Book Reviews

Biting the Hand that Starves You
MAISEL, R., EPSON, D. & BORDEN, A., 2004
New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company
ISBN 0-393-70337-1
US$35.00 (hbk)

Reviewed by Maree Burns, School of Psychology, University of Exeter

In a move that is a significant departure from much of the existing literature about eating disorders, *Biting the Hand that Starves You* begins with and takes seriously the experiences of those who are intimately familiar with anorexia and bulimia (‘insiders’). Rather than using detached and expert language to describe disordered eating and those whose lives are at risk of being taken over by it, this passionate account invites its readers inside the worlds of those struggling against anorexia/bulimia. This is achieved using first person narratives (letters, poems, therapeutic conversations) that provide vivid and often poignant accounts of the battles that take place between anorexia/bulimia and those fighting to free themselves from its influences.

Utilising narrative approaches to the problem of eating disorders the authors powerfully outline the innovative ways (in both dialogue and practice) in which anorexia/bulimia can be understood and approached as separate from the person—as an unwelcome intruder or captor—rather than as a part of the person or as evidence of internal individual deficit or psychopathology. This understanding is a radical departure from mainstream constructions of disordered eating and it opens up a space between the person and the problem, thereby allowing the tactics and effects of anorexia/bulimia to be uncovered and explored. Alongside these investigations, descriptions and knowledges of the insider’s identity and preferred ways of being can be developed and strengthened in order to reinforce her (and sometimes his) resistance to anorexia/bulimia. This is perhaps one of the most compelling and hopeful messages of the book, which is convincingly illustrated using powerful examples from interviews, conversations and other writings. This unique approach to anorexia and bulimia allows those whose lives are immediately affected and their loved ones, health professionals and therapists to unite in resistance by focusing frustrations, anger and intolerance where they belong—at the problem—rather than at the person who is engaging in what otherwise appear to be inexplicable acts of self-destruction.

In delivering this powerful message, the book is well structured and clearly written. The first part of the book is devoted to outlining the ways in which anorexia/bulimia initially seduces and
then traps the women and men whose lives it takes over. The second section details how anti-anorexic/bulimic allies can help insiders to see anorexia/bulimia for what it really is, thereby indicating possibilities for ways in which it can be resisted. Detailing this radically different approach to overcoming eating disorders and outlining the ways in which insiders are invited and supported to reclaim their lives is the main focus of the third section. Strategies include exposing anorexia/bulimia through a critique of its tactics and effects and then engaging in a process of acknowledging and strengthening an insider's identity, goals and values for the purposes of taking one's life back from disordered eating. Finally, the last section is concerned with the process of generating collaborative resistance by outlining ways in which family members and other loved ones can join with insiders in this battle to defy anorexia/bulimia.

_Biting the Hand that Starves You_ offers an innovative way to understand and approach eating disorders—problems that often strike fear into the hearts of those affected and those charged with treating or helping. Using narrative approaches enables the authors to get around the immobilising discourses of anorexia/bulimia as impossible to overcome, of the women who struggle with it as difficult and hostile and of the families of those women as somehow deficient. Another major strength of the book is that it goes well beyond the simple nod towards sociocultural ‘factors’ in disordered eating by conceptualising anorexia/bulimia (and their practices) as constituted within particular contexts that value, for example, dieting, self-restraint, perfection, etc. As such, the book effectively demonstrates overlaps between so-called ‘normal’ body management that is encouraged in most westernised cultures (especially for women) and ‘disordered’ body management, thereby resisting the pathologisation that goes hand in hand with these problems. Furthermore, by treating ‘insider’ knowledges as central the authors outline an approach to disordered eating that does not universalise women’s experiences by seeking to provide uniform explanations and ‘treatments’, but that rather works respectfully with individual women’s own knowledges and histories of living with these problems.

