

## **Five portraits of the other**

This paper focuses on the attitudes towards others in a selection of some of the most influential existential and existential phenomenological writers: Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Boss. The aim is to move towards practice and to prepare for an appraisal and development of existential therapy. It is not possible to make an exhaustive analysis of all the relevant writers nor to discuss practice in detail in this paper. However, the strategy below is to read these writers in a hermeneutic way and to present condensed conclusions on their approach to the other as indicating a range of possibilities. The purpose of the paper is to raise pertinent questions and not to close off the discourse of existential therapy. The key thought of the paper can be expressed as the question: “What is an adequate understanding of human beings, sufficient for the practice of psychotherapy?” The answer to such a question means identifying inadequate or inappropriate understanding that would make therapy more difficult or hinder it in various of ways.

Kant is famous for beginning the form of thinking known as transcendental philosophy, a philosophy of limiting the ambition of theory, considering the conditions of possibility prior to action and providing rational justification with respect to the cosmos of human understanding. This paper notes that there is a progression in the following series: Kant, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Boss. When it is realised how influential Kant has been - not only do the links and differences between the writers above become clearer, further links to Freud, Binswanger, and the hermeneutic readings of Freud such as Ricoeur (1970), Habermas (1971), George Klein (1976) can also be contextualised. This paper could not mention all the detailed textual support required to bring the similarities and contrasts between all these writers. Yet it does hope to contextualise them and make a self-reflexive turn concerning the positions held by the five thinkers with respect to how existential therapy approaches its clients. First of all, it is necessary to sketch some of Kant’s influence.

## **The role of philosophy**

Since Kant, it is the job of philosophy to decide on the proper extent of human understanding. To describe or be aware, without rationalising, interpreting and concluding, is not philosophy. Kant stated his position as a focus on the conditions for the possibility of human beings attending to

sense and meaning of what appears. The central sense of “transcendental” can be understood from the following.

I apply the term *transcendental* to all knowledge which is not so much occupied with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects, so far as this mode of knowledge is possible *a priori*. A system of such concepts would be called *Transcendental Philosophy*... a transcendental critique, because it aims not at the enlargement, but at the correction and guidance of our knowledge, and is to serve as a touchstone of the worth or worthlessness of all knowledge *a priori*, is the sole object of our present essay.

CPR, p 43/B 25.

From the above, it is clear that the conditions that enable something to be understood are what is at stake. Determining these necessary limits is achieved *a priori*, before beginning any actual endeavour. Kant identified a tendency for over-ambitiousness of claims and desired to curtail such a tendency. For him, reason must overcome the tendency to ignore its own limits and self-reflexively identify the ability to take wrong turns. He demanded a standardised protocol for answering questions.

A cursory view of the present work will lead to the supposition that its use is merely *negative*, that it only serves to warn us against venturing, with speculative reason, beyond the limits of experience... But this, at once, assumes a *positive* value, when we observe that the principles with which speculative reason endeavours to transcend its limits, lead inevitably, not to the *extension*, but to the *contraction* of the use of reason, inasmuch as they threaten to extend the limits of sensibility, which is their proper sphere, over the entire realm of thought, and thus to supplant the pure (practical) use of reason.

p 18-19/B xxii-iii.

In the above, Kant stated his call for reason to be distinguished from its absence. Transcendental philosophy, by means of its critique, has the function of correcting inadequate manners of knowing in two ways. It provides discipline: “The *restraint* which is employed to repress, and finally to extirpate the constant inclination to depart from certain rules, is termed *discipline*”, (p 468/B 736). It provides censorship: “This procedure, of subjecting the *facta* of reason to examination, and, if necessary, to disapproval, maybe termed the *censura* of reason”, (p 495/B 788). Kant requested

coherence between scientific and philosophical practices as they refer to objectivities and phenomena that are publicly observable. “If truth consists in the accordance of knowledge with its object, this object must be, *ipso facto*, distinguished from all others; for knowledge is false if it does not accord with the object to which it relates, although it contains something which may be true of other objects”, (p 73/B 82). However, the purpose of the paper is not to make fully explicit the Kantian inheritance in existential writing. There are works which enable readers to make plain these topics (Gardner, 1999). Rather, a short series of questions and answers are provided in order to set the scene.

In answer to the question, “what should psychotherapy concepts do to aid practice?” The response is that they should enable therapists to meet their clients and understand them. If concepts made a relational, affective or other ‘distance’ of any kind, whereby clients could not get help or therapists come to mis-understand, then a helpful encounter may not be achieved. (There might even be a purposeful role of intellectualising therapeutic work in order to keep the feelings of clients from ‘contaminating the therapists’ but that possibility must be dealt with elsewhere). The main thrust of philosophy after Kant is to work on how concepts are effective or not and to understand how humans understand from the safety of the philosophers’ armchair. There cannot be any testing of ideas against psychosocial reality, for that is the job of empirical research. So for philosophy to be pursued for psychotherapy, logical coherence becomes discussion of emotional and relational coherence and the consequence of the practice of ideas.

