

think, that many of the structures underpinning existentialism, for instance, organizationally, our training courses, our conferences, are somewhat copy-pasted from elsewhere. As a self-published book, printed individually, promoted organically by members, represents an important move toward these values-matched structures.

The *Dialogues* series is an innovative, disruptive, autonomous and independent initiative. The book casts itself into the world, hoping for the best, and imagining that it will grow into a series. This is congruent with an existentialism that I recognize and want to see more of. Perhaps you can be inspired to write your own Dialogues?

Adam Knowles

Disclosure of interests

I helped the SEA administratively to prepare this book for sale. Sales support the SEA. I am independent of the writing and editorial decisions and do not profit from sales.

Existential Perspectives on Coaching

Emmy van Deurzen and Monica Hanaway, eds. 2012. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

I was excited to read this book having spent the majority of my adult life engaged in coaching rugby, and having experienced business coaching as a coachee and trainee(ish) practitioner. My knowledge of formal coaching theory is not that great, so I appreciated the diagrams and brief sketches of coaching theory, which helped my general understanding without going too in-depth. The book as a whole looks to cater for a wide audience; coaching trainees, coaches who have not encountered existential thought and seemingly everybody interested in an existential approach.

The book is laid out in three separate sections. The first attempts to outline what underpins existential coaching in terms of values and provide a framework, before the second illustrates where existential coaching can provide value. The final part sets out to illuminate how existential coaching can be integrated with other approaches.

In the first section, there are three chapters, including one by each editor. Van Deurzen's first chapter builds on the short foreword, primarily by drawing on existential thought and positioning it, and particularly her own developments, in the wider world. Mo Mandic then writes exclusively about authenticity and the conflicting demands people experience in life, which can seek them to potentially consult a coach, or therapist for that matter. This hints at the concept of paradox, which is the focus of Hanaway's third chapter, especially in relation to life and death, and how that pertains

to coaching in a business context.

The second section contains five chapters. The initial two look at people who seek support from coaching; Le Bon and Arnaud look at major decisions, which can be helped by existential coaching, while Pullinger focuses on career choice and career coaching specifically. The next three chapters focus on business. Jopling places her attention on working with leaders in an organizational setting, a nod to the ever-increasing emphasis in the corporate world on coaching as a leadership development tool. Hanaway introduces conflict coaching to assist organizations coping with conflict. The concluding chapter by Jackie Lewis looks at coaching in the workplace more generally.

The final part is, to my mind, the most interesting, where other theoretical coaching models are discussed. Greg Madison looks at embodied coaching with reference to focusing and the work of Gendlin, before Jamie Reed suggests how existential coaching and NLP can work together, provided they are seen as being in that order. Attachment theory is the focus for chapter eleven, penned by Duncan Fraser, as he offers the idea that the best and easiest way to make meaning with coaching clients is to draw from existentialism and attachment theory. Diana Pringle writes of using psychometric assessments to help the coaching process in chapter twelve, followed by a critique of cognitive behavioural coaching from Daniel Mirea. Finally, Jyoti Nanda makes the case for mindfulness-based existential coaching in chapter fourteen.

I felt that the authors had missed some issues and potential questions. As examples, there was an acceptance that the number of sessions, frequency and durations vary widely, particularly in the business context where the organization often foots the bill. However, there was no discussion about what would be best based on experience, and whether it is worth trying to negotiate – as a coach starting out this could make all the difference for clients. Similarly, the idea of therapist disclosure was not discussed. This is a topic very dear to me both emotionally and intellectually. I believe it is a difficult subject to navigate for both trainees and experienced practitioners alike, so its explicit omission is somewhat confusing.

I write this as I approach the end of my ADEP training as thoughts have inevitably turned towards trying to understand how I can ‘make it’ as a non-student and a practising psychotherapist. Certainly within me the idea of trying to be existential, and certainly not un-existential, has been a key part of deliberations around values. In this vein, two chapters really stood out for me as they bridged the gap into the coaching world and gave me insight into how my existential foundations can be used without complete contradiction. This conflict was acknowledged by Diana Pringle in chapter twelve when she says honestly that as a coach, prior to training existentially, she used two psychological assessments (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation – Behaviour™) but stopped as she felt

a conflict with her new existential training. Pringle provides good insight into how psychometric measures can help the relationship and illustrates this with a case study. I found this useful as it challenged my sedimented beliefs on the risk of pigeon-holing people as a result of using any measures.