The book is also a potentially political text inasmuch as it forces us to rethink the ways in which mainstream approaches understand, represent and construct eating disorders as real, individualised, clinical entities. It forces readers to consider radically different ways in which power might be operating in the life of somebody struggling with an eating disorder. As such _Biting the Hand that Starves You_ implicitly problematises many of the existing treatment orthodoxies for eating disorders and poses challenging questions regarding current approaches in psychology and psychiatry (and elsewhere) to recovery from disordered eating. Indeed, for those who are committed to finding out the ‘truths’ about eating disorders this will potentially be a challenging text. Although there is some very clear explanation at the beginning of the book regarding the theoretical underpinnings of this novel approach, those who are unfamiliar with narrative ways of understanding the world will need to suspend any desire to establish underlying ‘facts’ about anorexia/bulimia and the person whose life is in its grip. Instead it is
necessary to accept these innovative ways of thinking and speaking about anorexia/bulimia as a strategy—as a way to proceed that utilises ‘local’ and context-specific knowledge for the purposes of opening up possibilities for novel ways of approaching the problem and supporting people in their battles to reclaim their lives.

Although this is hardly a criticism of the book, there is one issue that I hold some concern about. The authors highlight as potentially problematic the possible effects on insiders of some of the vivid accounts of anorexia/bulimia’s entrapment in Part One. I was also concerned about this as I read this section. In this part of the book the voice of anorexia/bulimia is present at its most seductive and in a way that will be intimately familiar to those who have struggled against it. Although it would be hard to see how one could write about this in ways that do not paradoxically offer space/life to pro-anorexic ideas, I wondered about the possibilities of inserting critiques or ‘other voices’ in layers (or as footnotes or in a different font) throughout the seduction chapter to counter these potentially deadly promises. Of course the authors are careful to suggest that those who feel vulnerable to anorexia/bulimia’s voice seek support and/or read the latter chapters first where pro-anorexic ideas are exposed and critiqued. This is an important suggestion.

Finally, in terms of its usefulness to therapists who are interested in working in different ways with eating disorders, the narrative framework and practices that are outlined in Biting the Hand seem to me to operationalise many of the values of feminist and postmodern approaches within the social sciences that are concerned with issues of subjectivity, ‘mental illness’, and therapy. That said, it is offering something that is less about therapy in the traditional sense and more a call to action or a catalyst for mobilising power/resistance against anorexia/bulimia. In this way the book offers a means of working that hands back power to families and insiders and empowers them in collaboration with their therapists and health care providers to take a stance against disordered eating in their everyday lives, conversations and practices. Indeed, it is the first book of this kind that provides a model of united resistance and of practical ways of fighting the problem. As such it is a very hopeful and inspiring text that will be of interest and value to all those whose lives and work are affected by anorexia/bulimia.

Counselling and Identity: Self Realisation in a Therapy Culture
HOWARD, A., 2005
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
ISBN 1-4039-3309-X

Reviewed by Tina Besley, Department of Educational Studies, University of Glasgow

In this book, which aims to ‘consider how constructions of the self influence all of us in our every aspect of our daily lives’ (p. 4), Alex Howard addresses an issue that I have long believed is crucial (and have written about) to being a counsellor in our postmodern era, the issue of self and identity in counselling—both the identity of the counsellor and those he/she is counselling (see Besley, 2002). Howard notes that although both psychology and
counselling focus on the individual, there is surprisingly little literature on identity and authenticity. Instead it is both the sociological and philosophical discourses and in particular postmodern cultural studies/theory that debate the topic extensively. I share Howard’s concern that too often counsellors in general and counsellor education courses in particular seldom consider how other related disciplines like philosophy, psychology and sociology have considered the self and identity or subjectivity. ‘Remarkably little recognition of sociological and philosophical thinking is to be found within most counselling [course] prospectuses’ (p. 6). Furthermore, he is critical of the way ‘so many counsellors and therapists have remained so relatively ignorant for so long of these developments [about the nature of the self] is itself a symptom of the intellectual and social fragmentation that has itself been of major interest to many sociologists’ (p. 28). Howard does us a real service in painting a broader picture as he taps into an extensive bibliography (useful further reading for us). He is critical of the way counselling can become smug and not actually self-reflective, or even question or examine the theoretical assumptions it is based upon or consider the wider the sociocultural context that is constitutive of subjectivity.

The book comprises nine chapters totalling 295 pages: Chapter 1: ‘Introduction: identity and why it matters’; Chapter 2: ‘In search of self—counseling and identity’; Chapter 3: ‘Telling what’s wrong—narratives and metaphors of sickness and health’; Chapter 4: ‘Truth telling—identity and reality’; Chapter 5: ‘Honoured and esteemed? Identity and happiness’; Chapter 6: ‘Feeling good and being good: identity and ethics’; Chapter 7: ‘What was it like for you?—measuring and assessing change in identity’; Chapter 8: ‘Transcending self: identity, society and the transpersonal’; Chapter 9: ‘Conclusion—identities, past, present and future’. One of the useful features is the set of questions for counsellors that Alex Howard poses at the end of each chapter.

With its brief overview of the ideas of many theorists of the self and identity, including some Ancient Greek thinkers, Descartes, Kant, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Rousseau, Mill, Hegel, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Freud, Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Wittgenstein, Adorno, Althusser, Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Sartre, Rogers, Giddens, Kellner and Habermas, the book will undoubtedly be useful for counsellors and laypersons alike. Throughout, Howard quotes extensively from many of these writers. He makes it clear that he favours the Frankfurt school of critical theory and especially Habermas’ position (see pp. 129, 141, 191–195).

‘Habermas seeks to protect the enlightenment agenda that progress is possible, that we can, and should, cooperate; that we can make sense of others and ourselves and make the world fit for human beings. But in doing so we need to abandon naïvety about identity, reason and objectivity’ (p. 195).

While I welcome the book and its timely emphasis on the topic of identity, informed by philosophy and social theory, I think that Howard is too quick to
stand with Habermas and take on his rather negative view of some postmodernist views of the self/identity. In effect, by siding with Habermas, he positions himself against various poststructuralist thinkers like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and others whom he does not really consider (see e.g. Foucault, 1990, 1997a, 1997b). Foucault stated that earlier in his work he may have focused too much on power and that his real object was subjectivity (Foucault, 1988a, 1988b). Foucault also presented a seminar series on parrhesia or truth telling at Berkeley that could have fruitfully been considered in the chapter on truth telling (Foucault, 2001). Unfortunately, Howard barely taps into this literature. It is too easy today in 2005 to jump on the Habermas bandwagon against postmodernism. This does not recognise that Habermas, like many writers (Foucault as noted above), has radically changed his position since he called Foucault a ‘young conservative’ in 1981 in a speech to the city of Frankfurt on the acceptance of the Adorno prize. Habermas in the 1990s softened his earlier criticism immensely talking of a difference of style and in 2004 actually appeared in the same book as Derrida—Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida (Barradori, 2004). Nor does this recognise the way in which Habermas’ view of the self is essentially Hegelian and tied to the politics of recognition whereas that of poststructuralists, let’s say Foucault and Derrida though in different ways, derives in substantial part from Nietzsche. In introducing counsellors to this literature there is an obligation—an ethics of reading—that should be based on an invitation to practitioners to view the tradition and the literature known as the ‘philosophy of the subject’ (or the self) without shaping the issues in terms of simple oppositions that are misleading and dangerous. When authors favour a particular position it is preferable that this be made clear at the outset rather than being implied and commented upon later in the text.

Nevertheless, Howard usefully examines some of the key issues that have been debated such as whether or not the self is ‘integrated, divided, single, multiple, subject, object, process, prison, platform, performer, context, reality and illusion’ (p. 15). He also presents and critiques issues of autonomy and agency, truth and reality, and questions why we pursue happiness. He is critical of some aspects of the work two major figures in counselling, Gerard Egan and Carl Rogers. Howard accepts ‘that Aristotle’s welding together of excellence and virtue, in the Greek concept of “ataraxia”, was essentially correct’ (p. 165). He advocates that ‘counsellors should not be ethical authoritarians; they should be ethical authorities’ (p. 169, italics in original). Here too a more in depth look at ethics beyond Aristotle might have been useful.

In concluding this review, I fully recommend this book to fellow counsellors and therapists, with the proviso noted above about the author’s position. If it gets counsellors reading some of this literature, it can only be a good thing.

References

Besley, T. (2002). Counseling Youth: Foucault, Power and the Ethics of Subjectivity. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Borradori, G. (2004). Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida.
Careers Services: History, Policy and Practice in the United Kingdom

Peck, D., 2004
London: Routledge Falmer
ISBN 0-415-33935-9 (hbk), ISBN 0-415-33936-7 (pbk)

Reviewed by Jonathan Brown, The Open University in the North

Just as this book arrived for review, the educational press was forecasting yet more organisational change for the Connexions Service in England. Connexions created at the start of the new century contains the bulk of what had hitherto been the Careers Service. So it is an appropriate moment to review a history of the Service. David Peck spent most of his professional life in the Careers Service and in this book he reflects on the development of that service especially concentrating on the second half of the 20th century. Peck himself joined the Youth Employment Service in Sheffield in 1957 and was at the time of his retirement from full-time work Principal Careers Officer for Shropshire.

The organisational changes he encountered in his career are charted in his history. It is a history showing serial changes in the political perception of the Careers Service. These developments were translated into organisational change that can easily be logged against key dates:

- 1948—the Youth Employment Service is brought together into the ambit of the Ministry of Labour and National Service in the UK. However, Local Education Authorities would normally provide the service under the direction of the central ministry unless they chose to opt-out.
- 1974—the Careers Service is created and becomes the responsibility of the Local Education Authority.
- 1994—in England (from this time forward developments elsewhere in the UK follow different routes) the Careers Services are privatised (or partly privatised) with the introduction of central government contracts to Careers Companies.
- 2001—Connexions launched which incorporated the Careers Service in England within partnerships where increasingly Careers Advisers would become personal advisers in a generic service targeted at disadvantaged young people.
One of Peck’s key contentions is that throughout the post World War II period the Careers Service has suffered ‘an uncertain administrative framework’: the sequence of changes in 1948, 1974, 1994 and 2001 justify this contention. However, this is not just about the ‘administrative framework’, but also about governance, role and mission. Why was the Careers Service treated in this way? Here Peck echoing views from the profession at each point in time shows continuing surprise: surprise at the direction of policy, surprise at political processes, and surprise at the outcomes. For example, in 1991–1992 Peck notes in relation to Careers Service views and current research: ‘It is doubtful whether the policy makers were listening. Their concern was with governance; with what was best administered within the current political framework’ (p. 69).

Worse was to come, so that in 2000–2001 Peck says:

‘Concentrating on its own place in the scheme of things, the Careers Service failed to see the wider picture. Seeking to contribute to the government’s educational and economic policies, especially lifelong learning, the Service was largely unaware of the government advisers were pressing their social agenda’ (p. 91).

Even when the proposals became clearer it was symptomatic of the Careers Service position that ‘the name ConneXions appeared from nowhere. it is difficult to trace its origins’ (p. 94; the original (mis)spelling of the name of new Service had a capital X at its centre).

There is also a sense in which the surprise at the way the Service is treated is compounded by the worth of its core characteristics which Peck sees as:

- having ‘a body of dedicated professionals’ who
- show ‘increasing awareness of the educational, social and economic value of career guidance’ (p. 115).

So despite professionalism and cultural awareness the Careers Service has been curiously isolated on the peripheries of both the educational system and the world of work. Part of the uncertainty and surprise at the way things develop comes from tensions in this uncomfortable position. This may explain the shunting between Departments of State and that at times of crisis the Service has lacked popular support. Peck notes this isolation from public opinion, and does so with some clarity, over the 2000–2001 debate: ‘It was difficult to gauge public reaction to Connexions because there was so little’ (p. 102).

The development of the Careers Service over the period particularly since 1948 is well chronicle. The writing is lively and is adorned by reference to many of those involved. It is a pity that there are so many mistakes over proper names (to give but two examples, ‘Moodie’ instead of ‘Mudie’, p. 45, and more worryingly a confusion over the Report on the Careers Services in Scotland which should be Duffner, not Beattie). I would also have liked to see more on the development of guidance for adults in the period from 1980 onwards. More could also have been attempted on changes in guidance practice and in particular the development of initial training (the Qualification in Careers
Guidance and the introduction of S/NVQs). It might also have been interesting to look at the diaspora of Careers Advisers with so many former professional staff occupying guidance roles elsewhere (in higher and further education, school-teaching, training and development, life-coaching and consultancy).

However, the volume still provides an interesting, thought-provoking account which may help guidance practitioners and their managers to better understand the changes yet to come. Changes that it is hoped may rescue the Careers Service in England from its disappearance into the morass of Connexions.

Between Psychotherapy and Philosophy
Gordon, P. & Mayo, R. (Eds), 2004
London: Whurr
ISBN 1-86156-401-5
£19.50

Reviewed by Colin Feltham, Sheffield Hallam University

Most of the 10 contributors to this volume have close associations with the Philadelphia Association (PA), an organisation founded by R.D. Laing and others in 1965 to run houses for the mentally distressed and to train psychotherapists. It acknowledges, and is not wholly dissimilar from, the 1989 volume Thresholds between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis, a collection of papers from the PA. The editors have been interested in certain kinds, aspects and applications of philosophy rather than with philosophy for its own sake, and the interpretation of ‘philosophy’ is quite liberal here. What coherency-creating themes exist in the book include scepticism, subjectivity, language, wonder, and the ‘taken for granted’. Needless to say, the accent is on continental philosophy (existentialism and phenomenology) rather than analytical philosophy, and names like Laing, Heidegger, Husserl, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Wittgenstein feature quite prominently.

The chapters are somewhat personal, reflective and subtle pieces that are not easily summarised. I particularly like the unfailingly elegant Smail, relentless in his exposing of the nonsense in professionalised therapy, and Heaton on normality and reason, always stylishly original, deft and surprising. Lomas writes with personal tenderness and from a mature perspective, surmising from photographs of himself at age 6 that the sense of wonder may be lost by that time. Glossop neatly attacks ‘rigour’ and ‘scientific modes of thinking’ as unsuitable to therapy and in some cases as causative of distress. Some chapters seem written more loosely, experimentally or creatively. It is something of a cliché for reviewers to point out the unevenness of contributions to edited books, yet it is the case here. It is not a straightforward matter to discern the rationale for these chapters to sit side by side, except for their authors having something vaguely ‘philosophical’ to say. On the other hand, some of the writing is undeniably moving. Gordon on ‘coming to terms’, for example (‘we are not, after all, masters of our date’, p. 45), chimes well with Smail, and is excellent.

‘Therapy is not to be trivialized as the removal of some obstacle to some task. Philosophy is not to be trivialized as mere “talk about talk”’, says Cooper (p. 4). Yet all too often—including, disappointingly, here in places—philosophy
does indeed come across as talk about talk, as mainly male pontification. (Latham’s vignette-centred chapter escapes this charge.) A small group of philosophically oriented writers (e.g. Howard, Fiumara, Fulford, Levin, Mace, Spinelli, van Deurzen, et al) have sought to compensate for psychotherapy’s surrender to psychology. Erwin, Farrell, Gellner, Grunbaum and others of a ‘rational-analytic’ disposition have attacked psychotherapists’ instances of illogicality. But few if any have successfully avoided the problem of unintentionally converting raw human distress into mere printed clever speculation and empty polemics. And, as Smail reminds us, ‘nearly everything worth saying has been said before’ (p. 139).

Two main features rescue this book, for me, from being consigned to the latter descriptions. One is the PA’s commitment to sceptical thought, evident in a certain anti-psychiatric and even anti-psychoanalytic strain, as well as an anti-professionalisation thrust. ‘The truth is, and always has been, that there was never any real public drive for regulation of therapy’, say the editors very boldly (p. xii). Gordon’s remarks on the ‘therapization (of everyday life)’ also have this cauterising quality. Smail regards ‘new paradigm’ therapies as being as self-deceived and redundant as the old and likewise new qualitative research methods as simply ‘the new orthodoxy’. The second redeeming feature of the book is the humanity that often does shine through the less rewarding passages. I imagine that these writers all in different ways wish to fasten on the humanity that arises in our encounters that is not quite psychotherapy nor amenable to philosophy (hence the between in the title). Lomas, arguing the case for wonder, writes with bullseye simplicity and poignancy:

‘There in front of you is someone who is unique and mysterious. There is no replica. Here is a person who has lived on this strange earth and tried, as far as he or she can, to survive it, to make sense of it and to maintain their original passion. ... And this person is coming to me with whatever trust they can muster and whatever hope is left in them’ (p. 110).

Earlier, Latham has told us that ‘as we are drawn into the manifold complications of human speech, none of us is to be entirely trusted’ (p. 86). Vulnerable trust and eroded hope—these ‘European’ motifs surely have more reality and honesty about them than inanely upbeat American therapeutic promises.

