Self & SOCIETY

REVIEWS

From the Review Editor's Desk

It seems to me that one of the central tenants of psychotherapy or counselling, of any school or background, would be communication. By communication I mean not only the communication between a counsellor and their client, but also an open line of communication between counsellors with themselves, counsellors with other counsellors, and between counsellors, psychotherapists, and the larger community. Communication is one of the central ideas behind any professional journal such as this one; to pass on and share information, experience, and debate.

Communication without debate or argument would neither be a challenging nor an enriching activity. If we are all in agreement, then there is nothing we have to learn from each other. A debate made public (which is a popular component in many modes of media) has an even greater ability to encourage the involvement of bystanders. A public discussion of ideas encourages the receptive bystander to take a position of some sort, and by doing so, they engage with the ideas on a much deeper level.

In an effort to encourage greater engagement with contemporary ideas (represented by newly published texts on counselling and psychotherapy), *Self and Society* has invited two authors, Tim LeBon and Ernesto Spinelli to respond to reviews written about their recently released books.

For each author we have provided two very different reviews, from reviewers from different backgrounds and experience. The result of this enterprise, interestingly enough, seems to provoke more questions than it answers. As both books grapple with the philosophical dimensions of counselling and psychotherapy, it seems appropriate that their very existence seems to provoke some of the unknowable qualities of existence that they elucidate.

While both authors work with the dialectic between philosophy and counselling, their approaches are very different. While Tim LeBon looks for ways in which philosophy can benefit counselling and psychotherapy, Ernesto Spinelli takes a more deconstructive approach, challenging the very paradigm of psychotherapy with his philosophical insights. Is either approach mutually excusive of the other? Does philosophy provide us with techniques and answers, or does it blow away the ground from which we even dare to question?

I invite you to ask these questions and more as you engage in the 'review and response' theme of this edition of *Self and Society.* I would also like to thank both our reviewers and authors for their courageous contributions to the continuing evolution of theories, ideas, and practice.

Aaron Balick

Wise Therapy: Philosophy for Counsellors

by Tim LeBon

Continuum, 2001. £14.99 pb

Review 1

In 1961 Carl Rogers said that 'in these days most psychologists regard it as an insult if they are accused of thinking philosophical thoughts' (163). Forty years later, in the postmodern era in which we live, Tim LeBon with his book illustrates that philosophy has much to offer to counselling and psychotherapy. According to him, one of the aims of this book is the development of a synthesis between the 'ideas of philosophers working in counselling and counsellors working with philosophy' (xii). I think that LeBon did a very good job in achieving the aim of utilizing his broad philosophical knowledge along with cases from his own counselling experience, others may agree.

The book is divided in two parts and six chapters. It opens with an introductory overview about the relevance of philosophy to counselling and a definition of the five philosophical methods which the author conceives as the most useful in both theory and practice of counselling. These methods are critical thinking, conceptual analysis, phenomenology, thought experiments and creative thinking. Following that, the writer introduces four types of counselling which apply philosophical methods and ideas, namely; Philosophical Counselling (PC) developed by Gerd Achenbach in 1981; Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (RET); Existential-Phenomenological Counselling (EC); and Logotherapy. The introduction includes valuable recommendations to the reader how to use the book.

The first part entitled 'Ethics,' includes two chapters. The first chapter explores and examines philosophical theories of well-being and their practical implications for counselling. It then goes on to introduce the informed preference theory (IPT), which is a helpful framework to enable the client to understand what his/her well-being consists of. The author perceives counselling as applied philosophy and in order for the counsellor to be effective, the counsellor must be able to facilitate the client's achievement of true autonomy through a philosophy directed towards enlightened values, good decisions and emotional wisdom. Afterwards he describes the Refined Subjective Value Procedure (RSVP) a five step method which can assist the client to have more enlightened values. RSVP uses an integration of the insights of Logotherapy, EC, PC and other ideas implied by IPT.

In the second chapter, LeBon studies the philosophical approaches of virtue ethics, principle-based theories and utilitarianism in relation to the counsellor's own ethical dilemmas about right and wrong. He attempts to put them in practice through the description of a five stages procedure developed by Arnaud, Macaro and himself called the 'Progress', which incorporates many basic points of philosophical theories as a way of helping to solve both the client's and the counsellor's own ethical dilemmas. The chapter ends with a combined application of 'Progress' and Charles Darwin Method (CDM) to decision counselling. CDM is a rational

justification of beliefs, decisions and values borrowed from critical thinking.

