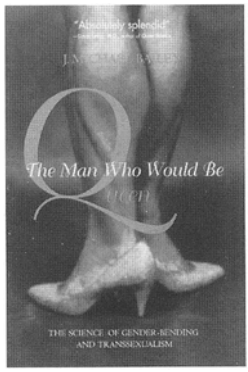
The Man Who Would Be Queen

J. Michael Bailey

Joseph Henry Press (Washington D.C.) 2003 Hardback $24.95



There's quite a bit of hype around this book and I began to feel wary when I read some publicity which came with the request to review it. The dust jacket comments made me more suspicious, as it's unusual for an academic book to have such effusive comments: 'Absolutely splendid' by Simon LeVay (of the 'gay gene' theory) gets pride of place on the front cover and a couple of evolutionary psychologists crow on the back cover. After reading the book, I checked the author and some of his colleagues out on the internet and found he's been stirring up quite a hornet's nest on the other side of the pond.

The main thrust of the book is that gay men are feminine, they either do feminine jobs (florists, nurses, ballet dancers, and yes psychologists), and/or they speak in a 'gay' way (although he can't describe what that sounds like, apparently he has research to show others know what it sounds like); and/or they move in a feminine way. This all started, of course, in childhood where gay men played with dolls, hung out with girls and dressed in their mother's clothes! Some of them go onto become 'homosexual transsexuals' (the third part of the book) because they are attracted to straight men, but most outgrow much of their femininity and are happy to settle down into (non-monogamous) relationships with other gay men.

One can see there's quite a bit of stereotyping dressed up as pseudo-

science here. Bailey offers no references so there is no way to check the methodology of his 'research' and it appears to me to be poor science bolstered up by anecdotal evidence for human interest basically pop psychology and hyperbole.

It is this third part of the book which has caused some controversy amongst the transgender community. He resurrects a 20-year-old classification of transgender created by sexologist Ray Blanchard where there are two types of transsexual: *homosexual transsexuals* - (who Bailey finds to be generally attractive - 'feminine gay men' who according to him seem to work exclusively as prostitutes) and *autogynophiles* - whom he describes as 'men who are erotically attracted to themselves as women.' He classifies these 'men' as having a 'paraphilia' (fetish), but also as 'liars' (in that they often claim to be women trapped in men's bodies, although he finds that they usually present for gender reassignment later in life, often after marriage and parenthood), but they have a history of erotic interest in cross-dressing, which he says the homosexual transsexuals don't have.

The author is a heterosexual academic psychologist who seems to conduct quite a bit of research into (male) homosexuality and male to female transgender issues. He appears to recruit his research subjects from gay bars, and from amongst his students at Northwestern University. He doesn't seem to consider the potential bias in favour of giving him the results he seeks.

Like many researchers he seems to be uninterested in lesbianism and in researching female to male transsexuals which might provide a more rational balance to his biased theories. However he seems very happy to make sweeping generalisations about homosexuality and transgender simply from having interviewed men. Bailey also speaks in derogatory ways about some of the people who have been generous enough to participate in his 'research', and he extends this discourtesy to others who work in the field who would challenge his ideas.

I don't think this is a very helpful book and I didn't like it!

Dominic Davies

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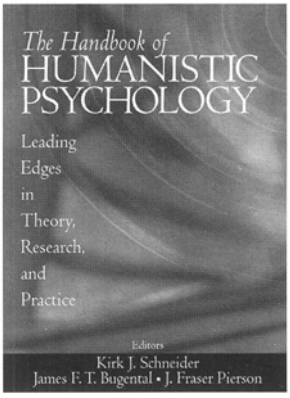
[Co-editor Pink Therapy textbooks (volumes 1-3), Open University Press]

The Handbook of Humanistic Psychology: Leading edges in theory research and practice

Editors: Kirk Schneider, James Bugental & Fraser Pierson

Sage 2001 £96 hb £42 pb



This marvellous book can inspire us all over again to realise how humanistic psychology can be a force for good in the world. Rather than go through all the six parts and the forty-nine chapters, I just want to pick out the things that particularly stood out for me.

Adelbert Jenkins gives us a chapter on multiculturalism which states the case for humanistic thinking beautifully. He makes the point that to deal with multiculturalism in any adequate way needs dialectical thinking. We have to be able to hold two contradictory beliefs in the mind at the same time. We can see the individual as an autonomous self, or we can see the person as part of a social field, a community; but we do not have to settle for one or the other. We have to be able to handle both at the same time. And this is most obvious when we are dealing with people from more communitarian cultures.

