

## Book Reviews

**Mark Poster:** *Critical Theory of the Family*, 1979, Pluto Press, 256 pp £3.95/£8.50.

"Are the values of monogamous love, privacy, individualism, domesticity, maternal child care and emotional fulfilment realized or corrupted by the family? Are these values themselves in doubt?"

*Self and Society* has recently received many books on the family, (and, significantly, on family therapy,) for review, and this, the latest, attempts to chronicle and compress all previous research and theory concerning the prime human

group, collecting insights and discarding errors, so that a new critical comprehensive theory of the family emerges. Having examined conceptualization that come from social historians, sociologists and psychiatrists, Poster suggests that these show that the family, as a phenomenon, is discontinuous, non-linear and non-homogeneous, rather than a specific and eternal group. He says that it should be studied in two ways: the synchronic, which evaluates its structure at any given time; and the dischronic, which analyses the processes by which it changes. As only the former is a present possibility, Poster uses this, at three levels, to correlate the structure of the psychic life on the family with its daily domestic patterns and its relation to the outside community. He thereby integrates the work of Freud, Shorter and the family historians, Marx and Marcuse, not to mention many of the other theorists such as Laing, Erikson and Lacan.

This leads him to evolve four models of family structure: the bourgeois; the aristocratic; the peasant; and the working-class. He finds that the bourgeois is the most distinctive, and itself becomes an attractive model for the working-class. It is characterized by the parents having chief authority over the children, (not true of aristocratic and peasant models, he says), by the children becoming a focus of the intense concern of the family, and "by the systematic attempts by the parents to substitute their love for the child's bodily gratification". What a super examination question for sixth-former this last statement would make! Poster then briefly considers the contemporary family, and argues that this is distinguished by the fact that it makes the highest demands for all time on emotional, psychic and sexual fulfillment, plus those for the successful nurturing of the child. This, in consequence, is why it has become subject to so much stress and failure.

Finally, he returns to the question he asks about the value of the family, and the value of its values. He appears to feel that it is humanity's best defensive social group against political and other hegemonies, and that, positively, it can be the best place for the "unleashing of personal potentials". However, in a closing reference to making a model of the utopian family, he says that this would become free from possessiveness and destructiveness whilst ideologies of romantic love, domesticity, and maternal care should be demystified and liberalized. He goes so far as to advocate the kibbutzim method of child-rearing as being most appropriate for the less bound, and probably more serial family relationships that would emerge.

This review does no justice to the scholarship, erudite academic references, and close, careful argument of Poster's book, most of which gives some of the best critical summaries I have read of existing family theories. It is difficult to give equally valid evaluation of his own "critical theory of the family", because, as he says himself, we still know so little about the past, and we are too involved with the present to be able accurately to assess short and long-term changes, causes and effects. Even his own considerable understanding of the schizophrenic processes in nuclear family life is dated because the most advanced authoritative work by the British specialist on schizophrenia, Professor John Wing of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship

and the Institute of Psychiatry, shows how inaccurate and damaging has been the loose labelling of past categorization of the schizophrenic process, in view of the now more accurate knowledge we have about the organic, biochemical disease to which alone should be attributed the specific name. Also, the sheer difficulty of analyzing exactly the function of, say, swaddling, shows that our opinions can never be certainly based: did swaddling, indicate neglect? Or did it show that child care was just one part of busy, responsible domestic life? Or was it based, as was taught to me, on what fond parents felt reproduced for their baby, the cosy security of the womb? The complexities of the evolving family will probably always present us with mysteries: Isn't it the mysteries of life which we find most stimulating, especially in those of birth, marriage and death, and their family rituals?

**Mary Cresswell**

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**Anthony G. Banet** (ed) *Creative Psychotherapy: A Source book*, University Associates 1976.

This is a book of readings in six sections: The goals of psychotherapy; The psychotherapist; The patient as collaborator; Creative approaches; Group approaches; Issues. Authors include Naranjo, Jourard, Kopp, Fagan, Schutz, Rogers, Maslow, Tobin and Lederer.

