

A needed hearing for wisdom

This is a stimulating account of the reputation and position of narratives in human science and the prospects of applied psychologists generating context-dependent formulations. Many of the contributors were recruited from outside of mainstream psychology, including the theatre (Simon Callow, Prunella Scales and Timothy West), journalism (Bryan Rostron) and training and coaching (Alan Durrant and David Drake). This multiple perspective provides any reader with a rich diversity of views about the utility of contextualised accounts, and it is a valuable text for both psychology undergraduates and trainee practitioners.

With such a large book and its multiple contributors, it is impossible to offer either a blanket critique or endorsement. Briefly, here is my reaction to the text. Maybe more could have been said about the historical and philosophical peculiarities of British psychology and its roots in naive realism and empiricism; critiques of that tradition from radical constructivism and critical realism might have been rehearsed more fully. In particular, I felt that the authors were too charitable in attributing a seminal role to Hans Eysenck about formulation, given his nomothetic emphasis in personality testing. Surely, he, more than others, championed the eugenic Galtonian differential psychology tradition. (The authors are right though to highlight the case formulation innovations of colleagues like Shapiro and Meyer.)

The particular historical context of British applied psychology does make the position of the fruitful explorations in this book relevant to follow through beyond its pages. For example, psychology here continues to have the semblance of a unitary discipline (played on at times for rhetorical purposes by those in its applied wings, when making bids for legitimacy), but actually it is diverse and contested. The narrative approach in the book both reflects that contestation and is a particular challenge to the objectivist scientific gaze associated with traditional British empiricism. Our consequent native ambivalence about applied psychology being a nomothetic or idiographic set of practices is certainly discussed in the book by the authors but a more critical and historical exploration would have been useful.

The current contention about CBT is a particularly good starting point for the kind of reflection being encouraged by the authors. Some versions of its 'third wave' overlap with the position of Corrie and Lane. However, what is to be done by them and sympathetic colleagues about mechanistic CBT, which focuses on techniques and categories rather than the quality of the relationship or the unique stories clients tell? CBT research

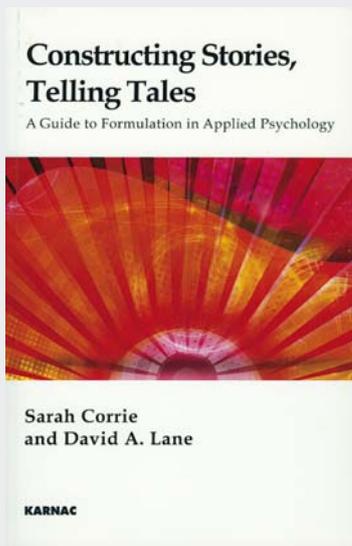
has overwhelmingly colluded with reified neo-Kraepelinian categorisations and recurrently failed in its epistemic duty to replace diagnosis with formulation.

This complicit trend has de-coupled personal accounts from their social contexts and the unique meanings being expressed about them by clients in applied psychology settings. Look how many research grants have been acquired, and books written, about CBT 'for' 'schizophrenia' 'depression', 'anxiety disorders', etc. (just keep filling in the DSM category and a book will appear). We can be grateful to Corrie and Lane for laying out a case against this version of scientism, which has gushed from the research industry, not in the name, note, of psychiatry, but of *psychology*.

If applied psychologists are to move beyond epistemology to phronesis, then this book is an excellent starting point. Academic research in the tradition of randomised controlled trials for reified diagnostic categories fancies that it has delivered scientific knowledge and even, for now, captured the policy arena of 'evidence-based practice'. However, Corrie and Lane give wisdom a needed hearing and open up the prospect of value-based practice as well. Without formulations recording diverse meanings in unique social contexts, that prospect is permanently undermined.

| Karnac Books; 2010; Pb £29.99

Reviewed by David Pilgrim who is Professor of Mental Health Policy, University of Central Lancashire



Constructing Stories, Telling Tales: A Guide to Formulation in Applied Psychology
Sarah Corrie & David A. Lane



Challenging religion

36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction
Rebecca Goldstein

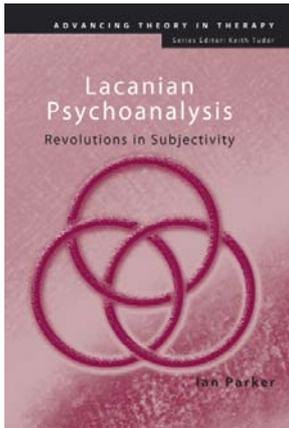
This philosophical novel is the story about a psychologist of religion whose work has propelled him to fame because it challenges the great upsurge in fundamentalism in the US and Middle East. Thus, the hero, as a 'New Atheist' is 'having to take up the work of the Enlightenment again' as 'the stockpiling of fallacies reaches dangerous levels'.