Amedeo Giorgi, famous for his work on phenomenology at Duquesne University, contributes a stirring chapter on the psyche. He argues against any reductionist version of the person which turns the person into some kind of machine. He particularly argues with Stephen Pinker and others like him, who want to say that cognitive science and evolutionary psychology can account for the person. This is exciting stuff, and just what we need in order to combat a tendency which is common in academia right now.

'The revival of the romantic means a revival of psychology' is a chapter written by Kirk Schneider, and it makes a serious case for owning up to romanticism. He quotes from Van Gogh, Goethe, Rilke and others, contrasting their views on psychological problems with the official clinical versions. He approves of postmodernism for shaking up the fixed beliefs of the past, but notices

that it has its own kind of reductionism in that it has no place for romanticism.

Thomas Szasz makes some good points on the person as moral agent, and Donald Polkinghorne has a good treatment of the self, bringing in Neisser, Gendlin, Lakoff and Ricoeur to help fend off the cognitivists and the postmodernists.

Mike Arons and Ruth Richards jointly write a chapter on creativity and humanistic psychology, which they describe as 'two noble insurgencies'. They say: 'Creativity joins humanistic psychology in its greater mission, and in its expansive methods, at a time in human history when the challenges never have been greater.'

Tom Greening has a nice chapter on an existential-humanistic approach to reading literature. It complements a chapter on research by Gayle Privette, where she investigates self-actualization and peak experiences. She shows how peak performance can only be understood by using the insights of humanistic psychology.

David Feinstein builds on his previous work with Stan Krippner to give us a chapter on personal myths as fields of information. In doing so he has something to say about the phenomenon of transpersonal linking in therapy: 'many therapists report a momentary merging of the boundary between themselves and a client that, in its intensity, exceeds empathy and rapport'. And he goes on to label this as the opening up of 'the mythic field' between therapist and client, 'accurately obtaining information that is not transmitted through even the most subtle sensory cues.'

This obviously touches on the transpersonal, as does the next chapter, by David Elkins, treating of a humanistic spirituality. He speaks of a continuum of sacred experiences, ranging from 'poignant moments' through 'peak experiences' to 'mystical encounters' – from low intensity to high intensity. 'When the soul is nourished through regular contact with the sacred', he says, 'the result is spiritual growth or spirituality.'

On a more mundane level, Scott Churchill and Fred Wertz give us 'An introduction to phenomenological research in psychology', which is well done and quite illuminating. 'According to the phenomenological approach', they say, 'it is not possible to exhaustively know any phenomenon, and different viewpoints can be valid.'

This is followed by a brilliant chapter on narrative research, by Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Liieblich. They quote Bakhtin to this effect: 'The better a person understands the degree to which he is externally determined, the closer he comes to understanding and exercising his real freedom.' They emphasise the importance of dialogue.

More specialised, but equally good, is the chapter by Robert Elliott on hermeneutic single-case efficacy design, where he speaks of the research he has done and inspired on the therapeutic process. He has used 'a mixture of qualitative and quantitative information to create a

rich case record that provides both positive and negative evidence for the causal influence of therapy on client outcome.' This sounds a bit daunting, but the work is actually very good. He explains that 'narrative causality' is different from mechanistic causality. 'In other words, therapists do not 'cause' their clients to change; rather, clients make use of what happens between them and their therapists so as to bring about (or sometimes to avoid bringing about) desired changes in their lives.'

Larry Leitner and Franz Epting write a fascinating chapter on constructivist approaches to therapy, showing how relevant this is to humanistic approaches. They discuss the 'credulous approach' advocated by George Kelly. 'If a client says that he went to the moon, then 'he really went to the moon'. After all, there are many ways of going to the moon; indeed, there are many moons to which one can go.' They describe a narrative approach and work with children, and say that their techniques 'have the aim of enabling children to say what they know about their worlds but could not otherwise find words to express.' This really breathes the spirit of the humanistic.

I shall not comment on the two chapters where John Rowan and Ernesto Spinelli debate whether humanistic and existential approach are the same or different.

The brilliant chapter by Maureen O'Hara goes into the whole question of where the humanistic approach fits in the cultural scene today. She speaks of the narrowing of the psychotherapy field, the increasing legalizing of therapy, the industrialization of health care. She says that 'graduate schools are rearranging their curricula to produce the line workers for the managed care industry.' The field of psychology, she argues, represents in microcosmic form the crisis of values affecting the society at large. If it wants to survive at all it will have to decide whether it wants to be part of the culture of domination, exploitation and alienation, or of the culture of emancipation and love. The humanistic vision, the emancipatory vision, is needed now more than ever.