The second question is “how would we know whether a therapeutic concept worked or not?” The answer provided here is that an idea would have to be related to the aims and nature of therapy and the latter would have to be specified. The third question is “what are the aims of therapy?” The answer given here is according to the possibility that there are causes and effects. The special form of “cause” here is not the type of cause that operates within natural being, that an outcome cannot be otherwise, but rather that there is an influence or motivation. Three kinds of cause can be identified:

1. Socially mediated motivations from all contact with others that may become engrained and habituated and be understood by self as parts of self that cannot change. It includes the on-going presence of the social past. Socially mediated motivations are those of folk psychology, the ordinary understanding of emotional and relational life of the non-psychotherapist, understood in the context of the conditions of possibility of a society, culture or family.
2. Personal choice, free will and personal preference exist in connection with habituated constraint in the individual. Personal choice can be understood in the context of the conditions of possibility of personal conscience and social context.

3. Cause in the material sense is due to physical inheritance and predisposition. Material cause in human beings is understood in the context of the conditions of possibility shown by the psychobiology that indicates mental and physical freedom and constraint.

Returning to the question of how we would know whether a therapy concept worked or failed, can also be asked in the context of how it reaches clients. The fourth attempt to phrase a pertinent question to this inquiry is then “How would we know whether therapy understood its clients or not?” Again, a question asked from the comfort of the armchair of thought, rather than in the heat of the moment when a therapist or client is confused or caught up in something they do not understand, emotionally nor relationally. The answer this paper provides is to claim that the key point is to have a theory of how the perspectives of clients and therapists co-relate, in the same relationship and conversation, according to the same topic they discuss. Without such a theory, then the centrality of dialogue and the face-to-face encounter will be missed or excluded. Such a perspective would be related to the other in a way that can capture an adequate understanding of humanity in the psychotherapy situation. In order to appraise if existential therapy, or indeed any kind of transcendental philosophical approach to therapy is sufficient or not, it will have to consider the conditions of possibility of therapy concepts as they lie between professional and client. This is with respect to understanding other persons and so making tangible the nature of the influence of the past, the nature of emotional contact between the two or more parties involved, the way in which the relationship is understood from a position which is neither wholly the clients’ nor the therapists’ instantaneous sense of the interaction as it unfolds. The topics under consideration for therapy usually focus on the generalised sense of other persons that clients have, ‘transference,’ on the affective state or manner of relating or thinking that can be interpreted from the presence of clients. In order to make this work more precise, something needs to be said of the type of activities that occur in therapy. Specifically, but not exclusively, the following mutual tasks are meant:

Making links between events, thoughts and feelings in a way that has not occurred for clients but is apparent from the perspective of therapists.

Suggesting possible ‘causes,’ that means possible influential or motivating factors for people feeling and acting in ways that appear to clients.

Relating past occurrences in clients’ lives to their problematic sensitivities in the present.

Understanding the problems of clients in new contexts where what seems nonsensical or unrelated to them is made clear by the affective and relational perspective of therapy.

Helping clients to not miss their own strengths.

Helping clients to undo reifications of their self-image and their generalised sense of other people. Perhaps through appreciating their own strengths rather than fixating on themselves as weak, under attack, unlovable, bad or useless.

Entering into non-dogmatic dialogue about the above and analysing emotional and relational situations together with a view to enabling the client to make better decisions and promote their quality of life.

Let us look at some of the most influential writers in existential therapy to see what sort of answers they have provided.

### **Jasper's hermeneutics in the *General Psychopathology***

Jasper's comments on the hermeneutic circle emphasised the continual possibility of the re-contextualisation of any interpretation. It is worth noting his hermeneutic stance because it was a precursor to Heidegger. In 1913, Jaspers asserted six principles which are interlocking, if not repetitive.

a) Understanding "meaning demands other methods than those of the natural sciences", (*General Psychopathology*, p 355). All "*empirical* understanding is an *interpretation*:" Therefore, hermeneutics is ubiquitous (p 357).

b) The whole contextualises each of its non-self-sufficient moments: "Understanding therefore will push on from the isolated particular to the whole and it is only in the light of the whole that the isolated particular reveals its wealth of concrete implications", (p 356-7).

c) The hermeneut should not decide on any specific understanding too hastily. Ambiguity is a phenomenon that needs addressing. Human being contains such ambiguities and contradictions. "We should always look out for possible ambiguities", (Op cit).

