

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.

Anders Draeby Soerensen

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

must have for anyone working in the field between philosophy and therapy.

Why does Epictetus' teaching appear as the most important existential philosophy of the Roman Empire, and why has it remained popular until today? One way of answering that question is through the story of American officer James Stockdale, whose plane was shot down over Vietnam in 1965. Stockdale was held as a prisoner of war for seven and a half years. In 1959, the U.S. Navy had sent Stockdale to Stanford University, where he not only received a Master's degree in international relations and comparative Marxist thought, but also studied Epictetus' *Enchiridion* intensively. Stockdale was released as a prisoner of war on the 12th of February 1973, and he later credited Epictetus' philosophy for helping him cope as a prisoner of war. Stockdale described his coping strategy during his period in the Vietnamese POW camp with these words: 'You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end – which you can never afford to lose – with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be' (Collins, 2001: p 83).

The philosophy of Epictetus is exactly based on the lived experience of captivity. It is similar to famous existential psychotherapist and holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl's experience in *Man's Search for Meaning* (1959), describing his experiences as a concentration camp inmate during World War II, and explaining how the way the prisoners imagine their future affects their longevity. In the year 69, Epictetus was freed from physical slavery, and the rest of his life he taught his students how to free themselves from existential slavery, caused by dependence on passions and external things like material goods and social status. In other words, the experience of existential freedom is at the heart of Epictetus' teachings that perceive philosophy as a way of life and not just a theoretical discipline. In accordance with prevalent Hellenistic and Roman ideas, Epictetus understood philosophy as a form of therapy, practiced as an art of living. Thus, philosophy is an attitude and lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence. Epictetus taught this art of living in his philosophy school in Rome, and as he states in *Discourses*: 'A philosopher's school, man, is a doctor's surgery' (*Discourses*, 3.23.30). In other words, his philosophy school was a clinic for the soul that people came to for a period to be treated for the passions and existential problems from which they suffered. Philosophy thus appears, primarily, as a therapeutic of the passions and existential challenges.

Epictetus himself apparently wrote nothing down. His teachings were written down and published by his pupil Arrian. In Epictetus' view, philosophy did not consist in exegesis of texts or in teaching of abstract theories. Philosophy was an experiential practice, which was orally transmitted, and its task was to educate people who lacked proper training in the art of living.

To Epictetus, the basic principle of living well consisted in the insight that 'some things are within our power, while others are not' (*Handbook*,

1.1). Peoples' existential suffering are caused by irrational beliefs, stemming from erroneous efforts to control or figure out matters that are beyond our power. This involves everything that is not of our own doing, like property, reputation, office and other people's minds. Any delusion on this point leads the slavery of the soul. Therefore, the philosophy students must learn to accept the things they cannot change. Human flourishing, eudaimonia, is to live from a good spirit, and its achievement also requires that one learns to control what is within our power, which involves everything that is of our own doing, like our opinion, motivation and desire. Therefore, the philosophy students must learn the courage to change the things they can. This means becoming a better person and benefit others. In 1937, American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr adopted this ethical principle and authored the Serenity Prayer, made popular by Alcoholics Anonymous:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference*
(Niebuhr, 1987: p 241)

To Epictetus, existential slavery and suffering was essentially a result of bad education, and therefore therapy involved a corrective education for people who were not able to conform to the norms and conventions of society. However, the goal of therapy was not to readjust students – or clients – to the prevalent values and ideals of culture. Rather, therapy aimed at teaching the students how to live independently in society, and therefore they had to unlearn everything they previously knew about life. The philosophy school, then, considered listening as the first step in the learning of true discourse, which would enable the students to take in logos and gain some sense in their lives.

Therapy did not consist in simply teaching the students some skills or competencies. Instead, therapy should raise the students from an inauthentic and darkened condition of life to an authentic and enlightened way of living. In other words, therapy aimed at a spiritual awakening that should completely transform the lives and selves of the students. To learn to accept what is not of our own doing means to surrender part of our will to God, and the result of therapy would be that students know their place in the universe. In the end, what is beyond our power is the fact that one day we must die and become recycled in nature. Instead of fearing this moment, therapy trains the student to death by teaching them to let go of everything which is unnecessary for living well.

To me, reading Epictetus was an eye-opening experience. His teachings are forceful and challenging, comparable to the very best of contemporary

writings on existential philosophy and psychotherapy. Even though *Discourses* and *Handbook* have been amongst the most widely read and influential of all philosophical writings on therapy, they have never directly influenced modern existential therapy. However, they not only speak to modern readers seeking meaning in their own lives. The texts are also highly relevant to existential therapists looking for profound insights into ways of dealing with clients' experience of suffering and existential captivity. I can highly recommend everyone in the existential community to read the new translation of *Discourses and Handbook*.

References

- Collins, J. (2001). *Good To Treat*. New York: HarperCollins.
Frankl, V. E. (1959). *Man's Search For Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press.
Niebuhr, R. (1987). *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*. New Haven: Yale University Press

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Being and Relating in Psychotherapy Ontology and Therapeutic Practice

Christine Driver, Stephen Crawford & John Stewart (eds.) (2013).
London: Palgrave Macmillan.

This book is an attempt at widening the lens of contemporary psychodynamic psychotherapeutic practice with its psychoanalytic foundations to considerations of what it means to be human in a wider context of life. Thus, the various authors consider not only the intrapsychic (drives, instinct, conflict and tensions within) but also pay attention to the relationship and situate it within the wider connections and influences of both the social and the cultural.

It is structured in three different parts, the first part looks at the therapeutic relationship per se by considering briefly ontology, the healing aspect of the therapeutic relationship, considerations on the 'talking cure' and what might be going on when clients 'refuse' to speak, and an introduction into Buber's concept of the I-Thou. The second part explores themes such as love, shame, loneliness and mortality. And finally, in the third part the net is cast wider into social and cultural dynamics by considering the nature of the self, diversity, sexuality, the artist in psychotherapy, religion and time.

The majority of the authors of this book have an association with the WPF (the Westminster Pastoral Foundation), a charity that came into existence in the late 1960s within the Methodist Church, as a way of supporting the community and pastoral work with the insights of psychotherapy, the psychodynamic and psychoanalytic in particular. It has become a provider for psychodynamic counselling, therapy and training and most authors of