

author's use of examples from related disciplines in clarifying complex issues, and the weaving in of aspects of the philosophy of science. The book draws heavily on British literature. The difficulty in locating references (which are reasonably collected at the back of the book for those not wishing to bother with details of journal articles in this easy read, but which could have had chapter titles and top of page headings rather than simply 25 pages of 'Notes') is irritating. The quality of the figures and illustrations is unnecessarily poor, and in some cases the author reports information somewhat uncritically.

Many psychiatrists will enjoy reading this blend of leisure and work-related subject matter.

COLIN M. SHAPIRO, *Senior Lecturer,
Department of Psychiatry, University of Edinburgh*

How Does Treatment Help? On the Modes of Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. By ARNOLD ROTHSTEIN. Madison: International Universities Press. 1989. 232 pp. \$32.50.

This densely packed and thought-provoking book is the fourth in the workshop series of the American Psychoanalytic Association. By the time I reached the discussion section I felt I needed to come up for air; it is probably better read in sections rather than one or two sittings.

In general the contributors, struggling in a vital but controversial area, stick to what they know best, their own area of expertise and clinical practice – so much so that at times it is difficult to relate the clinical examples to the underlying theme of the endeavour. Surprisingly, only one contributor mentioned research as making a contribution, and the distillate of Luborsky's views quoted here amounts to the rather likely conclusion that the less sick one is and the more adequate one's functioning prior to therapy, the greater the likelihood of being helped. Not all contributors broke the question down further, although Loewald asks, "Help for the moment or in the long run? Help the patient to run his life better, his relations with others, his work? Help him to understand himself better, and if so how would that help him to be less miserable, to master his conflicts better?" To be sure, many if not all the contributors discuss factors that most therapists would consider important: interpretations, insight, reconstruction, working through, and "corrective emotional experience", although most contributors hasten to dissociate themselves from Alexander & French's original description. There was considerable

discussion on the relative importance of insight versus the relational aspects of the transference, eloquently termed by Levenson the "message in the bottle" versus the "laying on of hands".

The most stimulating chapter is Spence's discussion paper using the analogy of the 400-year search for the cause of scurvy to suggest that perhaps in therapy we are still in the position of the helper of of scurvy-prone sailors – many theories and many hypotheses, but in the end, not enough lime juice.

TERESA BLACK, *Specialist Senior Registrar in
Psychotherapy, Gaskell House, Swinton Grove,
Manchester*

Treating Couples: The Intersystem Model of the Marriage Council of Philadelphia. Edited by GERALD R. WEEKES. New York: Brunner/Mazel. 1989. 352 pp.

Creation and nurture of human life requires couples – heterosexual partners, and then the nursing couple of infant and care giver. So the idea of creative and secure pairing has the utmost emotional importance for everybody, and any professional working with couples who feel destructive and despairing together needs reference texts which offer some reliable containment for her or his anxieties.

Treating Couples goes a considerable way towards providing this. The Philadelphia 'intersystem approach' is a brave shot at combining 'family systems' understanding of three or four family generations with behavioural task-setting, teaching of 'relationship skills', fostering rational understanding of the self and the partner, and modelling respect for feelings. Such an attempt requires a determined and constructive optimism, and this spirit informs the book, which gives a comprehensive survey of the work of the Marriage Council of Philadelphia, and thus includes papers by practitioners on almost every aspect of couple therapy. It demonstrates understanding the couple's problem, structuring the treatment, technique, and termination as practised by the Marriage Council, covers some important clinical issues (spouse abuse and effects of divorce on children, for example), and offers two interesting papers on theory. It is a thorough, lucid, and useful text for anyone who wants to understand and (especially) practice couple therapy. The wilder shores of love remain unvisited, but on a humane and rational eclectic voyage round the treatment of couples, this is perfectly appropriate.

SASHA BROOKES, *Trainee in Marital Psychotherapy,
TIMS, London*