The same thinking informs the excellent chapter by Jeanne Watson and Art Bohart entitled 'Humanistic-experiential therapies in the era of managed care'. They explain that the relatively new discipline of experiential therapy, arising now particularly in Europe, but also in Canada, takes forward the basic humanistic approaches and makes them more sharp, more hard-edged, more capable of taking on the challenges of evidence-based thinking. 'It is the client's involvement', they say, 'that makes therapy work'. We get away from the concepts of 'treatment' and 'interventions' as being the thing to watch and to measure. The things that therapists do 'are more properly viewed as tools that the client can use to shape his or her own outcomes.' This is radical thinking.

One of the most exciting chapters in this book is the one by Constance Fischer on 'Collaborative exploration

as an approach to personality assessment'. This takes the whole question of diagnosis and transforms it into something human and desirable. She gives exactly the same tests as any good assessor would, but instead of using the results as a judgement, she goes through them with the person being assessed, so that the meeting awakens a therapeutic self-awareness. It is a process of self-discovery for the person being assessed. And she says that it might be better to conduct this session in the person's home or neighbourhood to get a better sense of the person in context. Instead of aiming at objectivity, one is aiming at intersubjectivity – two people working together to understand the results. This is marvellous stuff, and it turns out that the author has been conducting tests like this since 1970.

Another beautiful chapter is by Kenneth Bradford, entitled 'Romantic love as path: Tensions between erotic desire and security needs'. This is written from the inside, by someone who really knows what romantic love is, both the heights and the depths. He goes back to the origins of romantic love in the tales of the middle ages, with great insight, and then moves into comparing courtly love with tantra. This is deep stuff, and very challenging. 'It is not by merely tolerating inner and interpersonal tensions, but rather by embracing them wholeheartedly, that love becomes a path'. This chapter is beautifully written, and shows us yet once again how rich and how human humanistic psychology can be.

Roger Walsh and Kirk Schneider exchange an interesting pair of chapters where they explore the relationship between existential and transpersonal approaches to the person. This is actually a great introduction to transpersonal thinking, but again no real agreement was reached.

An excellent chapter on humanistic psychology and social action is contributed by Arthur Lyons. He makes the point that humanistic psychology, to fulfil its promise, must involve social activism and not merely personal development, and he quotes some interesting examples of where this has been done and been effective.

Michael Mahoney and Sean Mahoney contribute a fine chapter on dialectics and future development, which draws a number of different threads together and talks about the importance of hope. The relationship between mainstream science and humanistic psychology can be a rich and rewarding one if we can play it right. The relationship between loneliness (bad) and solitude (good) needs to be understood, too. They say – 'Confusion, cruelty and suffering remain rampant, and the compassion and authenticity of approaches such as existential-humanism are needed desperately'.

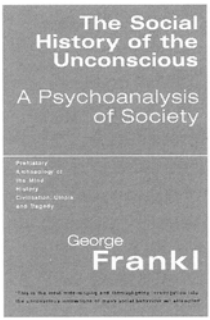
Out of the 49 chapters, I have only picked out those that appealed to me particularly, but there are many others well worth reading. This is a huge contribution to our knowledge and understanding of what humanistic psychology has to offer in the difficult world of today.

John Rowan

The Social History of the Unconscious – A Psychoanalysis of Society

George Frankl. Revised (Third) Edition: 2003

Open Gate Press. £17.95



For anyone who feels disappointed with classical psychoanalysis, or its more recent 'postmodernist' incarnation, this book 'brings it all back home,' back to its roots in humanism and its mission: human liberation. It challenges the dead end in which psychoanalysis has contrived to land itself and it speaks with conviction and urgency about the crisis of our time with a refreshing radicalism. This book is a turning point and will lift up heads and hearts and open new avenues to a better future for those willing to face the challenge.

This new, up-dated, edition of George Frankl's major work comprises two parts. Prehistory: Archaeology of the Mind, and Civilisation: Utopia and Tragedy. These subtitles help the reader to navigate the depth and breadth of Frankl's analysis of the evolution and development of the psyche and society, since the dawning of our hominid ancestors to the emergence of homo sapiens. Frankl argues that previous workers in this field hitherto failed to give adequate attention to the mind of 'man' as a product and shaper of 'reality'. This book expresses the conviction that psychoanalysis is an emancipatory science and thus has a crucial role to play in the creation of a non-repressive civilisation in which the individual and society can be reconciled.