d) Hermeneutic re-interpretability is forever open and not capable of being closed: "all phenomena are open to *unlimited interpretation and reinterpretation*", (p 356). Therefore, understanding is inconclusive because of hermeneutic re-interpretability. Predictions and hypothesis testing lie outside of the sphere of psychology and psychiatry. "If understanding is inconclusive, then our predictions of what someone will do or how he will behave are equally so", (p 358).

e) Although hermeneutic re-interpretability occurs, and all topics are open to it, it is possible to become more certain concerning specific understandings. "Multiplicity" of "unlimited possibilities of interpretation... does not necessarily imply haphazard uncertainty but can mean a flexible movement within the range of possibility that leads to an increasing certainty of vision", (Op cit). It follows that rationality exists and that some interpretations can be shown to be better or worse than others. Although there is re-interpretability there is not chaos or a loss of distinguishable criteria for making distinctions.

f) Jaspers believed that it is possible to distinguish between truth and falsity (p 359). For him, phenomenology is about "understanding which illuminates" and "makes us positively conscious of

what is”. The representation of the nature of the relationship is also borne out by being able to judge between different types of relations.

Phenomenology for Jaspers meant “purely an *empirical method of enquiry* maintained solely by the fact of *patients’ communications*... The object of study is non-existent for the senses and we can experience only a representation of it... Description demands the creation of systematic categories, as well as demonstration of relationships and orderly sequences on the one hand and of sporadic appearances, unheralded and unforeseen, on the other”, (p 55, fn). What he meant was that he wanted phenomenology to be a focus on the full range of human experiences and to be understood as intentional and meaningful rather than chaotic. He acknowledged that the consciousness of the other does not appear, so that only conscious communication can be studied. The scope of the approach for psychotherapy practice should be sufficient to spot regular, definitive patterns and be capable of including and accounting for novel, unique and idiosyncratic occurrences. The consequence for those who accept these tenets is to side with Jaspers in concluding that personality is *inconclusive* in a hermeneutic sense. “Personality is always inconclusive and points on to something else”, (p 431). “The quality of a man can never be stated with absolute certainty as to the future and, so far as the actual manifestation has gone, can only be fixed in retrospect by ignoring the play of chance and free decision. Personalities are never whole and conclusive. If they were, they would be without life and potentiality, one-sided and stultified, grown into an automaton”, (p 434). “We cannot say whether the theoretical concepts of what may underlie everything do approximate to what ‘really is’ or to what ‘is properly there’. *There is no valid theory of psyche, only a philosophy of existence*”, (p 551). This latter sentence seems to support the idea that force of non-empirical stance alone is sufficient to be correct or acceptable. Self-reflexively, to accept hermeneutics is to be aware of what interpretative strategy or preferences are being taken towards a specific situation in terms of making sense of it.

The point of this section was to illustrate that the influence of Dilthey was at large in the German speaking world of mental health long before Heidegger and the work of Jaspers has a post-modern quality to it.

### **Special hermeneutics of the other in *Being and Time* and other works**

Because of Heidegger’s influence in the field of existential therapy, more details of his stance are provided than the other writers considered. Heidegger was at pains to point out that his philosophy is not a “psychological” or “anthropological” ontic (non-ontological) analysis. The a priori analytic of Da-sein finds the ontological essences or *existentialia* of Da-sein prior to any empirical

investigation. His focus is ontology and the concrete showing of “the actual exhibition of the determination of Da-sein as thematized” and so finding “*existentialia*”, parts of the Being of Da-sein. It follows the aim of determining the “characteristics of being of Da-sein”, (*Being and Time*, §9, p 42) such as finding its dimensions or nature as taking-care, being-with, worldliness, distancing, making room, concern with others, the inauthentic mode of living in the they, attunement, understanding, projecting a world, meaning, discourse, truth and temporality. Terms such as “existential analysis,” fundamental ontology” and “phenomenology of Da-sein” or “hermeneutics of facticity” are all equivalent in that they concern Da-sein’s modes of Being, understood in a non-empirical manner. Heidegger tried to oust Kant by raising anew “*the question of the meaning of being*” with the aim of interpreting “*time as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of being*”, (p xix), where “horizon” means perspective, and links to the historical horizon should be forged (§§72-77). Almost forty years later, Heidegger continued to explain that his analytic of Da-sein, as expressed in *Being and Time*, was not the same as Daseinsanalysis and could not be used for “laying the foundation for a philosophical anthropology”, (*Zollikon Seminars*, p 125).

