

## The pluralistic approach

### Pluralistic counselling and psychotherapy

Mick Cooper and John McLeod

Sage 2010, £21.99

ISBN 978-1847873453

Reviewed by Val Simanowitz



This is a clearly written, accessible and thoughtful book. The 'pluralistic approach' is roughly based on the premise that 'different things suit different people at different times in their lives'. This is in contrast to the polarised positions adopted by therapists narrowly wedded to one orientation. Pluralism builds on existing integrative models but avoids favouring yet another orientation. The theory encompasses 'both/and' and permits a commitment to one's own orientation and respect for the expertise of other approaches. It is firmly grounded in a pluralistic philosophy that any question has a range of plausible and possibly conflicting responses and that no one vantage point is best.

Its focal point is a collaborative relationship between therapist and client, to work out what the client wants from therapy. Client and therapist set goals together and work out tasks and methods towards achieving them. For me the terms 'goals', 'tasks' and 'methods' have a mechanistic tinge but Cooper and McLeod go out of their way to try to show how this is not the case. They go into great detail about how these terms can be part of the therapeutic relationship – client-led, 'personalised' towards clients' wants and needs, with a stress on the use of clients' existing resources, clarity about what is available, frequent feedback, and meta-communication about what is going on in the session.

I would find training people to practise in a number of approaches, yet avoiding superficiality, extremely challenging. However, Cooper and

McLeod have developed some clear plans for a convincing three-level training programme. I do, however, admit to some scepticism when the authors assert that people trained in one approach can learn the skills of another in 10 sessions.

It is apparent that aspects of the approach describe the way that many practitioners already work but this book makes such practice more concrete, clear and acceptable. The authors are also aware that, if there is any danger that this approach becomes yet one more dogmatic creed, then it defeats its whole purpose. *Val Simanowitz is a counsellor, supervisor and trainer*

## Why we become therapists

### Why therapists choose to become therapists: a practice-based enquiry

Sofie Bager-Charleson

Karnac 2010, £20.99

ISBN 978-1855758261

Reviewed by Maureen Perkins



This is a thought-provoking book. Two hundred and eighty counsellors were invited to consider their own reasons for their chosen profession. The book acknowledges that such a question can only be partly answered through statistics, if it can ever be answered at all. Therefore, the complexity and ambiguity of making

sense of therapists' motives is considered within the context of reflective practice. At the heart of the book are personal accounts provided by six therapists, all from different backgrounds and working in different fields, who are members of a reflective writing group.

The survey highlights that two-thirds of the respondents cite problems in childhood and adult life crises as the main precursors for entering the profession. The book suggests a general reluctance of therapists to explore their motives, possibly due to the split that is often perceived between good and bad intentions. The wounded healer versus the noble altruistic helper is an inherent part of this debate. The conclusion of the research is that this split is not clearly defined and most therapists have motives which are a composite of wounded healer and Good Samaritan. Personally I find it difficult to believe that anyone who knows anything about therapists or therapy would ever think that what drives therapists is anything other than several shades of grey.

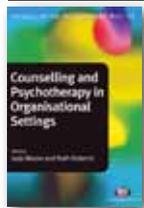
The individual accounts are well written and interesting. However, at times I found myself absorbed in the story but wondering what it was really saying about the therapist's career choice. Furthermore, despite having given considerable thought to my own motives over the years, the vague sense of not knowing what I was left with at the end of the book is possibly a parallel process of the ambiguity and complexity of the topic. I liked the self-reflection boxes at the end of each chapter and I think it would be difficult to read the book without

introspection, and this can only be valuable and ultimately of service to our clients and the profession. *Maureen Perkins is an integrative psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice*

## Working within organisations

### Counselling and psychotherapy in organisational settings

Judy Moore and Ruth Roberts (eds)  
Learning Matters 2010, £18  
ISBN 978-1844456147  
*Reviewed by Chris Rose*



Judy Moore and Ruth Roberts have put together a practical and informative book about the different contexts within which counsellors may find work. The areas covered are schools, higher and further education, voluntary agencies, addictions counselling in residential settings, prisons, occupational health and employee assisted programmes, and IAPT. Each chapter spells out any relevant contemporary legal frameworks and government requirements, identifies what it terms 'core knowledge' and pinpoints areas that might be at variance with the counsellor's training models. Brief case studies and examples, along with ideas for self-reflection, help clarify the differences in approach in each area.

