Book Reviews

The Dynamics of Power in Counselling & Psychotherapy: Ethics, Politics and Practice (2nd edition)

By Gillian Proctor
PCCS Books, 2017, 240pp
£21.00 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-1910919187
Reviewed by **Andy Rogers**

Counselling and psychotherapy can be like working in the near-dark, following the glimmers and traces and flicking on the odd spotlight, but often just gently exploring the unknown. Sometimes though, a shift occurs that suddenly illuminates everything all at once, which is precisely what the therapy field needs with regard to the issue of power.

Gillian Proctor's book, *The Dynamics of Power in Counselling & Psychotherapy: Ethics, Politics and Practice* (2nd edition), does this extremely effectively. I am unable to think of a better way for a therapist, trainee or interested other to begin to understand the centrality of power in our work than to study this text. It encourages us to stray from cosy dogmas in order to think more critically about our roles. It challenges us to look long and hard at the ways we – individually and collectively – might disempower others through our actions in the therapy relationship and beyond.

There is often a shadowy distance between our values as practitioners and psychotherapy's organized, collective version of itself as it engages with cultural forces and powerful social institutions. To hover drone-like above the complex web of competing interests that occupy this dimly lit zone in an effort to capture a high-definition impression of it all can feel impossible. The temptation then can be to turn inward to the counselling room, to concentrate instead on 'the process' – as if it were possible to isolate therapy from its political contexts and implications. So 15 years on from its first edition, updated to throw the professional environment into sharp relief, the light cast by Proctor's erudite elucidation of the ethical necessity of understanding the operation of power in and around therapy is more welcome than ever.

That is not to say I adored every page. I became easily distracted during the chapter on structural theories, as it transported me back to some of the drier reading required for my sociology degree. To be fair, the author acknowledges in the preface that some parts of the book are more theoretically dense than others and almost everywhere else the material and its articulation are more enlivened. The still relatively heavy chapter on post-structural theories nonetheless had me scrawling eagerly in the margins, perhaps because it is up my philosophical street but also because there is a more detailed connection drawn here between theories of power and the actual theory and practice of therapy.

Elsewhere, Proctor brings her own differing experiences as a client to chapters examining person-centred and psychodynamic therapies, with the person-centred chapter being – in some ways – as insightful an introduction as you can read anywhere. The author clearly aligns herself with the approach (she is, among other things, a person-centred psychotherapist) but this is not a work of dogmatic allegiance. It is also not an infallibly comprehensive account of person-centred theory. As a book of this integrity probably should, the

chapters' emphases might niggle as well as excite. Initially I found myself pedantically disputing the 'organismic self' references while simultaneously celebrating the connections drawn between Levinasian ethics, deconstructive approaches and person-centred practice. Once I'd finished it, however, the idea of explaining the person-centred approach without Proctor's contextualization in theories of power seemed absurd, like explaining fish without mentioning the ocean.

On top of all this we get an insight into the many contributions made by feminism to our understanding of power, a fascinating critique of CBT's ignorance of power issues and its flawed efforts to grapple with the ethical dilemmas they generate, as well as a new chapter for this edition on the context of therapy today. This latter section makes for vivid reading, summing up many of the powerful agendas around the professions, not least the dynamics at work when the State begins co-opting therapy for its own purposes. The chapter is a good starting point to engage with the literature, commentary and activism that is currently flourishing around such concerns and should, I propose, be regularly updated and handed to all trainee therapists on graduation day.

The Dynamics of Power in Counselling & Psychotherapy offers vital intellectual illumination of an area of practice that too often remains hidden. With our culture's increasingly destigmatized but fanatically medicalized approach to 'mental health' – in which therapists risk being complicit in widespread disempowerment – let us hope that Proctor's analysis – and its case for *power-with* rather than *power-over* the other – will be a catalyst for urgent change, not just in therapy rooms but out in society too. S

Email: Andrew.Rogers@sparsholt.ac.uk

Feminist Spirituality under Capitalism: Witches, Fairies, and Nomads

By Kathleen Skott-Myhre
Routledge, 2017, 118pp, £23.99 (paperback)
ISBN: 9781138917743
Reviewed by **Jocelyn Chaplin**, feminist and integrative psychotherapist

Most Anti-Capitalist thinking comes from rational, abstract modes of knowing. Religion is seen by Marxists as the opium of the people. Even the idea of dialectics as the spirit moving within matter was never taken up by the left, who generally despise anything spiritual. Yet today the simple binary between rational (leftist) secularism and (rightist) religion feels not only short sighted but dangerous too. With the rise of increasing fundamentalism in the three main monotheistic/patriarchal religions, something new is badly needed. Kathleen has taken a brave step as a post-Marxist academic to focus on intuitive and spiritual ways of responding to capitalism. She has brought together a wide range of practices, philosophies and psychologies that provide an alternative approach to the purely materialist one we are more familiar with.