In brief, Heidegger wanted to grasp the nature or being of human existence a priori, what was always already there for ordinary persons understood across history. He made statements that are similar to Kant’s transcendental arguments in that they are analytic interpretations of what must be the case and that they are hard to contradict because of the generality of their phrasing. For Heidegger, even pre-predicative or pre-reflexive ‘understanding’ or presence is already interpreted in some way as something. “We are able to grasp beings as such, as beings, only if we understand something like *being*. If we did not understand, even though at first roughly and without conceptual comprehension, what actuality signifies, then the actual would remain hidden from us”, (*Basic Problems in Phenomenology*, p 10). Being is understood in a pre-reflexive way: “The essential feature in every science, philosophy included, is that it constitutes itself in the objectification of something already in some way unveiled, antecedently given. What is given can be a being that lies present before us, but it can also be being itself in the pre-ontological understanding of being”, (p 281). Despite what is written concerning the pre-reflexive nature of human action, when it comes to philosophical analysis prior to psychology or psychotherapy, historical comparisons of reference are the most important topic. It is necessary to show contemporary inadequacies by making evident the ancient Greek meanings of current words and actions. This always privileges the ancient Greek over the contemporary. Sections 25 to 27 of *Being and Time* contain brief mentions of the approach to the other which is stated in brief below. Heidegger’s perspective is made along object-related lines, not intentional ones because he claimed that it is necessary to understand being before intentionality. In section 26 there are hints concerning what a hermeneutic and ontological

phenomenological approach to the other would be. The “special hermeneutic...will have to show how the various possibilities of being of Da-sein themselves mislead and obstruct being-with-one-another and its self-knowledge, so that a genuine “understanding” is suppressed”, (p 117). His approach can be summarised into three points.

1. There is false understanding when Da-sein understands itself as a separate person, a thing or an undifferentiated, alienated, self-ignorant being who blindly lives alongside others. Otherwise, the shortcomings of epistemology allegedly neglect “the existential analytic of Da-sein in general, they do not even attain the basis for a phenomenally secured problematic. Nor is this *basis* to be attained by subsequent phenomenological improvements of the concept of subject and consciousness... idealism constructs the interpretation of reality in a vacuum”, it is alleged (p 192). In the ontic understanding of empathy, there is a mystery about the immanence of oneself and the transcendence of the other. There is presumed to be some gap between any two persons’ consciousness. For Heidegger, this is an ontologically mistaken and unjustifiable belief that remains based on an ontic understanding blindly accepted from inauthentic Da-sein, the they, the alienated and alienating mob of contemporaries.

2. The correct understanding is that people always already understand each other, that there is a primordial, pre-reflexive understanding, before conscious attention can turn to it. Da-sein is already empathic in its pre-reflexive being. Primordially, there is merger in human being. Heidegger recapped the insistence of gaining the right research attitude in the following words: “along with understanding there is always already projected a *particular possible being with the others* and a *particular possible being toward intraworldly beings...* it is equally wrong to suppose that the problem is seen in principle and progress made toward answering it if the solipsism of the isolated ego is replaced by a solipsism en deux in the I-thou relationship. As a relationship between Da-sein and Da-sein this has its possibility only on the basis of being-in-the-world”, (BPP, p 278). What he meant was that the everyday experience of social life should be understood as a precondition for philosophy or human science of any kind. The main point to grasp is that just as in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the pre-reflexive constitution of all Being exists in the understanding of Da-sein because Da-sein is the only one who understands.

3. Conclusion: Being-with is a condition for the possibility for ontic empathy and not vice versa. ““Empathy” does not first constitute being-with, but is first possible on its basis, and is motivated by the prevailing modes of being-with in their inevitability”, (BT, p 117). Da-sein’s Being enables ‘surface’ intersubjectivity to exist. This is because it is important to focus on what must exist at the ontological level, *before* any possible consideration of any specific interaction at a natural attitude, surface, psychological or ‘empathic’ level.



The *Zollikon Seminars* confirm some of the long-standing aspects of Heidegger's stance that have not changed over the years since 1927. Seeing Being is an interpretation of the ontic, the appearance as it shows the ontological in the phenomena. Because no details of how to interpret are provided. It seems that Heidegger is suggesting that psychotherapists can feel free to read off what is there and this is not problematic. Let us look at what instructions are given to readers about encountering Being: "Nonsensory, imperceptible phenomena, for example, the existence of something, are *ontological* phenomena", (p 6). "We also "see" [phenomenologically] that existence is not a quality of the table as a table; nevertheless, existence is predicated of the table when we say it *is*. This is ontological evidence", (p 7). "I see the existing table immediately, but I do not see existing as such. There are two kinds of phenomena: ontic and ontological. The phenomenon of *being* is the condition for the possibility for the appearance of the ontic, for the appearance of beings as beings... only when "existing" as such has somehow become evident to us without being apprehended explicitly has the nonperceptible phenomenon of existing dawned upon us", (p 187). The ontological is dependent on the ontic: "When understood historically, the relationship between ontic interpretation and ontology is always a correlative relationship insofar as new *existentialia* are discovered from ontic experience", (p 207). Heidegger stated that consciousness assumes some fore-conception of the being of Da-sein. Therefore, Da-sein's being-in-the-world must be ascertained first. Any ontic knowledge is "always already" formed within the openness of Da-sein's transcendence towards Being of all kinds. In 1965 Heidegger concluded that any...

