

of others to make their own choices' and 'recognizing that the same is true for ourselves'.

The last chapter is a practical chapter on the process of rewriting your own rules. Barker reminds readers this is not a one time event, but a continual process. The idea introduced in the beginning is reiterated. This book is an 'anti-self-help book'. Barker instead suggests we build self reflection into our lives and use it as a tool to engage with the world.

While I enjoyed the entire book, the final section is what I find the most valuable. Barker invites readers to live an engaged life with themselves and others. While the rest of the book is composed of consistent invitations to start the process, the final section contains the practical suggestions on how to integrate investigations into uncertainty and curiosity into one's life.

In my opinion, existential psychotherapy suffers from a lack of accessibility to those outside our philosophical sphere. Barker's book, however is accessible to most clients. I can give this book to clients to read without the concern that they will get lost in overly intellectual rhetoric. At the same time, Barker's book doesn't hold back from the phenomenological investigations that are deeply valued in existential thought. Barker's avoidance of solutions provides a process for better understanding of ourselves, our relationships, and love.

**Justin Rock**

## **The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology**

Amedeo Giorgi (2009). Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press.

Whether familiar with phenomenology or not, researchers should find this book important because it describes what it claims to be a better way of conducting research into human psychology than empirical statistically-based methods. Giorgi advocates Husserl's Phenomenology as a better, more appropriate approach. As a psychotherapist, I regard myself in part as a researcher into the way clients' thinking might generate their complaints. Or in existential terms, how clients' intentionalities (valuing, judging, planning, remembering, hoping, expecting, giving significance and meaning to, making assumptions, desiring, comparing, measuring, calculating, etcetera) might sustain their experience of themselves and the world. A phenomenological researcher does this in a disciplined way to gain generalised psychological knowledge about the researcher's particular field of interest. I find that Giorgi's text speaks to both therapists and researchers, describing and fully justifying the steps that can produce stable and scientifically valid conclusions.

Chapter One lays out what Giorgi calls his Conceptual Framework,

distinguishing the study of humans from the study of the natural world in order to explain why a new approach is required. For example, the usual empirical tools of observation and measurement can hardly be applied to the study of other people's dreams, memories, or beliefs. Phenomenology is a philosophy, broader than empiricism but not anti-empiricism. It suspends the idea that we see only what is actually there, or that what we see actually exists concretely, and it takes full account of the subjectivity in the 'ego-object' structure of human consciousness, that is, Husserl's intentionality. A phenomenological attitude is taken by the researcher to minimise the researcher's assumptions, expectations, and interpretations regarding the participants' data (descriptions of their experience). In this way, the participant's experience can be distinguished from the researcher's, and thus validly used as data that can be accurately understood.

Giorgi describes the history of research methods that have included qualitative methods, showing that phenomenological approaches are more 'normal' than the reader might imagine, lending weight to the idea that an extended qualitative method can be accepted as rigorous by the scientific community. Over a number of decades, Giorgi travelled the world and read extensively to uncover what his contemporaries had learnt about Husserl and how they had interpreted it. He now presents a justification for a modified Husserlian approach, based on the limitations and inappropriateness of the natural scientific method for such a diverse population as the contents and activities of human minds. He notes the impossibility of applying certain quantitative criteria to the type of data he is interested in – human experience in a context. I reproduce here his table of criteria for producing precise, stable knowledge:

#### Natural science criteria

Experimentation  
Quantity  
Measurement  
Analysis-synthesis  
Determined reactions  
Identical repetition  
Independent observer

#### Human science criteria

Other research methods  
Quality  
Meaning  
Explication  
Intentional responses  
Identity through variations  
Participant observer

Giorgi uses a lot of vocabulary that might well be unfamiliar to the general reader, which he doesn't always define or explain until later in the text. Understanding the ideas was therefore a struggle as I found that words such as eidetic, nomothetic/ideographic, essence, bracketing, formulation, reduction, noematic, noesis, 'givens', unreal, horizon, and so on, weakened

my motivation to read on. I found myself thinking that what was being said could have been said in plain English, and with many more examples, like the one he uses to explain the difference between an *element* and a *constituent* (p 102). Yet Giorgi does explain the differences between the two sets of criteria in his table, and his explanations act as a summary of his previous discussions. The reader is then led to consider the requirement for a new ethical perspective when the object of study is a human being.