The book starts with a poem by Yeats (1902) 'Come away, O human child! To the waters and the wild, with a faery, hand in hand, for the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.' Some of that 'weeping' is for what capitalism has done to our beautiful planet and to our human souls. She then describes hunting for faeries with her grandmother of Irish descent as 'carrying a deeper resonance, perhaps an echo of cultural memory.' Was it a 'ghostly remnant of Celtic women's way of knowing partially abandoned in (her) Irish family's assimilation into the rationality and reason of the American middle class' (p. 2)?

She goes on to quote Gayatri Spivak (1988) who shows how those groups subjected to the logic and domination of colonialism find that their very ways

of knowing and speaking are translated into the language of those who rule. This applies to women in general too, who are seen as fundamentally different, forced to think and speak in 'phallocentric logic'. In this book 'the ways of knowing found in the spiritual practices and wisdom of women across generations will be investigated as necessary antidotes to the perversion of all living things that is global capitalism' (p.4). However, she does not want to 'return to some romanticized, new age version of magic' but seeks ways of giving those modes of knowing 'current political resonance within new modes of feminist and post-Marxist politics' (ibid.) Unfortunately this attitude could be in danger of dismissing many of the spiritual practices and beliefs she is so keen to recover and validate in a specifically feminist political context. Billions of people in the world have some spiritual and / or magical belief in actual other dimensions and beings, which at least deserves respect and at best can be secretly subversive. Yet for the author, this 'hint of the divine' seems only worthy of investigation if it operates directly in contradistinction to capitalism (p.7).

To overcome this potential contradiction Kathleen uses concepts like 'transrational realities' and a transpersonal approach to psychology. She treats faeries and those who experience them as transiting a kind of borderland into different states of consciousness. Some of these states may actually be helpful in contesting capitalism. They tend to operate in different realms, different time scales and with different values. Even if it is all seen as produced purely by the human unconscious at least it is taken seriously and not pathologized as it is in mainstream psychology.

Kathleen describes these other modes of knowing and being as 'a minor psychology'. They are rooted in the flows and intensities of an implicate order, through encounter with the real or the plane of immanence. Her concept of spirituality is within nature not transcendent and beyond it. Her approach can be seen as the antithesis of traditional psychology with its emphasis on rationality, scientism and hierarchical ordering.

Rather than dividing and organizing everything into categories, it is an infinite dance of relations. She quotes from Deleuze and Guattari (1983) and writes of its rhizomic nature connecting things under the earth, out of sight, spreading in all directions. With them she sees it as an infinitely productive, creative force that cannot be trapped in capitalist relations.

This minor psychology is not bound by family or other affiliations. It flows across borders and boundaries. What matters are the elements interacting in any given moment. There do not need to be rational causes from the past or goals for the future. Kathleen relates it to the spiritualities that remained in Africa, South America, the far and near East etc. through colonization. It was often women that kept the old magic alive. This is contrasted with colonial scientific ways of knowing that make abstract taxonomies of gender and race etc. It also involves a different non-monetary system of values. Instead of the shallow happiness promised by capitalism its practices inspire a surplus of joy and an open flow of creative energy. It is about the life force and human wellbeing, not money. Quoting Spinoza (2000) Kathleen sees this spirituality as infinite connectivity from within people and nature, without any outside cause.

Intuition is vital for attuning to this different way of knowing. Lacan calls it the preverbal. Others call it the deep feminine. Practices like Shamanism always have accessed this information, mainly through trance states. These reach places that reason cannot understand. Kathleen describes many examples, such as ceremonies in tribal societies that access wildness and challenge the totalitarianism that binds the image to what it represents. She writes of the power of Obeah women in slave revolts in the Carribbean to show that this mode of knowing and being can resist capitalism and colonialism as well as provide an alternative way of living.