...talk about being-related...is misleading because it seduces us with the idea of two polar [merely] present-at-hand subjects, who subsequently must establish a relationship between their respective ideas, in their respective consciousness to one another. Thereby, this concept of "relationship" obstructs the engagement of our true relationship to others... The often quoted psychological theory of empathy rests on this obviously incorrect concept. This theory starts by imagining an Ego in a purely Cartesian sense...thus discovering that the other is a human being as well in the same sense of an *alter Ego*.

ZS, p 111-2.

What he was stating was that the lived experience of being-with others indicates the ontological nature of Da-sein and concepts which do not grasp this stand in the way of encountering others, rather than promoting such contact. Furthermore, the "traditional, psychological theory that one perceives another human being through "empathy" and through "projection" of oneself into the other does not mean anything because the ideas of empathy and projection always already

presuppose being-with the other and the being of the other with me. Both already presuppose that one has already [existentially] understood the other as another human being; otherwise, I would be projecting something into the void”, (p 162). Rather, the orthodox concept of transference should be replaced by the genuine understanding of human relationship as “specific attunement” where this “ontological disposition [*Befindlichkeit*] or attunement [*Gestimmtheit*] is a basic character of *Da-sein* and belongs to every comportment. Every comportment is always already in a certain attunement beforehand”, (p 165). The upshot is that understanding another is a here and now occurrence like perception.

When the stress is on the role of fore-conception and hermeneutics, it is difficult how to take the introductory remark that “phenomenology” is “to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself”, (BT, p 30). It seems to become permission to ignore hermeneutics and the self-reflexivity that it brings and so is contradictory with the explicit hermeneutic instructions of sections 31 to 33. When Heidegger spoke at the *Zollikon Seminars*, he seemed to state that interpretation involves the “necessary circle of all *hermeneutics*”, (ZS, p 125).

The problem with the above is that section 26 states the problem well but does not carry out the special hermeneutic in detail with respect to intentional processes nor with respect to sense of self and other in detail. Therefore, the reader is left without a detailed answer. To state that the pre-reflexive presence of the other is always already present is not an answer to the question of how it is there or how it is constituted. Accordingly, the reader is left hanging. Furthermore, the discussion is universal and not specific to the psychotherapy situation, even one which would like to learn from Heidegger’s ontology.

### **Sartre and the other in *Being and Nothingness***

The writing of Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* is without details and references. Because he indiscriminately commented on Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Freud and Heidegger, and others, the reader has to know the work of these writers in order to understand what is being commented on. Accordingly, it becomes possible to mistake when Sartre is voicing his own beliefs, criticising others, agreeing with a point and so forth. Two things are clear. First, Sartre refuted some of the beliefs of the Kantians because they were “preoccupied with establishing the universal laws of subjectivity which are the same for all, [and] never dealt with the question of *persons*”, (*Being and Nothingness*, p 225). Second, *Being and Nothingness* is not an acceptable critique or development

concerning the *Cartesian Meditations* because Sartre failed to understand some of the basic points concerning Husserl's stance. So when Sartre criticised Husserl, he criticised a series of beliefs that Husserl never held. The comments on the other as self-reifying and self-deceiving can be gleaned from the account of the young girl and the waiter (pp 50-64) and the culmination of the existential psychoanalysis (pp 557-616) reaches a peak in (pp 567-9).

Yet there are some novel elements to *Being and Nothingness* and these are similar in spirit to the hermeneutic difficulties mentioned by Jaspers. For instance, intersubjectivity cannot provide "universal knowledge" because of the "ontological separation" between self and other. For Sartre, any two persons are free to act and do not influence each other nor bear any relation to the other in any way of being able to control, stand against or for, or in other ways communicate or share meaning: "between the Other-as-object and Me-as-subject there is no common measure, no more than between self-consciousness and consciousness of the Other... No universal knowledge can be derived from the relation of consciousnesses. This is what we call ontological separation", (p 243). For Sartre, each for-itself in animate being cannot have intentional relations (it cannot be open to the world in Heidegger's terms). "The Other is first the permanent flight of things toward a goal which I apprehend as an object at a certain distance from me but which escapes me inasmuch as it unfolds about itself its own distances", (p 255). In making these comments he was arguing that the other 'takes' the self 'outside itself'. The other de-centres the self and takes it towards that which is not, as well given as the givenness of the self is to self.

