

better. In presenting a theory based on the concept of choice, Heyman is contributing to the existential psychotherapeutic literature on addiction, for those therapists on the quest for a solution.

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The Child in the World: Embodiment, Time, and Language in Early Childhood

Eva M. Simms. (2008). Detroit: Wayne State University Press

This book is at once an explanation of children's development of spatiality and embodiment, and an attempt to develop a genetic phenomenology of lived time. The approach is what the author calls a '*nondualistic existential perspective*'. It is therefore a contribution to phenomenology and to existential psychology.

Eva Simms begins by developing the nondualistic methodology via an examination of the child's relationship to breastfeeding. The phenomenon is described as one of coexistentiality, and the theme will recur several times throughout the text. Simms argues that the coexistential, nondualistic perspective is pervasive in children's lives, a finding that is explained through Simms' own experiences in breastfeeding her daughter, Lea. The role of provider showed the mother-daughter relationship to be more than a relationship of two separate wholes. Instead, '*she and my body were one*', and in fact it was her daughter, rather than Simms herself, that controlled the rhythm of milk production and consumption. This coexistential way of being exposes the illusion of separateness that so easily takes hold after parturition, argues Simms. To this extent, coexistentiality is evident in a wide variety of behaviors and relationships: the rooting reflex, the way mother and child touch, even the distance that newborns can see (12 inches) as a reflection of the distance required to see the mother's face.

It is misleading, nonetheless, to state that Simms argues for these points. Her method is intensely metaphorical and does not lend itself to a simple analysis and critique of the argument's premises and conclusions, or its validity or soundness. Instead, the book must be approached from a

mindset already open to such a methodology, lest the reader be put off by the entire affair. As Simms writes: '*We cannot grasp the importance of milk, peekaboo, or the first pointing finger until we push our language into poetry – and from there language drops our thinking into the yet-uncharted dimensions of our children's everyday lives*' (p.5). Given such methodology, it would be in bad taste to evaluate the project from the standpoints of argumentative validity and soundness. It is more subtle than that, and it suffers and benefits as a result.

The metaphorical structure of the book notwithstanding, this is not a book that is lacking in scholarly rigor. Simms relies on an established and august literature in phenomenology and existential psychology. References to the giants in the field abound: Merleau-Ponty is particularly important to the text, Ricoeur is prevalent, and Piaget provides much of the classical psychological foundation (though at times in a reworked fashion, as seen from '*the inside*' through, for example, the '*case of the vanishing [celluloid] stork*' (Ch. 4). Heidegger and Boss are present as conceptual contributors, supplying the text with many of its central notions ('*...embodiment, coexistence, spatiality, and temporality as a heuristic framework*', as Simms writes at p.73). Finally, Langeveld supplies a more contemporary background.

In spite of this venerable panorama of existentialists, phenomenologists, and child psychologists, however, there is always a lack of satisfaction for the reader that is open to the text's central notions, but is yet to be convinced. This is a book for those that agree with the book. This is a shame, for the central thesis is a controversial and by no means settled one: that in child development we see a nondualistic lived structure that thereby shows metaphysicians and phenomenologists that it is possible to use empirical findings to establish a claim in fundamental ontology. This was, after all, the Heideggerian task, and to that extent, at least, Simms' metaphorical/poetic approach does not help the theoretical thinker who comes to this text hoping for an extension of Being and Time. It does, however, help the reader who is in tune with the Heidegger of *The Thing*, one of his last works.

But then, what does the text accomplish?

There is much to be said here. In the second chapter, for example, cleverly named '*The World's Skin Ever Expanding*', we see a clear elaboration of Merleau-Pontian spatiality, in which experience itself creates space by virtue of the particular modalities of the human senses. Touch, for example, as the first sense and the one that gives meaning to the others, develops the child's spatiality by first experiencing the boundary-less depth of the womb. Rather than seeing depth as a third dimension in logical space, Simms describes the experience of the child as a pre-logical and pre-theoretical oceanic experience of the liquid environment which first defines spatiality. This description is imaginative, but it is also

nonetheless a helpful attempt to understand experience qua experience (i.e., Erfahrung).

The third chapter marks the author's step towards coexistentiality, herein understood through the lens of participatory consciousness. The role of the gesture in structuring our sense of embodiment and spatiality is important here, and Simms does a good job of knocking down the notion that geometrical space – '*...as objective, measurable, and conceptual...*' (p. 60) – has the principal claim to being "real" space, or space as "it really is." As a foil against which to view the lived dimensions of children's space, objective geometrical space is a helpful bogeyman. Even if its presence in the text serves as a kind of straw man to flail against, the principal task is to describe lived experience as such, and this task is sometimes best served by using a straw man. What's unfair as an attack might nonetheless be fair and necessary to the constructive side of the project, after all.