She also looks at modern Western practices and ideas such as the witchcraft of Starhawk (1979) and the goddess spirituality movements. Here, spirituality is not given an abstract, hierarchical and

external cause such as one god, but flows within nature. It is immanent and not transcendent. Its culture and images have been helpful for millions of women in the feminist world, much of which is also directly anti-capitalist. It is also pluralist with no one great goddess who simply replaces the one patriarchal god with a female one.

This is an inspiring and hopeful book, not only for scholars and students but for the wider public yearning for alternatives to consumer capitalism. Left wing politics badly needs a spiritual dimension today to counteract the power of the rising right.

Email: jochaplin@yahoo.com

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Ecotherapy in Practice: A Buddhist Model

By Caroline Brazier
London and New York Routledge 2017, 248pp
£25.59 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-0415785952
Reviewed by Adrian Harris

Caroline Brazier's extensive experience of psychotherapy together with her understanding of *Buddhist* psychology provide a unique perspective on ecotherapy. The result is somewhat more than a Buddhist model of ecotherapy; Brazier offers a total framework for thinking about therapeutic work outdoors. Brazier has written five related books, two of which are notable for the purposes of this review: *Other-Centred Therapy* (2009) and *Acorns Among the Grass: Adventures in Ecotherapy* (2011). This latest book comes across as a synthesis and development of the ideas in those earlier works. It has more of an ecotherapeutic focus than the former book and more theoretical depth than the latter.

The title might be off-putting for those not attracted to Buddhism and that would be a shame. There is something here for any therapist, especially those of us who sometimes work outdoors. There is a lot of Buddhist psychology, which I found useful and relevant to my practice. However, even if you are not especially drawn to Buddhism, you will gain from viewing your practice from a different perspective. Brazier's book reveals aspects of ecotherapy not addressed elsewhere and provides tools that can add considerable value to your work.

The book is divided into five sections, each containing several chapters. The layout is very clear; practicalities are often set out in bullet points and exercises are presented in boxes. The first section sets out the principles of therapeutic work. First, Brazier considers the 'Conditions for Change', developing Rogerian core conditions into an *other-centred* perspective. The author then addresses the importance of embodiment in 'Embodied Presence'

and the power of place in a chapter on 'Sacred Space'. The second section considers the practical and theoretical aspects of ecotherapy. This practical discussion is useful for anyone working outdoors and includes a thoughtful consideration of some of the challenges of outdoor therapy, notably around boundaries. I did not always agree with Brazier on these points, but this is a very live discussion in ecotherapy and our ideas are always worth reconsidering.

Brazier then delves more deeply into Buddhist psychology and how it underpins other-centred therapy. The other-centred approach is grounded in understanding how the 'existential challenges of mortality and loss' lead us to distort our perception of the world (p.52), and there are inevitable crossovers with other therapeutic models. Brazier explains that it investigates how the client's 'sense of the world is coloured by scripts, assumptions and other habits of thought and perception' (ibid.), and I could say the same of most therapeutic work. But the ways in which Buddhist psychology illuminates the other-centred approach is intriguing and may have wider applications. Brazier opines that this approach is particularly suitable for therapy outdoors; I tend to agree, but perhaps the same could be said of many approaches, as nature can provide many different kinds of therapy.

The next three sections of the book consider the process of psychological conditioning at three levels; the personal level of individual history, culture, and global circumstances. Brazier considers how each level conditions our state of mind and its impact on psychological well-being. Each section also provides exercises related to that level. I found these to be particularly useful. Even those that were quite familiar, like creating outdoor artwork, were given a new twist and greater depth. Others, like having a dialogue with a tree, were new to me but immediately applicable in my work.

I am not a scholar of Buddhist psychology, but the book offers what I take to be a fairly comprehensive outline of the subject. However, I found some sections quite heavy going. Most of the terminology is from Sanskrit and although terms like *rupa* and *vibhava* are explained when they first appear, I did a lot of flipping back and forth later in the book when they were used again. A short glossary of key terms would be a welcome addition to future editions.

Ecotherapy in Practice has considerable breadth of application as it considers both one-to-one therapy and group work in various contexts. I work with individual clients and as a workshop facilitator, so found value here for both. However, the author sometimes moves seamlessly from a discussion of one-to-one therapy to group work and I sometimes found this confusing. Brazier is experienced in one-to-one therapy, group work and training, so will be very familiar with the commonalities and differences. Few readers will share that level of understanding and delineating individual from group work more explicitly would be helpful.

