

Review published in *The Homeopath* Spring 2013 (31:4)

Transformation through Journal Writing: The Art of Self-Reflection for the Helping Professions. Jane Wood. Jessica Kingsley Publishers (2012)

ISBN 9781849053471 £15.99/£24.95 <http://jkp.com/catalogue/book/9781849053471>

Thinking about one's impulses, motivations, thoughts and feelings; knowing oneself: *being self-reflective* has always been a central part of homeopathic training and education. From Hahnemann's (1829) early instructions to practitioners: "... *by such noteworthy observations on himself he – the physician - will be brought to understand his own sensations, his mode of thinking and his disposition . . .*" (Hehr, 1983:91-92), through Kent's (1900:173) noteworthy observation:

"To know the human heart well is largely to examine into oneself and ascertain what one's own impulses are, what one is compelled to do under varying circumstances, what impulses one has to control in oneself in order to become a man... In time the physician who does this will become so well acquainted with the human heart that he has sympathy and knows what constitutes the language of the affections."

Homeopathy realized the importance of reflective practice long before it attracted the attention of the caring professions. When Bob Fordham reminded us of the idea in his 1995 article in *The Homœopath*, there were few resources around for student or teacher to draw on. Compare that to a quick Google search today: more than 30 books on the topic.

Do we need another one ?

The answer is emphatically **yes**. The challenge of many of the available texts is that they are heavily theory-driven, directed at one particular discipline (e.g. nursing, midwifery, education, counselling) or complex in their approach. The beauty of Jane Wood's book is that it is written by a homeopath for, (amongst others), homeopaths. The author so obviously practises what she is writing about. Above all else – it is **simple** (*in that way an experienced practitioner's case-taking process is simple.*)

This is an authoritative yet permissive book. Jane's writing is steeped in a rich knowledge of the topic (it was reassuring that so many of my favourite authors found a mention; I also discovered new ones to follow up on.) Her keen appreciation of the practicalities of embarking on reflective work for the first time shone through. I particularly admired her emphasis on *reader choice*: whilst the author presents many suggestions for taking up, trying, refining, or improving reflective practice, she makes it very clear that the final choice of method should be made by the reader, based on their needs and experience.

Above all, this is a **reassuring** and **encouraging** book. Suitable for those brand new to the idea of reflective practice (I'm going to recommend it to my Foundation Degree students), whilst at the same time a rich treasure trove of ideas, techniques, and models for those more familiar with the topic. Its strengths lie in the organized way the author has presented the range of content (see publisher's website for a detailed breakdown of the book), the accessible way she writes about her subject, and above all, the numerous examples she gives us of what a piece of reflective work written in *this way*, or developed in *that* model, or produced by *that* technique might look like. A valuable addition to the literature, and a great resource for students and teachers.

Ian Townsend, FS Hom [retired] taught reflective practice to counsellors, teachers, nurse tutors, complementary therapists - and generations of student homeopaths in private colleges, and on the BSc and MSc courses at the University of Central Lancashire. He now teaches *person-centred practice* on a Foundation Degree in Counselling at University Centre Blackburn College, and his

latest work on the similarities between homeopathy and psychotherapy is available at <http://www.wholistichealingresearch.com/131johannes>

REFERENCES

Fordham, R. (1995) The Challenge of Reflective Practice, *The Homœopath*, 56:342-343

Hehr, G. S., (1983) Self-awareness and homœopathy, *British Homœopathic Journal*, Vol. 72, Issue 2, April: 90-95.

Kent, J. T. (1900 /1979) *Lectures on Homœopathic Philosophy*. Wellingborough: Thorsons Publishers Ltd.