Book Reviews

Edited by **Manu Bazzano**, Book Reviews Editor

Happy-Clappy Economics

Thrive: The Power of Evidence-based Psychological Therapies

By: Richard Layard and David M. Clark
Allen Lane, London, 2014, 374 pp
ISBN 978-1846146053
Reviewed by: Manu Bazzano

Once upon a time, humanity lived in profound ignorance. People didn't have the faintest idea about mental health. Consequently, they wasted their precious time, energy and money in credulous pursuits. For years on end they would talk about their childhood – of how Mum & Dad, with all their best intentions, thoroughly fucked them up. Lying on a couch or sitting opposite their therapist, they nattered on about their dreams and nightmares, their relationships with partners, friends and colleagues. They would harp on and on about their feelings and emotions – how they perceived the world and their own place in it. They were truly obstinate: they wanted to explore, describe and clarify, but this only made matters worse. They did peculiar things, such as talking about what was happening in the counselling room, in the hope of shedding light, so they said, on their pains, dramas and dilemmas. They were exceedingly fond of picturesque notions: transference, archetypes, edge of awareness, the unconscious, relational field, free association, felt sense, embodiment, attachment, congruence and similarly quaint and archaic ideas. They said they wanted 'emancipation' and hankered for 'meaning', whatever they meant by these vague words. They clamoured for renewal, transformation and (let's face it) an easy way out of an existence they petulantly saw as stultified by their professional duties. They even claimed, borrowing from obsolete socialist phraseology, that they had been made spiritually bankrupt by social degradation, poverty and squalor. On and on they went. Predictably, things went from bad to worse. Psychological theories got more flowery, more cerebral (and awfully un-scientific). Yet the people's misery increased. A deep sadness fell on planet Earth.

Then one day, sometime in the 1950s, something began to stir on the distant horizon. A faint but propitious ray of hope: mental health began to be considered *scientifically*. It was about time! Until then, as Layard & Clark buoyantly assert, 'there were no scientifically validated treatments for mental illness' (p. 8). Those first auspicious stirrings did not flourish, however, until the 1960s and 1970s, when something truly numinous happened, the equivalent of which has very little comparison in the history of our glorious and twisted species.

For what felt like an eternity, a mighty thunderstorm cleansed the ether, freeing the minds and hearts of Earth-dwellers of all medieval dregs and irrational froth. Then, as the sky cleared, in the glorious sunset three blazing letters appeared, one by one. The first letter was C. The second was B. And the third was T. Millions of sufferers across the globe kneeled in silent gratitude. And when the final meaning of the Event became clear, the people in the North and the South, the people in the East and the West, rejoiced. They joined hands and gave thanks to the bearers of Glad Rationalist Tidings, the very blossom of the Enlightenment. No more depression! No more personality disorders! No more agoraphobia or suicidal ideation! The end of human suffering was near, for this time truly scientific psychologists, moved by tremendous compassion for humanity, had found a name and a formula for happiness, which would make happy workers of us all.

That name was CBT, which Layard & Clark see as the only truly scientific orientation in psychology: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. It did not matter in the least that many CBT practitioners claimed humility, integrity and wholeheartedly acknowledged the validity of other approaches alongside theirs. It did not matter that they were willing to work with colleagues from other orientations

as well, and test the validity of their approach in their everyday practice. Tough times require tough measures. And if tough measures are seen by critics as pig-headed, that's because these critics do not grasp the magnitude of the task Layard & Clark have embarked upon.

Never mind the critics: the first battle against the forces of obscurantism had been won. Yet a mighty struggle lay ahead: people were still unhappy; people still suffered. They felt bad, and they let Layard & Clark know of their suffering: they wrote heart-felt letters and emails about their sleepless nights; they conveyed their melancholy and their low moods at posh dinner parties. Could they not do *something*? Were they not willing to step forward and answer to the heart-felt call of a suffering humanity? Wasn't there something good, something solid and scientific out there?

Layard & Clark were deeply moved by the people's plight, and even more so by their own sense of timely historical consequence. They listened attentively to the people's complaints, before committing their momentous struggle to print. They did so in the writing style of an obliging twelve year old, for the message was of great significance and it could not afford nuances, intricacies, and certainly none of the mind-boggling pseudo-profundity of much psychoanalytic and humanistic jargon. Didn't all the prophets of mankind speak simply? Moreover, people are mostly simpletons, so you need to speak to them in the language of a simpleton. 'Extremely easy and pleasurable to read. It is the most comprehensive, humane and generous study of mental illness I've come across', coos Melvyn Bragg in the back-cover blurb.