It's an odd book. The first section consists mainly of journalistic pieces. The first one is nice, with this extract:

*After an episode where students (at an AHP conference) pitched a tent in the lobby of the elegant Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco to protest high room rates, Rollo May, Gardner Murphy and some others resigned.*

*But May rejoined two years later with a simple statement:*

*"Somewhere, there has got to be a psychology that includes poetry, art, and movement towards social justice and that will help me understand myself - and no where does it exist - even beginningly - out side the (AHP)."*

I liked the article by Max Hammer on Transpersonal psychotherapy, though it's a bit wordy. It seems to me that he's really spot on about the goal of therapy - the experience of the transpersonal self - which is equally the absence of self.

***If Consciousness in duality is the cause of the pain, then only consciousness in unity can be the elimination of the pain. Consciousness is already what egoistic desire seeks to fulfil through its pursuit of various objects.***

I liked the article by Matthew Dumont where he tells of a patient with whom he sat for seven successive therapy hours in silence, and got a breakthrough in the eighth hour by whispering the magic words - "How are things going?"

I liked the piece by Joen Fagan about gestalt awareness, where she has a nice dig at the existential "do-nothing" therapists. And a nice thought about some patients:

*I tell patients, "Basically, what we are doing here is seeing if I, as I am now, could have grown up in your family as you presented it to me in your person, and remain sane."*

There a striking critique of family therapy by Elsa First, which should be read by all family therapists.

There is a pompous and jejune article by Robert Anthony called "Zen Transactional Therapy" - don't know how it got in, really.

There is a political critique of psychotherapy by Nathan Hurvitz, which seems mostly to relate to Freudian approaches.

All sorts here, and a very uneven standard. Heavy research articles, lightweight thinkpieces - a bit of a mess really. Have a look at it - it might just contain what you are looking for.

### **James Crippledini**

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**Sukie Colegrave** - *The Spirit of the Valley (Androgyny and Chinese Thought)*  
Virago Press, £7.95 hardback; 2.95 paperback.

Sukie Colegrave gives us some penetrating and exciting analyses of Confucianism, Women's Lib and the Chinese revolution (masculine principle). She also presents a unifying and global view of humanity and universal links to the individual (feminine principle). Her thesis is that each of us individually experiences and can develop both the masculine and the feminine consciousness within us and ideally achieve a working synthesis between the two - a dynamic androgyny.

Society has for four thousand years upheld the masculine principle at the expense of the feminine and, she suggests, it is time for a change - but not to the opposite - an aggressive and controlling patriarchy - but to a state where each principle is allowed its appropriate place.

Her quarrel with the Women's Liberation Movement, as with the Chinese revolution, is that they are both emphasizing the masculine principle of domination and control of nature, instead of the feminine principle of Wu Wei - allowing nature to proceed in its own way and becoming one with this natural process

She admits there is a problem with *real politik* but insists that it must be overcome if humanity is ever to develop to its full potential - or return to its golden age before the busy hand of male consciousness imposed four thousand years of patriarchy. She insists that the starting point is self-knowledge. "It is a fundamental postulate of Yi Jing (I Ching) that inner development is a precondition of healthy action in the outside world, not only because we are acting out of confusion until we have harmonised the Yin and the Yang principles within our psyches, but also because of the relation of correspondence which exists between the individual and the universe". Moreover the ancient Chinese saw the human being as a single organism with body and mind interacting and interdependent. Sukie Colegrave points out that this could also be a statement of Frederick Perle's position in gestalt therapy. ". . .our bodies are considerably more sensitive to our thoughts and feelings and our consciousness considerably more sensitive to our bodies than most people have been accustomed to accept or believe."

Although Miss Colegrave is primarily a sinologist and bases most of her theory on Chinese philosophy, she makes useful and enlightening links with today's world, with Rudolf Steiner, Carl Jung and sub-atomic physics. She links the Chinese Yin/Yan polarity with Jung's male and female archetypes - the animus or anima - which Jung claimed needed to be in balance for true psychic health. Steiner saw the issues as a continuing conflict. "Both within the individual and within society a battle has raged since early times, according to him, between the female force which brings about similarity and binds individuals to others and to nations through blood ties, and the male force which promotes all that is individual and unique in the human being."