It presents a pragmatic view of the scope and limits of counselling for those hoping to work in these various areas. There is little space for the purist here. The work involves compromise and flexibility, and may challenge ideas that have been born of training courses that focus exclusively on their own particular theoretical model(s). If our understandings are always shaped by the learning context – and I believe they are – then it is necessary to relearn and adjust in every new environment that we encounter. The training experience offers a version of counselling that cannot be exactly replicated beyond the confines of the course. Any claims to the contrary can be usefully referred to this book, which clearly underlines the inseparability of practice and context.

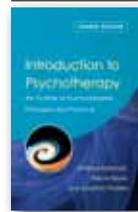
The missing chapter, from my point of view, is the one which goes beyond the rational and conscious features of organisational life. The unconscious dynamics in all the areas discussed exert a powerful influence over the ethos and the interrelationships that the new counsellor will encounter. A discussion on group dynamics, organisational styles, leadership and power, using some specific examples from the book, would have been helpful to alert potential counsellors to the unconscious processes that are at work in every organisation.

It is not a book to read from cover to cover but a valuable resource to refer to, that should find a place on many reading lists. *Chris Rose is a group psychotherapist and writer*

## Updated psychodynamic introduction

### Introduction to psychotherapy: an outline of psychodynamic principles and practice (4th edition)

Anthony Bateman, Dennis Brown and Jonathan Pedder  
Routledge 2010, £19.99  
ISBN 978-0415476126  
*Reviewed by Eileen Aird*



The fourth edition of this invaluable text confirms its position as the essential guide to psychodynamic psychotherapy for trainees. One of the book's many strengths lies in the simplicity and clarity of the writing. Complex theoretical concepts are neither evaded nor simplified but are discussed in language remarkably free of jargon. Appropriate illustrative case study material is used and here too the writing is a model for how to write clinical notes. Prefaces to the four editions indicate the siting of the book in the developing body of psychoanalytic theory and the extension of psychodynamic practice into other, particularly briefer, therapies. Sadly both Dennis Brown and Jonathan Pedder died before the publication of this fourth edition.

Freudian theory is a baseline for comparison with both historical developments and current thought. There is a discriminating discussion of what – though no longer useful in its original conception, eg

castration anxiety – has been transmuted into wider thinking and application. A generous definition of psychotherapy is given, including conversations between close friends and the listening and diagnostic skills of related professionals such as doctors and social workers. Historical, scientific, medical and literary thinking is also drawn upon. Developments in attachment and relational theory, group analytic work and neurobiological thinking are taken account of and related to psychodynamic conceptualisations. There are final chapters on a range of other therapies and on outcome and research work in the field. There is a very respectful account of different theoretical models and four levels of depth in working. Five-times-a-week psychoanalysis is not considered to be a purer or better way of working, although the necessity for a thorough training analysis or therapy for psychotherapists is underlined.

There is a stimulating and thoughtful exploration of the change of emphasis from reconstitution of the past to working in the here and now. The desired outcome of psychotherapy is seen as redeeming the past as it is alive in the present: 'Reflection on the present and its continuity with the past become central in a struggle to make coherent sense of oneself throughout development' (p140); '...the past shapes the present, but the present can also reshape the influence of the past. This is the basis of development and change in life and in psychotherapy' (p56); '...the greatest therapeutic effect takes place where the transference

comes alive in the “here and now” of therapy’ (p151).

I hope that this concise but wide-ranging book will continue as a set text on much psychodynamic training.