Chapter 4 describes and justifies phenomenological methods, whilst Chapter 5 distinguishes the philosophical phenomenological method (looking for abstract essences) from a psychological phenomenological method (looking for invariant psychological structures). Chapter 6 describes a way of applying the latter, and relates the results (a description of a structure in consciousness for the phenomenon being investigated) to phenomenological ideas and terminology.

Giorgi's philosophical method would include:

- assuming the transcendental phenomenological attitude
- looking for essences, using free imaginative variation and eidetic intuition
- describing of the essence fully (without formulation or explanation).

But this philosophical approach would result in transcending the data we are trying to collect – the contents of human consciousness.

So in Giorgi's psychological method the researcher

- gathers data from at least three people
- records the descriptions of the experiences without adding anything or leaving anything out
- and without any interpretation or theoretical formulation
- assumes the psychological phenomenological reduction
- uses free imaginative variation and eidetic intuition to find an invariant psychological meaning
- applies the structure to the empirical data to re-substantiate the findings and draw out inherent implications and possibilities.

Here, as throughout the book, Giorgi discusses possible objections to his thinking and offers arguments to counter them, questioning his every step and every choice. Then, by giving examples in Chapter 6, Giorgi shows what the work of analysing the data might actually look like, what the result might look like, and where the implications of the result might take us. The book is therefore persuasive, provided that the reader can understand the language used, and persevere with the ideas. He points out that the term 'psychological' has not yet been adequately defined in the scientific community,

and that there are no alternatives to Husserl's ideas that stand up to close scrutiny when applied to human experience to create knowledge.

This book is thorough, but not an easy read. If the reader already understands phenomenology, it might make sense to read Chapter 6 first, since 'the primary purpose of this book is to demonstrate how the method is applied in the analysis of qualitative data' (p 139). Giorgio admits that he learnt as much from trying to apply the method as he did from reading philosophical phenomenology. I too can't form a general concept until I have seen several examples, and I assume that this is the way we learn – from examples to generalities, like the research method he advocates. Yet he writes his book largely the other way round.

**Paula Smith**

## **Boundaries and Bridges: Perspectives on time and space in psychoanalysis**

Andrea Sabbadini (2014). London: Karnac.

Andrea Sabbadini brings together his clinical experience from a life's work in psychoanalysis with an existential interrogation of phenomena as they arise in the room. He does so through the open and receptive lens of film and literature, in writing which manages to be simultaneously accessible and rich with meaning. This book, therefore, is of interest to psychoanalysts, existential therapists and anyone with a keen interest in how the themes and experiences arising in the clinical situation can be found represented in over two thousand years of cultural expression. The book offers an interpretive medium through the arts, and in particular literature and film.

In some early chapters the book's title does not always appear uppermost on the author's agenda, and at times the links to these themes seem somewhat tenuous. This, however, never detracts from the quality of the material under discussion. Importantly, Sabbadini does not shy away from any of the big questions that are relevant to any modality, and most specifically what it is that we are attempting to do for our clients or patients. He challenges the psychoanalytic notion of 'treatment' as being central to the work, and points out that the German term *behandlung*, has more connotations of caring than the somewhat sterile and medical overtones of the English translation. He claims '*treatment does not describe the nature of what takes place in my consulting room*' (p xiv), begging the question, '*If you do not intend to obtain [particular results for your patients] then why do it at all?*', which he sets about answering through a model comprising three key principles: theoretical, technical and ethical. While the first is specifically psychoanalytic in its application, the latter two might be considered more