

until Breuer hits upon the brilliant idea that the way to treat Nietzsche is by getting Nietzsche to 'treat' Breuer as his patient.

As a novel, it works wonderfully - especially for those readers who are therapeutically informed. Yalom keeps his eye on the story proper, but still finds interesting ways to raise interesting questions about the whole enterprise of therapy. As a film, many of these 'asides' are minimised, if not entirely eliminated. Instead, it 'sexes up' the story and the various romantic relationships contained within it. It also emphasises a number of 'symbolic' fantasy passages that are, frankly, somewhat hokey.

Thinking about, and re-viewing, the film for this review, I was struck by the thought that Nietzsche has very rarely been portrayed on the screen. In fact, the only other portrayal of him that I could think of was in an obscure Italian film, *Beyond Good And Evil*, directed by Liliana Cavani in 1977 which I chanced upon in the early days of VHS video rental shops and which has since all but disappeared from view and consciousness. Actually, the actor, Armand Assante, who plays Nietzsche in *When Nietzsche Wept* does a reasonable job of it. He plays down the histrionics and doesn't keep playing with his bushy moustache just to 'emote' what a great thinker he is, as I recall was the case with the actor playing Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

So.... I know that there are a great many people - including members of this Society - who loved reading *When Nietzsche Wept*. Are they likely, as Point 2 above proposes, to be disappointed by its film version? Almost certainly, yes. But perhaps not *quite so* disappointed as they might fear. I think that Yalom's own summation is pretty accurate.

As I see it, what's best about the film, in the end, is that it reminds you of how much you enjoyed the book and that a second (or whatever number) reading might be a better option.

Ernesto Spinelli

The Case for Working with Your Hands: or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good

Matthew Crawford. (2010). London: Penguin.

This is an easy book to misunderstand, from its wacky three part title, to its folksy language. It also talks about elements of US culture that mean little to a UK audience, like 'shop-craft'. Shop-craft is explained in a special preface for UK readers as, '*training i n t h i n g s l i k e w o o d w o r k i n g, a u t o m o b i l e r e p a i r, a n d m e t a l f a b r i c a t i o n...t h a t w a s o n c e a s t a n d a r d p a r t o f t h e s c h o o l c u r r i c u l u m b u t i s l e s s s o n o w*'. It is declining in UK education too, as are the possibilities for genuine physics, chemistry and biology experiments. And sports. There is a lot of detail of motorcycle mechanics which has led it to be compared to Robert Pirsig's unique (1974) book and

also misguidedly to be labeled as a bit of a male book. He takes us through his own disillusionment with academia and his discovery of motorcycle mechanics because that is what he knows about. The subject is just an example. In fact I first became aware of the book through an article in the Guardian where the stone-carving, something I know much more about, was used as the example. It talks eloquently about the value of manual work, which opens it unfairly to accusations of idealizing a pre-industrial age, which it doesn't. One of the quotes from a review on the dust jacket says *'The best self-help book that I've ever read. Kind of like Heidegger and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance'*. Which positions it in the market, well, where? It is part autobiography, part technical manual, part political critique and part philosophy. And incidentally, not like any self-help book I've ever read.

Don't be put off, this is a book with serious academic intentions. It is properly referenced, has lengthy footnotes and an index. If the reader can manage these different aspects they will find some profound messages about the way we live and what we (seem to) find important and how we, and by implications our clients, lose track of what's important. Many of the ideas may have been stated elsewhere, but there are few completely original ideas. Just because something is new doesn't mean it's better. The book's originality comes from the way he combines them and anchors them in his own experience. And reminds us how we forget what is important.

The Introduction is a good summary of the book. He notes that the disappearance of tools from the education system is the beginning of a slippery slope to a wider ignorance of not just how things work technically, but also of our relationship with the things we make use of and incorporate into our lives. He makes good use of Heidegger in expanding this point. This simultaneous detachment from, and dependence on, the objects of everyday life makes us more passive and more reliant on the unseen and often unseeable manufacturer. Where we once made and mended, we now throw away or get an 'expert' who actually only has as much knowledge as the manual will allow him to have and is just as ignorant as us of the mechanics and more importantly is unaware of the cost to their well-being of this process. Anyone who doubts this just needs to remember the last time they phoned an internet helpline. Our mending, our repairing, makes the object personally owned because we invest a part of ourselves in it. By doing so I become more meaningfully in-the-world. A look at the high street shows that there are virtually no car spares shops around any more. People no longer buy Haynes manuals simply because cars are impossible to repair without a purpose built computer and specialist tools and anyway if you try you risk invalidating the manufacturers warranty. Cookery, gardening and decorating programmes are everywhere on TV and activities like knitting are undergoing a revival and enormous numbers of machine

tools get sold on ebay. So what's going on? Crawford's thesis is that this is not simply fashion or nostalgia, but there is '*an ideal that is timeless but finds little accommodation today: manual competence*' (p.2). It is ontological, and if it does not find a healthy manifestation it will find a pathological one in which the crucial features will be evaded, denied and mystified.

The problem with office work, he says, is that the overall task of the institution is split into so many small parts that no one has any involvement, knowledge, power or responsibility to make their mark on the product. The ability to say 'I did that'. The significant autonomous act. Personal agency has been edited out and Charlie Chaplin's message in *Modern Times* is still relevant. This is not exclusive to office work, just more prevalent.