Much of the plot is taken up in showing, often in funny and yet discerning ways, how psychologists and other academics respond to this challenge – both in the ways they manage their personal lives, and in the discourses that they participate in. Thus, in the many colourful and amusing characters, Goldstein seeks to explore in a sympathetic way, the inside, subjective experience of holding beliefs: religious, secular and atheist.

Central to this plot the hero takes part in an impassioned debate, appealing to a deeply felt, but often understated, humanist sentiment that we in the 21st century must aspire to a grown-up morality, facing the full facts of evolved life and human nature, rather than having them dictated by traditional authorities such as religion.

| Atlantic Books; 2010; Pb £7.99

Reviewed by Steve Heigham who is a psychotherapist and further education lecturer in psychology and counselling



Politics and psychoanalysis

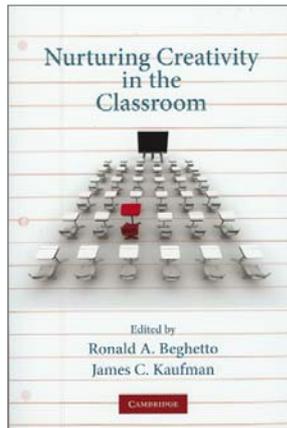
Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Revolutions in Subjectivity
Ian Parker

Psychoanalysis is increasingly becoming a marginal section of psychology. Within psychoanalysis the portion that goes by the name Lacanian is itself marginal. Or certainly this is true in the English-speaking world. But this book is no simple attempt to educate and explain what this form of practice entails. What attempts to do is to explore and critically examine the political implications of this practice. And it does this superbly.

Most of the critical examinations of Lacan's theory and practice have come from outside the school. This book is very much from within, and from within the English variety of Lacanian praxis. This makes the book unique. It would be impossible to do justice these ideas in such a brief review. But I do wonder whether other forms of therapy (CBT, systemic) have ever explored their own politics so thoroughly.

This is a very difficult book. But it is extremely honest and robust. I will need to read it again and I am sure I will enjoy it as much on the second reading as the first.

! Routledge; 2011; Pb £20.99
Reviewed by Ryan Kemp
who is a Chartered Clinical Psychologist with CNWL NHS Foundation Trust



Creative lesson planning

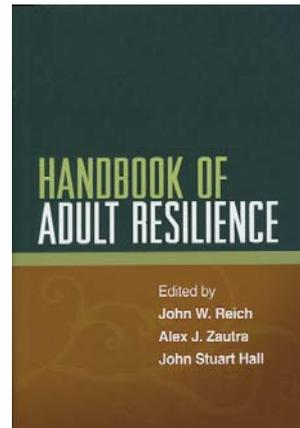
Nurturing Creativity in the Classroom
Ronald A. Beghetto and James C. Kaufman (Eds.)

It's a big dilemma: How do you nurture creativity and still stay within the tight constraints of the National Curriculum? I hoped this book would tell me, and to a certain extent it delivered – but only just.

Packed into its 400 or so pages are 19 papers written by some of the key players in creativity, kicking off with one on how to discourage creativity in the classroom. Ironically, much of what it says we *shouldn't* do is exactly what we, as teachers, are *taught* to do. In particular, the advice that teachers should never insist on adhering to lesson plans – something, I suspect, Ofsted would find very frustrating. Other chapters are useful but often weighted down with evidence that many teachers will bypass, while 'learning styles' remains an educational myth that refuses to lie down.

There are many good suggestions throughout the book for both the experienced teacher and those newly qualified, including motivational techniques and ways to enhance critical thinking. Those teachers who do find the time to read it won't be disappointed.

! Cambridge University Press; 2010; Pb £23.99
Reviewed by Marc Smith who is a Chartered Psychologist and teacher at Boroughbridge High School, North Yorkshire



Bouncing back, moving forward

Handbook of Adult Resilience
John W. Reich, Alex J. Zautra & John Stuart Hall (Eds.)

The *Handbook of Adult Resilience* pulls together current thinking surrounding a familiar yet elusively fluid concept. Broadly speaking resilience refers to the adaptive capacity to successfully deal with adversity and disruption, and it involves recovery (bouncing back) and sustainability (actively and purposefully moving forward). This timely book considers how resilience is defined, operationalised, measured, acquired and taught, and how resilience thinking is applied to real-world problems.

The book's value lies in its evidence-based consideration of resilience across a range of domains and at many levels of analysis. There are chapters

covering biological, individual, organisational and community resilience, and the plethora of factors identified as contributing to resilience range from genes to culture.

Despite the diversity of material the book is well organised, coherent and accessible. Also, the concept of resilience travels well across subject boundaries, providing obvious linkages between seemingly disparate topics. The book's holistic approach fills a big gap in the literature and it should prove a valuable resource for students, researchers, practitioners and policy makers with theoretical or applied interest in this fascinating and increasingly important topic.

! Guilford Press; 2010; Hb £51.00
Reviewed by Dr Ian Davison
who is Research Associate (Risk and Resilience), Durham University

just in

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