

on fictional accounts of psychotherapy (Ryan Howes on various examples, but especially *Dr Phil* and Joanna Dovalis on *In Treatment*).

Part 3 of the book contains several chapters that cover apparent exceptions to the premises of the book although it starts off with the rom com and why that might make one feel better after a bad day – not, of course, that anyone believes the story any more than anyone mixes up folk tales with historical accounts.

Part 3 explicitly mentions ‘existential’ philosophy on several occasions and, you guessed, it is Kierkegaard who is the influence mentioned, and the Nordic noir that exemplifies existentialism. I agree with the contributors in part 3 who find it interesting that after a bad day we might get surcease by seeing our favourite character going through agonies of self-questioning, only to break the law in ways that they are sworn to uphold. It runs counter to the title of the book, an irony that escapes the contributors. ‘Irony’ was the topic of Kierkegaard’s Masters thesis and was, in many ways, his master theme throughout his writing. Irony led to the taking away of certainty, to a dread that Sartre felt as nausea in association with the nihilation of self-knowledge. This is not a happy state of affairs, and will need another book to account for its popularity in new fairy tales like *The Killing*. But this book did at least give me an insight into why *The Killing* seemed to convey it so effectively. According to Alex Charles, the author of the chapter ‘Sarah Lund and individuated happiness’, the actors in *The Killing* were only given the script for the next episode. They did not know how the whole story would turn out, or whether their character was innocent or guilty. No wonder the series was so gripping. It was, as we existentialists would think, so true to how life is. Only as the last credits role do we know what our actions have meant.

References

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Therapy and the Counter-Tradition: The edge of philosophy

Manu Bazzano & Julie Webb (eds) (2016). Oxford: Routledge.

Therapy and the Counter-Tradition: The Edge of Philosophy is about philosophy and therapy within the counter-tradition. Tradition, or otherwise

known as rationalism, is about the world being an orderly cosmos that can be explained by science, laws and reason. At times the tradition speaks the language of secular rationalism, at times it speaks of religious or spiritual rationalism. The book doesn't explain further yet gives the general sense of what is meant by the tradition and the counter-tradition. The sense I get is that the counter-tradition isn't rational, governed by laws, and isn't seeking an ultimate truth or a way of being. The book is a collection of papers all of which are giving a taste of this. The writers are contemporary psychotherapists, philosophers and writers who are exploring the counter-tradition and at the same time how philosophical ideas within counter-tradition may inform psychotherapy.

The writers are putting forward a counter argument to the ideas that non-philosophically informed therapists have as the ideas are rooted in philosophy rather than science or psychology for instance. Yet it is also putting forward an argument for those who, like me, do have a training in existential philosophy and psychotherapy, as it's countering the thinking of 'this is how one should live according to these philosophical ideas'. The writers seem to be writing from a position of responding creatively from philosophy as one may do with literature and art. This is how it adds a fresh perspective on the ongoing dialogue between philosophy and psychotherapy. It certainly doesn't regurgitate the same ideas in similar books on philosophy and psychotherapy. The book does encourage the reader to consider philosophy as having a real implication on our selves as human beings as well as our work as psychotherapists. It does this in a way that doesn't tell you explicitly how to do this. I found that this taps into an important yet unexplored arena. In a sense this book goes to the heart of what it means to be a psychotherapist, as well as human 'wholeness', despite the increased need for rationality, regulation and diagnosis. In fact, it seems clear that the writers don't feel they belong in this world of rationality, regulation and diagnosis.

The writers are writing from personal experience, their own personal knowledge of how philosophy has inspired and influenced their lives. There is a sense of how the current way philosophy and psychotherapy is going has rattled their cages. Especially how philosophy isn't given the credence it should have within psychotherapy and psychology education. I am surprised that it doesn't acknowledge the psychotherapy training schools which do bring philosophy and lived experience to the forefront of the training. The personal stance of the book makes this book engaging for me as I tend to learn from experience and examples rather than from theory. I appreciate that the book is not written in the style of a text book, which makes it more authentic rather than didactic. However, it is an academic book, it should be put onto course reading lists and I would recommend having some prior knowledge of therapy and philosophy before

attempting this book. It's certainly not an introduction to philosophy and psychotherapy.

These writers have backgrounds in religion, music, as well as academia and existential psychotherapy. The authors are discussing philosophers such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Rousseau, Camus, Deleuze, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty. This book starts with the sentence 'I really don't see what trainees can learn from Nietzsche' (p 1) and immediately sets the tone of the book as the book seems to want to prove that trainees and psychotherapists can learn from these philosophers. The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 looks at the threshold of experience. It begins by explaining that we experience the threshold when we openly question ourselves. Some of the accounts in this section can be read as a poetic response to the threshold of experience. Bazzano's (p 9) chapter on the self in Nietzsche's psychology is at times hard to grasp. He speaks of the important influence that Nietzsche has on our view of the self and how he is at times critical of how different schools of thought have embraced Nietzsche. John Lippitt's (p 24) chapter on Kierkegaard shows how therapists have much to learn from the philosophy of Kierkegaard. This chapter is more comprehensible and connects to my experience of being a therapist. It speaks about the story of the lily and the bird, which is a beautiful metaphor for gratitude and patience. Diana Voller's (p 34) chapter on John Keats and negative capability proposes that the therapist's capacity to be *in* uncertainty is an important but previously under-represented aspect of practice, because of both its elusive nature and its connections to the therapist's permeable sense of self. Diana Voller attempts to describe the 'negative capability' process with a view to making it a more explicitly appreciated aspect of the therapeutic process. Using poetry as a way to do this makes for a fascinating read. I certainly think that using poetry and literature to enable us to understand the process of what it means to be a human could be a book in it's own right!