Something similar occurred while I was reading the following chapter by Daniel Miera, who draws on his experience with CBT. I have struggled with this approach after working in a CBT-focused IAPT service and come into conflict with it. Again, I felt challenged and in the meantime I have already had a couple of conversations with former colleagues about whether we are not more closely aligned than any of us think.

Stylistically there were big differences between chapters. One slightly confusing issue was the different usages of the term ‘coaching’, and particularly the notion of ‘life coaching’, which remained undefined and slightly obscure. This may be my desire for a clear definition, but it could also be considered as evidence that there is something missing when read by a sceptic of either coaching or existential practice. There is a marked difference in the tone adapted from chapter to chapter; some, such as Madison’s work on embodiment, are far more owned by the author, and reading it felt as though I got the whole of his being in his words (perhaps unsurprisingly). These ‘owned’ chapters are the ones which I found myself wanting to re-read and refer back to, because they seemed more aligned as a whole with the existential approach, something worth bearing in mind if reading from a non-existential background. Along a similar vein, I found the exploration of existential thought at times disjointed and a little difficult to follow given the huge range of authors exploring multiple times concepts and to different depths. Steeped in existential thought as an ADEP student, for me it was manageable but I can imagine it could be difficult to follow and keep track of for a non-existential reader.

Some of the case studies were excellent and informative, for instance to see the difference between a coaching verbatim and a process report. However, there were times when I really wanted more, for example in chapter ten when Reed says ‘after about ten or fifteen minutes we had established what felt to be a sound basis for our working relationship and so asked her what she wanted from coaching’ (p 138). While I do not doubt the felt sense of the author, I did not get a real insight into what it meant practically, and I was unsure whether he checked, or even contemplated checking, with the client Karen. While writing about ‘instructions’ is clearly not the brief, and nor should it be, there seems to be a gap between what is said and what actually happened that felt quite mystifying, especially I imagine for people who have never coached before. In some chapters this was more readily acknowledged such as when, in chapter six, Jopling says ‘by the fourth of eight contracted sessions I had started to see a pattern and had developed the courage to reflect back my relational experience of him’ (p 83). This disclosure around developing courage, to my mind,

offers more, and points to the potential difficulties that could be experienced. This is something practically useful for the reader and demonstrates how some chapters are less theoretical and more applied in content.

While there were several references to sports as the original source of coaching as a thing, that was it. In some ways this is unsurprising, as I have found the majority of therapists to be ambivalent towards it, although I concede I may simply be having the wrong conversations. I wonder whether the existential givens would be more than appropriate to an underpinning, or perhaps potential underpinning, of sports coaching, especially in teams. Certainly in rugby the idea that we have a finite time, and a certain thrownness with regards to both teammates, and our own physiological abilities is very apt, and helping players understand and process that, can be the difference between winning and losing over a season. This is an area, which I think should have had more acknowledgements, especially given that the history of coaching and sport are so intertwined.

At £30.99 on Amazon, this book is towards the expensive end of the coaching offering. I have at various points over the past couple of years talked to friends who are coaches, and they have wondered how and why existentialism could work as a coaching approach. This volume really offers some answers, but I am not sure it is priced at an accessible level to lure people into taking a chance. They should. It has shortcomings, and omissions but, as the foreword acknowledges, this is the first book of its kind, which hopefully will lead to further existential coaching offerings. I feel it is potentially relevant to psychotherapists as much as coaches, if only to broaden the perspective and challenge the sedimentation that can exist in our field. It would be a valuable piece of CPD reading and reflection on the implications for therapy given the world as is. I enjoyed the book, to the extent that I devoured it ahead of more pressing class reading. It is valuable because it poses relevant and revealing questions and offers a plethora of insights, which are useful to a practicing therapist.

Ben Scanlan

Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design

Charles Montgomery. 2015. London: Penguin Books.

'He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god'

(Aristotle, in Montgomery, 2015, p 43).

This is an attractively presented, modern book, with the text running for a formidable 328 pages, a useful 'Notes' list of forty pages and an index