On the one hand this is not simply another ecotherapy book: it presents a new approach from a Buddhist perspective. On that basis, it is perhaps not ideal for those just starting to explore ecotherapy, unless they are already familiar with Buddhism. However, the practical chapters are an easy read and immediately useful if you work outdoors. These chapters could be read without grasping the context of Buddhist psychotherapy, but how much would you lose? I suspect the author will disagree, but I think you could skim through the theoretical sections and apply the practical material quite effectively. There is more practical material than theory so you would still be getting good value on that basis. However, I found that the more complex theoretical chapters more than rewarded the effort and I think the book works best as a holistic synthesis of therapy and practice. Ultimately, it is down to what you want from the book.

The material here is challenging and stimulating, offering many insights and lots to stimulate your thinking. *Ecotherapy in Practice* makes a unique contribution to the field and serves as the definitive text on Buddhist perspectives on ecotherapy. If you are a therapist who works outdoors, you will

gain from this book whether the Buddhist model speaks to you or not. However, I would have enjoyed it simply as an introduction to Buddhist psychology, so if that is of interest, buy it! In conclusion, I recommend the book for outdoor therapists in general and especially those interested in Buddhism or mindfulness.

Email: adrian@gn.apc.org

Your Sacred Calling: Awakening the Soul to a Spiritual Life in the 21st Century

By Richard Harvey
Austin Macauley: London, 2017, 348pp
£6.29 (paperback)
ISBN: 9781786129031
Reviewed by **Jim Robinson**

On the whole, I think this book is a useful contribution to the growing body of writing that is articulating human development in 'psycho-spiritual' terms, i.e. that we need both an in depth, psychological investigation as well as spiritual exploration in order to reach our potential. Whilst in many ways this is nothing new, with roots in the post WW2 developments of humanistic and transpersonal psychology and the West's opening to broader spiritual influences, the crystallization of this approach has occurred over the last twenty years or so through the work of Naranjo, Almaas, Welwood and Wilber, amongst many others.

Harvey makes the case well for how the spiritual is our experience of, and connection to, something special in life. He articulates how this is something that is beyond ego and personality that can be increasingly opened to and how it is this connection that provides our ultimate meaning. He makes clear that we need to resolve our psychological conditioning in order to develop our connection to the divine.

I am aware though of how deep our insecurity can be and how we can work through many layers, find much self-knowledge and freedom and yet still be motivated by the insidious compensatory needs of our ego that inevitably emerge from our insecurity. It is clear that the author has travelled a long way down this psycho-spiritual road and has many valuable insights and much knowledge to share. However, I am unsure that he is as free from these compensatory needs as he claims.

Who am I to judge since I know I am not free of these processes? But the author is setting himself up as someone who has found freedom and who knows the truth. Again, I am aware of doing this myself to a certain extent! But his writing style is old-fashioned in its 'authoritative' style. He makes bold claims, that God (or whatever name you prefer) exists and that he knows what God's nature is and what the ultimate levels of consciousness available to us are. Indeed, he spends nearly a quarter of the book taking to task the many ways in which he sees false spirituality being played out through various 'New Age' or 'ego based' spiritual approaches. This criticism left me uneasy: does he protest too much, I wondered? Especially in light of how he does not name those he is directing his criticism at, when he obviously has specific people in mind. This passage gives a flavour of Harvey's style,

> The process of spiritual attainment requires a sound foundation of psychological maturity. Prior to psychological maturity, all that takes place in a human life relates to and is bounded by the earlier stages of life... Unless you have resolved and discarded your personal character-creating conditioning and released your attachments to your emotional-behavioural patterns, your personal biography, and everything that supports the fiction of self, you will not survive one step in the spiritual realms. You can practise a meditation technique, breath work, self-help, emotional opening, mantra, yantra, yoga et al, but it will not be a genuine spiritual practice, rather a spiritual dalliance, dilettantism, or merely light involvement to adorn your outer life (p.174).

