

theory - see for example, Blackman, I. (2008) which treats from a different perspective the way in which the 'self' emerges.

Overall, this book is reasoned, focused and summarises a breadth of thinking both coherently and cogently. However, I do have reservations with respect to its interest to readers of this Journal. In many respects I feel its target audience is that of Gestalt therapists, and the language used throughout is that of Gestalt. I do not feel the intention is to bring a Gestalt perspective to existentialists; rather it is to bring a clarified existential perspective to Gestalt practitioners. This is a perfectly legitimate goal and the observation is not a criticism, rather a comment on the book's interest for an existential audience. At the same time, if we are interested in exploring the common ground between an existential approach to therapy and others, then this book is a helpful addition to that process.

Reference

Blackman, I. (2008). Affect, Relationality and Personality, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25: 23.

Richard Pearce

The Talking Cure: Wittgenstein's Therapeutic Method for Psychotherapy

John M Heaton. (2010). London: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Wittgenstein's work is generally regarded, along with Heidegger's, as one of the most important contributions to modern philosophy. Unlike Heidegger, who wrote extensively on virtually every major thinker, and whose work can be clearly situated within the development of western thought, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* exploded as if from nowhere when, as a soldier in WW1, he first began to assemble his thoughts which were later completed, like Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, in a prison camp. It comprised a series of nested statements that began with the (in)famous phrase 'The world is everything that is the case, and ended with *Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent*'. It was as if these phrases were akin to bookends that, on one side held the hope that the problematics of language were about to be explained, but at the other slipped quietly off-stage, as did Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, with 'the rest is silence'. In his extensive, posthumous publications Wittgenstein both elaborated on some key themes in the *Tractatus*, while rejecting others.

Given that speech and silence may hold equal weight within the therapeutic encounter, and that Wittgenstein was one of few philosophers who engaged with Freud's work, and also believed, with the ancient Greeks, that a philosophical understanding of the human predicament might be truly therapeutic, his capacity to de-stabilize our certainties still retains much of its original surprise. In the therapeutic encounter, much of

what we are told holds familiarity. Our clients tell us that they are anxious, depressed, can't understand why they do this or that, have obsessive thoughts, reveal strange beliefs, and so on. Thus there may be a temptation to seek a common ground for their complaints. This is so because the psychotherapist's views of the world are frequently clothed in the language of revered theorists whose theories of causality did not include a reflection on how their theories arose. What if their initiating claims fell foul of what Wittgenstein described as the capacity of language to 'bewitch' us with a logic that closer inspection reveals as spurious? Much like the child who observed that the Emperor, far from being bedecked in the accoutrements of his office was bereft of clothing, or what the Buddhist reveres as *beginner's mind*, Wittgenstein maintained a keen ear for what was actually said, *how* it was said, in what context the words were spoken and, in short, first drew our attention to the vast hurly-burly of language which both grants us the ability to speak profound truths from the heart, but can also confuse and beguile us with fine sounding phrases that return to the tinkling brass of unconsidered opinion. Of the many themes that run through Wittgenstein's work, one is of central importance for the psychotherapist: that what we might claim to be an '*explanation*' of what we are doing, speaking as if we have found an underlying maxim that supports our practice, is invariably another example of it. In such circumstances we are much like the man who buys a second copy of the same newspaper to see if the first one reported the news correctly. If both '*theory*' and '*example*' returns us to the same state of affairs then we are none the wiser; language has lead us up the garden path. Like Nietzsche, who observed that we call the familiar '*truth*' just because we tend to trust what is familiar, much of Wittgenstein's work asks: '*what if it isn't*'?

So, how does Heaton engage with Wittgenstein's thought, and explore how it may be of use for the psychotherapist? First and foremost, as a practising psychotherapist with an extensive knowledge of phenomenology and the theories of psychoanalysis. He has impressive credentials. Originally reading philosophy and mathematics at Cambridge, he shifted to a medical training that led to his qualifying first as an Ophthalmic surgeon, and then as a psychiatrist. His long standing interest in phenomenology brought him into contact with Ronnie Laing and the founding of the Philadelphia Association, where he remains a training analyst. He is a Vice-President of the *British Society for Phenomenology*, a role that brought him into personal contact with many philosophers including Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty. He was one of the founding members of the SEA, and a co-editor of this Journal for many years. He has considerable experience of working with people experiencing a wide range of distress, and it is this cumulative experience that makes this work so impressive when challenging much of our collective 'wisdom'.