The people were right, Layard & Clark reflected. The people demanded to be happy. Above all, they demanded to go back to work. They were so eager to set their depression aside and with a spring in their step contribute to an economy entirely geared for the privileges of the pampered elite. The people wanted to do their bit for the country, and Layard & Clark would make damn sure it would happen.

What, exactly, was the people's problem? Moved by this deep question, singled out by their unique vocation, Layard & Clark ('the Dream Team of British Social Science', according to another blurb on the back cover) were ready for action: 'One of us is an economist and the other a clinical psychologist. We met ten years ago and at once began discussing one of the great injustices of our time.' (p. ix) You have to admit it: only a chosen few are endowed with that mighty sense of calling. In duly answering that calling, they do so without beating around the bush. You won't find in them any of that psychoanalytic, archaic soul-wrenching self-doubt nonsense, nor any of that humanistic self-effacing, wimpy false modesty. Think of founders of religion, of great statesmen, of groundbreaking artists and inventors. They simply do what needs to be done. Think of Tony Blair, a man thanks to whom Layard became *Lord* Layard, appointed by the notorious warmonger and permanently tanned former prime-minister as 'Happiness Tsar' in support of New Labour's IAPT programme, a programme Layard supported because depression and mental distress are so damned expensive and inefficient, are they not?

It must be frustrating to an economist such as Layard to see that people under late capitalism feel a malaise, a deep hunger that remains dissatisfied, no matter how many doughnuts you throw in their direction. To be sure, the very task of the market is to maintain consumers in a state of continuous dissatisfaction. It's just that (after a series of financial crises provoked by the elite's covetousness and the taxpayer's subsequent bailout of banksters), the level of dissatisfaction has reached very high levels indeed. The people whom Layard & Clark are so munificently willing to educate are not happy. Many of them are depressed. And what is depression, this iconic malaise of our age, if not, amongst other things, *weariness of the self*, and the refusal to dance merrily to the happy-clappy tunes of neo-liberalism? And what, if anything, will help people overcome their chronic weariness? In the early, innocent Weberian days of the market, it used to be 'rest and recuperation'. Now, it's 'back to work after six CBT sessions'. No one can deny the fact that Layard & Clark have expertly captured the *Zeitgeist* – whether by intellectual acumen or perhaps because they have been feted by other benefactors of humankind such as Blair, Sarkozy and Cameron.

The authors are worthy candidates to the post of Last Man's preservers and embalmers. Allow me to explain: we have perhaps reached what Nietzsche envisioned as the inevitable course of Western civilization, the stage of what he called the Last Man, or the last human being – a droopy individual entirely devoid of great passion and involvement; devoid of vision, merely seeking security, comfort and a stupid and stupefied 'happiness' – a being whose only religion is *work*. In a world devoid of values, work has become our religion. Weber's Protestant ethic needs an update, and Layard & Clark provide useful footnotes. And so does Britney Spears, whose latest hit is 'Work, Bitch', and it goes something like this: 'You wanna Lamborghini/Sip Martinis/Look hot in a bikini?/You better work, bitch/You wanna live fancy/Live in a big mansion/Party in France?/

You better work, bitch.' That's what you'd expect from a singer, the anagram of whose name is *Presbyterians*. And she's not alone: there is a new wave of motivational work music that uses the rhythms and timbres of rave, techno and ambient (far more imaginative forms, if you ask me), but this time as a soundtrack to a new aggressive work culture that alternates speed, amphetamine salts and great consumption of alcohol to work round the clock in places such as the financial City.

Motivational work music uses the template of rave music in the same manner, perhaps, as Layard & Clark utilize a therapeutic template originally devised for human emancipation. Layard & Clark re-brand 'the psychological therapies' in the service of regimentation, and in so doing they end up misconstruing CBT by presenting it reductively (mainly drawing on Beck and Wolpe) and dogmatically (as the only game in town). Do all CBT practitioners feel that way? Early in my career I worked beside a CBT practitioner at the Priory Hospital. He was competent, humane and deeply committed. I learned a great deal from him. He never said, or remotely implied, that CBT was a superior form of therapy, like Layard & Clark assert, passing on their advice to government bodies in a language that people in power understand: simple, driven by economics, hot on factoids and obsessed with targets, quantifiable measurements and targets – all in the name of 'happiness'.

For work is apparently what keeps people happy. What kind of work, Layard & Clark do not care to say. No distinction is drawn between alienated work and creative endeavour. No mention, god forbid, of class divide. No discussion, in their simplistic appeals to 'happiness', between *eudaimonic and hedonic* 'happiness'. The happiness they so eagerly promote is the hedonic gratification that leaves us wanting more and becoming more enslaved in cheap consumerism: a doughnut now and then, followed by a 6-week CBT programme to deal with the frustration any intelligent individual is bound to feel. And, to top it all, a blessing from the Buddha who, in Layard & Clark's version, eerily appears as an ancient edition of Aaron Beck, with both of them suggesting one aim for common folk like you and me: 'to achieve control over your thoughts, and in this way achieve control over your life' (p. 121).

