

that seems unique to the literature around psychotherapy – neither modelling a perfect way of unknowing, nor turning not-knowing it into a theory.

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From personal to global – the art of living well

Future sense: five explorations of whole intelligence for a world that's waking up, by Malcolm Parlett, Kibworth Beauchamp, Leicester, UK, Matador, 2015, 240 pp., £11.74 (paperback), ISBN 978-1784624552

Reviewed by Laurence Hegan, Gestalt psychotherapist

Malcolm Parlett is a man I feel that I know well, yet as I write these words I realize that I hardly know him at all through actual face-to-face contact. I do know him, however, through having developed a relationship based on a deep respect for his passionate influential leadership in the establishment of Gestalt in the UK as well as his contributions to the wider Gestalt world and psychotherapy in general through his writing. Here, the influences of his career in research, education, psychology and psychotherapy are clear, his attention this time more focused on global and societal attitudinal change.

A culmination of its author's lifelong quest, *Future Sense* aims to demonstrate that tackling global problems must begin with a focus on our own lives. Our mutual interconnectedness means that small changes to the way we live our lives result in changes elsewhere, as a ripple effect. The book has an aesthetic quality, calling for a richer and more satisfying way of being in the world through cultivating the art of living well. It highlights the human dimension as the most significant determining factor for our lives, now and in the future. The author's ability to bring his experience to life through personal example and simple yet fascinating stories about encounters with others conveys what could be a theoretical combination of guiding principles for life into something much more: he makes it a motivating factor for world transformation. His aim is to challenge leaders, experts and academics to focus on a different way of being, of living, a way of understanding through experiencing as well as analysis, something Malcolm calls 'whole intelligence'.

Whole intelligence and a focus on what this means, as well as its implications for human beings in the face of enormous challenges to the world in which we dwell, is essentially what the book is about. What Malcolm refers to as five explorations of whole intelligence have evolved from some of his earlier writing about human abilities, which he initially saw as independent of each other (Parlett, 2003). Although the author has always held a field perspective (Lewin, 1952), here as explorations they

convey the essence of field theory – a set of holistic principles and perspectives on people extending to include their environment, their social world, organizations and culture. Explorations of whole intelligence place Malcolm once more into a leading role in his call for this inclusive general concept of valuing human qualities and capabilities (p. 19) with what, for me, are more ontologically defined principles, as well as promoting the notion that in our human existence we co-create the total global situation.

A closer look at the five explorations of whole intelligence will, as was intended by the author, deepen our understanding of whole intelligence and how the book can exert influence positively on the total global situation. Each of the five explorations is given a chapter so that ‘a search for deeper understanding of a critical dimension of whole intelligence’ (p. 55) is achieved. These chapters are also used to clarify where fundamental attributes associated with being human are philosophically devalued, and space is given to demonstrate how supports for further emergence of whole intelligence in the world can be strengthened.

The explorations are: responding to the situation, interrelating, embodying, self-recognizing, and experimenting. These five explorations came about as a result of Malcolm’s making sense of therapeutic situations over time, highlighting an example with one client in particular. These chapters set out what the author wants to achieve, in that a deeper understanding is gained about not just one aspect of whole intelligence, because these explorations intertwine, and a deeper understanding of one leads to an enhanced awareness and greater understanding of whole intelligence as something much more than the sum of its parts.

Throughout the book and again in the final chapter, Malcolm emphasizes that whole intelligence is not something that is easy to define. It ‘needs to be understood aesthetically and ethically more than conceptually’ (p. 262). The book is a call for action on the way that society is, and seeks to influence systems that maintain the status quo at many levels, including education and the value bases that underpin it, through increasing whole intelligence in the world. One dictionary defines ‘intelligence’ as ‘the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills’, and the author courageously attempts to elevate what might be termed tacit knowledge or knowing to at least equal status with more positivist cognitive logic. The book is a philosophical examination of what it is like to have an awakening of human sensibility in a world that remains under constant threat from the same conceptual constraints that Western-favoured intelligence bestows on us.

In his postscript, Malcolm shares a loss, and it is clear from this that *Future Sense* emerged in the way that it needed to. His experience of grief, and a commitment to complete and dedicate the book to his deceased partner through his obvious engaging explorations with his impressive whole intelligence, has resulted in what he intends to be much more than a text – a movement away from the inevitable inertia of feeling overwhelmed by seismic events, and towards a growing impetus of whole-hearted living with whole intelligence.

Heidegger is referred to in the book on one occasion, but there is something about whole intelligence that cannot be separated or conceptualized because it is embedded in the very fabric of existence. This, for me, positions this work ontologically, and I sensed the author on occasions struggling to justify the abstract nature of whole intelligence, because paradoxically, attempts to conceptualize it are a move away from whole intelligence. As a consequence, our capacity to think cannot be the central

quality of our being because thinking is reflecting upon this more original way of discovering the world.

Future Sense is a stimulating read and the author is ambitious in his views about global impact and change; we can all, as he suggests, begin by scrutinizing our own lives. To achieve the intended and needed impact, this text needs to reach beyond those who are already convinced about the need for action involving wider explorations using whole intelligence to influence all levels of society, so that the message gets to the parts of the world that still refuse to wake up.

References

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Take a hike: the trail as therapy

Wild: a journey from lost to found, by Cheryl Strayed, London, Atlantic Books, 2015, 236 pp., £6.29 (paperback), ISBN 978-1782394860

Reviewed by Nigel Armistead, writer on walking

I have done a lot of hiking and quite a bit of psychotherapy, and I much prefer the former to the latter as a way of dealing with any unhappiness in my life. This book shows why.

Cheryl begins with a short resumé of the mess she got herself into: absent father, beloved mother dying young, break-up of the remaining family, deceitful one-night stands, heroin abuse, divorce from a much-loved husband – unresolved issues, you might say. So she decides to hike part of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) from Southern California to the Oregon/Washington border over three months:

It was a world I'd never been to ... one I'd staggered to in sorrow and confusion and fear and hope. A world I thought would both make me into the woman I knew I could become and turn me back into the girl I'd once been. (p. 4)

Her struggles with cold, heat, dehydration, hunger, an outsize backpack and blisters from the chafing of boots and backpack are both painful and hilarious to read. Here is her account of how all this affected her: