

Dictionary of Existential Psychotherapy and Counselling

Emmy van Deurzen and Raymond Kenward. (2005). London: Sage. 228pp. Hardback: £60, Paperback: £19.99.

This long overdue book joins a growing list of 'Dictionary of...' books of which Rycroft's (1972) was the first. Rycroft's set the standard and format for others and this dictionary generally follows his format which is to take key ideas and review the different ways the idea has been used and referred to, by in this case by different philosophers and practitioners. The perennial problem for existential psychotherapists is making the sometimes rather tenuous link between theory and practice, between philosophy and psychotherapy. As readers of this Journal must know only too well, some philosophical concepts do not translate easily into therapeutic practice. Generally speaking the authors have taken a light touch approach to this problem and made appropriate references when necessary. I think this is a useful and valuable decision which let the references speak for themselves.

Existential psychotherapy is still seen as a rather controversial form of therapy and it might be necessary to state that the aim of this dictionary is not to provide ammunition for those who, for whatever reason, wish to find fault with its basic tenets, but to help those who need or wish to inform themselves about it, to do so, intelligently and critically. Existentialism is one of these subjects that gets criticism from within and from without. It is criticised by people who do not know anything about it and there are also factional disputes from those within it. Bearing in mind the different ways which many existential concepts and even the word itself have been interpreted, it is a courageous, some would say risky, act to attempt such a potentially contentious book as this.

In my view, that it succeeds is a vindication for the authors that in spite of this factional disagreement and that the concepts were so open to interpretation, they clearly had faith that such a project was possible. As I said, they give a voices to the different voices. Nevertheless, not surprisingly it has a UK/European slant and probably Heidegger's shadow is cast on it more than other philosophers but it is a close run thing, which is another way of saying that it is unequivocal but also even handed.

In each entry the concept or issue is reviewed historically and with respect to how it has been viewed by different writers, e.g. use of the word intentionality is traced from Aristotle to Descartes to Brentano, Husserl, Heidegger through to Merleau-Ponty and May. This helps to clarify the different contact points between all the different uses. It also has biographies and bibliographies for the key philosophers and psychotherapists who have contributed to existential philosophy and psychotherapy. These are specially useful. By and large the philosophers are allowed to speak for themselves and good use is made of well-chosen

quotes when only the original text would make sense. All these quotes are fully referenced.

There are 320 entries, thoroughly cross-referenced and in using this dictionary quite extensively for teaching and checking references and primary sources in marking essays and case studies I have found it extremely useful and accurate. The most often used quotes are referred to appropriately.

Although it can obviously be read as a dictionary to find out about a single idea it can also be read as a narrative that begins anywhere and goes off with an endless number of plot lines each of which is coherent with the other. That way it can be an exciting and inspiring read as well as informing and teaching readers who acquaint themselves with existential psychotherapy for the first time.

All books have limitations; no dictionary can say everything and some entries for me like the for example the one on Jaspers and his concept of limit situation seemed relatively short. For this reviewer Jaspers deserves a bigger space considering the importance that his concepts and his life as a practitioner who was also a philosopher had for the development of existential therapy. But this is a small point and I suspect most readers will have similar thoughts from time to time. This is the nature of such a project.

This dictionary is a significant contribution to the field of psychotherapy and counselling. As someone with a considerable experience of existential philosophy and psychotherapy I often found its clarity enlightening. As with the Rycroft dictionary it is invaluable for philosopher and practitioner, for student therapist and experienced therapist and also for people of unfamiliar with Existential theory and practice keen to know more.

Reference

Rycroft, C. (1972). *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*. London: Penguin.

Barbara Karban

The Words to Say It: An Autobiographical Novel

Marie Cardinal. (1993). London: The Women's Press. 295pp. Paperback: £7.99.

This is a moving, beautifully written book, first published in 1975 as '*Les Mots Pour le Dire*', that charts the breakdown, subsequent analysis and recovery of Marie Cardinal. What, for me, makes this book strikingly different from most other accounts of analysis is that it is written entirely and only from the client's point of view; thus it becomes a fascinating