*Eileen Aird is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and supervisor*

## At-a-glance guide to Gestalt

**Gestalt therapy: 100 key points and techniques**

David Mann

Routledge 2010, £12.99

ISBN 978-0415552943

*Reviewed by Anne Gilbert*



As a Gestalt psychotherapist I felt nervous when I agreed to review this book. I wondered if it played into outdated ideas many therapists still hold about Gestalt psychotherapy, invoking images of empty chair techniques and the video of Fritz Perls working with Gloria. Any fears I had were swiftly allayed. This is a well-researched and clearly written book. It portrays the richness of Gestalt psychotherapy as a relational and present-centred therapy with a solid theoretical foundation based on phenomenology, field theory and dialogue.

The book, in six sections, opens with an exploration of core theoretical concepts such as awareness, contact and the cycle of experience. A section follows on the preparatory phase of therapy featuring Gestalt assessment,

diagnosis and contract setting. Parts three and four, which I found the most satisfying sections, focus on the therapeutic relationship and show how it is informed by field theory, phenomenology and a dialogical ‘I-Thou’ way of relating, based on the ideas of Martin Buber. The development of the therapy relationship is viewed as co-created by the client and therapist, placed within their wider cultural context. Factors such as shame, guilt and support available to the client are also considered. Creative experimentation in therapy sessions is discussed, using many different methods, including metaphor, fantasy and dream work. A clear picture emerges of Gestalt as an embodied, relational therapy. The last two sections on ethical issues and evaluation and research are much shorter and, in my opinion, not as well developed, although still informative. Whilst some of the theoretical concepts in the book are complicated, they are well illustrated with practical examples. I particularly enjoyed the division of the book into bite-sized subsections, making it easy to dip into and digest. There are also experiential exercises. However, I felt the phraseology employed in some of them (eg ‘A field-congruent way of me diminishing my awareness of desensitisation is...’) might deter some readers from engaging with them.

In summary, this is an excellent reference book for both those familiar with Gestalt theory and therapists of other orientations who wish to learn more.

*Anne Gilbert is a Gestalt psychotherapist*

## Working cross-culturally

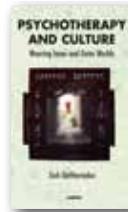
**Psychotherapy and culture: weaving inner and outer worlds**

Zack Eleftheriadou

Karnac 2010, £20.99

ISBN 978-1855756250

*Reviewed by Els van Ooijen*



The experience of moving from one culture to another may vary widely. Apart from personal, social and cultural factors, people’s responses will also be affected by the circumstances of the move, possible trauma and their reception in the new country. This book aims to ‘open up a discussion about how to work cross-culturally’, rather than to offer a definitive model. Although the author utilises a psychodynamic lens to examine cross-cultural issues, she sees therapy as a relational process for which a ‘blank screen’ approach would not be helpful. She emphasises that cross-cultural work demands an in-depth exploration of practitioners’ personal and cultural narratives and assumptions, a view also taken by Ryde in her book *Being White in the Helping Professions*.

Eleftheriadou discusses the therapeutic relationship; assessment; transference issues, including therapist countertransference; barriers to cross-cultural work, such as language or setting; and how people may differ in adjusting to a new culture. Three chapters supplement her own writing, each by a

different author. Refugees’ practical needs often override those of a more emotional nature and may therefore need to be addressed before clients can make use of counselling or therapy. In chapter eight Costa gives an example of a community-based programme where counselling is embedded within a larger network of services addressing a wide variety of client needs. This means that counsellors can refer within the service and are thus able to adhere to their professional boundaries. The next chapter by Dzeko details how four Bosnian women dealt with their experience of migration. She makes the point that help for refugees should be based on their view of the situation, rather than on Western expectations of their needs. The last chapter by Alleyne constitutes a particularly useful guide to organisational consultancy. She emphasises that it is not enough to focus on ‘macro processes’, such as the development of guidelines and policies for cross-cultural work, because ‘micro processes’ (internal and unconscious processes) need careful attention if macro processes are to have any effect in practice.

I particularly enjoyed the many case examples, which helped bring the more theoretical discussions to life. The language is a bit clunky at times; the book would have benefited from more thorough editing. However, it does constitute a rich resource for those practitioners interested in working cross-culturally and should be of interest to trainees and qualified practitioners alike.

