

Book Review

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Globalized Psychotherapy. By Alfred Pritz (Ed.), (2002). Vienna, Austria: Facultas Verlags und Buchhandels AG. ISBN: 3-85076-605-5; 856 pp.

This book is a veritable curate's egg: good in parts but, overall, "bad" in the sense that the book is somewhat indigestible, and that the good and the few excellent contributions do not redeem either the book or the project of a globalised psychotherapy.

The book comprises some 67 (unnumbered) chapters in three (untitled) parts, the first of which describes the state of psychotherapy in 45 countries, with one chapter describing the situation of psychotherapy in the continent of Africa. The second group of chapters outlines 19 "important" psychotherapy modalities (p. 5), though it is not clear how the editor has decided that these particular modalities are important, or why he has chosen to include in this part two forms of psychotherapy (group therapy and family systems therapy) as distinct from modalities – or to justify that he considers them to be modalities. The third part of the book comprises two chapters on traditional healing.

On the "good" or positive side, the book is impressive in its scope and size. Each of the chapters describing the state of psychotherapy in different countries of the world is informative and interesting for anyone who is curious and/or concerned about the development of and access to psychotherapy both in particular nations and, overall, on a global scale. The other highlight is the two chapters on traditional healing. Sylvester Ntomchukwu Madu's chapter on psychotherapy and African traditional healing draws on extensive research material and is well written, if a little brief. It is, nevertheless, an important record of the project of dialogue between, and the potential integration of these two different traditions, embodied in the participation of African healers in the first Congress of the World Council for Psychotherapy (WCP), held in Vienna in 1996. This dialogue continued in the WCP's sixth and most recent Congress, held in Sydney last year, with the presence of Aboriginal and Māori healers and psychotherapists. The second chapter, written by Gloria Alvernaz Mulcahy, of Tsalagi (Cherokee) ancestry, is an excellent, beautifully written and wide-ranging chapter, encompassing traditional pathways; pre-colonial history of what is now Canada; indigenous ways of seeing and being in the world; the concept and practice of "decolonising minds"; indigenous practices, including the sweat lodge, feast for the dead, vision quest, and spirit dance; and aboriginal and traditional healing – and is by far the best chapter in the whole book. It also, unsurprisingly, has echoes of some of the wisdom and work of Waka Oranga, a collective of Māori psychotherapists, as reported by Hall, Morice, and Wilson (2012) in the previous issue of *Psychotherapy and Politics International*.

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This said, the book is highly problematic both in much of its content, especially the part on modalities, and in its overall conception – or lack of it.

The problems begin in the Introduction, which advances no thesis for the book and, crucially, does not discuss the key word in its title i.e. what is or should be “Globalized” about psychotherapy. Given the debates about globalisation, both within and outside the field or discipline of psychotherapy, this is a serious omission and flaw. The editor, Alfred Pritz, is the founder and current President of the World Council for Psychotherapy (WCP; see WCP, 2012), and is an enthusiastic advocate of bringing together what he sees as an international community of psychotherapists. However, both in the book – and, I think, in the organisation of WCP – he (and others) appear to confuse “globalisation” with “global” or “worldwide”. That he is also uncritical about both the professionalisation and the regulation of psychotherapy means that (t)his project appears to be one of making psychotherapy and psychotherapists acceptable and respectable at all costs and little reflection or critique.

The lack of thesis leads to the second major problem of the book, which is a lack of meta-theory and, specifically, organisation. In the first set of chapters about psychotherapy in different countries there are no common headings so, whilst individual chapters are more or less interesting, it is impossible to follow or compare information between countries. This, together with the lack of an index, makes it virtually impossible to pursue a theme, such as the regulation of psychotherapy, across the globe. It is also unclear as to how the individual authors were chosen and what they represent. Another example of the lack of or idiosyncratic nature of the organisation of the book is Pritz’s list of modalities which, in the Introduction, is both eclectic and, by his own admission, incomplete – and yet he offers it. This is a particular problem as the second part of the book offers 19 (actually 17) chapters on various modalities, the importance and coherence of which are undermined by the inclusion of very particular modalities such as “multimode psychotherapy” (in one country), “positive psychotherapy” (which appears to be based on the work of one author), and “Sophia Analysis”. Not only are the chapters in this part difficult to compare but they are also very uneven: Ian Stewart’s chapter on transactional analysis amounts to fewer than four pages of concise notes, compared to several other chapters which come in at around 15 pages, and Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb’s chapter on gestalt therapy, which amounts to 24 pages. In terms of coverage there are a number of books which cover this material much more rigorously, comparatively and satisfactorily; and this book would be better without this part (which amounts to nearly 200 pages!).

The idiosyncratic nature of the book is reflected in the fact that it is a “messy text”: the book is poorly, if at all, edited, and poorly copy-edited. Unfortunately, this completes an overall sense of dissatisfaction about its lack of thesis and, at the same time, the grandiosity of its aim; its content; and its presentation.

REFERENCES

- Hall, A., Morice, M., & Wilson, C. (2012). Waka Oranga: the development of an indigenous professional organisation within a psychotherapeutic discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 10(1), 7–16.
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