

The Comforts of Unreason

Dorothy Rowe

Dorothy Rowe (1930-2019) was a philosopher, author and clinical psychologist and a beacon for oppressed women.

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In my salad days when I was green in judgement, I believed that universal enlightenment was possible. I saw that the body of human stupidity far outweighed the body of human knowledge and wisdom with the result that just about all of the vastness of human suffering derived not from natural causes but from what we do to one another and to ourselves. However, I believed that the forces of unreason (the kind of thinking which results when fear, greed, vanity and the desire for power are allowed to prevail over logic and scientific thinking), could be exposed for what they were and thus defeated. I thought that psychotherapy would be the means by which this would happen. Through psychotherapy we would come to understand that all we know is what we have constructed, and that out of this understanding we would develop new ways of living together based on tolerance, mutual dignity and knowledge informed by the search for truth rather than the fulfilment of desires.

Now I know that this has not occurred and might never occur. I no longer see psychotherapy as being as profound as I once thought it was. Moreover, the forces of unreason are not so easily routed, and, when they do suffer a defeat in some area of experience the forces quickly regroup and capture other territory. This happens because not only do these forces serve to keep power in