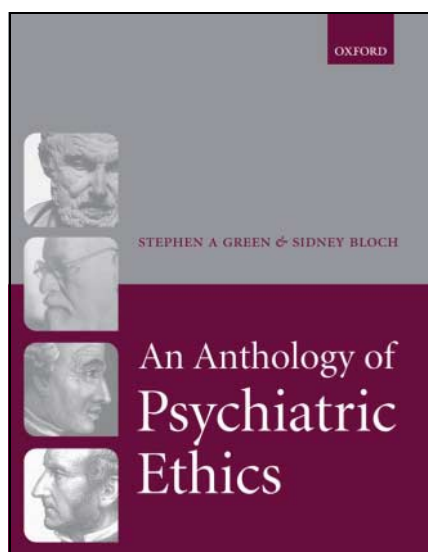


Book reviews

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An Anthology of Psychiatric Ethics

By Stephen A. Green & Sidney Bloch. Oxford University Press. 2006. 512pp. £39.95 (pb). ISBN 0198564880



A famous anthology of poetry steals its title from Montaigne: 'I have gathered a posy of other men's flowers; only the string that binds them is mine own' (Wavell, 1944). This is a typical joke of Montaigne's for, as the preface to Green & Bloch's anthology reminds us, the word anthology itself comes from the Greek word for flower. So Green & Bloch have put together a collection of papers relating to psychiatric ethics that, for them, presumably represent the flower of literature on this subject.

As the editors themselves comment, the publication of this book is a notable development in itself. The first textbook of psychiatric ethics was published only 25 years ago and, as most will know, Sidney Bloch was its co-editor. Now, Bloch's textbook is in its third edition, and psychiatric ethics has become an academic discourse in its own right. It is now a field for empirical study, with journals publishing high-quality ethical debate, both conceptual and clinical. Clinical relevance is fundamental in psychiatric ethics because

values, beliefs and attitudes are not only essential to ethical reasoning, but are also key to understanding a person's mental health and disorder. So an ordinary psychiatric practitioner is likely to meet major ethical dilemmas almost daily.

We need to educate ourselves about psychiatric ethics, and this book is an excellent collection which will be both helpful and useful to those who have to deliver the new MRCPsych curriculum (which requires trainees to be competent ethically). I thought the selection of papers excellent and practical. The section on boundary violations is particularly good and includes a paper which discusses the ethical duties of psychiatrists employed by the state. As a transcript of a conference which took place nearly 30 years ago, it is oddly comforting to find that the principles and arguments are no different, which suggests to me that the 'two hats' problem really is an ethically painful one.

I would suggest that anyone who is interested in psychiatric ethics should buy this book; and certainly anyone who is involved in teaching juniors. It is a big book, and the print is horribly small: but it is worth it.

Wavell, A. P. (1944) *Other Men's Flowers*. Jonathan Cape.

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Feeling Unreal: Depersonalization Disorder and the Loss of the Self

By Daphne Simeon & Jeffrey Abugel. Oxford University Press. 2006. 242pp. £16.99 (hb) ISBN 0195170229

The constellation of symptoms that constitutes depersonalisation is often as perplexing to the therapist as to the sufferer. Interest in it has fluctuated over the years;

it was much discussed and studied in the mid-20th century by such luminaries as Mayer-Gross, Schilder, Roth and Shorvon but its intellectual appeal seemed to decline thereafter. Fortunately, interest in the condition has revived in recent years, which has been reflected in the psychiatric literature. This monograph, which aims to review present knowledge of the subject, is therefore timely.

The authors are an unusual combination of a psychiatrist with special expertise in the treatment of depersonalisation (Daphne Simeon), and a medical journalist, (Jeffrey Abugel) who has himself experienced persistent depersonalisation and founded an educational website on the subject (<http://www.depersonalization.info>). This blend of experience lends authority to their portrayals of sufferers and their symptoms, leaving no doubt of their familiarity with the condition and its often devastating effect.

The authors concentrate on free-standing depersonalisation disorder as defined in DSM-IV. They accept its DSM-IV classification as a dissociative disorder, but acknowledge its dissimilarity from other dissociative symptoms. They trace the history of the condition and review the multifarious theories proposed during the past century, opting for a combination of Mayer-Gross's 'pre-formed functional response of the brain' and the psychoanalytic notion of a defence against overwhelming stress, but which has gone awry.

Their review of recent biological studies, including brain imaging and neurochemical