So, how to achieve a healthy androgyny? If we are genitally female, we encourage the "male" qualities of analysis, individuation and control in appropriate situations: if male, we allow female consciousness to emerge from time to time - "learn how to listen. Be supple, weak and unobtrusive". And "the search for androgyny entails exchanging a partial self for a complete self through the discovery that we can see further than we have seen, feel deeper than we have felt and love more than we have loved, that we are, in truth, far more than we knew".

**Vivian Milroy**

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**Leon Radinowicz and Joan King:** *The Growth of Crime*, 1978, Pelican, 367 pp, £1.50.

How do humanistic psychologists react when they have been mugged, burgled or had their cars smashed by drunken drivers? Are we understanding, analytical and compassionate towards the offender? Or do we seek retribution and reformation for them. Penal reformers, amongst whom these two distinguished authors from the institute of Criminology are universally respected for their authoritatively reliable knowledge and time-tested liberal commitment, hope that humanistic psychologists will objectively study the evidence about

our rising crime rate, and set a lead in increasing public toleration about some deviancy, whilst rationally refusing to follow the various ideological bandwagons which go the rounds with regard to new "treatments" or political theories about crime.

For their book, a cheap classic which everyone interested in the subject should possess, is sub-titled *The International Experience*, and shows the misery of addiction, uncontrolled violence, and plain greed - and what are our feelings about imprisoning white collar defrauders and speculators? - which is part of the human condition, and rears its ugly hydrahead in all regimes, distorted though the appearance may be. The book also shows by its extensive references to British and overseas practice, how our penological inadequacy and ambivalence with regard to the protection of the public, versus the rehabilitation of the criminal, veers from the counter-productively lenient to the equally ineffective severe. Also that this is a refraction, rather than reflection of similar uncertainty amongst ordinary citizens, full of fears yet fairly ready to be forgiving. Thus there is a real intellectual challenge, for humanistic psychology in accepting grass roots feelings in the community, and then helping its members to work through these so that they can themselves accept as many of their deviant brethren as possible for "care and control" outside of institutions. For this is the practical task, if we are to get people out of prisons, and encourage them to lead more socially useful lives: to polemicize about theories of deviancy, and whether I am more deviant than you is luxuriously energy-consuming, when as the Howard League and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders points out, what we need is an immediate willing influx of volunteers to teach social skills to illiterate West Indian youths, support battering families, act as uncles and aunts to drifting young delinquents, and offer peer companionship to disturbed people of all ages. It is the development of this response to the growth of crime in which the Probation Service has always been involved, increasingly sharing its task with young and mentally ill offenders with Social Service Departments. This work, and its diverse options, are described in detail in the book, which whilst indicating that research shows that non-custodial care offers no panacea to problems, still maintains that it is within this area that most hope lies.

The authors also probe more deeply into the cultural conflicts involved, recognizing the necessity and stimulation of change, but showing the price that society pays through broken families, surrogate child care, job redundancy, and shifting moral values. If the community is to rehabilitate its offenders, rather than send them to prison, then has the community itself to accept its own rehabilitation before it is able to offer a good reinforcing environment to its weaker (or overstrong!) members? Hence the liberal dilemma about the decriminalizing of cannabis, in which politically and socially progressive groups like the international AMADE (The Friends of Youth World Association) are stressing in this International Year of the Child that they are "profoundly alarmed" that "such an attitude cannot but compromise seriously the measures which society is obliged to take in order to protect its young" (*Int. Child Welfare Review*, 36, p. 61).

So much for the serious underlying issues of the book: its comprehensive text, clearly written, contains chapters on The Relentless Upsurge of Crime, Ideologies and Crime, The Search for Causes, The Instrument of Deterrence, The Police - Protectors or Oppressors?, Sentencing, Prisons in the Pillory, and Experimenting with Alternatives. It is a book which dispels prejudices, urges objective sanity, and exposes our own collusiveness with failing to help misfits and offenders fulfil their potential in socially acceptable ways that neither damage them or ourselves.

**Joan Conway**