This demonstrates how the author tends to define reality in an absolute way. I can see that he wants to come across as strong, authoritative, not relative and 'wishy-washy'. He obviously understands much, but his writing style, which follows in the footsteps of many past twentieth-century 'spiritual teachers' who love

defining reality, can sound pompous and didactic to post-modern ears.

At the heart of this problem is I think a paradox, about how everything is relative, yet our experience points so strongly at how our destiny is towards an absolute that is not relative. I agree with Harvey and many others, that there is an objective universality in the qualities of freedom, love, silence, joy, consciousness, creativity, as well as to the different 'stages of development' (Wilber), that represent our potential as human beings. Our experience of directly connecting to the spiritual gives such depth of meaning. This, in the end, is about how truth and reality must exist, even if we can never fully know them. Our potential is surely towards qualities of beingness that are recognized as beyond those which are defined by culture or ego.

But, as we know from history, and current world difficulties, problems arise when we claim to know what this ultimate reality is as part of our compensatory ego needs. We all suffer from our ego becoming attached to our knowledge, it is obviously an expression of insecurity, which, so often it seems, runs deeper and hides with more determination than we can see. It happens to 'teachers' and 'therapists' of all flavours (me included). It happens all the time in psychotherapy with attachments to modalities, especially with those who re-invent the wheel, call it some new acronym and present it as 'the answer'. As Harvey points out, it also often happens with spiritual teachers. The question is, is he and this book any different? The answer I think is, of course, not black and white. I agree with much of what he says about the nature of our developmental path towards realising our potential and how this is about waking up to 'now' as well as working to removing the obstacles to our freedom over time. It is the way it is written, without sufficient humility, that I find difficult.

Also, compared to Ken Wilber's new book *The Religion of Tomorrow*, Harvey's book feels less substantial. Wilber makes the case for this psycho-spiritual approach in a much more scientific way, providing a much broader and more objectively supported perspective, with his inclusive 'Integral' map. At the heart of his approach is a similar understanding to Harvey's, which Wilber phrases as our need to 'Grow Up' and 'Wake Up'. He envisions this as the basis for a new revolutionary non-dogmatic religion (or revolutionary forms of existing religions), that can provide a path of human development that befits our twenty-first century world. I find this exciting, and even if you think his map can be improved upon, it does provide a modern path that is not dependent upon a 'Guru', which is Harvey's position.

However, Harvey does articulate well, how at some stage we need the experience of connecting to the spiritual or transpersonal, in order to find sufficient support to face the depth of our insecurity. This deep support comes from depth of meaning that spiritual experience brings. He points out that it is very rare for someone to fully let go of their ego before their death. This is something we must choose to do and yet cannot 'do'. But this paradox must not put us off. We need patience and determination on this psycho-spiritual journey for it is a lifelong process.

As I see it, human beings have choice for a reason, that somehow the consciousness of the universe wants to become aware of itself, and the only way that can happen is through beings consciously choosing to become self-aware, choosing consciousness over un-consciousness, to wake up rather than avoid, to open rather than close. That there is choice and meaning does not mean that accident is not a huge aspect of our lives and life generally. It does not mean that the negative effects of trauma will not be projected around, left, right and centre. But it does mean that, no matter how difficult our situation, we can have choice over how we relate to our lives. It is here that we can transform how we meet the world, and move towards eventually transcending our ego.

Harvey explores the theme of how our motivation for connecting more directly with the spiritual and letting go of our ego cannot come from the ego itself. It seems to me that here is an exquisite expression of the above paradox, our motivation needs to come from some kind of 'call of the Spirit', of the Divine or the Absolute(?) but also *our own* deep desire. Here, Harvey suitably references de Salzman's extraordinary book, *The Reality of Being*.

He also describes well, how, regardless of modality,

those therapists who are operating from more than a medicalized model of symptom relief (i.e. working with meaning, understanding, emotional reconciliation and embodiment) are working at a spiritual level whether they label is as such or not. Working in a relational, open-hearted way is spiritual, as Buber made clear. The work of therapy is not separate from opening to 'spirit' or 'beingness' or 'love'. The moments of opening to and seeing our 'neurotic' motivations, integrating them and experiencing deeper relaxation, those 'aha' moments of insight, all enable us to increasingly 'be' our 'true self' (as opposed to our compensatory driven self) in the 'here and now'. Opening to the hurt, fear or distress behind our insecurity cracks our hearts open, understanding ourselves opens our minds, attending to our bodies supports them to open. To open to what is, here and now.

