

in life is not necessarily something bad. In a more spiritual or religious perspective, Seneca explains that misfortunes have a teaching purpose as moral lessons. They are Gods way of testing and training us to be as good and outstanding as we can be. By enduring misfortune, we learn to be ourselves and we gain capabilities for living. Thus, Seneca agrees with most modern existential theory that we are able to convert painful events in life into self-knowledge and abilities to do well to others.

Hardship & Happiness has an obvious relevance to existential analysis. Seneca's therapeutic philosophy probably has the greatest similarity to van Deurzen's existential approach. They both insist on combining ethics and therapy into an art of living. However, Seneca's experiential approach to existential issues relates to a wide range of existential authors. In recent years, The University of Chicago Press has republished many works by Seneca. I hope that this effort will influence the existential community.

Dying for Ideas. The Dangerous Lives of the Philosophers

Costica Bradatan (2015). London & New York: Bloomsbury.

French philosopher Albert Camus begins his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* from 1942 with the famous proclamation that there is only but one truly philosophical problem and that is suicide. Suicide is the confession that life is not worth living, and to Camus the fundamental question is whether this confession must follow the realization that existence is absurd. The teachings of the book *Dying for Ideas* from 2015 by American philosopher Costica Bradatan seems to be a reversal of Camus' problem. Following Bradatan, we need to rephrase the most serious problem for a true philosopher: What is worth dying for? To me, this also seems to be a fundamental existential question in our current western culture, preoccupied with individual wellbeing and happy endings. Camus actually embodies this issue being a resistance fighter in World War II. Yet, the question remains whether the rest of us have anything to die for in the 21st century, and whether the artificiality of most academic philosophy might be reflecting this shortcoming.

Bradatan actually forms part of a new way of perceiving philosophy that relates closely to the existential tradition. At the end of the 1970's and the beginning of the 1980's, French philosophers Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault advocated a reinvention of philosophy as an existential art of living. Hadot and Foucault argued that originally, Greek and Roman philosophy was a therapeutic form of life, very different from current mainstream academic philosophy. From Socrates to Marcus Aurelius this art of living seemed to focus on transforming and reinventing peoples' selves and lives around the notion of a training to death. Bradatan expands this notion by following the martyr-philosophers from Socrates to Jan

Patočka who chose to die for their ideas. Books on philosophy are rarely page-turners, but Bradatan takes us through a fascinating exploration of the existential limit-situation in which philosophers find themselves when their only means of communicating the truth is their own dying bodies and the public spectacle of their death.

To ancient philosophers, as well as some modern ones like Michel de Montaigne, Friedrich Nietzsche, Simone Weil and Patočka, philosophy is something that engages the whole of existence in order to conduct one's life in a resilient and truthful way. Even though I found it rather strange that Bradatan never mentions Søren Kierkegaard, he manages to make his point. We can only validate a philosophy to the extent that it is embodied in the philosophers' life, and talk is cheap unless it is put into action. Long before his engagement with ancient philosophy, Foucault declared the death of the author in the 1960s. However, in this new tradition of reinvented philosophy, the philosopher's own biography becomes highly relevant, because we need to seek consistency between action and discourse. From this perspective, German philosopher Martin Heidegger's engagement with National Socialism speaks for itself. There is no way of separating the evaluation of Heidegger's writings from the evaluation of his engagement with the Third Reich or the fact that Heidegger dreamt of becoming a philosopher-king for the Nazis.

Bradatan's book is fundamentally about the relationship between death and philosophy, and the author portrays two layers of this relationship. The first layer regards the existential role of death to philosophy, as death has always been a basic philosophical problem. French philosopher Montaigne plays the main role in this part of the book that shows how to philosophize is to learn how to die. The Platonics, the Epicurians, the Cynics and the Stoics were the first to show us how the true philosopher is an apprentice to death, and probably Irvin Yalom is the most direct successor of this idea within existential therapy. Yalom's book *Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Dread of Death* from 2008 was highly inspired by ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus in its existential perspective on death and dying. If we do not confront death, we are not able to live. In addition, as Roman philosopher Marcus Aurelius stated: it is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live.

Existential phenomenology in the tradition of Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty show us how our mental life presupposes our being in the world as embodied agents. In an intermediate chapter, Bradatan describes how the martyr-philosophers take the idea of embodiment to a far more radical level. Whereas Nietzsche talked about breaking the idols, the martyr-philosophers break themselves by letting their dying body become the existential means for their philosophy. While Austrian existential therapist Viktor E. Frankl stated that even in Auschwitz, you have a freedom of

mind, Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno showed us that even though you are being burned alive, as long as you can turn your face away from your executioners and their symbols, you have all the freedom you need. We can overcome our mortality and instinctive fear by taking care of our soul and cut our selves off from the profane world. According to Bradatan, this is the true meaning of the word 'sacred'. Thus, through philosophy, we may learn to detach ourselves from the superficiality of mass society, and this makes death less terrifying. This insight looks almost like the existential idea of freeing oneself from inauthenticity and thereby gaining more orientation and purpose in life.

The second layer points to the world as an existential prison. The true philosopher has an urge to speak the truth even though it makes people uncomfortable. In times of crisis, this means that society has a tendency to turn against the philosophers. The authorities make the philosophers scapegoats in order to regain order and comfortability. The philosophers then find themselves in the situation where they either can abandon their ideas or die for them, which is the choice of the true philosopher. However, the task of the philosopher is to make his or her death into a public display so that he or she turns dying into a means of communicating truth.

Traditionally, existential therapy takes inspiration from modern existential philosophy and phenomenology. In recent years, Emmy van Deurzen and Irvin Yalom have pointed out that existential therapy could also benefit from the insights of older philosophy. Bradatans book seems to be a book on death and dying, but it shows us that dealing with these issues are a gateway to dealing with life and living. The martyr-philosophers may serve as role models that grasped a fundamental aspect of daring to live fully. What does really make life worth living and thus worth dying for? This problem is the core of philosophy as a therapeutic practice aimed at freeing us from the worries and sufferings that come from feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness.

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Discourses, Fragments, Handbook

Epictetus (2014). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Born around the year 50 and raised a slave in the Roman Empire, Epictetus was not destined to become an influential philosopher. His thoughts, however, have been widely read and they have proven to be sustainable through 2000 years. Recently, Oxford University Press has chosen to publish the only complete modern translation of Epictetus' *Diatribai* or *Discourses*, together with the *Enchiridion* or *Handbook*, and surviving fragments. Robin Hard's accurate and accessible translation is an absolute