Right from page one, Heaton reminds us that: *Psychoanalysis first developed as a practice. Free association in adults and play therapy in children were not theoretically driven but were found by Freud, Klein, and Anna Freud to be effective in practice. Such activity was not rationally deduced from a theory of the mind.* It is all too easy to skip over the significance of this observation. If the great and the good of psychoanalysis found certain ways of working to be *useful*, prior to the theories they later developed, then what part do their *post-facto* concepts play in ‘*explaining*’ their approach if, apparently, they lacked such support while they were first doing it? The concept of ‘*usefulness*’ underpins much of Wittgenstein’s work, where an important distinction is drawn between how some idea is *used* in a specific case, and the manner in which it is subsequently reified in terms of a law. Such problems are endemic. For example, no one can doubt that mathematics is eminently useful. Its practice make much of the modern world possible, but the so-called ‘*laws of physics*’ are classic examples of reified observations. Are the planets really *following* Kepler’s Laws as they circle the sun, or could this better be seen as an example of how scientific endeavour utilises phenomenology while in thrall to anthropomorphism and metaphysics? On the one hand science proceeds via rigorous observation -its *forte* being counting and measuring –while its other hand traces Plato towards the current goal of a Unified Theory of Everything. Ultimately, all must be part of some great scheme of things. It is this assumption that Wittgenstein challenged when rejecting the whole idea that the ‘*language game*’ of science could be employed to further an understanding of the human predicament. Far from offering enlightenment, he feared that such an approach would only lead us into ‘*complete darkness*’.

Freud was similarly caught. His theories devolve to a mixture of acute observations on human vanities - to which we are all indebted – coupled with a wish to establish psychoanalysis in terms of a Newtonian ‘*energy*’ model, while ignoring, as many do, the fact that Newton spent most of his life practising alchemy or attempting to find a correlation between celestial phenomena and the Biblical account of human history. Freud’s work, like Newton’s, drew on many earlier ways of thinking. He was entranced by a partial reading of Greek mythology, which ultimately required the support of his own hypothetical Ur theory of the human race -the primal horde - which, he acknowledged, lacked any basis in reality but was ‘*necessary*’ for his project for a ‘*scientific psychology*’. In both cases consideration of the *sources* from which their respective ideas emerged tends to overlook the complex linguistic roots of their thinking, and all the implications of this. While Newton demonstrated his theories using the public language of mathematics, Freud followed Descartes’ self-reflection, of which his ‘*heroic*’ self-analysis is an exemplar *par excellence*, to develop a theory of human psycho-sexual development that *mirable dictu* was found to hold

good for everyone! Though Freud revised several aspects of his theories during the course of his life, he never questioned their base. It is here that Heaton draws Wittgenstein into this central problem. What if it were not so? Much like the student who told Wittgenstein that he could understand why ‘*primitive*’ people believed that the sun went round the earth, because it *looked* as if it did, Wittgenstein replied that it would still *look* like that even if the obverse were true. What if the way many therapists are taught to look held such fundamental confusions?

With the clarity that consistently marks his writing, Heaton methodically examines the claims for a range of therapies, from psychoanalysis to CBT. He demonstrates how such theories of human behaviour tend to rest on a relatively small number of assumptions that, over time, get so overgrown with technical discussions as to their various ramifications, each amplified by the manner in which later schools built -and continue to build -their respective power bases on divergent re-interpretations of one facet or another, that arguments tend to focus on which branch might bear the promised fruit, rather than the more onerous task of getting back to the root of the problem. This is particularly challenging for psychoanalysts, whose ethos is embedded in precisely such an endeavour - a return to the past – but who consistently stop short of questioning their originating assumptions.

Wittgenstein captures this problem in paras 6.371-2 of the *Tractatus*, with his claim that the modern view of ‘natural laws’ governing our behaviour is an illusion based on concepts of causality which he later suggested, as did Nietzsche, might be invented to ameliorate our anxieties. Wittgenstein believed that ‘*the ancients*’ might be wiser than us, in that they did not attempt to invent further reasoning. Does this imply that all must return, as the far reaches of post-modernism have suggested, to the dope-hazy days from which they emerged, that the meaning of everything ultimately returns to individual experience, and, ‘*hey, man, you do your bag of solipsism and I’ll do mine.*’ While we all have our own personal experiences, and try to articulate these with clarity or confusion, we do so through the medium of the language into which we have been born, and which lays its limits on all aspects of the everyday. Certainly, much cannot be said -the thought which closes the *Tractatus* – but what *can* be said has the potential to be said clearly. As it is most unlikely that any therapist would dispute the importance of seeking clarity, then this book can only assist their endeavour.