Part 2 looks at ethics and politics. These chapters are articulating a sense of not being at home within the institutions of philosophy and psychotherapy in their respective current containers, and instead reinforce our desire to persist in our own being; desire a kind of vitality that only exists because of, and is dependent upon, rupture and conflict (p 65). Julie Webb, in her chapter Desire and Judith Butler (p 67) asks the question, 'To what extent is therapy a quest for mutual recognition?' She brings the self and the Other into the forefront. Her chapter is full of engaging vignettes and is well written and is embedded in the experience of being a therapist and being a 'self'. Richard Pearce in his tribute to Jean-Paul Sartre (p 76) describes his own inner conflicts, Sartrean philosophy, and the political

dimension. He acknowledges the concerns that people bring to psychotherapy are very much relevant to what Sartre describes in his philosophy. I appreciate how he highlights the point that what is important is our understanding of the core aspects of how the human exists in the world. He also suggests that the underlying philosophical framework that Sartre elucidates shows the practice of psychotherapy to be a political act. 'A Metaphysical Rebellion, Camus and Psychotherapy' by James Belassie (p 98) is one of my favourite chapters as I enjoyed how he compares the *DSM V* to Camus' philosophy around suicide. It's an important point to be made, how facing suicidal feelings is a real response to existence rather than a pathology that needs to be cured. It's refreshing to read about suicide in this way. Especially as I have experienced health care professionals treating suicidal thoughts as a pathology rather than as a real response to living; I find this frustrating.

Part three looks at self, other, world. This is my favourite section of the book. Comprising of short engaging chapters that seem to be about having a healthy degree of scepticism towards contemporary therapeutic discourse, which unanimously emphasizes the relational and dialogical dimensions of human experience and underlies their significance in the therapy room. The forthcoming chapters do challenge this discourse. It starts with Manu Bazzano (p 109). He writes about the French philosopher Deleuze and therapy. I was initially unfamiliar with Deleuze and interested in who and how this may be relevant to my work as a therapist. Bazzano describes his route into Deleuze, his context in which he writes, being a Zen practitioner and a psychotherapist trained in the existential and Person Centred Approach. He is inspired by and critical of Zen philosophy, PCA and the existential philosophy, and disappointed by the way these three have been assimilated into contemporary culture. He talks about how Deleuze helps him with this and then helpfully he grounds his point into an example from therapeutic practice, which is always welcomed! I also enjoyed Paul Gordon's chapter entitled 'A Poetry of Human Relations – Merleau-Ponty and psychotherapy' (p 117). He writes beautifully about Merleau Ponty, showing how his philosophy is very much part of the counter-tradition.

Part four approaches therapy, language and metaphysics. Julie Webb explores Wittgenstein (p 147). This chapter is one of my favourites in the book. Webb, a therapist and trainer in the humanistic tradition, considers the humanistic approach to therapy as a kind of anti-therapy, against the current tendency that sees therapy as treating the human condition as a series of problems to be solved rather than as a life to be experienced. The way she writes about Wittgenstein, making his philosophy relevant

to her work as a therapist really brings his philosophy and her client work to life. John Mackessy looks at Schopenhauer. He explores this philosophy to stress the importance of really facing up to the suffering as a reality of existing in the world. Schopenhauer reminds Mackessy of how therapists can never fully appreciate the suffering of our clients. It also reminds me of the profound respect that suffering deserves and the fundamental part it plays in our client's lives. Jeff Harrison writes about Wittgenstein, Buddhism and psychotherapy and the book concludes with Devang Vaidya speaking about suffering to become the person you are. It's refreshing to read about Buddhism also being a way in to understanding the wholeness of human beings.

What is refreshing about this book is that it talks about therapy and what it means to be human without claiming to be an expert. There is a respect for humanity and a healthy scepticism for adhering to assumptions about what it means to be human that threads right through the book. Despite the lack of the word existential in the book, this book would be extremely useful for anyone studying existential psychotherapy. I couldn't help but feel disappointed at the lack of female philosophers and the overuse of white male philosophers. Wouldn't a chapter on Simone de Beauvoir be fitting as she was part of the counter-tradition? However, this is made up for a bit by the female writers in the book. *Therapy and the Counter-Tradition: The Edge of Philosophy* claims to be of interest to mental health professionals, practitioners, counselling and psychotherapy trainees and trainers, as well as academics tutoring or studying psychology. I believe that this book will certainly be of great interest and greatly informing to this group. I believe it is important for those working in this arena to be aware of the implications of the tradition and counter tradition. I hope this book inspires more writing in this vein.

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The Child In The World: Embodiment, time, and language in early childhood

Eva M. Simms (2008). Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

At what point do you become an adult? This may be a hard question for many of us to answer. Many cultures have ritual ceremonies marking this important transition, but typically these events have become more symbolic in their relevance and no longer retain a strong psychological power in shaping our identity. Rarely however, do we stop and think of what it means to actually be an adult or a child, and where these differing concepts come from. Like the demarcation of east and west on a map, we simply take such significant decisions for granted presuming they have always been thus.