



## *Depression: The Evolution of Powerlessness. Paul Gilbert. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 1992.*

In this impressively broad integration of thought and research into the nature of depression, Paul Gilbert refuses to occupy a polarized position from which depression might be seen to arise from either purely psychological or biological factors, or is divorced from social context. In his view, however, the disease concept is extremely limited and in its place he proposes a psychobiological approach that encompasses an interest in body, mind, and emotion.

His views clearly relate to his previous work based on evolutionary principles and relating tangentially to object relations concepts and to ideas and concepts in academic and clinical psychology. Thus, he proposes that human beings have a number of basic needs relating to social success: to be loved and to have a sense of value for others, for example. He takes an evolutionary perspective, seeing depression as an internal potential in the species that is activated under certain conditions, and he assumes that a certain minimal environment is necessary, most importantly regarding one's social and human context, in order to maintain psychological health. He relates depression to an inability to maintain one's place in the social group. Thus, depressive responses are viewed as having evolved from concerns about an individual's position of rank in the group and are associated with feelings of subordination, submission, defeat, and yielding to others. He may be seen to be most centrally concerned with internal representations of self in relation to another, a theme that is explored throughout the book. These themes and preoccupations will not seem entirely foreign territory to those familiar with a Group Analytic perspective.

Within this framework the quality of attachment relationships is of major importance and Gilbert argues a powerful case for their role in the genesis of depressive affect. Additional causative agents are the strongly negative affects of shame and guilt, anger, envy, and hostility, and the cultural and psychological archetype; "the outsider".

The book is in three parts. The first part explores history and philosophy, issues of classification and types of depressive disorder, and epidemiology and personality factors. Part two develops an evolutionary view of depression and introduces ideas about the importance of rank and social belonging, since these produce self-esteem and self-worth evaluations for the individual, in the aetiology of depressive affect. Experiences of shame, anger, envy, and other affects are seen to be related to social rank and group relationships. The third part of the book explores a variety of relevant psychological theories (Freud, object-relations theory, attachment theory, self psychology, theory of archetypes, cognitive theories, behavioural theory and so on) relevant to the phenomena of depressive affect and relates these theories to the ideas presented earlier.

This is an extremely ambitious book that is carried off with some panache and style. It

provides an overview of biological, psychological, and evolutionary theories of depression. It is also a work of synthesis, making an original contribution with its proposals concerning the importance of social rank and social attachments in the development of depressive disorders. It should certainly be in the working library of every mental health professional.

### **Experiential Training: Practical Guidelines. Ed. Tony Hobbs. Tavistock/Routledge. 1992. £14.95 (pb).**

This is a book about how to provide learning experiences which do not rely upon traditional chalk and talk methods based on a relatively clear hierarchy of authority and expertise. The emphasis, instead, is on collaboration, the provision of structured exercises as opposed to significant quantities of didactic teaching, and reflection on the experiences of the participants. The authors state that this type of teaching is of particular relevance where topics are emotionally charged and where self-examination, the use of personal life experiences, and discussion of relationship matters are pertinent. The emphasis is on providing a forum in which opinions, feelings, and personal responses can be thought about and utilized to facilitate the learning process. The ambitions of training thus become almost psychotherapeutic, highlighting personal change within the context of the group.

This is very much a practical guide on how to organise experiential training workshops. Contributors discuss ways of structuring and managing meetings and pass on their own experience of running training events. Workshops on personal and organisational stress management, communication, and basic counselling skills, working with sexuality, the dying and bereaved, are described and analysed. An initial chapter explores wider issues in the field of experiential learning and the role taken up by the trainer, whilst two final chapters consider the evaluation of workshops and issues in the general conduct of experiential training.

This book will be of value to all those involved in teaching and training others who work in interpersonal, group, and emotional health arenas. It successfully manages the difficult task of conveying practical information about how to run workshops as well as conveying a strong impression of what it is like to participate in this type of training event.

### **A Psychoanalytic Theory of Infantile Experience: Conceptual and Clinical Reflections. E. Gaddini. Routledge. 1992. £14.99.**

Eugenio Gaddini, who died in 1985, was a leading figure in the Italian psychoanalytic community, who assimilated into his thinking elements from British psychoanalytic thought, primarily currents from the work and traditions begun by Klein and Winnicott. He was also influenced by the American analyst Phyllis Greenacre. This is a collection of papers written between 1969 and 1985 arranged in roughly chronological order so that we are able to trace the development of Gaddini's thought over time.

This collection of papers is largely concerned with the application of insights about infant psychology and development to psychotherapeutic work with adults when states "beyond language" are reached. Gaddini charts the psychology of these mental states and their effects in

terms of constraints on relatedness which are observed in the therapeutic situation. The main themes of the book are: that imitative methods of relating occur when the ability to identify with another has not been attained; the identification and management of this in therapy; an associated theme outlining the development of psychic integration and the consequent achievement of separateness and individuality; and a focus on the way in which defences may become barriers to maturation, particularly for the quality of object relationships. Specific chapters focus on the vicissitudes of early aggression, the role of the father in development, the formation of concepts of space and time, and the issue of therapeutic technique and changes in the presentations of patients over the course of the past century.

This is not an easy book to read as the ideas are often complex and because the book consists of a collection of individual papers that were intended to be read separately rather than as part of a collection. This means that the reader has to do a certain amount of work in order to connect and integrate concepts. However, Gaddini's thought is often original and it is not yet widely known in this country. This book poses interesting and useful questions and formulations that extend more familiar thinking and that will inevitably provoke useful reflections for the reader.

**Terry Birchmore**