As I see it, there is nothing more meaningful and satisfying than travelling this psycho-spiritual road, no matter how we view the ultimate nature of reality. It is not about striving for 'perfection', it is about working to close the gap between ourselves and the 'here and now'. If we arrive at some 'enlightenment', WOW; if not, so be it. Having not met Richard Harvey, I have to leave open the question of how close he is to transcending his 'ego'. I am though, grateful and appreciative of his efforts in writing this book and its contribution to this new approach.

Email: jim@jim-robinson.co.uk

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Zen and Therapy: Heretical perspectives

By Manu Bazzano
London and New York, Routledge, 2017, 166 pp
£31.99 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-138-64631-5
Reviewed by **Caroline Brazier**, Psychotherapist & Course Leader Tariki Trust

A prolific and poetic writer, in this most recent book, Manu Bazzano brings together his twin interests in Zen Buddhism and psychotherapy in a wide ranging, erudite and often witty exploration of practice in both fields, which not only encompasses his subjects in a narrow sense, but also expands its investigation into their roots in Western and Eastern philosophy. For those familiar with Bazzano's other books, this book continues themes which we have already seen elsewhere – in particular his interest in the concept of hospitality, drawn from the philosophy of Levinas and others, and linked with the Buddhist notions of generosity and non-self; his concern with the current trends in mindfulness teaching and their bias towards the rational and controlling of mental processes, avoiding the messier side of life; his passion for meditation practice and the body-sense as primary to the in-the-moment experiencing of thought and action. The book is a patchwork of sections, arranged in thematic Chapters, which move between personal reflection, spiritual anecdotes, philosophical reasoning and theoretical principles. At times tightly argued and at others expansively illustrated, it carries the reader through a range of ideas and impressions which lay out challenging perspectives on modern practices.

Bazzano's book is subtitled 'a heretical perspective', alluding to its counter-orthodoxy approach and loyalty to differentialism, the philosophical path of investigating perception and questioning certainties which value appearance over essence, the exhaustibility of theory, and the

importance of doubt (p. 7). Grounded in Western phenomenology and Zen Buddhism, Bazzano proposes a process of intentionally unending encounter with all the fields of human and other-than-human existence, creating something of an enigma. In its rejection of fixity, the book offers an assemblage of often deeply revealing passages, which, like the proverbial fingers, point ever towards a distant moon without ever touching its surface. It encourages the reader into a dance with theory which is at once informed and provocative, but its arguments are multi-faceted and sometimes hard to pin down.

The book is presented as eight chapters. These are thematic, whilst reiterating Bazzano's central perspective on the primacy of direct phenomenological experiencing. They show how, in the author's experience, the two fields of Zen Buddhism and psychotherapy can intelligently inform one another. To my eye the book loosely falls into three sections, with chapters one and two exploring the ground of Buddhist psychology in the teachings of non-self and impermanence, chapters three and four exploring implications of these for the therapy room, and the final four chapters building a central argument for the deconstruction of positivistic and schematic thinking in favour of a more willing engagement with uncertainty and encounter, but the overall themes of the book interplay throughout, creating a more organic structure than my summary would suggest.

The first chapter of the book, then, explores notions of self and non-self, drawing on Buddhist and Western philosophy to reveal the complexity and slipperiness of notions of self. This is followed by a chapter on living and dying in which it is suggested that, rather than involving endings to be mediated through linear processes of grief and recovery, death and impermanence are the enablers of our coming to being fully alive. Only in facing the transience of each moment do we come to appreciate life's ephemeral beauty. Through the presence of death we become fully alive. These themes of insubstantiality and the interconnection of life and death, which thread themselves through the remainder of the book, provide a foundation for Bazzano's dedication to open-handed investigation of phenomena.

Having established basic principles, in Chapters three and four Bazzano returns to themes he has addressed in previous books. Chapter three, on *Zen and Therapy*, returns to the theme of hospitality and the receptive quality which, he argues, underpins all genuine encounters, especially the therapeutic. Hospitality, a Western concept, is equated to principles of non-self, and in his inter-weaving of Buddhist and Western ideas, Bazzano suggests that to be a host is to embrace homelessness (the common attribute of the Buddhist monk), refusing to settle into the complacency of identity and possession:

> 'We become good hosts by remembering that we are guests on earth, by temporarily interrupting the self and our habitual concerns about 'me' and 'mine, and also by reframing our notion of identity, including national identity. We become good hosts by remembering our condition of existential homelessness' (.p. 44).