The second part of the book focuses on 'Emotions, reason and the meaning of life' and has three chapters. The first chapter focuses on how a client can be helped to move towards emotional wisdom. The writer examines three theories about the nature of emotions: emotions as feelings, as cognitions and as dispositions to behave and he perceives a component theory of emotions as an interaction of the previous three components. He asserts that cognitions are a component of emotions and sometimes emotions come before cognitions. Then he describes the strengths and weaknesses of CBT, PC and EC in terms of emotions; he acknowledges that CBT provides a technology for altering emotions, PC provides an open-ended forum for a more general understanding of the emotions and EC can facilitate the client to make sense of his/her emotions. Finally he examines the possibility of synthesizing them in order for the client to move towards emotional wisdom and alleviate from distress.

In the second chapter the author studies philosophy and counselling and the meaning of life. He analyzes questions about the existence of God, death and he attempts to clarify the question 'what is the meaning of life'. He distinguishes two but related usages of meaning: as a purpose, refered to individual's conscious intentions and as a significance refered to a broader perspective. He discusses the meaning of life in general and of the human being (meaning *in* life and/or meanings of life). In the two latter, which are the more answerable questions according to him, he states that the person moves toward a meaningful life when he/she is making good decisions and having enlightened values and emotional wisdom. He concludes the chapter with a view that philosophical approaches to counselling will enhance meaning without explicit concentration on it, which remind us of Victor Frankl.

The last chapter deals in respective sections 'five of the most important contents of the counsellor's philosophical toolbox' (138): critical thinking as an important tool for assessing arguments, conceptual analysis as a way to clarify what we mean, the CDM, the development of enlightened values using RSVP as a self-help exercise for the client and 'Progress' as a collaborative procedure in supervision and counselling, for good decision-making. In each of them are mentioned some of their elements and examples of the procedure. The book concludes with a description and supplementation with the ideas contained in the whole text, some of the techniques of CBT to correct errors in client's thinking.

Today a significant part of therapists from various schools function as experts, as authorities and/or statisticians. They view the client as an object, as an instrument and/or as a 'subject' for a strict and fix quantitative research and data. For the precedent, determinative factor may be the demand for 'easily' and 'fast' solutions. Lebon gets over, attempts and succeeds to answer questions and suggests a 'hard', more sophisticated, but qualitative alternative with a great respect to the person who is in difficulty. As he writes in conclusion, 'a really wise counsellor - someone with the theoretical wisdom of Socrates, the practical wisdom of Aristotle, and the empathy of Carl Rogers - will ... promote ... a better chance to lead a more satisfying and meaningful life' (165-166). Overall, as

a counsellor I found in the book new paths for my relationships with the clients. The using of simple language by the writer in order to explain difficult philosophical concepts, the style of writing, the originality and the applicability of the ideas, the very good structure and the sequence of 'Wise Therapy', makes it a highly readable and innovative source. Apart from the text, the book as a whole is a rich source itself, including bibliography references, recommended reading, interesting websites and e-mail addresses. It is a very good choice for libraries and counselling centers from different orientations. For these reasons, I strongly recommend it for philosophers as well as practitioners, teachers, students and supervisors in counselling and psychotherapy.

Grigoris Mouladoudis

Further Reading

Rogers, C. (1961). *On becoming a person*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

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Review 2

This is all about philosophical counselling. I had been hearing about philosophical counselling for some time, and was very interested to hear the full story. It started in Germany in the 1980s and is popular in the USA at the moment, and there is an organization and a magazine called *Practical Philosophy* in this country.

But this book is actually a bit more ambitious than that. It covers not only the classic philosophical counselling, but also other philosophical forms of counselling, such as cognitive-behavioural, rational-emotive and existential-phenomenological. It introduces the reader to RSVP (Refined Subjective Value Procedure), to CDM (the Charles Darwin Method) and to Progress, which is an integrated method for helping people to make good decisions. And as I read it I became more and more appalled.

It does seem reasonable and a good idea to introduce people to critical thinking, conceptual analysis, phenomenology and so on. But it turns out that this author is only interested in the most basic forms of such approaches. So instead of raising up the level of consciousness of the reader, this book systematically holds it down. Instead of illuminating the mind, this book ties it down to the most elementary forms of thought. This is particularly inappropriate when it tries to talk about therapy, as it does throughout: virtually all the examples given are from the field of counselling.