This book is likely to appeal mainly to existentialist therapists and others interested in promoting psychotherapy—philosophy connections. Read selectively, it could prove moving, stimulating and rewarding to many others. A book review cannot do justice to its many subtleties.

**Carl Rogers Counsels a Black Client: Race and Culture in Person-Centred Counselling**

Moodley, R., Lago, C. & Talahite, A. (Eds), 2004
Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books
ISBN 1-898059-44-6

Reviewed by Robert Manthei, School of Education, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
This is one of the most curious books I have ever been asked to review. When I received it in the mail and had a preliminary glance through the 25 (yes, 25!) chapters, my first reaction was: ‘How could there be so much to be said about the rather unremarkable fact that Rogers counselled a Black client?’ However, before continuing with this review I had better say who I am and what theories/models of counselling I prefer and teach to graduate level counselling students—much like the contributors did in the notes at the back of the book. Many of these very personal notes read like mini-autobiographies and are intriguing in their detail. They help to give context and background to the chapters each person authored.

Yes, I, too, was trained in the pervasive client-centred model of counselling and therapy that existed in the United States in the late 1960s. The model’s values and respect for clients suited me and underpinned my work for the next several years. During the 1980s, however, I became more and more interested in the client’s role in and perception of counselling and began to grow increasingly sceptical of the always perfect explanations of how and why counselling worked with particular clients that were being offered by presenters at conferences, public demonstrations, and in books, articles and videos of counselling sessions. I often found myself wondering how the clients involved in those demonstrations would have described what had happened to them, and what worked for them and why. To what degree would their views have coincided with the ‘stories’ proffered by their counsellors? Since the early 1990s I have been drawn to briefer models of therapy, social constructionist approaches and, particularly, solution-focused therapy. It is this latter approach and my current research interest in the client’s view of counselling—often in contrast to the counsellor’s view of the same process—that form the basis of the graduate programme in which I teach.

Back to the book. The editors are to be applauded. It must have been a mammoth task trying to obtain promised material from the many contributors, on time and on topic. The resulting book is well organised into six parts: a review of the two video tapes, The Right to be Desperate and Carl Rogers Counsels an Individual on Anger and Hurt; analyses and critical reflections on Rogers’ therapy (including a detailed analysis of Rogers’ use of ‘uh huh’s and ‘mm hmm’s’ in the tapes!); race and culture in person-centred counselling (PCC); other perspectives; personal reflections; and historical documents. The material in each section is invariably interesting, seriously argued, and clearly presented and referenced.

I found the book fascinating as a publication, but I wondered many times as I read it why so many people would contribute so earnestly to what could be seen as a basically flawed idea: to revisit and critique two demonstration video tapes made by Carl Rogers in 1977, almost as though they represented current thinking and practice in the field. What could be gained by such a detailed backward look at the work of one of the masters of counselling and therapy, and one who Moodley (Chapter 3, p. 31) states ‘... was not excited by “looking back” himself? The videos are summarised in the first two chapters, but nowhere in the book are there full verbatim transcripts to which readers
can refer. I assume the editors thought that readers would have access to the tapes, or, if they desired, would send for complete transcripts using the email addresses provided.

Some authors did comment on the obvious historical and contextual limitations of the project. For example, McLeod (Chapter 14) says, rightly, that ‘at the time when the sessions were recorded, the body of theory, research and experience in cross-cultural or multicultural counselling and psychotherapy, to which we now enjoy access, did not exist’ (p. 188), and Courtland Lee (Chapter 18, p. 228) began his brief piece by reminding readers that ‘issues of race and culture have become much more centralised and accepted in the profession of counseling than they were in the 1970s’. Lago and Clark (Chapter 12) also pointed to the development of a greater ‘race acknowledgement’ in Rogers’ work over time. All three of these chapters left me wondering if the vehicle of Rogers’ 1977 work was the right choice for a book that hoped ‘... to generate multiple understandings of how person-centred therapy can be more inclusive of black and ethnic minority clients’. To my way of thinking Vontress seemed to have a more limited and accurate assessment of the importance of the book in his foreword: ‘I believe that this book, Carl Rogers Counsels a Black Client, contributes significantly to understanding the life and contributions of one of the most important contributors to the counselling profession’ (p. v).