Sartre made three initial basic claims:

[1] The realist who believes that he apprehends *the Other* through his body considers therefore that he is separated from the Other as one body from another body, which means that the ontological meaning of the negation contained in the judgement, "I am not Paul," is of the same type as that of the negation contained in the judgement, "the table is not the chair"... [2] The knowing subject can neither limit another subject nor cause itself to be limited by another subject... [3] Only a witness external both to myself and to the Other could compare the image with the model and decide whether it is a true one.

p 231.

Let us take these points one at a time. Firstly, to understand the other through their body is classed as a realist position and that ordinary logic applies. This is not the case for any intentional semiotics. Secondly, freedom and the inability to constrain human being are assumed. This is clearly not the case from the cases of slavery, inculcating fear, manipulation and the sexual abuse of

children. Thirdly, Sartre precluded the possibility that it is possible to adopt a new perspective or the perspective of another. Again, this is clearly untrue. If clients could grasp their freedom to understand and act differently, there would be no psychological problems and hence no therapists.

The hermeneutic of the sense of the other in Sartre begins with the idea that a human totality or world never appears (p 225). He has a point here in that the human totality is a difficult set of positions to grasp and that the human sciences are on tricky ground. Sartre also agreed with Heidegger: Arguments concerning empathy “do not put the debate on its true ground: that is the Other is first *perceived* or he appears in experience as a particular form before all habitude; and in the absence of any analogous inference the fact remains that the object, signifying and perceived, the expressive form refer purely and simply to a human totality whose existence remains purely and simply conjectural”, (p 225). But Sartre did not like the inquiry into the conditions of possibility.

For Sartre, the other frustrates and defeats the desire to know: “I apprehend the relation of the green to the Other as an objective relation, but I can not apprehend the green *as* it appears to the Other. Thus suddenly an object has appeared which has stolen the world from me...The Other in the world corresponds ...to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting”, (p 255). The otherness of any specific other person is a whole, a gestalt: My “apprehension of a look turned toward me appears on the ground of the destruction of the eyes which “look at me”. If I apprehend the look, I cease to perceive the eyes”, (p 258).

In conclusion, poor attention to detail keeps readers guessing as to what Sartre is commenting on.

### **Merleau-Ponty and the other in *Phenomenology of Perception***

Again, the writing of Merleau-Ponty is almost without detail and references to those who he is commenting on. He replied to Husserl and Heidegger mainly and the reader has to know their work in order to understand if he is agreeing or disagreeing, recapping or developing. Generally, the writing style is more to the point than Sartre and although introductory, the comments are often more accurate with respect to Husserl and Heidegger. The general tendency to think that Merleau-Ponty is a better phenomenologist than Husserl is created by the fact that Merleau-Ponty is a better writer and recapped portions of *Ideas II*, *Cartesian Meditations*, *Crisis* and *Being and Time* in a relevant and accessible way. But two points need to be observed. First, Merleau-Ponty refuted Kant because the criticisms of intellectualism and “objective thought” which he deemed unacceptable for an attention to being in the world, the being of others and consciousness. Second, *Phenomenology*

of *Perception* (pp 348-364) is in broad agreement with the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation* and accepts hermeneutic openness or re-interpretability, as shown below, and criticises Sartre.

The place to start with Merleau-Ponty is his treatment of meaning as a self-sufficient whole which follows on from *Ideas I*, section 49, where Husserl was arguing that meaning and being exist for consciousness as cognised being. The starting place is to attend to the manifold ways in which consciousness intends the world and beings with other consciousness. Merleau-Ponty quite rightly asserted that “it is clear that no causal relationship is conceivable between the subject and his body, his world or his society”, (p 434), in the sense of their being natural cause-proper occurring within the sphere of meaning and its ‘causal,’ motivational, associations of sense. Merleau-Ponty agreed with Kant and Husserl that considering the world is an absolute perspective: “the whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced”, (p viii). “To return to the things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography to the country-side”, (p ix): Meaning that one should not mistake a moment for its whole.

