

**Review of
Therapy and the Counter-tradition:
The edge of philosophy**

**Edited by Manu Bazzano and Julie Webb
New York, NY**

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In *Therapy and the Counter-Tradition: The Edge of Philosophy*, editors Manu Bazzano and Julie Webb invite a dialog between psychotherapy and philosophy (including literature and the arts). In their introduction, Bazzano and Webb define the counter-tradition. Tradition or “the official history of Western thought” lies in rationalism and an expectation that the human condition can be mastered, and destiny controlled. The counter-tradition, beginning perhaps with Heraclitus (535-475 BC), has chronologically flowed in parallel to Western philosophy, literature, and art. This stream of culture “continues to remind us of our human limitations and of the ungraspable nature of the world” (Introduction, Para. 6).

An internationally diverse group of fiction and nonfiction writers, professors of philosophy, musicians, and psychotherapists wrote the essays in this volume. Each author discusses a philosopher who interests them or has influenced them. Many of the authors have immersed themselves for years in the study of their essay topic. Whether from the essayists or from quotations taken from the primary philosophers, there are many lines of lustrous, thought provoking, redolent language from naturalistic or humanistic thinkers. Even though both editors are informed by Zen teachings, the collection is Western in scope. The thoughts of Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig Wittgenstein are discussed in two chapters each; other chapters discuss Søren Kierkegaard, John Keats, D. H. Lawrence, Blaise Pascal,

Judith Butler, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Albert Camus, Gilles Deleuze, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Luce Irigaray and Arthur Schopenhauer. The editors remind us of many, many absences from the book as well.

I enjoyed reading *Therapy and the Counter-Tradition*. Its essays, at the very least, amount to a compelling, annotated bibliography of writings by Western geniuses who are acceptant and reflective on the subject of human grief and suffering. If serving merely as an annotated bibliography, filled as it is with pearls of quotations from significant minds, it offers a resounding and bolstering thwack of reminder that those of us stranded in our life work or in our life stance outside of the mainstreams of politics, bad science, and economic power, are not alone. The Western counter-tradition thinkers represented here are validating of the person-centered approach; they back us in the tradition that is our point of reference.

The book's introduction and its essays are political as well as philosophical in nature as they drive nails into the stance of institutional power agendas and market demands that impinge upon the ethical foundations of radically humanistic therapy. Here, psychotherapy is described as an ethical endeavor. Such an endeavor is not driven by prescription, technique, or a "desire to control, guide, implicitly or explicitly chastise the person and direct her along a normative agenda". The perspective of the counter-tradition is more likely to be "animated by empathy, [and] active and unconditional acceptance of contradictions, shortcomings and complexities..." (Introduction, Para. 13).

Fine as exposure to the breadth of counter-tradition thought might be for therapy students, it seems unlikely that the average course in client-centered therapy or the person-centered approach can accommodate making this book required reading. On the other hand, there is a recent article by one of the editors, Bazzano (2016), that explicitly addresses the tensions between the true and radical person-centered approach to therapy and the present-day venal and commercial, thoughtless and careless, paradigm driven by economic undercurrents undermining practice integrity. I believe that article could be included on a list of required readings. It belongs there alongside Rogers (1951, chapter 2), Levitt's (2005) collection on the subject of non-directivity, Bozarth (1998), Brodley's selected writings

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(Moon, Witty, Grant and Rice, 2011) and possibly Bozarth and Wilkins (2002) collection on unconditional positive regard.

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