One of the most interesting and challenging things about therapy is that it has to tackle the question of conflict within the person. It has to face and deal with the fact that people can be divided, and that this is indeed often the problem. It has to acknowledge that there is such a thing as self-deception. It has to allow as how a person may have within them a top dog who gives orders and a bottom dog who is supposed to carry them out, but

often fails. It has to have a place for inner parents, inner children. It has to know that people have ways of warding off unwelcome information about themselves. These are not recondite, rare phenomena: they are the everyday discoveries of any form of therapy that goes beneath the surface, including the person-centred approach, as Dave Mearns and Brian Thorne have been pointing out in recent years. But this book never does go beneath the surface. It holds to a sort of Flatland where people have just one opinion, just one decision, just one sort of relationship with the therapist. It is all there out on the surface, all fully conscious, all reasonable, all logical. And if by chance logic should fail, all the therapist has to do is to help the client to remember how to think clearly.

Another aspect of this Flatland approach is that there is no recognition of the way in which people develop through different layers of consciousness. The basic idea of Maslow, familiar to all those in the humanistic arena, is that people develop along a path which leads from physiological needs to self-actualization. And there are several well-marked way-stations along the way. This idea has been elaborated and taken further in recent years by people like Ken Wilber and Jenny Wade. The point is that what is true of people at one level is not necessarily true of people at a different level. So when Sartre says that we are just as responsible for our emotions as we are for our actions, LeBon labels this as a 'caricature' of the existentialist position, and prefers a much more empirical, evidence-based version of emotion. The point is that at the conventional levels of development LeBon is right, and emotions happen to us, rather than us choosing them. But at the self-actualized level, we do choose our emotions, and we are 100% behind them at all times. This is because we have a deeper kind of autonomy at what Jenny Wade calls the authentic level than we have at the more role-bound levels.

Not only does this book not recognise any of that, it does not even acknowledge the mass of recent work on emotional intelligence. Instead of quoting people like Daniel Goleman, he sticks to people like Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, Windy Dryden, Elliot Cohen, who all work at the level of inauthenticity.

As for any recognition of spirituality, that is so far away from anything in this book that it seems a shame to mention it. There is some recognition of religion – all of it critical – but no allusion to spirituality in any other form. The theme of keeping people down rather than helping them up is even more in evidence here. The kind of philosophy being peddled in this book is not so much atheistic as unaware of any issues involving spirituality. Even when the author quotes people, like Emmy van Deurzen, who give an important place to spirituality within their existential framework, he ignores all that part of her concerns.

So all in all, this is a disappointing book. If this is what philosophical counselling is like, it is not nearly as interesting as I thought it was at first. It can fulfil a need for a fairly pedestrian and prosy approach to handling everyday problems, but it sticks on the level of the instrumental. It treats people on the level of I-It, rather than on the level of I-Thou. And for anyone interested in humanistic psychology, this is not enough.

John Rowan

A response from Tim LeBon

to the reviews by Grigoris Mouladoudis and John Rowan of *Wise Therapy: Philosophy for Counsellors*

First, I'd like to thank the editor of *Self and Society* for allowing space for not only two reviews of *Wise Therapy* but also this reply. The debt that counselling owes to humanistic psychology can hardly be overestimated. Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, to name but two, are people to whom counselling in general, and my own thinking in particular, owes so much. The importance of the relationship in counselling and the need for empathy are the very bedrocks of counselling and the idea of self-actualisation an inspiring statement of its goal. Why then should humanistic counsellors bother with philosophy? One answer is that if we care about the whole person, then we need to include in our work both the human concern for ultimate questions such as the meaning of life and the human ability to reason well –and badly. In more concrete terms, I believe that humanistic counsellors need philosophy at both a theoretical and practical level. Too many people, from critics like James Hillman and Emmy van Deurzen to people we meet on the Clapham omnibus, have a view of humanistic counselling as too individualistic, relativistic and subjective for these views to be completely ignored. One way to counter these criticisms is for humanistic counsellors to become more aware of the philosophical objections to relativism (*Wise Therapy,* pp. 25-7) and to purely subjective notions of well-being (ibid. pp. 28-30) and make sure their work does not rely on such foundations. This brings us to philosophy's applied value, because one way of making humanistic counselling less open to philosophical objections is to incorporate some of the practical ideas contained in *Wise Therapy* into their work. Carl Rogers *plus* Socrates would be a really wise road for counselling to travel along.