In the fourth and sixth chapters the reader is treated to a variety of insights into the world of thingliness and temporality. The broader project begins to come into view: to develop a genetic phenomenology of lived time via Simms' conception of a '*lived grammar*' that is not formal as in linguistics, but embodied and intersubjective. This phenomenological construction is itself a propaedeutic to the development of a new conception of childhood as historically situated.

The phenomenological perspective on temporality that is developed throughout the sixth chapter is an interesting one to the child psychologist, for it directly challenges Piaget's analysis of children's conception of time as beginning with the confusion of time with space (and vice versa) and eventually culminating in operational time, which is appropriately continuous and understood abstractly. As Simms puts it, Piaget sees this as a process of coming to abstract '*time from its qualitative context*' (p.128). No longer will the child understand time as intractably rooted in the events, needs, and feelings of the moment, but he will be able to understand it as separate from these other happenings and personal phenomena. Simms, arguing that lived time comes prior to this form of operationalization, charges the Piagetian outlook with having an occidental bias. It is time '*as it is lived and conceptualized in Western culture*' (p.131). To borrow a term that Simms does not use but which is instructive in this context, the phenomenon could be called the instrumentalization of time: time as a tool for doing, for controlling, for managing.

Lived time, however, '*does not follow the rules of physics*' (p.133). Instead, it is not '*afternoon because afternoon is always after naptime*', to cite Piaget's example of his sleepless daughter. Lived time follows the rules of the current moment as the dominant structuring element. In a way similar to the way that things are always in the act of worlding and thus structuring space, the emotional and meaning-laden structure of events temporalizes the world for us. This temporalization happens, for the child,

in a coexistential environment rather than through simple subjectivity. Even the seemingly uncontroversial notion of my ownership of past events – ‘*This is my memory, my past event*’ – gives way to the coexistentiality inherent in the thingliness of memory: that without the things in those memories of what we have experienced, there are no memories. There is therefore no escaping coexistentiality and the nondualistic perspective. Ultimately, we even see how babble can serve as a response to Ricoeur’s challenge to phenomenology in light of the post-structuralist challenge. In that context Simms develops the outline of a phenomenology that answers the linguistic challenge by reconceiving language through the unique semiology of the infant.

Granting these various steps in the book’s development leads to a fairly obvious conclusion: that childhood is always a construction of the historical epoch. It is a shame, however, that Simms chose this conclusion as the endpoint of the text, for it is such an obvious derivation that it hardly seems worth mentioning. Once again we see a relative disinterest in argumentation, in convincing.

The theme that recurs repeatedly throughout the book is nondualistic coexistentiality. This idea is intriguing and at times quite original. While an attack on dualism is obviously nothing new, and the notion of coexistentiality is at the very least present in Husserl, if not already fully developed in his later work, there is one misgiving that never seems to be addressed. The point is perhaps too obvious to mention, but here it is: can’t it simply be the case that all of these facticities of childhood – coexistentiality, nondualism, embodiment, and meaningfulness – are simply part and parcel of the child’s inexperience with the world and thus representative of his mistaken interpretation of that world? It may well be true that Simms has achieved an accurate description of lived experience (*Erfahrung*, that is, and not ‘*mere*’ *Erlebnis*), and if so she is to be praised for a keen contribution to phenomenology. But is it possible that she has instead attempted to import nondualistic coexistentiality into a structure that is indeed dualistic and subjective? Yes, the child is in some sense ‘*at one*’ with the breast and mother’s milk. But the very thirst felt by the child, and the very satiation of that thirst, speaks as much to the connectedness of two entities (and thus a dualistic subjectivity) as it does to the idea that the child is experiencing the world as boundary-less. It seems at least plausible that this is what the child is experiencing – not nondualistic coexistentiality, but a separate existence with thirsts and hungers that are sometimes fulfilled, sometimes denied by those things that the child herself is not. Unfortunately, we have here a text that does not give us a methodology by which we could adjudicate between the two positions. Which is the true description? Alas, Simms’ poetry is unwilling to mount an argument.

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Art Therapy for Groups: A Handbook of Themes and Exercises. (2nd ed.)

Marian Liebmann (2004) London: Brunner-Routledge,.

I heard Marian Liebmann speak at an SEA forum couple of years back and was so impressed by her work that I have since wanted to read her book. While Liebmann's approach is broadly integrative it gives scope for practitioners of various orientations to develop a style of art therapy that is their own, her phenomenological approach shows how to make a space available for clients to describe their experiences to others and ultimately to themselves.

This book serves several purposes, firstly, it is an introduction for those who are newly interested or beginning to do art therapy and/or group work. This being said, after running creative writing therapy groups for a number of years, I still found this part of the book illuminating and thought provoking. Secondly, the book offers basic guidelines on how to do research involving groups. Third it allows us to follow the progress of a number of groups offering an experiential feel for what can happen there. And finally it is a catalogue of ideas and themes for groups.