Apart from the detailed analyses and re-analyses of Rogers’ performance in these two old videos (of what importance is it historically or currently to note that he was uncharacteristically directive in Anger and Hurt?, Chapter 4a; or to suggest that he was being duped by a client playing ‘pretend client’, Chapter 23), there is nothing new about PCC or multi-cultural counselling. All of what appears here has been written before, at greater length and in greater depth—just check the reference lists at the end of most of the chapters. Nevertheless, the book is a mini-compendium of interesting essays containing ideas, comments, suggestions, perspectives, opinions and useful references on these topics. Almost all of the chapters make for stimulating reading simply because they do raise multiple points and perspectives on the topics of race, cross- and multi-cultural counselling, power, masculinity, theoretical models, personal views of therapy, personal values, etc. In short, they cause one to think. It would be difficult to find so much diversity on a single topic anywhere else. In this respect the book is a both unique and something of a gem.

However, given current knowledge and research on the common factors in effective counselling (e.g. Bohart & Tallman, 1999; Hubble et al., 1999; Wampold, 2001), the matter that kept tripping me up as I read the book was the absence of the client’s perspective, not the therapist’s construction of that perspective, in much of the writing and analysis. To still be asserting that PCC (or any model of therapy, for that matter) is ‘... inherently multicultural in the best sense ...’ as Brodley does in Chapter 4b (p. 47) ignores the obvious, it seems to me: that it is the client who is the final arbiter as to whether the counsellor is culturally sensitive. Lee’s final sentence in Chapter 18 (p. 230) clearly suggests that simply being non-directively PCC is not sufficient any-
more, if indeed it ever was: ‘... through twenty-first century Black male eyes, this client could be better served by a more active and creative approach on the part of the helper’.

Several authors seem to have used the Rogers’ tapes as a jumping off point for discussing their own current issues and ideas, and it is largely this material that makes the book so interesting. See, for example, Chapters 3 (an historical analysis), 7 (issues of difference in PCC), 9 (power and PCC), 11 (cross-racial matching in counselling), and 17 (socio-cultural and historical aspects of racism). There are many more; readers are bound to find sections and specific chapters that match their own interests and questions.

When I began writing this review, I vowed to myself that I would not add overly to the already sufficiently large number of words on the topic(s) addressed in the book itself. So, I had better stop and merely say that if you have access to the book and time to spare, pick a chapter that interests you and read it. Allow yourself to be intrigued by the point-of-view and you, too, may find the book interesting, curious, slightly odd, but stimulating.

References

BOHART, A.C. & TALLMAN, K. (1999). *How Clients Make Therapy Work: the Process of Active Self-Healing*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

HUBBLE, M.A., DUNCAN, B.L. & MILLER, S.D. (1999). *The Heart and Soul of Change: What Works in Therapy*. Washington, DC: Jossey-Bass.

WAMPOLD, B.E. (2001). *The Great Psychotherapy Debate: Models, Methods, and Findings*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

**Dialogical Self in Psychotherapy**

HEMANS, H.J.M. & DIMAGGIO, G. (Eds), 2004

Hove & New York: Brunner Routledge

ISBN 1-58391-855-87

Reviewed by Michael A. Peters, Department of Educational Studies, University of Glasgow

This is a collection of 16 essays by an international range of authors from varied backgrounds in psychiatry, counselling, clinical psychology, and psychotherapy, including professors, doctoral students and/or practitioners. The collection comprises four sections: general theory; theory and clinical practice; reconstructing dialogical processes in severely affected patients; methodological issues in the psychotherapeutic process. It thereby provides a good balance of the theoretical, the clinical and the applied.

The notion of the dialogical self is an idea whose time has come and in the introduction, Hermans and Dimaggio explain that it is a concept that brings together ‘self’ and ‘dialogue’. In this context they talk of the American tradition of the ‘psychology of the self’ initiated by William James—essentially, at the heart of American pragmatism in both philosophy and the social sciences—in conjunction with Mikhail Bakhtin’s ‘dialogical school’ in literary science. The introduction does not go further in contextualising these connections or in discussing the historical or philosophical orientations or connection between the two. Rather the editors move straight into a discussion of self-narratives as spatially ordered and multifocal and proceed to outline the
implications of this view for dysfunctions in the self. One of the central ideas is the way in which theory of the dialogical self can serve as a common meeting ground for the different orientations represented in the collection: cognitivism, constructivism, process-experiential, psychodynamic, psychodramatic, humanistic, and cognitive-analytical. Indeed, this collection in a strong sense is an outcome of a series of international conferences held on the notion of the dialogical self, now in its fourth incantation. The Fourth conference advertises itself in the following terms:

‘The concept of dialogical self, taking advantage of the rich philosophical tradition concerning dialogue, represents a relatively new development in psychology. It is closely related to narrative psychology, constructivism, and cultural psychology. It has a broad scope ranging from literary sciences to brain research and from empirical psychology to psychotherapy practice. It brings together contributions from different fields of psychology, like personality, developmental, social, and clinical psychology. From these diverse areas of inquiry, dialogical self allows a common concept to be shared, which is the idea of the self as a society of minds, understood as a pluralistic and multivoiced system’ (see <http://www.dialogicalself2006.com/>).

The editors also speak to the connections with brain research.

Hermans, professor emeritus at Nijmegen, worked on valuation theory since the early 1970s and the ‘self-confrontation method’ towards the dialogical self, producing a couple of books in the 1990s with the titles The Dialogical Self: Meaning as Movement (with Harry J.G. Kempen) (1993) and Self-Narratives: the Construction of Meaning in Psychotherapy (with Els Hermans-Jansen) (1995). His website indicates:

‘Beginning in the second half of the 1990s, Hermans began more explicitly to examine the nature of culture and cultural development as they pertain to an understanding of the self’s functioning. He has stressed the complexity of culture and the development of hybridized cultural forms as divergent traditions meet in a world of increasing social contact’ (see <http://web.lemoyne.edu/~hevern/nr-theorists/hermans_hubert_j_m.html/>).

His co-editor, Giancarlo Dimaggio, is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist who is listed as being affiliated with the Terzo Centro di Psicoterapia Cognitiva, although more recently of Centro di Psicoterapia Cognitiva (Rome, Italy).

Hermans, in his opening chapter, discusses the dialogical self as a multiplicity of parts—voices, characters and positions—and returns to classic and recent literatures of James and Bakhtin to address the question of power (as dominance) as an intrinsic feature of dialogical relationships. Bertau in her chapter looks to the developmental origins of the dialogical self, while Lewis and Todd explore a neuropsychological
model of internal dialogue. Mick Cooper in ‘Encountering self-otherness’ concludes the theory section.

In Part 2, ‘Theory and clinical practice’, Angus and McLeod address the question of self-multiplicity and narrative expression; Stiles et al. explore an assimilation model of internal voices; Whelton and Greenberg examine internal voices and the reorganisation of the self in process-experiential therapy; Hermans and Hermans-Jansen look at (re)construction of a ‘personal position repertoire’, Bromberg scrutinises the multiplicity of self in the psychoanalytic relationship, and Verhofstadt-Denève et al. adopt a psychodramatic approach with children.

Part 3, ‘Reconstructing dialogical processes in severely affected patients’, comprises a set of four essays by Neimeyer and Arvay on ‘performing the self’, Dimaggio et al. on ‘Strategies for the treatment of dialogical dysfunctions’, Lysaker and Lysaker examine ‘Dialogical transformation in the psychotherapy of schizophrenia’, and Semerari et al. detail ‘A dialogical approach to patients with severe personality disorders’.

The final part, ‘Methodological issues in the psychotherapeutic process’, includes two essays by Osatuke et al. on measuring internal multiplicity and Leiman on ‘Dialogical sequence analysis’. This section would have been better placed after the second part and there really is a need for some reflection in a conclusion on the success of the notion of the dialogical self as a common ground for different therapeutic schools and traditions, and as a basis for cross-fertilisation.

As a reviewer, I would have liked more philosophical background especially in the introductory and opening theory chapters on the narrative mode and its adoption by psychologists and psychotherapists by the likes of Bruner and the present editors rather than an applied and clinical focus. Why is it that there has been this literary and narrative turn in psychotherapy, what are its drivers and how does it reflect broader movements such as the linguistic and cultural turns? The answer to these questions also will go some way towards answering questions of interdisciplinarity, cross-fertilisation and the radical narrative self-reflection of DST (Dialogical Self Theory) in its own historical terms of development.