Whether counsellors have the open-mindedness to consider going down this road is an interesting question. This was one reason why it was such a pleasure to read the thorough and stimulating review of *Wise Therapy* by Grigoris Mouladoudis. As Mouladoudis realises, *Wise Therapy* is trying to do three things. First, it aims to survey and critique (in a language we can all understand) the philosophical theories most relevant to counsellors and therapists – these being well-being, right and wrong, reason and the emotions and the meaning of life. Next it attempts to show how the acceptable theories that arise from this discussion can be used to critique counselling as a whole and some philosophically-based approaches – i.e. existential/phenomenological counselling, logotherapy, cognitive therapy and philosophical counselling. Finally it makes a start at the ambitious, difficult – yet important - task of synthesising the acceptable ideas from both philosophy and philosophically-based therapies, into methods and insights that counsellors of all persuasions can integrate into their work. The end result is the 'Counsellors' Philosophical Toolbox', including well-established (for

philosophers) methods like conceptual analysis and critical thinking, and also more innovative ideas like CDM, Progress and RSVP. Clearly Mouladoudis has found *Wise Therapy* very engaging, and has himself engaged with the book at a very authentic and complete level.

By contrast, from the first sentence of his review 'This is a book all about philosophical counselling,' John Rowan's review is based on a gigantic misunderstanding. Of course *Wise Therapy* is *not* all about philosophical counselling, and nor, as his review seems to presuppose, is it a textbook on how to do counselling. The methods of the Counsellor's Philosophical Toolbox are intended to *complement* the counsellor's existing ways of working, not replace them. So I actually agree with much of what Rowan says about good therapy, but he's got it completely wrong if he thinks that *Wise Therapy* precludes this. I'm not suggesting throwing away all the good ideas counsellors already have, but I am proposing marrying them to ideas that practical philosophers have developed – Rogers *plus* Socrates again.

Unfortunately Rowan's review is also marred by, shall we say, a not very close reading of the text, and also a number of factual errors. For example, the chapter on the emotions contains many of the answers to Rowan's questions about self-deception and 'Flatlands', but then again it is not at all clear how well he has absorbed this chapter. Rowan criticises it for not mentioning Goleman, yet it contains a long discussion about Le Doux, a more original thinker about emotional intelligence to whom Goleman acknowledges a considerable debt. Rowan also completely ignores the half of the book discussing philosophical theories, which is a great pity as much of it is so relevant for humanistic psychology (see above).

Nevertheless I do think that there is one nugget buried in Rowan's review. I say a lot about counselling's potential to help the client towards enlightened values, good decisions and emotional wisdom but, it is true, am not very explicit about the *order* in which these can usually be achieved. At the risk of great oversimplification and over-generalisation, I would suggest the following. First facilitate emotional wisdom, then enlightened values, then good decision-making. If a client has little emotional wisdom, it may be hard for them to have enlightened values (their values may be skewed), and lack of emotional wisdom and enlightened values will also hamper good decision-making. But I wouldn't want to be dogmatic about this – after all, Frankl argues that everything is gained by focussing on values. Crucially, I would argue that even for the authentic and/or emotionally wise client, enlightened values and good decisions do *not* flow automatically – hence the need for methods like Progress and RSVP to take them to an even higher level.

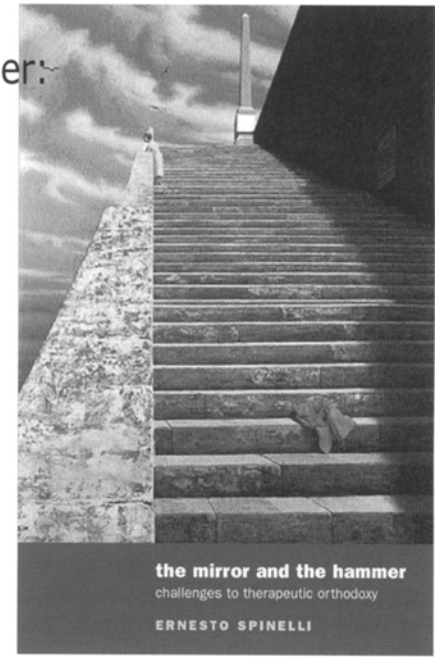
I'd be interested to hear what other readers think of the ideas contained in *Wise Therapy*, and can be reached by e-mail at the address below. My hope is that they will be of real practical and theoretical benefit to counsellors and of course their clients. I would be particularly interested in hearing of case studies of how people have used any of the ideas in their own work, for potential inclusion in a future *'Wise Therapy Handbook'*.