The type of unhappiness the authors appear to combat is, at closer scrutiny, breakdown of consumer choice. The best thing the Buddha did, the authors tell us with the straight face with which all leaders of humankind are endowed, is having developed Mindfulness, 'one of the oldest forms of psychological practice' which miraculously 'increases the grey matter in the brain areas critical for learning and the regulation of emotion' (p. 231). This brought to mind an interesting project recently undertaken by a Buddhist writer, a compilation of what the Buddha did *not* say, a list of quotes various peddlers love to attribute to the unsuspecting Gautama Siddhartha in order to supply their products with a halo.

There is another name for Nietzsche's 'Last Man': *homo psycho-economicus*, an unco-operative individual whose only concern is to be happy. By pursuing his ever-elusive happiness, he maintains the foundations of an economy based on instant gratification, false needs and disregard for the ills that befalls its fellows. Layard & Clark provide this new type of human being with enough psychological signposting to keep him going for a while longer — until the next economic crisis. Ⓢ

A Philosopher Who Is Willing to Observe

The Child as Natural Phenomenologist: Primal and Primary Experience in Merleau-Ponty's Psychology

By: Talia Welsh
Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill., 2013, 169 pp
ISBN-10: 0810128802; ISBN-13: 978-0810128804
Reviewed by: Richard House

> ...Merleau-Ponty's psychology is... a compelling and unique account of the human condition.
>
> (Talia Welsh, p. xiv)

> ...perhaps accurate theorizing is not a hallmark of normal human interaction. Something much more primary and less intellectual underlies the natural connections we form with others.
>
> (Welsh, p. 98)

In issue 41 (3), 2014 of *Self and Society*, we presented a special theme issue, edited by Manu Bazzano, on the contribution of eminent French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) to leading-edge thinking in psychology and the psy therapies. University of Chattanooga philosopher Talia Welsh contributed to that issue, and she is a leading world scholar on Merleau-Ponty's thinking in psychology and child development (an area of his many contributions that is often overlooked) – being a thinker who tellingly 'stands on the intersection of... phenomenology and postmodernism' (p. xiii). In 2010, Northwestern University Press published a priceless new collection of Merleau-Ponty's celebrated and relatively accessible 1949–1952 Sorbonne lectures, titled *Child Psychology and Pedagogy* (amounting to some 460 pages in English), translated by Talia herself – lectures which investigated the broad themes of child and developmental psychology, psychoanalysis, pedagogy, phenomenology, sociology and anthropology, and in which Merleau-Ponty 'works against materialistic and intellectualist accounts' (p. 32). Merleau-Ponty examined child psychology with greater rigour and depth than any other phenomenologist, and for holistic child development thinkers, these lectures make seminal reading. It is of great regret that it has taken some 60 years before the lectures have been made available in full to the English-speaking world.

In her subsequent, wonderfully titled book *The Child as Natural Phenomenologist*, Welsh offers us a panoramic perspective on Merleau-Ponty's work in child psychology, as exemplified by the Sorbonne lectures, exploring its relationship to his philosophical *oeuvre*, and making a strong case for its continued relevance in contemporary theory and practice. Being someone who has been campaigning on childhood and early child development and learning issues for many years, and who supports a strongly holistic, humanistic perspective on child development, I could scarcely wait to open the pages of this book – and my anticipation was more than met by this excellent, thought-provoking work.

The book consists of six chapters. A very helpful contextualizing preface (tellingly titled 'A Philosopher Who Is Willing to Observe', following Jean Laplanche) is followed by a first chapter on Merleau-Ponty's early work in child psychology prior to the Sorbonne lectures, especially in his *The Structure of Behaviour* and his magnum opus, *Phenomenology of Perception*, where the *living, situated* subject was always his starting point. Chapter 2 looks at phenomenology, Gestalt psychology and psychoanalysis, with Merleau-Ponty embracing an existentialist reading of the goals of phenomenology, and arguing that phenomenology needs to stay close to the findings of empirical research (including detailed examination of particular cases). In the text we discover that Merleau-Ponty was a close associate of Jacques Lacan and lectured extensively on Melanie Klein. While strongly influenced by psychoanalytic writings and theorists, Merleau-Ponty embellishes the notion of the unconscious with that of *ambivalence*, with 'what is on the very surface of our experience mak[ing] it difficult to objectify experience' (p. xviii), and with pathology resulting from incompatible structures of experience rather than from hidden drives. Chapter 3, 'Syncretic Sociability and the Birth of the Self', focuses on the notion that a child's earliest life experience is social and shared, with an 'intersubjective infant' who is responsively engaged. Here, subjectivity is not seen as preceding intersubjectivity, but rather, 'social awareness precedes and underlies our sense of self-awareness' (p. xix). Here we find detailed, complex discussions of the famed 'mirror stage' of French psychologist Henri Wallon and Lacan, and its place in child development.