From this position Bazzano suggests, true freedom emerges, for, once homeless, we are no longer tied to viewpoints or to protecting our nature. As he later suggests (p. 51) this homelessness can be equated to the attitude of the counsellor, as conceived by Rogers, who receives the fullness of the client's experiencing with unconditionality. This chapter also, interestingly, considers ethics, seeing the position of host as one freed from the social norms of received morality (p. 47). Bazzano thus encourages a more exploratory approach to ethics rather than following the rule-bound conventions of culture and history; an interesting area of exploration for those of us who work within the therapy professions, which are frequently in danger of being caught in the stream of the latter, but, if Bazzano is to be believed, should rather aspire to the former.

The theme of hospitality is further explored in Chapter four, which looks at *Presence, mindfulness and Buddha-nature*, as it is linked to the concept of presence. Not wedded to a position, the therapist opens to whatever arises in the psychological space

between herself and the client, deeply trusting in the co-created process (p. 61) which relies on mutuality and the client's capacity to receive as much as on the therapist's; a dance for two which, according to Bazzano, results in a dissolution of self-boundaries and a new emergent oneness which he equates, somewhat optimistically, to the Buddha's enlightenment experience (p. 62).

Whilst eschewing the concretization of the self-concept, drawing on Zen meditation practice, Bazzano is particularly interested in embodied experience and present moment awareness. Both Chapter four, in its emphasis on presence, and Chapter six, *Incarnate Practice and Ecopsychology*, address this theme. Chapter six in particular explores the materiality of humans as incarnate animalistic beings rooted in nature rather than apart from it.

Chapter four also critiques current mindfulness teaching, contrasting the rather reductive, commodified approaches of the modern secular mindfulness movement with a more expansive conceptualization of mindfulness based on presence. The former, Bazzano suggests, champions consciousness and control, avoiding the uncertainties of untamed awareness. In particular, this misses the original intent of the Buddhist teaching and, by sanitizing the process of experiencing through proscriptive exercises, loses the vital energy of more fluid engagement. In particular, it avoids the inevitable encounter with death and impermanence, so important in the Buddhist sources, which has the potential to awaken the practitioner in the immediacy of the moment.

Continuing this emphasis on the importance of direct experience, Chapter five, declaring that *Zen is not transpersonal*, offers a pithy rebuttal of the idea that a therapeutic application of Zen Buddhism will fit neatly into the transpersonal camp. More mystical approaches in psychotherapy tend towards reification and other-worldliness and disregard the importance of facing the reality of impermanence and uncertainty. Whilst Bazzano admits to having himself taken an interest in mysticism as a younger man, he proposes that much of what goes under the name of transpersonal psychology is actually an attempt to soothe existential anxieties with a cloak of eternalism: 'I find myself strongly resisting any categorisation of the : "eternal" that seemingly bypasses our transient human experience' (p. 93).

In the latter Chapters of the book, Bazzano returns to earlier themes. Chapter seven, *On Differentialism*, celebrates the importance of doubt and intellectual rigour, leading us, in Chapter eight, to the realization that, rather than the positivistic metaphysic of popular spirituality, or the equally positivistic trends of modernity and neoliberalism, it is the unknown and the unconscious which is to be most deeply trusted. We ignore the unconscious at our peril, as a number of Buddhist teachers have done in recent years (p. 143).

The central themes of the title, Zen and psychotherapy, weave through the fabric of the book's arguments like sunlight through branches. If you are looking for a manual, or even a systematic presentation of either subject, you may be disappointed, although there is much theory, succinctly presented, within the many subsections. To me, it felt as if the book's drift was more towards Zen than to therapy, but perhaps this is my personal bias, for there is certainly plenty of material that is relevant to both fields, and examples drawn from the author's own therapeutic practice. Easy to dip into, and eloquently flowing, the book nevertheless makes demands on the reader, who is often expected, like the author, to already have mastered fundamental principles of philosophical traditions in order to follow the lines of argument through their many nuanced illustrations and allusions. This said, the interested novice will certainly find plenty to delight. Ⓢ

Email: caroline@tarikitrust.org