

In Chapter 11 there is hope of some empirical support through a report on the "Swabian study of AIDS phobics." Telephone calls to an AIDS hotline were "recorded in a rather unstructured form" (p. 116) and demographic data from 60 calls judged to be possibly phobic "in the opinion of the counsellor" (p. 116) were presented. As the author/editor notes, "our data is to some extent incomplete. Interpretations should accordingly be rather guarded." Better yet, it should never have been published at all.

Devoid of any substantive content, this small volume is remarkable only for its opportunism. It is simplistic, both in theory and in content. Conceivably this volume could have provided an empirical-base or a prospective conceptual framework for its topic. Unfortunately, it does neither, leaving the reader unconvinced that "AIDS phobia" is a clinically or socially significant problem. As one author notes, there is "no satisfactory empirical knowledge from which to create a definitive picture of AIDS phobia" so that "no diagnostic criteria of the AIDS phobia syndrome are available" (p. 79) — a statement amply supported throughout the book and one which raises reasonable question about the value of this volume.

REFERENCE

- Bor, R., Perry, L., & Miller, R. (1989). *Strategies for counselling the "worried well" in relation to AIDS*. Discussion paper presented to The Royal Society of Medicine.

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Attribution Theory in Clinical Psychology. By F. Försterling. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1988. 202 pp. \$54.95 (hardcover).

Interest in how people explain the causes of events swept through social psychology in the 1970s, resulting in a loose grouping of theories and findings known collectively as attribution theory. Interest in attribution theory is now sweeping through clinical psychology as well. To date, many discussions of how attribution theory applies to clinical phenomena have looked at the attributional causes, consequences, and correlates of psychopathology. The present volume by Friedrich Försterling attempts to go beyond these discussions by taking as its goal the explication of how attribution theory is relevant to psychotherapy.

This book is a translation (and expansion) of one published in Germany in 1986. The translation by Jonathan Harrow is a good one, with no awkward phrases or words to be found. Ten chapters are organized into four sections, dealing in order with attributions and their antecedents; the consequences of attributions; attributional change; and attribution in therapy. The book is attractive and well-produced, with a detailed table of contents and a useful index.

In terms of its content, the book has several strong points. First, Försterling makes and underscores a distinction between two attribution traditions: the first concerned with the causes of attributions and the second with their consequences.

His recommendation that these two traditions be considered together in understanding the role of attribution in clinical psychology is an important one.

Second, he grapples with how "reality" affects attributions and their consequences. Many attribution theorists and researchers seem to regard an attribution as an arbitrarily entertained projection that can be readily changed, but Försterling avoids falling into this trap.

Third, the book introduces to an English-speaking audience the work of the German researcher Wulf-Uwe Meyer, who studies how the nuances of social interaction implicitly communicate attributional judgments. So, kindness in some circumstances may undercut one's sense of competence, because it implies that the person lacks required abilities. These ideas make attributional research more truly social than it usually is.

Fourth, the book is at its best in discussing how attributional notions, and particularly those of Meyer, clarify the ongoing business of psychotherapy. This material is contained mainly within the fourth and final section of the book, and I found this discussion provocative.

At the same time, I was disappointed with Försterling's book. Only one section out of four contained really new ideas. The first two sections of the book present a competent overview of attributional work, but there exist better and more current discussions of this literature (e.g., Weiner, 1986). The third part, on attributional change, previously appeared as an article in *Psychological Bulletin* (Försterling, 1985). What this leaves is about 50 pages of text, made available to the prospective reader at one dollar per page! Försterling's examples were too few and too simple. There was a seeming reticence to grapple with controversies within the attributional literature. Much more could have been done with the topic of this book.

Upon finishing reading this volume, I was left with some intriguing insights about attributions in psychotherapy but also with two nagging questions. Why did Försterling write this particular book and not the more elaborate and original contribution of which he is capable? And why did Wiley offer the book at such an outrageous price?

REFERENCES

- Försterling, F. (1985). Attributional retraining: A review. *Psychological Bulletin*, **98**, 495-512.
Weiner, B. (1986). *An attributional theory of emotion and motivation*. New York: Springer.

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