Tim LeBon (timlebon@aol.com)

The Mirror and the Hammer: challenges to therapeutic orthodoxy

By Ernesto Spinelli

Continuum, 2001. £12.99



Review 1

As the author makes clear from the title, this book aims to challenge the conventional wisdom of mainstream psychotherapeutic thought. His starting point is that ideas from psychotherapy are pervasive in our society, and that they are acting as a means of pacification and control rather than liberation. In addition, he suggests that the underlying assumptions behind psychotherapy models are taken for granted and rarely debated. It is such a debate that he wishes to provide in this book and in doing so he takes on many of the sacred cows of psychotherapy: sexuality (particularly with reference to children), the dilemma presented by evil and the role of the unconscious. For instance, in Chapter Eight on artistic creativity he carefully outlines the prevailing view on the origins of such creativity starting with Plato and Aristotle through Freud, Storr and Heidegger, finishing with Steiner and his own contribution. This analysis is fascinating. He concludes that the recent emphasis on the origins of creativity in the individual leads us to concentrate (in my words) on what Tracey Emin had for dinner and who Damien Hirst is dating and to sideline art as a means of expressing truth, as offering the possibility of transcendence.

Each chapter in this book deals with a different subject encompassing issues specifically of interest to psychotherapists such as the role of self disclosure and the more general subjects of sexuality and the paranormal. The scope of the book is impressive; the content should appeal to practitioners and trainees as well as to the wider public. Each chapter is fairly self contained so the

interested reader could 'dip in' and read the chapters out of order. When ideas developed in one chapter are referred to in another a page number is given for easy cross-referencing.

The author's style makes the ideas presented highly accessible. No prior knowledge of existential psychotherapy or psychoanalysis is required as all the concepts introduced are clearly explained. In addition, extensive references and suggestions for further reading are given in the endnotes. The author's breadth of knowledge is clear from these references which include Woody Allen films, heavyweight philosophers and novelists as well as the more standard references. Yet this knowledge is worn lightly: at no point did I feel overwhelmed by the ideas and arguments developed.

As you may already have guessed, I found this book a joy to read. Each chapter sets out the orthodoxy in question then proceeds to explain lucidly the author's difficulties with this orthodoxy and to suggest an alternative way of looking at the issue. The transparency of this approach, by clearly setting out the different stages of the argument, leaves the reader free to make up his or her own mind. Examples and case studies are frequently used for clarification. To take an example, in Chapter Four the author gives an excellent presentation of Freudian ideas of the unconscious. He then goes on to give a convincing exposition of an alternative based on sedimentation (who I accept I am) and disassociation (who I will not accept I am) and to outline the practical implications of adopting this alternative viewpoint.

In Chapter One the author criticises much therapy for what he marvellously describes as 'intrapsychic imperialism' (page 19), i.e. the emphasis on the self and subjective experience without taking into account the impact of actions on others. From this chapter I came away with the image of a therapist as a self-important, self-styled 'expert' doling out advice and peddling solutions and in doing so maintaining the status quo in society at large. Spinelli instead suggests that a therapist is not an expert but rather communicates through his or her way of being and through a willingness to accept uncertainty. This is a theme that runs through much of the book. At his most radical in the final chapter, the author brings in the ideas of Faber and of releasing psychotherapists from the stultifying norms of current psychotherapy and stressing instead the shared humanity of each encounter and the importance of acknowledging that both parties have something to learn from it. In this, as in many of the chapters, Spinelli thinks the unthinkable. You might not agree with him all the time, and to be honest I don't think he would want you to.

Katy Wakelin

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Review 2

I expected to like this book. It has a good title, and a good cover picture, and I have read previous things by the same author which I have liked very much. But as I read through this book, a sort of malaise crept over me: a growing question about the end product, which emerged in the words – 'So What?'

