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Dyspeptic Definitions

Igor D. Radovic
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Both philosophical and funny, this book of "definitions" is a delightful box of chocolates that can be enjoyed as an occasional treat.

Igor D. Radovic offers an A-to-Z dictionary of wit and wisdom in a book readers can flip open and browse to find tidbits of humor, irony, and personal insight. It's been done before, certainly, most remarkably in Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary*. Radovic characterizes his offering as "barbed," "caustic," and "a stream of prickly observations." Note Radovic's own definition of sarcasm: "n: 1: mockery that uses humor the better to cut, and is used by humor the better to amuse 2: irony or wit with jagged edges not filed down."

Radovic's intellect and drive are evident. His philosophical nature is manifest in his nearly three pages of definitions of "truth," a noun for which he finds eighty-four different meanings. Many are sardonic—"what must forever compete for recognition and acceptance with oblivion, ignorance, and deceit"—and others are serious: "what a pilgrim seeks, what a prophet has found, and a cynic has given up on."

The author is an educated and accomplished person of wide experience. He was born in the former Yugoslavia, earned a doctorate in the United States, and served several years with the United Nations. Considering Radovic has lived under both Nazi and Communist rule and then toiled around the world for peace, perhaps it is not wrong to suggest a measure of sophisticated world-weariness in one of his definitions of "world politics": "n. 1: stage on which talking is not getting any easier, but fighting is becoming ever more costly and perilous."

It is amusing to find definitions within definitions—for example, in Radovic's definition of "truth," he uses the word "ignorance." With a quick shuffle through the pages, readers will find the following among the twenty-one definitions of ignorance: "n: 9: what allows many a speaker to discourse freely and with authority on any topic."

Dyspeptic Definitions is a fun read, but it does not lend itself to a two- or three-hour session and would be better employed as a random sampler. The volume has a playful air, as seen in one of Radovic's definitions of "intelligent": "adj: 4: one who can play the fool better than a fool can fake intelligence." There is, however, a more serious side to the text that might encourage readers to reflect on life. It is evident Radovic has spent many years writing and many more in contemplation.

What Radovic is offering here could be called a literary and philosophical box of chocolates. It's not something to be enjoyed as a meal, but these aphorisms, definitions, and assorted observations can be a delightful occasional treat.

GARY PRESLEY (October 1, 2013)

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