***The Future of Training in Psychotherapy and Counselling* by John Rowan** Routledge (215 pp)

Practitioners who have had any involvement with training, and I suppose this includes all of us since we have all, I hope, **been** trained, will already be aware of the difficulties, contradictions and controversies involved. For example, some practitioners express concern at the increasing 'academicisation' of the training as more and more courses are validated by universities and are offered as MA's (with a diploma as a consolation prize to those who choose not to write a dissertation!) Others are dismayed at the prospect of counselling and psychotherapy being drawn into the orbit of the National Vocational Qualification; the subtle art of psychotherapy being reduced to a set of behavioural objectives which are assessed by ticking boxes on a form!

Many of these kind of difficulties arise from a legitimate concern about standards and a genuine wish that what is offered to the public as counselling and psychotherapy should reflect well on the profession as a whole. The role of training in creating and maintaining a high standard of work, however this is measured, is equally controversial with a body of research e.g. Hattie et al (1984) suggesting that training actually lowers, rather than raises efficacy!

It is into this maelstrom of contradictions that John Rowan bravely steps and emerges, having thrown a beacon of clear-sightedness into the murky world of partisanship and self-interest that is our profession.

One of the difficulties in talking about psychotherapy is the assumption that there is one entity called psychotherapy. This is equally applicable to counselling, but the sentence would have been confusing if I'd included that word! John's subdivision of the work into 'Instrumental, Relational and Transpersonal Perspectives' (the subtitle of the book) makes the discussion a whole lot easier. Those who are already familiar with John's work will recognise the basis of this subdivision which is based on Wilber's four positions in personal development; the fourth level being more the province of spiritual growth than psychotherapy and counselling.

There are ten chapters, each of which focuses on an aspect of training and nine 'Dialectical interpolations' which focus on paradoxes which emerge. One of the pleasing aspects of the interpolations is that the paradoxes are explored, but left unresolved. Indeed there are times when John emphasises the importance of holding onto both horns of the dilemma; a healthy attitude for any therapist or counsellor, but we all devote so much energy to trying to resolve them!

In each of the chapters an aspect of training is explored from each of the three perspectives. In the first, 'Do we Need Training?', it is particularly helpful to realise that research, which would seem to suggest that personal therapy has no effect on the efficacy of the therapist, focuses on the first five stages of therapy out of a possible eleven (this is in John's table which brings together the alchemical sequence with the work of William Stiles, Jocelyn Chaplin and Meier and Boivin.) To those unfamiliar with John's previous work, I would relate the first five stages to Egan's three stage model. The subject of research is dealt with in a later chapter, but in this chapter it becomes clear that, since the instrumental way of working is the most conducive to traditional research methods and demands least in terms of self-awareness on the part of the practitioner, personal therapy will obviously be less important.

The subject of personal therapy is tackled more fully, after three excellent chapters on Theory, Skills and Supervision, in Chapter Five. Some interesting facts emerge. For instance, although one might assume that practitioners working in an instrumental way would not necessarily choose to have their own therapy and that, if they did, it would be of a similar orientation to their own, this proves not to be the case with 44% of cognitive behavioural psychologists choosing to go to psychodynamic practitioners. The necessity of personal therapy and/or groupwork for practitioners working at a relational or transpersonal level is also explored in this chapter.

The chapter on written work which follows I found particularly validating. Having struggled for years to justify to trainees **why** I didn't want to accept written work which was sloppily referenced it was good to read John referring to this as symptomatic of a 'rebellious undercurrent'. Thank God I can stop worrying about whether I really **was** being 'picky'!

The chapters on ethics and research maintain the same standard of curious enquiry, but chapter nine on 'Therapist Resistance' is particularly important. I did find myself wondering whether it might not also be important in the supervision, particularly of experienced practitioners, to be aware of therapist

resistance as well as incorporating the idea into training programmes.

If there is a weakness anywhere in this book, it is in the next chapter on 'The body in therapy'. The account of the three levels of bodywork is as thorough and insightful as one might expect, but I was not convinced by the way this was linked with counselling and psychotherapy training. I felt that perhaps the paragraphs which followed the subheading 'Implications for Training' could have been expanded into a concluding chapter of their own.

That said, I would thoroughly recommend this book to all practitioners, particularly those involved with training. I found it both extremely informative and supportive to me in my training work.