*Els van Ooijen is a counsellor, psychotherapist and supervisor*

## Life inside Kingsley Hall

**An uneasy dwelling: the story of the Philadelphia Association community houses**

Paul Gordon  
PCCS Books 2010, £13.99  
ISBN 978-1906254247  
*Reviewed by Guy Holmes*



This beautifully written, incredibly frank book will interest anyone curious about what went on at Kingsley Hall (the first Philadelphia Association (PA) house made famous by RD Laing and residents such as Mary Barnes); what happened to the PA and houses it supported post-Laing; whether people who go through psychotic breakdowns can come out of such experiences stronger and more able to relate to others, or whether they come out more damaged, as many psychiatrists and drug companies claim; and whether people with severe problems can be helped by living with others with similar predicaments, who help them with minimal support from

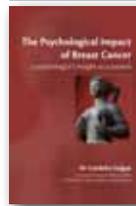
'house therapists' (people who may just visit a few times a week to facilitate group meetings), or whether therapeutic communities need a daily structure and lots of therapeutic activity. The philosophies behind the houses are explained and illustrated with moving descriptions of experiences of house residents and therapists, as are practicalities such as how people join an established household, the structure of house meetings, and management of crises.

Clearly many residents benefited from their stay in the houses, but the fact that some of these hurt people hurt themselves or others (physically and emotionally) is not shied away from. No one could read the book and conclude that living together, and helping others to live with themselves and others, is anything but incredibly difficult, whether we be people who have spent time in a psychiatric hospital or members of an organisation like the PA. Our current culture is so dominated by people and organisations who feel they have to protect their reputation and market themselves that Gordon's honesty may surprise readers and, like me, they may find it hard to put the book down. *Guy Holmes is a clinical psychologist at South Staffs and Shropshire NHS Foundation Trust*

## Living with breast cancer

**The psychological impact of breast cancer: a psychologist's insight as a patient**

Cordelia Galgut  
Radcliffe Publishing 2010,  
£22.99  
ISBN 978-1846193033  
*Reviewed by Jessica Sullivan*



This is a courageous book. In sharing her experience of surgery followed by radiotherapy and hormone therapy, Cordelia Galgut has given an uncomfortable, emotionally charged read. Dr Sarah Burnett (a consultant radiologist) contributes an important chapter on mastectomy, reconstruction and chemotherapy. I now feel more knowledgeable about what a diagnosis of breast cancer means for a woman.

The main message of the book is that breast cancer is not something 'you just get over' but 'becomes a chronic condition' with 'enormous ongoing physical and psychological impact'. This is compounded by an often less than holistic

approach to treatment, where a patient's emotional response is often belittled and physical procedures don't take account of what has gone before. Self and sexual identities are altered irreversibly and relationships come under immense strain.

I was struck by the author's decision to work during her treatment and reflected on the emotional advantages and financial implications of that decision. By contrast, Burnett writes of 'giving myself the space to be ill'; perhaps the message conveyed to 'not make a fuss' has some bearing on this decision, as might the loss of professional status and identity.

This need to carry on as normal might be a position many women take, but I wonder what impact it might have on physical and emotional recovery.

This is an important book for any medical or mental health practitioner working with cancer patients, particularly breast cancer patients. Breast cancer patients might find a place where they feel understood and supported. Galgut reminds us that although women's experiences will be different, there will also be common experiences, which should be recognised and acknowledged explicitly. *Jessica Sullivan is a counsellor, supervisor and trainer*

Visit [www.bacp.co.uk/shop](http://www.bacp.co.uk/shop) for great books at great prices!

Browse the BACP online bookshop for the full range of BACP publications including: training & legal resources, directories, research reviews, information sheets and more.

**Now available:** *Essential law for counsellors & psychotherapists* – this third book in the series provides a user-friendly guide to the law for all those practising and training in the counselling profession, by Barbara Mitchels & Tim Bond.

**bacp**

British Association for  
**Counselling & Psychotherapy**