

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

of seventeen pages. Charles Montgomery is an award-winning author and journalist from Vancouver, Canada; among his numerous awards are, Citation of Merit from the Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society for outstanding contribution to the public's understanding of climate change science. His writings on urban planning, psychology, culture and history have appeared in journals on three continents.

In this book he journeys internationally to dozens of cities, meets with the various visionary champions and activists of the happy city, the green city and the low-carbon city. It is said that this is going to be the century of the city; but what actually makes a good city? Why are some cities a joy to live in? This accomplished volume provides the reader with the numerous solutions, and simple changes that could make a serious difference to the future of humanity.

After decades of unchecked sprawl, more people than ever are moving (back) to the city. Dense urban living has been prescribed as a panacea for the environmental and resource crises of our time. Are subways, sidewalks and tower dwelling an improvement on the car-dependence of sprawl rising from the suburbs and commuter towns? Drawing on lessons from individual stories, from brain science and from the fascinating realm of urban experimentation, *Happy City* deciphers intelligently what we can all do to improve our subsequent fate. Even though Montgomery's argument may require some familiarization, this book will make you a believer; it belongs on every city-dweller's bookshelf.

Montgomery's work is spread over thirteen chapters and an epilogue. Sometimes it can seem that this publication is somewhat repetitive; but still, on vigilant examination, each time the author's argument could be said to be subtly different. The titles of the chapters vary creatively, including, 'Getting it wrong', 'Convivialities' and 'Retrofitting sprawl'. We clearly see how the author has engaged himself in the experience and is passionately dedicated to this contemporary, modernistic lifestyle.

Starting with some of America's brightest minds, we read of the anxiety of potential Harvard dormitory residents, where a bad residential assignment can be considered as a 'psychic and social disaster' (p 87). The most prestigious, Lowell House, with its grand red-brick facades, and wood-panelled library is the perfect representation of the ideal of Harvard life. However, students sent to what they were sure would be miserable houses ended up far happier than anticipated. The concrete tower of Mather House was described in the student newspaper, *The Harvard Crimson*, as a 'riot-proof monstrosity designed by a prison architect' (p 87), and yet Harvard's choice dormitories did not make anyone much happier than its spurned options.

The errors we find in individual and collective judgment can be frustrating and sobering. We need to make the connection between the way we live in cities and 'the massive risks now facing our world and our species', (p 103).

We are consuming plants, animals, soil, minerals, water and energy at a faster rate than the planet can replenish them; ‘we are dooming future generations to poverty and hardship’ (p 104). It would take nine planets to generally supply all we needed with the current squandering of our resources.

Evidently, the author has taken to the task of trying to look at the factors to create a city that will save the world. Nature is not merely good for us; it brings out the good in us. Nature in cities helps us build essential bonds with other people and the places in which we live. Quite simply, biological density must be the prerequisite for architectural density. Cities that care about liveability must start paying attention to the psychological effect that traffic has on the experience of public space. Chronic road rage can actually alter the shape of the amygdalae, the brain’s almond-shaped fear centres, and kill cells in the hippocampus. Interestingly, young people are not as interested in driving or even getting their licences as they used to be, as vehicles are a serious impediment to our ability to text, tweet, post Facebook updates, watch mobile TV or get work done.

In order to reduce traffic, Paris introduced the Carte Orange in 1975, a public transportation pass that morphed into a combination of transport and identity card over the years. For a monthly fee, it authorizes unlimited travel on all of the city’s public transportation. Gradually, the card underwent upgrades and now the unemployed get free access; it provides freedom and mobility for all. It could be argued that the card is shaping the city’s culture. Similarly, there is the provision of more than 20,000 bicycles at 1,250 stations around the central city – the Velib. Unclick a Velib from its hitching post and it is yours for half an hour, virtually free. It is this attitude that helps Parisians simultaneously contribute to saving the environment and become freer by owning less. For many people living in capitalist societies, the ‘right not to own things’ sounds like ‘deprivation’ in disguise. Heroes, pundits and presidents have advised us that we will risk democracy itself if we stop shopping. As a more psychosocial philosophy gradually develops guiding mutually beneficial transactions, we will come to observe more changes in user culture and in trust among strangers.

In 2010, Copenhagen created a design for a new power plant to generate heat and electricity by burning the city’s rubbish. They called this phenomenon ‘hedonistic sustainability’, based on the idea that a sustainable city can also improve its quality of life. This waste to energy power plant combined green energy production with a ski hill for mountain-deprived Copenhageners. It is an example of an energy plan, a climate plan, an economic plan, a jobs plan and a corrective strategy for a weak system, as the old system has generally begun to endanger both the health of the planet and the wellbeing of its inhabitants and descendants. Globally, many people are now pursuing a different kind of happiness via the dramatic, transformative game plan of urban activism.

I have to commend Montgomery for his conscientious devotion to such a crucial set of notions, but personally, as a psychologist with a speciality in the consciousness of schizophrenia, I thought perhaps the design of psychiatric asylums and the perspective of the contemporary insane might have been considered. However, this omission is nothing new. It has been said that schizophrenia is ‘the sacred symbol of psychiatry’, yet it is well known that schizophrenics are in fact some of the most vulnerable, poor citizens in today’s society. Kiyo Izumi (1971) interestingly has taken L.S.D. as an architect to design facilities for the care of the mentally ill. On reading this tome from cover to cover, I was reminded of the rare title by John Curtis Gowan (1974), *Development of the Psychedelic Individual*, a valuable psychological treasure trove of self-actualization.

Montgomery unquestionably highlights relevant ideas for the future of all mankind. *Happy City* will change the way you think about urban life and is a universal wake up call for the human race. Is this an essential title for the existential analysts? Yes. In their daily work with standard clientele, this work might be of use to ground the analysand in the reality and companionship of civilization. I think the knowledge contained within these pages is applicable to every individual on their quest to individuation in the world of inter-psyche recovery and cognitive nourishment. I recommend this volume as a thoroughly well-researched, agreeably written title for existential colleagues.

Gregory M. Westlake

References

- Aaronson, B. & Osmond, H. (1971). *Psychedelics: The uses and implications of hallucinogenic drugs*. London. Schenkman Publishing Company.
 Gowan, J.C. (1974). *Development of the Psychedelic Individual*. California. California State University.

A Ghost Story

Dir. David Lowery (2017)

Who would have thought that so much emotion, heartache and loneliness could be portrayed by an Oscar-winning actor who for the most part is covered by a sheet with only two black holes as eyes, that somewhat cheesy but familiar representation of all things ghostly? *A Ghost Story* is an intriguing reflection on time, loneliness, memory, existence, death and grieving not from the perspective of those left behind, but instead, unusually, from those who have died. The DVD cover and movie poster carry the strapline ‘It’s all about time’ and indeed *A Ghost Story* is very much a meditation on the theme. Even though it clocks in at only ninety minutes,