

BOOK REVIEWS

Relationships! What are they? What are other people there for? We start this issue's reviews with a book that examines the way existential philosophers have looked at what the author calls 'Romantic Love'. This is another term for what in everyday life we can call close or intimate and usually committed and sexual relationships. In my experience as a therapist this is the issue that the vast majority of clients want to figure out. Given that psychotherapy itself is a relationship that discusses relationships, the question arises, Why is that it has taken so long for such a book to appear? We know we are existentially always 'in-relationship', but what can we say, what do we want to say, about being 'in relationships'? Or to be phenomenological about it, 'What is it like to be in relationships?' In this book some philosophers are not present, Heidegger for example, for the obvious reason that 'relationships' as such were not his primary consideration. Interestingly though, this was the very issue that led Heidegger to reply to Boss' first letter to him when he did not reply to others. As we know, this led to the Zollikon Seminars. Maybe Heidegger's example, along with philosophy's tendency to abstraction had led to the issue of 'relationships' being overlooked for so long. Either that or it was just too difficult for some philosophers to consider. Thinking philosophically is not something that comes easily and especially so if it is not encouraged, as in the UK, by an education system concerned primarily with economic value and normative assessment. In contrast, in France this year 500,000 students sat down this year to take their end of secondary school exam to answer questions like, 'Are our moral convictions based on our experience?' and 'Critically examine the following text from Merleau-Ponty'. The next three books are about thinking philosophically. The first one examines Wittgenstein's contribution to psychotherapy, the second is a wide ranging meditation on the relationship of the dead to the living and the third is about Kierkegaard, someone who made it his life's work to try to get people to question their assumptions and beliefs. The final two books this issue focus on the contribution of Counselling Psychology, whose founding principles of practical application echo Sartre's view of existentialism as a practical discipline that addressed the process and contextual nature of human issues.

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