Frankl challenges Freud's anthropological speculations, showing that culture does not arise from the Oedipus complex, the latter is revealed as the product of a specific phase in the evolution of patriarchal civilisation. Assessing a great deal of evidence, Frankl argues that matriarchal society was overthrown as a consequence of the evolution of homo-sapiens from hunter-gatherers to settled communities with the invention of agriculture and private property. The psychodynamics of the battle between the principles of patriarchy and matriarchy continue to be lived out in the social unconscious of today. The 'Furies' confront the rule of 'Reason,' the return of the repressed is not an 'instinctual thermidor' ('archaic inheritance') but the struggle

between two super-egos which have brought progress and regression, and are playing out their usefulness on the stage of human history. The implications of the Oedipus complex, of desire, love, hate, rebellion and guilt, are rooted in social processes, and give rise to the conflicts of 'civilisation' down to today. The roots of the rebellion against the repressive superego are found in the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the dynamic of capitalism which simultaneously produces unrivalled material wealth, and by mobilising the exploitative and aggressive, rebellious drives of the population, produces eras of wars of conquest, civil wars, revolutions, counter-revolutions, and alienation. The desire to control and be controlled, to discipline and punish, to derive gratification in one's obedience and compliance, become powerful sadomasochistic drives, cementing the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. Moreover, the rebellious drives are displaced against other nationalities and groups, in hatred, conflicts and war: how to end this dynamic reproduced from one generation to the next?

Frankl acknowledges Freud's achievements but shows where Freud succumbed to the cultural expressions of repressive patriarchal civilisation. Freud floundered at the end of his life because he was resigned to the idea that 'civilisation' was caught on the horns of an inescapable dilemma: that progress in civilisation is tantamount to progress in repression, renunciation, disappointing sublimation, unbounded destructiveness and mental illness. These concepts seemed to account for the horrors of the twentieth century but left Freud's own humanism washed up on the beach. Frankl instead shows a revolutionary picture of how there is still a chance, and perhaps just a chance, for men and women to achieve the necessary awareness to go beyond the current stage of 'civilisation' and to the real emergence of humanity. Frankl's theory clarifies the way in which unconscious drives are shaped by historical processes (mediated by specific and variable cultural practices), and in turn become externalised as symbols, culture, and social consciousness. His writing has a remarkable lucidity despite the complexities of his subject matter, penetrating to the source of the problem, moving from the general to the particular, and back again, in masterful brushstrokes, so that, upon finishing this book, I felt that I had spent a day learning to appreciate the erudition and technique of a master craftsman.

In a fascinating innovation, Frankl recasts the notion of 'libido' in a way which makes sense of 'man's need to externalise himself in the world,' to give and receive affirmation, as well as consolation for his existence, by liberating love and affection from scarcity and want, so that 'libido' can become 'Eros'. Fromm, it can be noted, probed Freud's instinct theory, as did Bowlby, and found it wanting in the sense that 'libido' as sexual energy could not account for the range of human motivation. Nonetheless, for Frankl, it is axiomatic that 'libido' is 'object relating,' and when liberated, it

becomes Eros. Thus Frankl aims to restore the future prospects of psychoanalysis, liberating its humanistic impulse from the cul-de-sac of Freud's pessimism and resignation. But there are few grounds for optimism. The tragedy of the last hundred years, of conflicts, world wars, and the holocaust, is continued in the twenty first century by new cultural regressions and the potential ruination of life on this planet. If there is hope it must lie in realism and a renewed struggle to master the irrational forces, which we, as individuals and as a society, must become aware of, master and overcome.

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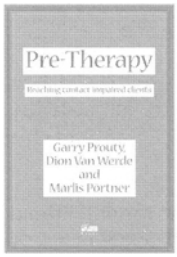
Pre-Therapy: Reaching Contact-Impaired Clients

Garry Prouty, Dion Van Werde and Marlis Portner

PCCS Books 2002(1998) £15



This is about the fascinating work of Garry Prouty and his associates in Germany over the past 30 years. Only recently has this work been translated into English. It comes out of the person-centred and the experiential schools, and is humanistic to the core. I found it quite inspiring and potentially very useful for anyone working with psychotic or learning-disabled people. It is divided into three parts.

Part 1 is a general introduction by Prouty himself, and introduces the basic ideas and some of the newer work as well.

Part 2 is by Dion Van Werde, entitled 'Pre-Therapy Applied on a Psychiatric Ward', is a fascinating account of the approach in use.

Part 3 is by Marlis Pörtner, entitled 'Pre-Therapy in Europe' and gives details of one project and of some newer developments.

This is really exciting work, extending the person-centred approach and in the process stripping it down to the bare bones. The person is confirmed in their own reality all the time, rather than some attempt being made to improve them according to someone else's standards. 'We always presuppose a healthy part in the person we are dealing with, a core that can be reached and strengthened, however relatively small it may be. For us, there is always somebody we can address!'

John Rowan