of dream imagery that we tend to interpret constructively (telos of the dream), symbolically (synthetic message of the dream), or compensatorily (ego-corrective aspects of the dream) really represents something altogether different, namely the psyche's self-portrait of its own archaic defensive operations.'

The chapter by Maria Sidoli on infancy is very brief, and consists mainly of some infant observations. Verena Kast and Hayao Kawai both contribute quite boring chapters on fairy tales — actually very specialised stuff. Roberto Gambini's chapter on backwardness was very specialised and not for me.

Renos Papadopoulos, on the other hand, contributes a riveting chapter on 'Jungian perspectives in new contexts' which has some excellent observations. I liked very much his view of therapy: 'Insisting on the uniqueness of each individual, Jung was against the imposition of set theoretical doctrines in therapy. He stated that 'since every individual is a new and unique combination of psychic elements, the investigation of truth must begin afresh with each case, for each "case" is individual and not derivable from any preconceived formula'; and again, 'we miss the meaning of the individual psyche

if we interpret it on the basis of any fixed theory, however fond of it we may be'.

He quotes Jung as saying that we can never just look at the immediate presenting problem, because it is only a part of a greater system, the personality as a whole. Not only that, but the client may need to face suffering rather than escape from it. I found it very refreshing to read this chapter after some of the disappointment in the earlier ones.

Anne Springer's chapter on female homosexuality suffers from a lack of knowledge of recent feminist thinking, but I liked her idea that it would be meaningful to abandon anima and animus as constructs, both in the sense of complexes and in the sense of archetypal structures.

The chapter by Polly Young-Eisendrath entitled 'Contrasexuality and the dialectic of desire' is brief and I think quite feeble. The final chapter, by David Tacey on James Hillman, is extremely readable and quite fascinating to anyone who has come across Hillman and been baffled by all his changes. Here is someone who has studied Hillman deeply and met him personally, and this real acquaintance pays off for the reader.

Like so many of these edited volumes, it is uneven, but the three chapters I have particularly noted here make it worth looking at, even if not actually buying.

John Rowan

Speak of the Devil: Tales of satanic abuse in contemporary England

Jean S La Fontaine
Cambridge University Press, 1998, £14.95

La Fontaine is the social scientist who wrote the report on ritual sexual abuse of children which appeared in 1994 under the imprint of the Department of Health. This book updates and extends that report. Again she makes the important distinction, which is blurred in the Sinason book, between abuse in which a few odd scattered people use ritual to scare children and intimidate them into keeping silence, and abuse as a worldwide conspiracy involving powerful people and institutions in many countries. She confirmed the existence of the former, and found no evidence of the latter. She makes careful distinctions between witchcraft, satanism and the occult, and goes over much of the history of all these. She finds child sexual abuse to be a widespread and worrying phenomenon, but not to be connected except very occasionally with ritual.

This is an erudite and well-considered book, and should be read by anyone who is interested in this subject.

John Rowan