Crawford is concerned with the experience and exercising of personal agency which he links strongly to personal meaning. The struggle for personal agency, and hence meaning, he sees at the centre of life's purpose. It has been corrupted in contemporary life in a rather Orwellian fashion and is most clear in advertising where choice and freedom are sold as a commodity. And also in the commodification and reification of sex. We forget that sex is not a thing, it's a relationship. Self realization and freedom is achieved by getting or buying something new. Redemption is achieved by winning the lottery or becoming a celebrity. The common factor is that the person's agency has not been tested or exercised. It has been subverted. This so-called freedom is not freedom at all, it is the opposite, and he cites Mercedes as claiming that a car was '*completely intuitive*' (p.60). A machine being intuitive?? There is an almost psychotic muddling and mystification of the boundaries between humanness and non-humanness, between the *pour-soi* and the *en-soi*. He continues the illustration with the example of a Mercedes (again) that has no way for the driver to check the oil level. Instead, a message appears on a screen that says simply '*service required*'. (Checking the oil requires a service??!!) The driver is not told, nor is thought worthy of being told, why the service is required and is not given the option of doing it himself. All in the name of freedom. Yes, it is a freedom from messing around with rags etc, but in a more profound sense it makes the driver more dependent on something outside his sphere of influence. The driver is in fact complicit in this reduction of freedom and is entangled in a co-dependent relationship with the car company, the dealership, the software designer, and the shareholders who together have the power to tell the owner when to buy a new car that will promise even more freedom. This sort of freedom is the holy grail, indeed it has a spiritual quality. But it is an illusion. Aided and abetted by our complicity with the state and state sponsored monopoly capital we are not becoming more intelligent, we are becoming more like '*idiots*' (p.98). He clarifies usefully that the original Greek meaning of

‘idiot’ refers not to intelligence but to privacy, someone who *‘someone who fails to grasp his public role which entails[...] a relation of active concern to others’* (p.98). Someone who does not grasp his or her being-in-the-world. Someone who fetishises individuality and specialness. This is the meaning of narcissism.

This rhetoric of freedom is seductive. A personal example - I was thinking of buying a new car recently and was momentarily seduced by an accessory that meant that the windscreen wipers went on by themselves whenever it rained. At last I was free from having turn them on myself – *Yes, I want one*. As I said, momentarily - I went off the idea when I decided I preferred the freedom to choose whether to have the wipers on or not. It’s me that’s driving this car, not the car company. It is a part of the idealization (and therefore misunderstanding) of creativity that evokes our tendency for magical thinking and delusions of omnipotence which are characteristics of narcissism. The experience of apparently faultless objects breaking is an affront to this narcissism, this ‘idiocy’, and the trust we (mis)place in the manufacturer. The trust we (mis)place in the manufacturer is the same trust we disown in ourselves. At our cost. By understanding not just how things (objects, relationships, skills etc) work but dealing with and overcoming failure by ones own actions and discovering what can be mended and what cannot, tempers the conceits of narcissism, idiocy, absolute mastery and specialness.

Removed from the process of manufacture into the anaesthetizing process of consumption we nevertheless have a basic need to own in the sense of making ones own, the objects in our world. To be in-the-world. As making our own clothes, literally making our clothes personal, becomes less common, our involvement in those things that make us ‘us’ – e.g. our clothes, degenerates into the next best thing – shopping for clothes. *At least if I can’t make my clothes, I will choose and buy my own clothes*. In the example of cars, I make a car my car by being free to choose (sic) the accessories that will make it a one-off and truly mine, and not like yours. As anyone who has worked with a client with a shopping issue knows, this is not a solution to the problem. The new item only satisfies temporarily because the gap it fills is nothing to do with clothes. It is one of a difficulty with ownership of agency. The problem is one of powerlessness and engagement with life and its vicissitudes.

These are just a few of the interlocking themes in this thought provoking book which is simultaneously extremely personal at the same time as being far reaching. His example is our example. All we have to do is provide our own example.

The relevance to therapy is clear but always subtextual.

It is about the tension, the dilemma, the paradox that the pursuit of happiness involves us in. All clients are concerned with getting an existentially truthful way of engaging with their agency in the context of an

uncertain existence which they are only minimally in control of. This is the challenge that when met will lead to a fulfilling life.

Although he talks about the value of manual work, hands are a metaphor for personal agency, the way the present-at-hand transforms into the ready-to-hand, engagement with problem solving and the ability to take a task through from beginning to end. To know from experience the qualitative difference between the beginning, the middle and the end. And to be able to persevere and succeed by one's own ability. Although psychotherapists do not work with their hands as such, what we do is equivalent in that we quickly discover how inadequate technical advice is. We work on our account. We are thrown back on our abilities with the existential choice being whether to accept the responsibility or not. If we do, we carry on, if we do not perhaps we should get a job that relies more on technique.

In order to find out the accuracy of Crawford's thesis, readers of this journal could do worse than to ask themselves what it is exactly that they find meaningful about their jobs.

References

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Martin Adams

Smile or Die: How Positive Thinking Fooled America and the World

Barbara Ehrenreich. (2009). London: Granta.

Smile or Die is a fierce, ferociously funny and learned exposé of the ideology of positive thinking, a.k.a. 'The Happiness Industry', written by one of America's most trenchant social commentators. The author of nearly twenty books, many of which expose the dark side of the American dream (*Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*; *Bait and Switch: The Futile Pursuit of the Corporate Dream*; *Nickel and Dimed: Undercover in Low Wage USA*), investigating journalist Barbara Ehrenreich has examined the nefarious role of life coaches, motivational speakers, fundamentalist Christian 'pastorpreneurs', self-help books, etc., when the economy 'tank'd', industries were mothballed or 'globalised' (relocated to Third World countries) and workers – particularly white collar professionals – had to learn to hustle and promote 'Brand You'.

Ehrenreich had first hand experience of the tyranny of positive thinking: when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was, rightly, terrified, angry and confused – over treatments, the real possibility of her own