I think this was worst at the end of the chapter on evil. It was bold to take on such a big subject, and one so relatively neglected in the literature of therapy. What would his conclusion be? But after walking all round it and looking at it from all angles, after quoting philosophers and critics, after giving copious examples from his own life and from the lives of others, nothing emerges. His last sentence is – 'Perhaps continuing to ask the questions in ways that permit novel 'mirrors' to reflect and reveal uncomfortable truths will prove to be the best we can do.' This seems to me like an irresponsible throwing up of the hands. Why take on a subject like this unless the author has something fresh to say about it? I felt I had wasted my time wandering through this maze, and discovering at the end that it had no centre.

In the chapter on creativity, the author's only real interest seems to be in knocking the psychoanalytic version of it. But there are many other versions, and much has been written on creativity over the years, including some quite good research, none of which is mentioned in this chapter.

In the chapter on sexuality, there is curious limitation of the issues discussed, which seem to me to stem from the insistence that whatever views we may have about it, Freud was wrong. The book does not have an index, but if there were one, I have a strong suspicion that the most-quoted or mentioned author would be Freud.

This book suffers from being a collection of papers delivered at various times to various audiences. The most unfortunate instance of this is perhaps the fact that there are two chapters on self-disclosure by the therapist which contradict one another. This would perhaps not matter so much if the author were aware of this, and commented on it in some appropriate way. Since he does not, they sit rather uncomfortably with one another. To be specific, in Chapter 2 he adopts a quite middle-of-the-road position which seems quite sensible and defensible, and makes some good points along the way. But in Chapter 10 he enthuses at length about the work of a Dr Farber, written up in the memoir of an ex-patient, named Emily Fox Gordon. She tells how in their meetings they talked about his childhood, her childhood, his marriages, her boyfriends, his despair at seeing some psychotic patients, the youth culture, movies, TV and so forth. She explains how he would see her as often as she liked, how the sessions sometimes lasted for a few minutes and sometimes for hours, how he went out on walks with her, invited her into his family, provided her with

meals, and so forth. And Spinelli is very taken with this, regards it as evidently human, and perhaps an example to us all. He gets quite excited about the value and importance of chaos. The only point I am making is that Chapter 2 is very different from Chapter 10, but the author never remarks on the fact, and never explains how the one might relate to the other. They are just left side by side in all their irreconcilability.

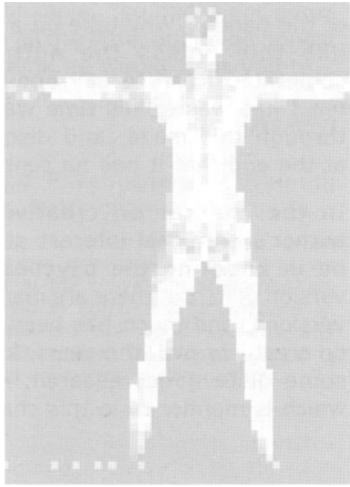
The chapter on the vagaries of the self is quite curious to me, in that the author seems to think that the only alternative to having one single self-structure is Dissociative Identity Disorder. The widely accepted notion of multiple selves as a normal feature of human nature – and Spinelli quotes happily from Mick Cooper without seeming to notice that Cooper is one of those who holds such a view – does not seem to occur to him. Yet it is the common experience of most of us.

The chapter on the unconscious is by now well-practised, after generations of existentialist thinkers have hammered it, and after Spinelli himself has hacked at it, and it is perhaps perfected now. Yet it is curious to me that it is only the classic Freud whose version comes in for yet another beating. The concept of the unconscious is now so widespread, and has expanded so far beyond the narrow confines of Freud's own words that it seems one has to say as so often before – 'You have killed the father yet again once more.' The obsession with Freud must have some explanation, somewhere, somehow.

Chapter 9 is headed 'Beyond the great beyond' and is actually mostly about parapsychology. But it is the closest we get in the book to any mention of spirituality. And it is typically inconclusive. Its final words are – '...How might we best respond to those instances which point us towards some possible 'beyond'? I suggest the following: A smile. A shudder. A shrug of resignation... and acceptance.'

I really don't know what to make of this book. Can the front cover give us any clues? The steps? Perhaps to represent the sedimented layers within the psyche. The female figure in yellow, leaning and looking out over the wall? Perhaps the frustrated spiritual centre. The tall monument? Perhaps the phallic challenge to Freud. The discarded blue garment? Perhaps a reminder of the importance of chaos. The birds wheeling about in the sky? Perhaps the thoughts that never were – the parts that got away. And the shadow? Perhaps the unconscious, making itself felt in spite of everything.