Chapter 4 then looks at contemporary research in psychology and phenomenology, and whether Merleau-Ponty's work of six decades and more ago stands up to the findings of recent (phenomenological) research (e.g. infants imitating facial gestures), including the important work of Shaun Gallagher (2005 – on interaction theory) and Beata Stawarska (2009 – on dialogical phenomenology). Following a detailed discussion, Welsh concludes that 'there appears to be little fundamental conflict between contemporary phenomenological assessments of imitation and Merleau-Ponty's work' (p. 105). Also, Welsh emphasizes Merleau-Ponty's appreciation of child experience not merely as a forerunner of adult behaviour, but 'possessing its own rhythm and styles of interaction' (ibid.). More on this later.

Chapter 5 then looks at exploration and learning, with detailed discussions of Merleau-Ponty's disagreements with Piaget (and this long before it became fashionable to critique Piagetian psychology from the late 1970s onwards, *à la* Margaret Donaldson etc.). Refreshingly, Merleau-Ponty isn't afraid to use the term 'natural' when theorizing early child experience: for him, the child has a natural engagement with her experience (p. xx), and she is seen far more as a 'natural *phenomenologist*' than as a Piagetian 'natural *metaphysician*'. Finally, Chapter 6 looks at culture, development and gender, including how

Merleau-Ponty weaves socio-cultural norms and physical development into his cosmology, and looking closely at the examples of menstruation, pregnancy and feminist-theoretical engagements as exemplars of how Merleau-Ponty does not see physical maturation being equal to psychological maturation.

Throughout the book I frequently had exciting '*ah-ha*' moments where what Merleau-Ponty was arguing all those years ago cohered closely with today's holistic child development thinking – indeed, in this sense, Merleau-Ponty can be seen as an early pioneer of such thinking, and holistic perspectives can only be advanced when they are associated with the thinking of such a leading and influential philosopher.

For example: for Merleau-Ponty, the child is always an active participant in their interpretations of the world, and never a passive recipient of cultural information (p. xiv), and he strives to appreciate the child on her own positive terms (p. xvii). Psychology must avoid reducing childhood in its preoccupations with how childhood presages adulthood (ibid.); the child's behaviour is by no means merely caused by a suite of chaotic internal impulses that are later mastered (p. xvi), but reveals 'an original meaningful experience' (p. xvii). He is also critical of over-generalization in human development (ibid.); 'the child's relations with the mother are never simply a set of instinctive responses to a situation' (p. 8). Children first perceive wholes, with childhood perception *preceding* intellectual distinctions like 'objective' and 'subjective' (p. 11; see also below); young children behave directly on the basis of sense-experience, with no conception that such experience is something one possesses – with no subject–object distinction existing for the child (ibid.); 'Merleau-Ponty avoids causal language that sees the child as an object solely controlled by libidinal forces', and he is reluctant to attempt to reduce human behaviour to a set of laws (p. 12).

For Merleau-Ponty, then, no single path of development exists, and development will always be unique (p. 15). The child does not come as an empty slate, but as 'a dynamic, living being constantly structuring and restructuring [her] environment' (p. 21). Merleau-Ponty criticizes both scientism in both psychology and philosophy, and our unquestioned faith in science as a straightforward 'objective' enterprise, and he wants methodologies to take on a more interpretive kind of inquiry, with subjective criteria being admissible, and starting from a description of the human condition (p. 24–5). He supported a psychology that ceased privileging the general over the individual (p. 25); and he maintains that (Cartesian) dualism 'fundamentally misunderstands perception, knowledge, and our embodied status' (p. 27). 'The infant's experience does not begin with chaos, but as a *world already underway*' (MMP, quoted on p. 33, his italics) – '[the child's] earliest life is of a radically different structure than our own' (p. 47); 'child development must be understood as a dynamic process rather than a sequential achievement of various stages' (p. 35).