Merleau-Ponty also believed that phenomenology involves indeterminacy and openness of perspective. As a consequence, descriptions potentially defy rational thought and are connected to ambiguity: “Thus there is in human existence a principle of indeterminacy... Existence is indeterminate in itself, by reason of its fundamental structure, and in so far as it is the very process whereby the hitherto meaningless takes on meaning... chance is transformed into reason”, (p 169). But if we agree with Kant, mere description without argument gets philosophy nowhere. Also, there is a hermeneutic problem concerning how to catch experience before egoic reflection can turn to it. It concerns how human experience can be caught in a pristine way and if this is at all possible in “finding out how to steal a march on myself and experience the unreflective as such”, (p 360). Merleau-Ponty showed his scholarship in understanding the close relation of perception, bodiliness and temporality - as portrayed in *Ideas II* and *Cartesian Meditations*. Consequently, Merleau-Ponty explained Husserl’s position by stating that the human body is a third type of being neither wholly natural nor of-consciousness. The “body withdraws from the objective world, and forms between the pure subject and the object a third genus of being...”, (p 350). Also, human bodiliness as both lived and material, *Leib-Körper*, is a part of a new whole, an intercorporeal one just as in *Ideas II* and *Cartesian Meditations*: “Henceforth, as the parts of my body together compr[om]ise a system, so my body and the other’s are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever-renewed trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously. All of which makes another living being, but not yet another man”, (*Phenomenology of Perception*, p 354). The word “comprise” makes better sense in the last excerpt

although “compromise” is what appears in the book. Therefore, “compromise” must be a typesetting error.

Finally, as concerns the other in relation to self, to be embodied is not a form of intellectual knowledge but a mode of fundamental existence: “Our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of knowledge... My body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of my ‘symbolic’ or ‘objectifying function’”, (p 140-1). “Solipsism would be strictly true only of someone who managed to be tacitly aware of his existence without being or doing anything, which is impossible, since existing is being and doing in the world”, (p 361). Human beings cannot escape one another. Meaning is social and historical.

The most interesting part of the stance of Merleau-Ponty for this paper is to agree that, to a great extent, the region of meaning and being for consciousness is governed by association of meaning, which is the nature of ‘cause’ or motivation of sense between people - and that such a region does contain within it ambiguity and a multiplicity of perspectives on the same object.

### **Daseinsanalysis and the other in the work of Boss**

One way of contextualising Boss is to compare his work to the other existentialists such as Binswanger, Jaspers, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and others. These share the common trait of replacing Freud’s metapsychology by the influence of Husserl and Heidegger. Alternatively, Boss can be understood in relation to those who oppose metapsychology whilst also keeping much of Freudian thought and practice: such as Klein, Gill and Holzman (1975) and Schafer (1976). Or in relation to those who wish to declare Freud as a successful natural scientist (Sulloway 1979, Kitcher 1992), a potentially successful scientist (Edelson 1984, Langs, (Smith 1991)), or a failure in this respect (Grunbaum 1984, Gellner 1985).

The *Zollikon Seminars* show that the perspective of Boss is not at all the same as Heidegger’s philosophy. The application of the analytic of Da-sein to interpret specific ontic phenomena, of actual experiences of persons as *existentialia*. Daseinsanalysis as a general applicable theory for understanding human beings such as in the case of the Daseinsanalysis of Boss. It functions at two levels of pathological and non-pathological. *Existentialia* are “the content [of the analytic of Da-sein]. They exactly co-determine the concrete description of a state of anxiety in a particular human being”, for instance (ZS, p 205). Actual case histories and specific applications of Daseinsanalysis show normal and abnormal examples of human beings interpreted in Heidegger’s way. Such work will be an “entire future discipline with the task of delineating the demonstrable existentiell [*existenziellen*] phenomena of the sociohistorical and individual Da-sein in the sense of ontic anthropology”, (p 125).

The form of therapy created by Boss, differs from Heidegger's philosophy in two ways. First, Boss can be read as permitting a psychological reading of *Being and Time* that produces a stance without any mention of hermeneutics or a proper attention to the other and intersubjectivity in the therapeutic relationship. Second, the English language books and papers do not make sufficient reference to the hermeneutic circle despite recent comments in this area (Holzhey-Kunz, 1997, Jaenicke, 1997). If the hermeneutic circle is often omitted then a non-relational blanket is thrown over the phenomena of the other and their perspective.

In Boss, transference and counter-transference are given short shrift. Boss criticised transference along the line that it is impossible to transfer affect in the manner that Freud claimed and that "such shiftable feelings or affects are merely constructions and do not actually exist", (*Daseinsanalysis and Psychoanalysis*, p 122). This is because Boss challenged the idea that affect can ever be distinct, split off from the whole: "Only if we assume that such thing-like, isolated, and independent feelings is it possible to imagine... that hate for a father can be detached from the father, pent up inside, and transferred to the analyst", (Op cit). Boss concluded that Freud never supplied any convincing evidence to support his theory of shiftable emotions in connection to relating to others. As a consequence, "Freud is not able to distinguish convincingly the nature of transference love from that of the genuine love of one partner for another in a normal love relationship", (p 123). A more detailed criticism is provided in a later text. First, there is the real value of the attention provided by therapists to clients: "Among adults is there any other human relationship so gratifying, any other in which one person is even half as helpful and unshakeably benevolent toward another, as that of analysts to patients?", (*Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychology*, p 268). "Instead, human beings are inherently engaged in relatedness to whatever phenomena address them from their locations in the human world and exist as these receiving and responding relationships", (p 271). Boss concluded that it is the intimacy of the therapeutic relationship that Freud was caught in and trying to explain: "No mere theory can alter this in the least, for the human relationship of physician and patient remains the very core of therapeutic action, its basis and arena, whether or not the people taking part in it are aware of its therapeutic significance", (Op cit).