This is an intelligent book and the fruit of many years practice, as well as a survey of shared practice from the author's research into the experiences of other practitioners, so that the reader benefits from the trials and errors that are recorded here. I should point out that Marian Liebmann focuses on the graphic arts, stressing the pictorial and non-verbal outlets for expression. Despite my own concentration on talking and writing groups I found this a valuable read and was able to mine the book for fresh practice and themes for groups that I run.

The chapter on the basics of running a group covers familiar territory such as laying down ground rules. For example, she discusses whether to begin with a check-in or not, balancing the pros and cons. I was reminded how this not only establishes a safe environment but can also allow participants to air any immediate problems and tensions they may be

having, releasing them to work on issues that are more important or long standing. This also helps to draw boundaries around intense feelings that may or may not be explored further, ensuring that the feelings do not burst out in an overwhelming way. I saw a clear example of this in a recent group when a client checked in with the fact that on her way to the group a friend telephoned to tell her about the murder of an acquaintance. While this could be material well worth exploring, in reality it had little to do with the clients personal life and we heard more about the client's realization of how her drinking behaviour was affecting her young daughter. Such nuances about basic procedure and their underpinnings are invaluable for therapists new to group work and it acted as a reminder for myself as an experienced one.

The short but valuable chapter on research outlines methods of recording, evaluating and researching the group experience. Liebmann firmly adheres to the need for and value of evidence based practice without denying the problems and inconsistencies of doing the necessary research. The descriptions of the methods used are brief but she refers us on to further literature. She does however take time to describe a tension between the degrees of subjectivity and objectivity in the scope of qualitative evaluation, giving due space to the problem of how it is possible to measure art and health. The difficulties of quantitative research within psychotherapy in general and art therapy specifically are also assessed.

The simplicity and basic phenomenology of the exercises can be exemplified in the 'group drawing' exercise, where a large piece of paper is set up and group members simultaneously draw or paint on the sheet. Not only how participants interact while engaged in the activity but also content, use of space, colours chosen and other variables become open for discussion. More precisely and important for working existentially, Liebmann illustrates how a dialogue can be opened up along these lines. The concreteness of the artwork offers something tangible to be worked on, it allows a finite experience to be slowed down, allowing for the joints of the experience to be articulated, the *a priori* structure if you will, to be revealed and articulated. The process as a whole allows for a genuine saying that shows how one is and acts rather than merely speaking about it (Heidegger 1971:122). This quality of showing helps to clarify and bring awareness to feelings and behaviours. Furthermore Liebmann maintains this principle of showing rather than explaining in the text and in her many examples of groups and themes she presents.

It is also worth noting that a dialogic approach pervades the book offering different viewpoints on procedure. Examples of obstacles and suggestions for surmounting them are interspersed throughout the text and never heavy-handed. Liebmann's experience and her research into the

experiences of other practitioners through trial and error are lent to the reader.

She gives examples of how emotion most often increases as the artwork is talked about rather than while during its creation, however she includes the example of a woman who became upset as she saw that she depicting her isolation while she was drawing. The ways that art can bring things to light is stressed in both examples.

In her consideration of the interpretation of works of art she shows very well how interpretations are not about process and say as much about therapists' and clients' viewpoints or their frames of reference rather than about the artwork itself. She also suggests particular exercises designed to illuminate and define these frames.

There are qualities that Liebmann notes that are unique to art therapy. An example here is the quality of silence that can be experienced. She observes the value of a kind of working silence in groups that often occurs when people are engaged in making art "where non-verbal process take over". It is my own experience that silence in an art therapy group can be very different than silence in one-to-one therapy, for example it is easier to see the difference between a working silence and a stuck silence in the concrete process of the artistic activity. The role of silence and when it is counterproductive shows up Marian Liebmann's stress on her flexible approach, and placing the clients needs first. She suggests particular groups where this is valuable and where it is counterproductive. For example, a pervasive silence for a group of self-conscious adolescents or adults with learning disabilities would be unhelpful and limiting.

The last part of the book (almost half of the total pages) is a catalogue and guide of themes and exercises. It is a great reference to have on hand for anyone who does theme-based groups. It includes starting points for specific client groups, warm up exercises, groups to help with concentration, dexterity and memory, family relationships, interactive exercises, and guided imagery. There is also a section on links with other arts, such as movement drama, writing and music.

In her talk at the SEA forum, Marian Liebmann also discussed the art therapy she does with individuals and I wanted to hear more about these. This being said, many of the themes can be modified for one-to-one work, but I am hoping she will give us another volume on her work in this area

Reference

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