Merleau-Ponty sees Gestalt theory and psychoanalysis as understanding children's experience far better than experimental psychology because they understand the contextual, temporal and personal aspects of experience (ibid.). 'The symptom is not something interior within the individual's psyche, but very much part of everyday life..., and the present is dynamic and not solely a product of the past' (p. 37); and 'development is not a linear slope toward adulthood' (p. 48). Merleau-Ponty strongly argues, further, that children's behaviour has its own logic 'based in the meanings they have given the world' that are *not* all nascent forms of adult meaning (p. 49) 'The child does not grasp that she has opinions, thoughts, and ideas... and that they are *hers*.... For children, experience is not something that is had; it is something that is' (p. 54, original italics). 'Ascribing a sense of self is often a result of our tendency to anthropomorphize' (p. 74) – and so on and so forth. This selection of quotations and positions compellingly conveys just how close Merleau-Ponty's thinking is to present-day humanistic, holistic viewpoints on child development and being – just how far ahead of his time he was, and how much we still have to learn from him and his ways of thinking.

One personal (and professional) 'bandwagon' of mine is the issue of over-intellellectualizing early childhood experience and education, a theme which is strongly evident in the work of both Donald Winnicott and Rudolf Steiner (to name just two). In short, the argument is that young children need to develop physically, emotionally and socially *before* they are introduced to quasi-formal cognitive learning. And if children are subjected to a developmentally inappropriate, intellectually precocious early education regime, this can have lifelong negative health effects (see, for example, Corrigan and Gordon, 1995). So I was particularly delighted to find that what Merleau-Ponty has to say about early development is consistent with this viewpoint. Thus, we read that Merleau-Ponty 'argues against overvaluing the intellectual in humankind' (p. 4); that he 'strongly critiques

developmental theories that use intellectual progress as guidelines, as they overlook the importance of the lived-body's development' – so rejecting a psychology of cognition in favour of a psychology in which the body, and embodiment, are central (p. 63; cf. Felder and Robbins, 2011). Thus, he strongly criticizes what he sees as the Piagetian over-emphasis on intellectual developments as the hallmark of children's development (p. 99). And relatedly, we find that Merleau-Ponty speaks extensively of how 'our adult investments, including our theoretical ones, often cause us to misunderstand the child' (p. 24). Indeed, he himself goes as far as saying that 'in child psychology, it is necessary to abstain from employing these adult concepts and even abstain from an adult vocabulary.... we must describe [the child's thought] in a new language that departs from the distinctions of adult language' (quoted in ibid.).

I need also hardly remind readers that in many if not most Humanistic Psychology circles, there is also the strongly held view that to overvalue the cognitive and intellectual at the expense of the rest of the human soul is far from healthy; so again, Merleau-Ponty can be seen as a strong ally of humanistic approaches.

Another key theme for me was how Merleau-Ponty emphasized that the child should not be seen as a 'mini-adult' – so echoing Rousseauean thought (as in Rousseau's *The Emile*), and some decades before this became a keynote viewpoint amongst present-day holistic developmental theorists. Thus we read that 'Children are not minimal adults but beings with their own unique styles of interaction and understanding' (p. xiv); 'Seeing the child as needing to achieve adulthood overemphasizes what the child lacks rather than what the child possesses'; and 'To grasp the child's experience as both unique and spontaneous, we must avoid language that is blindly invested in adult meaning' (p. 23). Thus, our 'adult investments' (and not least our theoretical ones) often lead us to misunderstand the child, with our adult concepts making it impossible for us to capture the child's unique viewpoint (p. 24). These arguments ring so true for humanistic critics who are deeply concerned about the unaware tendency in modern (Western) culture to treat children as 'mini-adults' in-the-making.

There are a few instances where Merleau-Ponty has been superseded by recent research – for example, with his view that young infants cannot visually perceive (p. xvii). Indeed, Welsh herself points out that in the light of contemporary empirical research – and hardly surprisingly – 'Merleau-Ponty would have certainly had to revise his understanding of early infant perception and thus his characterization of early life' (p. 73). For example, Welsh suggests that he would have very likely followed Gallagher's interaction theory (2005) and Beata Stawarska's dialogical phenomenology (2009) in developing a viable interdisciplinary theory of intersubjectivity (p. 73). Nor does Merleau-Ponty offer us a comprehensive theory of child development (p. xxi). However, these few lacunae are hugely outweighed by the extraordinary insight that Merleau-Ponty exhibited about child development some 65 years ago. In Chapter 4, for example, Welsh goes into great detail in defending Merleau-Ponty's perspective on early childhood experience from more recent research on neonatal imitation, theory of mind and dialogical relatedness which might appear, on the surface, to contradict it. Indeed, the current vogue in developmental theory for 'mentalization' and 'theory of mind' accounts (championed by Peter Fonagy, amongst others) is placed under severe challenge by Merleau-Ponty's perspective (e.g. pp. 93–4, 99).