In conclusion, Daseinsanalysis in Boss, there is no explicit focus on the transcendental philosophical requirement to attend to conditions of possibility. Even though Boss considered human development as being caught between past and future: "As for the future, it begins to stamp the present with increasing force for children as their curiosity grows, while in old people this future-directedness more and more declines", (Ibid, p 214). Intentionality is ignored as are the details of providing and receiving therapy and working with the relationship.

In conclusion, there is a great deal of difference between Heidegger's method of philosophical "A *priorism*", (BT, n 10, p 401) and the Daseinsanalysis of Boss. Heidegger noted the difference in the *Zollikon Seminars* but did nothing to dispel the psychological reading of his work. Distinctions concerning the forms and types of relationship are not developed in *Being and Time*, the *Zollikon Seminars* nor any of the works of Boss. Therefore, the leading question of "what is an adequate understanding of human being, sufficient for the practice of psychotherapy?" is not answered by Boss whose stance is "anthropological" or "psychological" and is not the same as Heidegger's.

## **Conclusion**

It would be difficult to attend supervision and only speak of the being of clients or what Jaspers, Binswanger, Freud and Boss wrote. The problem is one of a lack of a connection between what happens in sessions, what is the nature of cause and effect globally, and the pragmatics of how to help specific clients. The context for thinking through such relations is argued to be transcendental and a priori before making the change into empirical inquiry in the broadest possible sense of reflecting on practice, therapy and supervision. All the accounts above try to tackle the issue of the other in global terms. It is unclear why Heidegger and Boss attack Freud's metapsychology only to replace with the interpretation of Being, a non-perceptible and just as non-perceptible as the other's consciousness or unconscious, their wishes, phantasies or repression and other intangibles in psychodynamic therapy. The point being that there needs to be a very clear statement of the hermeneutic position that lifts therapy above the natural focus on material being and shows the human as sufficiently human - whatever that means.

Secondly, each of the writers noted above refute the everyday folk psychology of the lifeworld and the natural science approach to understanding consciousness, meaning and intentionality. If this is enforced as a gap, then there is no statement as to how therapy meets with the experiences, beliefs and desires of ordinary persons. One key difference between phenomenology (Husserl, Jaspers, Heidegger) and existential phenomenology (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Boss) is the acceptance or rejection of Kant's transcendental philosophy. Despite their differences, Husserl and Heidegger focused on ascertaining the conditions of possibility for concepts, by finding universal and necessary a priori through a rational analysis of intentionality and how experiences appeared and made sense in various contexts. Existential phenomenology did not make an a priori analysis and omission of the consideration of conditions of possibility leads to the danger of not staying within adequate limits. The point is to widen the scope in ascertaining how to attend to the consciousness of the other in a hermeneutic phenomenological way without



increasing the possibility of loss of contact with clients in sessions. For this paper, it is not clear why Freud's metapsychology is replaced by Boss only to have ontology and a discourse of Being replace Freud's excessive readiness to apply causative theses to the phenomena. After the above, there is now an obscured relation to Kant in the production of Daseinsanalysis, the one and only authentic influence of Heidegger on therapy.

If global theory fails to concern itself with practice and the specifics of human interactions, in therapy or outside of it, then there can only be an obscure or, at best, tenuous link to practice. If there is no account of relationships between two persons or within a group receiving therapy, then the centrality of understanding how the relationship is going is not even broached. Paradoxically, theory may not play a large role in the provision of therapy, as practitioners may be caught up in the minutiae or responding and playing a hunch which are experiences that lie outside of the grasp of global concepts. Specifically, if any account does not mention how self and other are interconnected, it fails to account for the therapeutic relationship sufficiently and cannot state what is a minimally acceptable understanding of another human being. As a consequence of this inability, it is concluded that there is no sufficient conscious understanding of the sense of, nor the relation to, the other among theories that do not focus on the relationship in therapy in a sufficient manner. As theories guide practice, the lack of attention to the other in theory means that there can only be an unclear relation to the other in practice. If existential and existential phenomenological theory does not fit with how therapy works, and what is required to understand the specific processes of interacting in therapy, then they will have difficulty in engaging clients in the instant of the interaction. This is a request for the philosopher to leave the armchair.

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