We are taken methodically through Wittgenstein’s understanding of language usage. Heaton explores their implications for the therapist in a series of chapters that describe how central concepts have been used and misused from the time of the Greeks and Romans. It begins with a chapter that examines how ordinary human phenomena tends to be represented by ‘theory’ - a theme that runs through much of his work – and claims that

psychotherapy is essentially a *craft*, now tending to be dominated by the idea of scientific progress, where knowing more is axiomatically better. If we practice a craft – a way of working that emerges from lived experience – then how do we match up to those who ply other trades? Do carpenters have a *theory* of how to saw a straight line, or that oak and beech must be planed in different ways? No, it is through the '*trial and error*' of learning a way of working, of coming to see that 'this' and 'that' may not be quite the same, and that it takes *practical* experience, hopefully assisted by a supervisor whose hands still hold the bruised memories of earlier misjudgements. Here Heaton is remarkably candid, offering in the preface an apology to '*those who came in the first 20 or so years of my practice as they had to suffer my inexperience*'. A statement that had this reviewer return quickly to his task, lest embarrassing memories should intervene. So, hastily onwards.

In its nine chapters Heaton offers a critique of the many ways scientific and psychological thinking weave their way through various forms of therapy, and are embedded within western culture. When might it be legitimate to think in terms of causes, and how do they differ from reasons and motives? What do we mean by such terms as consciousness, subjectivity, the self, identity, the unconscious, happiness or depression? What defines power, authority, normality, or gives credence to one form of thought, but denies it to another? In what ways may logic rightly be applied to an understanding of language, but is pointless in others? How might we best engage with dreams, phobias, 'delusional thinking' and apparently bizarre symptoms? And what of writing and speech? Given that most therapeutic ideas are communicated via writing, what difference may be seen/heard in the various signs of sound or sight – a discussion on such important differences that is very rare in our literature. In bringing considerable illumination to these, and many other issues that confront the psychotherapist, Heaton expands Wittgenstein's key texts with careful argument and examples from his own clinical work, and unpacks the unconsidered implications that all too easily pass us by when we encounter familiar expressions of human disquiet that cease to be quite so familiar in the light of his discussions. To say that this is a remarkably challenging work is an understatement.

While much more could be said, I will conclude with a quote from one of Wittgenstein's students, Maurice Drury (1974:138) who later became a psychiatrist. He said of psychotherapy that it comprises '*highly skilled procedures requiring years of apprenticeship. To communicate these skills from one generation to another psychologists have developed their own technical language. And to join in these activities one must learn this language...The danger arises when one learns the language without mastering the skills it is meant to mediate.*'

Heaton's book amplifies Drury's comment with a groundbreaking analysis of how these various languages are used, how they tend to beguile rather than inform, and how we may come to see some of the traps they hold. Though aimed at the psychotherapist –for whom it should be an essential text – this work holds profound insights for those of any discipline concerned with how we try to make sense of ourselves and our world.

Reference

Drury, M. (1974). *Fact and Hypothesis. The Human World*, Volumes 15-16, London.

Mike Harding

Heidegger, Medicine & Scientific Method

Peter Wilberg. (2003). New Gnosis Publications.

This book draws upon Heidegger's reflections upon science as '*method*' and, as such, draws primarily from the source text of the *Zollikon Seminars* (Heidegger 2001). The author claims that medical and scientific paradigms have avoided the question of what illness is – '*reducing it to a biological, behavioural or neurological disorder while ignoring the connection between individual health and the health of human relations*'. The author clearly states at the beginning that his desire is to re-appropriate phenomenology from present day usage as a '*qualitative scientific research methodology*' or even from phenomenology's apparent '*exclusive relevance*' within the human sciences to the basis of a more foundational or '*fundamental science*' which thus will have particular relevance to the understanding of medicine in particular.

The text commences with a well articulated presentation of Heidegger's discourse from the Zollikon seminars regarding '*tears*'- revealing how a scientific methodology may be able to '*measure tears*' and to account for tears by hypothesis of physiological or psycho-somatic causation but that this, in essence, rules out, in advance, any genuinely empirical approach, say, to the observation of grief or any exploration of the way '*we actually experience these phenomenon*'. In fact, dare I say it, this explication appears to better articulate Heidegger's arguments than the source text itself and I would recommend this passage as useful for Existential Psychotherapy trainees attempting to understand Heideggerian phenomenology and its relevance to psychotherapy.

There follows a general critique of the '*scientific methodological approach*' in Healthcare generally: RCT's (randomised controlled trials) are contrasted, by the author, with the phenomenological method as applied systematically within Eastern spiritual traditions where