The Child as Natural Phenomenologist, then, is a book for psychologists, child developmentalists, phenomenologists and sociologists as well as for philosophers, and it is a wonderful illustration of the way in which careful, sophisticated philosophical thinking can clarify our theorizing about the human condition so as better to understand it and, perhaps most importantly, to inform how we think about and work with young children. I loved this book for the way in which it affirmed and corroborated so many of the holistic, critical perspectives that I apply in my own work in and around early childhood.

Talia Welsh has performed a great service in enabling Maurice Merleau-Ponty's vital post-Cartesian philosophizing to take the prominent place that it deserves in our still developing knowledge about child development and the psychological dimensions of human experience. And to close with a statement with which all holistic, humanistic thinkers would surely agree: good psychologists grasp 'the totality of the child's becoming' (p. 34).

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One Complex World

Why Things Matter: The Place of Values in Science, Psychoanalysis and Religion

By: David M. Black
Routledge, London, 2011, 212 pp
ISBN: 0415493714
Reviewed by: R. J. Chisholm

One of the most important as well as perennial questions confronting any thoughtful psychotherapist concerns the nature of the profession itself. Is psychotherapy a science that advances through shared empirical discovery? Or is it more of an art that largely depends on the intuition and skill of the therapist? The safe, and surely correct, answer is that like medicine, on which it has always modelled itself, therapy should draw on scientific research and be applied with a skill that can be likened to an art. Yet the analogy with medicine should not be taken too far, as doing so would risk losing sight of psychotherapy's somewhat different interest. Indeed, pathologizing every complaint that can bring someone to therapy (as psychiatry has increasingly done over the past 40 years) misses an essential feature of psychological suffering. Anxiety, for example, need not be regarded as a symptom of a character disorder, but may be seen, instead, as an expression of the force behind each individual's quest for meaning. Moreover, although psychotherapy must often begin by treating symptoms as if they express some underlying pathological condition, success in therapy is most often found by addressing the self-understanding of the client. But if psychotherapy succeeds by helping the client achieve an elusive self-understanding that would be hard to gain by any other means, how does the therapist help the client determine what truly matters in his or her experience?

A great virtue of David Black's book is that it looks beyond the narrow confines of psychotherapy, and locates the human quest for meaning in a broad range of endeavours that can endow existence with meaning. A psychoanalyst, Black argues that each individual's quest for meaning must emerge from a process of psychological development that begins in infancy, and continues through childhood and adolescence. But meaning in any given discipline or system of belief cannot be found solely through a reductive analysis conducted in psychoanalytic or any other terms; it must be appreciated in terms of the endeavour for meaning itself. Moreover, things can be meaningful only because there are individual subjects that are self-aware – cognizant and appreciative of their own experience – and able to find it meaningful. Although there is an obvious circularity in this claim, Black makes a vigorous argument for the necessity of such circularity, and rejects any reductionist attempt in the name of scientific objectivity to eliminate the human subject from the discovery of meaning. To grossly simplify his argument, things matter because there are human subjects for whom they can matter.

But the book offers far more than a forceful case for recognizing the importance of subjectivity in the development of all fields of knowledge. It is at least as much a highly learned enquiry into the place of values in religion, morality and neuroscience, as well as psychoanalysis. Although the book originated in separate essays or papers that were previously published or delivered for particular audiences, each chapter reflects Black's interest in the nature of meaning within a variety of disciplines. This is not to say, however, that he believes that every field of knowledge is ultimately subjective. In all realms of experience there are objective truths which cannot be gainsaid. Black insists that no fact can matter without a subjective appreciation of its significance. He explains the unavoidable complexity of any understanding that can be reached about reality:

> There is not a 'real world' of the truths of physics, or of the sciences more generally, and a subjective or 'inner world' of feelings and values. There is only one world, of indescribable complexity – that is to say, we shall never get to the end of attempting to describe it – and the various sciences, like the various religions, each has its own take on the world. (p. 177)

Although the author has a firm belief in certain key principles that underpin his profession, the unfathomable complexity that obtains in many other disciplines can be found in psychoanalysis, too. Quite simply, to reach a true understanding of a client, there can be no simple answers that can be easily deduced from general rational principles. The chapter on Freud's development of the concept of the death drive presents a particularly convincing case in point. It is in the chapter devoted to sympathy that Black makes a most compelling case for the importance of recognizing the affective dimension of experience without which it would be impossible to

appreciate the emotional difficulties that clients face. It is, of course, an old saw of therapy that the therapist must exhibit empathy in order to understand and deal effectively with clients. Black, however, insists that the therapist should have both sympathy (feeling *with* the client) as well as empathy (understanding what feeling is *for* the client). In arguing in favour of the primacy of sympathy, the author shows that appreciating what matters for the client requires a sensitivity for shared emotional experience from the therapist.