John Rowan



The Truth Was Obscure....

an author's response to two reviews of his book

Ernesto Spinelli

When I was first contacted by Aaron Balick, I was very taken with his idea to attempt to promote a degree of interactive dialogue in the 'Book Reviews' section of *Self and Society*. I still think it's a great idea, but the reality of composing a reply has turned out to be more difficult than I'd imagined. Ah well....

Before anything else, I would like to express my gratitude to John Rowan and Katy Wakelin for having taken the time to read *The Mirror and the Hammer* and to have made the effort of conveying their responses to it via their reviews. What matters more than whether I agree or disagree with anything they've written is that they have taken the time to think about and consider what I wrote. An author can't really ask for much more than that from his readers or reviewers. So: Thanks, John. Thanks, Katy.

What I attempted to do with *The Mirror and the Hammer* was to set out what I hoped would be a series of interesting challenges for readers. Some of these concerned themselves with various aspects of the process and structure of contemporary psychotherapy. Others were more focused upon various ways that psychotherapy has influenced how many of us (not just psychotherapists) have come to think about some of the cultural issues and dilemmas that continue to fascinate and disturb our experience of engagement with ourselves, others and the world in general. Having spent most of my adult life engaged with psychotherapy, I find myself still enamoured with its unique possibilities. My writings tend to be categorised as being critical of psychotherapy. While I would not dispute this, I also hang on to the hope that I am not the only one to imagine that such critiques are not intended to demolish or dismiss the psychotherapeutic enterprise but, rather, to enhance its pertinence and promise.

Most of my ideas and suggestions have their genesis in, and, often, are re-statements of, views expressed by various authors who have been labelled as 'existential phenomenologists'. I happen to find what they have to say to be illuminating intellectually, experientially and, *pace* John's comment, spiritually. *The Mirror and The Hammer* tries to express and honour some of what I have gleaned from them – however inadequate and incomplete that may be.

With regard to the specific dilemmas that concern psychotherapists, existential phenomenologists have been at the forefront in addressing and reconsidering such from an *interpersonal* rather than *intrapsychic* standpoint. One of the many disturbing outcomes of this shift in perspective is, to be blunt about it, that most of the 'answers' to psychotherapeutic dilemmas provided by other existing models and approaches start to become insufficient and revealing of numerous previously unforeseen problems. Even more disturbing, in adopting an existential phenomenological perspective, it begins to become

apparent that such 'answers' may themselves be provoking, in part or as whole, the very problems which they seek to solve. And, to make matters even worse, it may even be the case that the very idea of 'an answer', in the form of a final or fixed statement or solution, at least with regard to matters involving the complexities of human inter-relations, may be a chimera.

If so, what may be the worth of psychotherapy? Perhaps, as has been suggested, it is that psychotherapy challenges us to ask novel questions about ourselves, our relations, our experience of being – not because such will provoke *a* truth to emerge, but because such will disclose the limited 'truths' with which we have encased our experience of being.

For John, such a view seems to lead to an 'irresponsible throwing up of hands', a sense of 'so what?', a discovery that there is no 'centre'. For Katy, the experience 'the approach.... Leaves the reader free to make up his or her own mind'. In an odd sort of way, the two reviews of my book encapsulate the conundrum. Reading them together, one might be tempted to ask: 'Did John and Katy read the same book?' If we agree that they did, then, again, John's view would, I suppose, force us into a position of wanting to know which review is correct in its conclusions and which is patently false.

It would be tempting for me to follow through on this latter line of questioning, dismiss one set of responses and approve of the other. But to do so, I believe, would belittle and invalidate that shared experience between myself, John, Katy and the readers of this exchange. On the other hand, if we were all to avoid this somewhat easy and secure (and typically Western) stance, we would be no closer to *the* truth as to the value of the book in question. Instead, we would all be forced into raising and asking all manner of potentially interesting and revealing questions which, while not leading us to any clear-cut 'centre', might just take us to a 'place' of openness, dialogue and interest in and for one another.

Of course, there are any number of points that John and Katy make that I would love to discuss and argue with them about. Perhaps an opportunity may arise someday. But this is not the time or the space for such.

