

**\* *Emotions. Experiences in Existential Psychotherapy and Life* by Freddie Strasser. 1990. London: Duckworth 178pp.**

In his new book *Emotions*, Freddie Strasser is exploring human emotions in terms of existentially important manifestations; each emotion, being meaningful and having a basic internal structure, serves as a tool for understanding basic psychological problems. The book refers to his previous book (*Existential Time-Limited Therapy: The Wheel of Existence*, co-authored with his daughter Alison) ,and extends the existential wheel to include the importance of emotional aspects of our existence, yet it is not imperative reading for understanding of this new book. The author uses his life experiences to demonstrate all connections and the book reflects mature, crystal-clear work, simply structured. Each line portrays respect for life and for other human beings. The sincere care and the ability to identify with other human beings reverberate in each page of the book.

Case studies are simple and describe average human concerns with 'ordinary' clients. There are no artificial techniques, simply the facilitation of clients helping themselves. This type of help manifests itself in hermeneutic guidance, collaborative work, and sensitive presence.

The case studies are also impressive in their simplicity. The book is somewhat similar to Yalom's best-seller *Love's Executioner*. This similarity emanates from similar world-views, rather than from comparable therapeutic style. Yalom's representation of existential psychotherapy is somewhat different from the author's school, which is influenced by the ideas of Emmy van Deurzen and Ernesto Spinelli.

The book begins with a summary of the basic concepts of existential psychotherapy, avoiding technical terms wherever possible so that they become clear and understandable. In the following chapters separate emotions are illustrated in more depth, dealing with them by connecting them with individual case studies. Anger, fear, anxiety, guilt and sadness are illustrated in each individual chapter. These are all connected to human destinies, existential crises and other issues.

Joy and hatred are illustrated by chapters containing two supervised cases. Both are interesting and special. The first case is illustrated by the supervision of a time-limited drama therapy. Here, although the supervisor (the author) transcends the boundaries, it demonstrates very well the power of the existential-phenomenological approach

The last chapter deals with a man with learning difficulties - it is captivating. This therapy developed into a long-term, open-ended process. The individual fights for his existence, in which he finds such psychic solutions that reflect upon the author's own issues as well. It expresses the human capacity to fight and respond to the uncertainties of the world. The description of this case study is again vibrating and absorbing. The author's own experiences - such as surviving the Holocaust - unfold as having an important role in the various aspects of the therapy. Although he is very cautious about generalising from these life experiences, one benefit cannot be doubted, and that is that they make the book very interesting.

Strasser is a modest observer and researcher, who moves almost step by step to work out his own views to the existential approach and therapy. He is not clinging rigidly to this conception; he is searching for new ideas, and does this, with the help of his clients and students. *Emotions* would be educative to many professional and non-professional readers - not least because of the unconditional respect and humble approach that the author shows towards his clients and problems in living.

**Dr Bela Buda**

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