

BOOK REVIEWS

'Star signs for Lovers'/Liz Greene / Arrow Books

Being an ex-student of Liz Greene and respecting highly her work and method of teaching, I felt rather disappointed to see this book on the market. After reading her very profound and insightful book '**Saturn**', one would expect a continuation of the same high standard: instead of which appears '**Star signs for Lovers**' which I can only describe as commercial and superficial.

It's an amusing or possibly useful book for the lay-person with a basic interest in Astrology. It's the kind of book you'd pick up on a train-station bookshop when you need something light to entertain you during the journey.

At the same time it does give you some insights or is amusing in that it is so right on.

The book is divided into sections, the sun sign itself, the myth, the Arian lover, the Arian man, Arian woman and so on with every sign. You really become quite bored reading so many lengthy sections on one sign and it becomes repetitive. The way in which the book differs from other commercial astrology books is that it deals with the shadow side of each sign's nature. Although the author fails to explain in any depth what actually is the Shadow or how to come to terms with it. We are given sentences like:

'How do you deal with a Cancerian Shadow, once its let loose? Sometimes it's best to ignore it. After all, it isn't meant with malice. Sometimes its best to confront it and bring a little honest truth into the discussion. But most important, it's best to notice it.'

I fail to see how this can be of any help to a person who has noticed that they possess darker elements in their personality.

The book seems to be a confusion of trying to present more serious psychological/ astrological terminology in a very simple way but then presents things in a childish, unenlightened manner. For example in the beginning she writes:

'If you really think the solution to the problem of relationships lies in things '**out there**' in society, look again. It may just lie in ourselves, in our ways of dealing with our lopsidedness and our lack of self-knowledge. How in the world can you possibly expect to get on with somebody else when you don't even know who you yourself are?'

But then later in the book she will come up with something like,

'If you're the more independent or self-contained type, Leo can be a big problem for you. He requires lots of time, love, attention and devotion. He wouldn't be half so interesting and charismatic if he were

the selfeffacing type, anyway. Besides whoever heard of a hero who hid in the background while his lady fought the battles? Extreme woman's libbers should stay away from this animal, for although Leo usually loves women and loves loving women, he expects his woman to be a woman first of all.'

Liz obviously has a good understanding of the signs and is very qualified in her field and I am therefore surprised that in this book she treats the subject in such a flippant manner.

Peri Rowan-Madirolas

Eugene T. Gendlin. Focusing Everest House, \$9.95

I am generally sceptical of and put off by claims that a technique is new and will help anyone with all their problems. When the front cover also says that it is something you can do alone and that you can learn it in a very short time, this added to my suspicions and to the feeling that this was 'too good to be true'. It would be a great pity if this put off other readers. My conclusion, having read the book and having felt sufficiently excited to try out the method with several of the clients that I am working with, is that Gendlin **does** have something useful and new to say.

Basically '**Focusing**' is a method of attending to your problem in its bodily form and listening for it to tell you something. If, for example, you ask a person to think of their mother, what they experience is a combination of emotions, facts, memories, perceptions, thoughts and wishes. This "all about mother" is called by Gendlin a "felt sense" and it is this felt sense that focusing is trying to reach. By focusing on this felt sense some aspect of it will become clearer and change. This change is felt bodily and is a sign that focusing has actually occurred. However clearly this is expressed it may sound strange and unlikely until one tries it - the old problem of expressing something non-verbal in verbal terms. Focusing is not "thinking about" or "getting in touch with" or "getting immersed in feelings", but an alternative to all three. (Gendlin's use of the word "feeling" is sometimes confusing. He defines it as referring to the felt sense and therefore as something quite different from emotion. However, the fact that "feeling" and "emotion" are used interchangeably by most people, makes it easy for the reader to forget this new meaning. The word "experience" would perhaps be more acceptable in this context.)

Gendlin makes good use of analogies and of examples of work with clients. A simple analogy that I liked was with looking at a picture in an art gallery, where you have to stand back a bit in order to see it properly. There are also useful chapters on difficulties with focusing and what to do about them.

Most books on psychotherapy give the reader no guidance as to what the therapist actually does, and after a time one learns not to ask. 'Focusing' does reply to this question, both in the technique itself and in the chapter "Listening Manual". (Most experienced helpers would do well to improve their skills in listening/empathy.) The book will therefore be useful to therapists as well as to those interested primarily in their own growth.

I have used focusing, as described in an earlier article, as part of a course on client-centred therapy which I have held for staff at a psychiatric hospital. It was usually well received even by people who were very dubious when I had first explained it. Since reading the book I have found it easier to use the technique effectively in working with clients. I have also lent it to friends who have been able to use it themselves and found it helpful.

I entirely recommend this book to anyone interested in their own growth or in working with other people.

Frances Jobling.