I tried to make *The Mirror and The Hammer* into the sort of book that asked all manner of questions that continue to intrigue me and that I imagine intrigue other psychotherapists. I tried to approach the questions from what I supposed was a different angle or perspective. If I go by the reviews provided by John and Katy, I may have succeeded to some degree *and* been surprised by their reactions.

As an afficionado of *The Sopranos,* and in particular between the therapeutic exchanges between Tony Soprano and Dr Melfi, I am reminded of one particular discussion of theirs:

TONY: America is the only country where the pursuit of happiness is guaranteed.

DR MELFI: Only the pursuit is guaranteed – not the happiness.

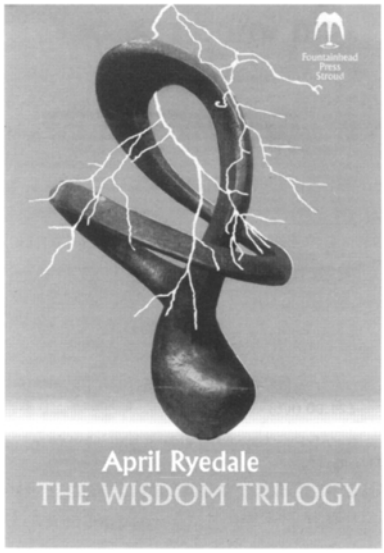
TONY: Always a fucking loophole, right?

Yes, indeed.

Risking Wisdom

by April Ryedale

Fountainhead Press, Stroud. £12.60 pb.



It had seemed a long while since reading and reviewing the first two volumes of April's epic Wisdom Trilogy, Wisdom Stranded and Strands of Wisdom. Now, at last, Risking Wisdom was open in front of me. I wondered how the many threads that had been spun in the earlier volumes would be woven together in this final book, and to what conclusion it would lead.

I was pleased to have those two earlier volumes on hand, enabling me to connect once more with the story line, and the generations that sprang from the relationships of the first generation of the Wisdom family. As I read Risking Wisdom I found myself making and recognising connections with the earlier story lines, yet still the promise of a fuller exploration of the Seven Rays eluded me. How was this great teaching to be dealt with, I wondered.

I did not need to worry. The author most beautifully brought together two young people in Vision and Love-Lyric to bring forth seven children each carrying, or should I say embodying, one of he Seven Rays as described in the Esoteric Psychological model of Alice Bailey. Seven types of energy providing seven types of personality and, on a higher turn of the spiral, seven great streams of informing life-energy that interweave to generate the complexity of creation. These seven children, born when each parent was in their teens, left me with a wonder around the significance of the age at which each child is born. Does a child born to young parents carry a more vital energy into the world? How might this contrast to children born of older parents? In a world that sees more teenage pregnancies, and more children borne to parents in later life, I was left wondering what studies might look into this.

Through my journey through the trilogy I had confronted so many diverse yet truly human (and spiritual) themes: racial issues, mental health provision, family tensions, gender and the concept of 'transgender', teenage pregnancy, the spread of HIV, ecological values and the meaning of nature, cosmology, vegetarianism, the power and significance of sound, genetics, as well as esoteric teachings concerning the true nature of humanity and the energies that govern and shape evolution.

As in life, the members of the Wisdom family are born and die. The theory of reincarnation is brought to life as members of previous generations are reborn to take their place, and carry their wisdom, into a succeeding generation. Within this process the opportunity for consciousness to grow and expand is ever present. As we read so tellingly, 'Form is the only thing that ever dies. And as energy dynamises form, conscience arises from complexity, as consciousness unfolds itself.' Consciousness unfolds through form experience. Consciousness is surely primary to the secondary form and it is towards consciousness that psychology must increasingly look to understand the nature of the person.

You will need to have read books one and two to grasp the flow and process that is the Wisdom Trilogy. Personally, I am left with an urge to give myself a retreat in order to read all three volumes as one, and am therefore heartened to learn that the trilogy is planned to be published in a single volume. I can only echo words that were written in response to Book Two: 'The author calls us to awaken to the truth of our being.' In a world in transition we can no longer view this as a choice. It has become an imperative, that we may become more than observer-participants in the divine tragic-comedy that is life, instead realising ourselves as co-creators and focal points for the expression and manifestation of the will, love-wisdom, intelligence, beauty, thought, devotion and order that are the Seven Rays.

Richard Bryant-Jefferies