The question of why things matter can be answered only in part by recognizing the intrinsic importance of subjectivity in all questions of value. For this question must necessarily be linked to a related question of what things matter. The impressive range of interests that Black displays in this book suggests that many different things matter to him. But there are, of course, countless other important matters that the book could hardly begin to address. Even so, the rigour of Black's thinking, combined with his deep sense of wonder and subtle appreciation for the varieties of human experience, makes this book a valuable contribution to the psychology of meaning. The thoughtful reader and reflective psychotherapist will greatly benefit from it. S

We Are All Relational Now

Relational Psychotherapy, Psychoanalysis and Counselling: Appraisals and Reappraisals

Edited by: Del Loewenthal and Andrew Samuels
Routledge, London, 2014, 235 pp
ISBN: 978-0-415-72154-7
Reviewed by: John Rowan

This is, here and there, a fascinating book, with its faults probably as great as its felicities. We are all relational now, and this book partly reflects the fact that the relational wave has taken over the whole range of psychotherapies – psychoanalytic, humanistic, behavioural and other. And yet I found this collection almost entirely psychoanalytic.

Jane Haberlin's chapter seemed to me very human, and representing the best side of the relational turn. It is just about one client, and is admirably well focused on that. She writes: 'Recognising me as a subject in my own right, as a being separate and different, with my own mind and my own inner world, was a profound achievement and through it she discovered her own subjectivity' (p 36).

I also liked Marsha Nodelman's chapter, which gives actual credence to the existence of primal experiences:

> At times, it seemed as if 'silence' in and of itself and/or my bodily presence represented a primary substance that sustained and preserved for Stephen his continuity of being. It is in the relational and intersubjective context of our bodies that we begin to develop our sense of self. It was my 'presence' rather than 'my understanding' that enabled Stephen to make contact and connect with the pre-symbolic dimensions of his subjective experience. (p. 48)

Judith Anderson's contribution, particularly strong on the question of forgiveness, also impressed me. 'Forgiveness can free up relationships', she writes; 'Perhaps there is a freedom to be intimate or not: the unforgiving person may be bound in a particular kind of relating.' (p. 75)

In her contribution on relational psychoanalysis in Europe, Chana Ullman writes:

> Kohut's ideas... are prevalent in the psychoanalysis practised in the US as well as the Mediterranean (Italy, Israel). Kohut's self-psychology regards empathy and recognition rather than interpretation as the major curative factors in psychoanalysis. From this perspective the therapist's stance is not of suspicion and detached observation but of an empathic attunement. (p. 113)

The chapter by Ian Parker I found unsympathetic and almost unreadable. We get over-intellectual statements like this:

> The first tradition focuses on language, and in this Lacanian tradition transference is defined by the repetition of signifiers, those that will be of specific value to the analysand and which appear in their speech as they produce a representation of themselves to the analyst. (p. 132)

In his chapter, Pete Sanders writes:

> Human beings do not learn to overcome, live with or otherwise deal with distress. They are not mended, cured, spiritually reconnected or made whole. Furthermore, that each human being is unique is not a slogan, since – confusingly for those with a taxonomic compulsion – they might experience their growth as all and none of the above things: relational psychology sets the client free to construct, experience and understand their process of change in any way they can. (p. 153)

Tom Strong's chapter on CBT mentions Mikhail Bakhtin:

> The dialogues Bakhtin described, those Shotter was highlighting the contours of, find their aliveness precisely in how therapist and client fall into and out of coordinated conversation, how they deal with each other's differences of meaning or conversational performance in the moment The rigour of a dialogically practiced CBT comes with how this occurs as client and therapist collaboratively ferret out ineffective words and ways of talking for critical reflection and replacement with more effective language for going on. (pp 171–2)

For Helena Hargaden,

> relational thinking has made it possible for all of us who share a relational sensibility, but still retain deep-seated differences and work in quite different ways, to have an ongoing conversation, the ultimate goal of which is to make us better, more competent, more able to work with people who are suffering. (p.182)

Keith Tudor's chapter was very thorough, and made it clear that this book was completely psychoanalytic in its content. He presents a complete list of all the relational theorists mentioned in the book, which does not include the names of Hans Trub, Lynne Jacobs, Richard Hycner or Philip Lichtenberg, with Hycner's work particularly hard to ignore – what I call 'slow Gestalt', as distinct from the 'fast Gestalt' practised by Fritz Perls and others. His best-known book is actually entitled 'Between Person and Person' – a pretty good label for the relational approach.

All in all, this is a pretty strange compilation. I think a psychoanalyst might find it fascinating and perhaps useful. As for anyone else, I am not so sure. Coming from a humanistic place myself, I found myself amused and put off in equal measure by the strong commitment to psychoanalytic phrases and assumptions. And the complete absence of the transpersonal was quite striking.