Robert Curvin & Bruce Porter. Blackout Looping, John Wiley, 1979, 240 pp
£9.35

Would we benefit from the selectively lower rate of law enforcement in our deprived areas which the Americans practise in theirs? Or would the poor living in them be as doubly victimized as were those who suffered in the 1977 looting catastrophe which occurred following the New York City power failure? Two journalists with an academic background inquire into the causes and effects of the widespread stealing, destruction and rioting which erupted as the result of a sudden civic suspension of services, and which raise questions of far-reaching importance. For in Britain now we are urgently reviewing the role of our police who are attacked for heavy law enforcement in ghettos and poor neighbourhoods, and for responding to emergencies of public disorder with premature and inappropriate defences, including an increasing use of arms.

Yet in this now notorious American episode, when thousands of people were on the rampage, the heavily armed American police fired not a single shot, had no prepared counter-attack or containment policy, and were insufficient in number to control the growing wave of crime. The book, which has quotes from looters, merchants and police, has interesting off-the-cuff comments from the cops: "we're damned if we do, and we're damned if we don't" is the common self-appraisal of the ambivalence with which they regard the arrest of the poor blacks who formed 65% of the looters who were caught, only 4% of whom were white. The ambivalence is not high-motivated necessarily, but "reflects what the community at large **wants** from its constabulary -people in these communities tolerate things that other places wouldn't tolerate - the community gets the kind of policing it deserves". . . and so there is a

laissez-faire approach which allows drugs trafficking, prostitution, larceny and looting, so that policing such areas is cool and minimal.

The authors add that their investigations "confirm the result of several studies which show how impossible is the task of controlling people who do not consent to be controlled, unless force is used in utterly massive proportions." It is interesting that the National Guard were not called in to quell the looters, although again it is hinted that pragmatic reasons of operational conflict between two commands may have been the main reason for this, as well as the difficulty of getting an immediate call-out by the N.G. Nor were the Fire Service called in to use their hosepipes on the looters - for they were busy fighting the spread of fires. The only strong and punitive response to the outbreak came in the subsequent treatment of the looters: it was clear that the police kept them in detention before arraignment far too long; far too many were remanded without bail in custody before trial; bail was fixed too highly; and sentences were harsher than usual.

This again raises important issues: when police preventative and interventionist policy is weak, does the judiciary and penal branch of law and order compensate for this by acting, or reacting, over-vigorously in response to the public and victim's cry for retribution? For black and poor merchants suffered as much as the white and rich ones: one black community leader bemoaned that "now people are programmed to take".

Unfortunately, the book does not have the scholarly research background which can usefully recall situations in both American, Britain and other policed countries where the balance between forces of social control have had important lessons to teach us. Nor does it conceptualize the unpredictability and irrationality of the public's response to civic prices, which often elicit self-sacrificial rather than selfish behaviour. Also statistics of arrest are given without adequate discussion about possibilities of racial bias in the catching of the looters. However, in their brief and superficial closing chapter on "looting theory", they compare "relative deprivation or RD theory" with "riff-raff theory" and offer a combination view that the trouble was caused by the general serious economic decline with high prices and high unemployment, which attracted three main groups, the criminal, the inadequate, and the sheepish poor. They make the point that the **majority** of the most poor are highly moral people who blame crime on to the riff-raff and who want vengeance on them: law and penal reform depends on the support of the liberal bourgeois and occasionally rich members of society!

John Stewart

W. Gordon Lawrence (ed). Exploring individual and organizational boundaries: A Tavistock open systems approach, John Wiley 1979, 256pp £10

This is a collection of papers and a sort of **festschrift** for Pierre Turquet, after his death in 1975. Many of the papers, and all the worst ones, deal

with the weirdnesses and idiocies of the Leicester-type conferences on "Authority, Leadership and Organization" run by the Tavistock and also by the Grubb Institute.

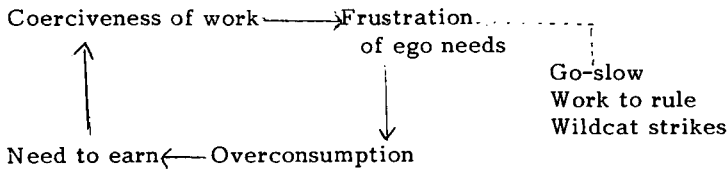
But there are in fact good papers in this collection. The first of these is by Barry Falmer, which explains Gregory Bateson's ideas about Learning I, Learning II and Learning III, and relates them very well to group relations. This gave me something which I feel I can now use myself.

The second is a chapter by Eric J. Miller about some consultancy work he did on rural development in Mexico. He says at the end:

My point is that, although many people may wish otherwise, organizational development cannot be effective without also being a political activity, involving changes in the distribution of power.

This is a conclusion which seems to be borne out by a great deal of research in underdeveloped countries, and which also applies in British companies.

The third good paper is by Gordon Lawrence himself, and is entitled "A concept for today: the management of oneself in role". This is a sensitive, precise yet firm essay on a concept which is important to anyone who plays a role from time to time - as few indeed of us do not! He has a nice diagram of our present culture:



None of this would be particularly new for a Marxist, but for a Tavistock man to get this far seems progress indeed.

O. Void

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