Geoff Lamb

The Schopenhauer Cure by **Irvin D. Yalom** Harper Collins
Price £12.35 358 Pages

We know we are going to die, but the question is, how to live with the knowledge of our mortality? Familiar territory, perhaps, for an eminent existentially orientated psychotherapist such as Julius, the protagonist in Yalom's latest work of fiction – but, as he discovers on being told he has one year left to live, when it's our own time 'there is knowing and there is *knowing'* – this book describes a therapist's response to *knowing.*

Julius decides to die as he has lived, inspired by Nietzsche, and chooses to intensify his life the best way he knows how, through his work as a therapist. Reflecting on work undone, he seeks out an old client, one who had seemed immune to all his therapeutic strivings, and finds Philip, his alter ego, who had finally been helped by a course in bibliotherapy based on the works of Schopenhauer.

The novel explores what happens when these two men, and their philosophies, are put into the heat of a present day West Coast therapy group, as its members take ever greater risks in moving closer to their life dilemmas, and one another, under the pressure of the ending that they know the death of their facilitator will bring. The story of the fictional group is interwoven with a parallel contrasting factual biography of Schopenhauer, the brilliant, but socially challenged, philosopher.

The book is not only an amalgam of novel, philosophical discourse and biography, it is also a demonstration of group therapy that brings his classic textbook, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy,* to life in such a way that learning unintentionally happens – perhaps there is also learning and *learning.*

Yalom is clearly adept at playing with forms of text to express himself, and in the tradition of a number of great existential thinkers before him, uses the novel to throw light on shadowy topics. In *Lying on the Couch* it was therapists having sex with clients, the taboo issue in *The Schopenhauer Cure* is therapists who die. Although the issue of mortality and healers has been eloquently represented in narratives such as the myth of Chiron and the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, the psychological literature has largely overlooked this anxiety-provoking topic. This novel picks up on a core issue identified in the academic literature that does exist in the field, which is the emergence of an awareness and reversal in the internal client/therapist:illness/health dynamic. The reciprocal essence of therapy is a theme Yalom fictitiously explored in *When Nietzsche Wept* and develops further here as imminent death pushes Julius into accepting a challenge and taking new risks in his work, living out the underlying proposition of the book, that 'death–anxiety is least where self-realisation is most'.

This book prompts reflection, and I would highly recommend it for opening up awareness of our mortality in terms of implications for clinical practice. Yalom vividly demonstrates here how we express our personal philosophy in our work, as he does in writing this book, in which he is generous with himself and his experience, making it a rich resource in all sorts of way.

But most of all, it is an enjoyable, thought-provoking novel, about things that may, or may not, matter in the end – leaving us with the thought that we will only know when it is too late!

References:

Yalom, I. D. (1995) *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*

Yalom, I. D. (1992) *When Nietzsche Wept.* Harper Collins. New York

Yalom, I. D. (1996) *Lying on the Couch.* Harper Collins. New York.

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***The Metaphor of Play: Origin and breakdown of personal being (3rd edition) by* Russell Meares -** Routledge

Date: 2005 Price: £17.99 pp. 254 ISBN 1-58391-967-8

This is a wonderful book, which would be of real interest to therapists of many different persuasions. The author is widely read and deeply experienced, and has a viewpoint which does not miss much. His interests and sympathies range from Janet and Charcot in the nineteenth century to Mandelbrot and fractal geometry. He says that his heartland is the conversational model of therapy pioneered by Robert Hobson.

He is particularly interested in borderline personality disorder, and shows that its ramifications extend into much more ordinary everyday work. He is also very interested in creativity:

'Schiller called the symbol creating function the play instinct and believed it to be the basis of culture.'

Meares contrasts the baby surrounded by smiling faces, responding to his every move, with the baby who gets negative feedback or cold neglect. Very different adults emerge from these two situations.

He is also interested in the effects of trauma, and points out that:

'Traumatic memory is frequently layered, earlier and less accessible traumata underpinning those which are nearer to consciousness.'

Particularly important, he thinks, are those situations where: 'there is a disjunction or disconnection with the other who is sensed as necessary to the subject's going-on-being.'

Our author is somewhat sceptical about concepts like transference, projective identification and the like, and prefers more experience-near concepts such as conversation and mutual influence. He is willing to quote parallel instances to the therapeutic couple, such as McCarthy and Neenan as hostages in captivity.

He distinguishes three different types of false self: one is compliant to the reality of the others around; a second is more truly mask-like; and the third is a caretaker self. He does not like the idea that there is just one.

There is no resounding conclusion here, no display of theoretical coherence and clarity – more a set of musings round a theme. But the theme is an important one – what is a person, and how do we encourage people to own their personhood?

Meares has never applied for membership of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, so far as I know, but if he did I think we might welcome him with open arms.

John Rowan