Neurons Maketh Man Not

Brainwashed: The Seductive Appeal of Mindless Neuroscience

By: Sally Satel and Scott O. Lilienfeld
Basic Books, New York, 2013, 226pp
ISBN-13: 978-0-465-01877-2
Reviewed by: Richard House

> Ours is a time of mindless neuroscience ... Asking the wrong questions of the brain... is at best a dead end.... (pp. xxii, 152)

When I heard about this new book, the title alone had me drooling – could this be the book I'd been waiting for (and would have liked to write myself), taking the neuroscience 'industry' head on, and the myriad unarticulated assumptions that it makes about what it means to be human? A critical humanistic-existential perspective is surely greatly needed on the burgeoning science of the brain, as the therapy literature (notably including psychoanalysis) takes increasing (and arguably uncritical) interest in neuroscience; for therapists could easily be taken down all kinds of materialistic-deterministic roads that most humanistically and existentially inclined practitioners would likely find horrifying.

It's impossible to do justice to this book in a short review. In six racy chapters, the authors take us on a highly readable, popularly accessible yet authoritative exploration of neuroscience's relevance, or lack thereof, to brain imaging, 'neuro-marketing', addiction, the issue of human deception, the law, and moral responsibility. They consider what it is about neuroscience that's so fixating (cf. 'neurocentrism', p. xix), highlighting the political, economic and social agendas that expediently and opportunistically seize upon neuroscience to add legitimacy to their various 'causes'. There is also just enough philosophy of mind to whet the appetite (e.g. there's a welcome but unsatisfying dalliance with the unfashionable dualistic worldview – p. 130); but readers wanting to take the issues deeper (e.g. by factoring in the greatly complicating psychoanalytic perspective) can consult either the references listed below, or the book's 60-odd pages of tiny point-size notes and references – an excellent resource for anyone wishing to look more deeply

into this important field.

In the former, we find the argument that what the authors call 'the brain-disease fallacy' is of little use 'because it does not accommodate the emotional logic that triggers and sustains addiction' (p. 60), and that neuroscience 'encourages unwarranted optimism regarding pharmaceutical cures' (p. 69). Regarding moral responsibility, we find subjected to critical examination the kind of view expressed by Joshua Greene, that '..all behaviour is mechanical [and] is produced by chains of physical events that ultimately reach back to forces beyond the agent's control' (quoted on p. 127).

The authors certainly aren't neuro-phobes; they make clear their respect for neuroscience, and in taking a middle position, they write that 'we should extract the wisdom neuroscience has to offer *without asking it to explain all of human nature*' (p. 153, my italics). Thus, Satel and Lilienfeld argue more that neuroscience isn't yet able to demonstrate clear causal links between brain and behaviour, rather than paradigmatically challenging in principle the materialistic world-view that commonly and unawarely underpins a neuroscientific approach.

Many academics and practitioners, then, have a dismaying tendency to drop their critical faculties in the face of the seductions of neuroscience, as if mesmerized by something that's technologically 'sexy' and scientifically 'hard'. But neuroscience is typically reductionistic, materialistic and deterministic, and therapists whose allegiance is to either a humanistic-transpersonal or to an existential-phenomenological worldview need to be very cautious about embracing it, as it necessarily downgrades (or even eliminates) the role of the psychological and the environmental. Jill Hall (1993 – in a book 'retro-reviewed' by Robin Shohet in this issue), for example, has argued that in 'late modernity', we've embraced a quasi-deterministic view that human beings are all essentially 'caused' by, and are therefore victims of, our personal histories and/or our brain chemistries. In the face of the inhuman march of the scientistic and the technocratic, the likes of Jill Hall, Robert Sardello, James Hillman and others are crying out for a reinstatement of 'the soul' and the 'imagination' as a counterweight to these dangerously one-sided developments – an approach that would see the brain as in some sense implicated in, and a 'carrier' rather than the *cause* of, our humanity.

Also published as an e-book, *Brainwashed* is a sorely needed corrective to the uncritical evangelism that is routinely expressed about the alleged beneficence of neuroscience by authorities who really should know better. And although it doesn't go as far as a thorough-going humanistic-existentially informed philosophical critique could (and perhaps should) go, it does a more-than-good-enough job in intelligently raising many doubts about the wilder claims of the neuroscience industry. I sometimes say to students that the greatest psychologist of all was William Shakespeare; and as the Bard might (and surely *would*) have said, 'Neurons maketh man not' – for Shakespeare was able to take us to the deepest levels of human experience, and without a brain cell or a mirror neuron in sight.

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