

psychology, cultural theory and personal essay, is a steady *Zen practice*. He reminds us that,

The teachings of the Buddha, Zen literature and the Zen tradition give us inspiration. But they are no substitute for the dedicated psychosomatic practice of zazen and the radical ethical practice of generosity

(p 133)

Zen and Therapy is the product of years of dedicated practice and is a generous gift to our profession. It has inspired me to persist with my own practice – as both a psychotherapist and Zen student – as I am sure it will all existential practitioners who are open to allowing counter tradition perspectives to disrupt normative views upon psychotherapeutic praxis. I end with three bows to the author, with new resolve and in deep appreciation.

Rebecca Esho Greenslade

References

- Bazzano, M. (2012). *Spectre of the Stranger: Towards a Phenomenology of Hospitality*. Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press.
- Caplow, F. & Moon, S. (2013). *The Hidden Lamp: Stories from twenty-five centuries of awakened women*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Phenomenology in Action in Psychotherapy: On pure psychology and its applications in psychotherapy and mental healthcare

Ian Rory Owen (2015). London: Springer International Publishing

Ian Rory Owen's 300-page book promises to illustrate how phenomenology manifests in psychotherapy; it delivers, as well as expounding the detailed minutiae of how phenomenology is situated as a tradition. As a text it sits as the seventy-ninth volume of a series entitled *Contributions to Phenomenology*. As a concept., I was unaware of its existence, but the placing of the text as part of a series on phenomenology gives an insight into its preferencing philosophical understanding and rigor over the applications to mental health. This is not meant as a criticism, and indeed the book seems to be aligned with Owen's numerous articles in this very journal over the years. However, it is definitely an academic text on Husserl and phenomenology.

The book is laid out in three distinct parts, following a preface and a general introduction (chapter one) which bears the title 'The naturalistic attitude cannot grasp meaning for consciousness'. Owen is clear about his intentions with the book 'written to summarise some key aspects of Husserl's theoretical qualitative methods for making theory, so empirical research

and practice in academia, philosophy and the sciences hit their target' (p ix). Not only does this opening locate phenomenology in relation to other traditions and their assumptions, but it also serves as a taster to the particular Owen uses throughout: an introductory positioning statement followed by short, titled, sub-sections (such as 'The natural and naturalistic attitudes and natural psychological science as the dominant paradigm' and 'Intentionality connects consciousness and the meaning of being'). He ends each chapter with a summary. The long titles of the sub-sections prove a useful tool for the reader in preparing and placing the upcoming text. It is a shame, however, that the contents page is not supplemented with a list of these to help the reader navigate backwards.

The first part of the book focuses on defining phenomenology and pure psychology in four chapters. Chapter two, 'Phenomenology and meaning for consciousness', gives some (basic) information about phenomenology and situates it, briefly, within the naturalistic tradition, offering a critique of what came before drawing extensively on Husserlian thought.

The second distinct part builds on the first. It covers 'The findings on meaning for consciousness' where intentionality is examined. The most interesting chapter for me is the seventh, which explores 'The being of consciousness'. It focuses in particular on how intentionalities are experienced from a singular perspective. Within this chapter Owen makes explicit what intentionality is ('the quality of being aware of specific objects in specific ways' (p 121)), as well as how it relates to empathy. While there is nothing new here in terms of ideas, the employment of analogies such as the understanding of a film offers the potential to arrive at an understanding in laymen's terms.

The final part of the book promises to deliver on the the book's title; 'Applying pure psychology to psychotherapy and mental health care'. At times it does not but at others it is exceptional. In chapter 13, 'A formulation of the ego and its context', Owen offers an intriguing and insightful sub-section around the experience of low self-esteem and social anxiety. It is here that real value is added with its simplicity as Owen takes the reader through a circular six-step formulation to the two defined experiences. He is clear that he is using examples to illustrate his theoretical points, rather than as an exclusive focus. This has prompted a new dimension in my own clinical work, despite my personal dislike of the term 'formulation'.

The fifteenth and penultimate chapter, 'On being unable to control variables in intersubjectivity', offers a grounded and clear argument as to how randomised control trials (RCT) are related to therapy. It is suggested that RCT 'seeks to find how effective brand name approaches are with single syndromes' (p 288) but Owen makes the clear point that this is based on the false assumption that 'only the therapy brand, the style of input from the therapist, is the only causative factor for clients' (p 288). A more

detailed critique of RCT from a pure psychology perspective is offered, evidencing the above, before justifying the absence of RCT in relation to pure psychology and psychotherapy generally.

The final chapter, 'Conclusion', sits apart from the rest of the book. I feel there is an argument to say that one could read this chapter and take a huge amount away from it without doing the work of the previous 290 pages. Perhaps I am looking for the easy way out and, while the conclusion draws everything together extremely well and in a way that feels compelling, the foundations laid elsewhere are necessary to obtain the full effect. That it could be read individually is a testament to the communicative ability of the author and it is here, rightfully, that Owen delivers on his aim fully.

Owen intermittently uses small case vignettes to illustrate his conceptual, abstract points, especially in the final third of the book, and the text is far richer for it. For example, when talking about understanding and looking at meaningful behavior in relation to causes he offers that 'a person accepts the social pressure to have a thin body shape and learns that it is possible to vomit after meals to maintain a low body weight and relieve self of the 'danger' of being fat. What makes sense in bulimia is how to alter oneself as an overall incentivised behaviour' (p 270). There is a clarity and demonstration of the interpretation needed to help the client, as well as the driving force they may be experiencing that shapes their individual map.

One issue with the book is one of language and the specific meanings which are laid out. As an example, it is not until the latter stages that 'psychological' is defined as standing 'for the worldview of the individual ego that is mediated by intentionality with respect to their sense of self and volition in the world about what can be chosen, valued and willed to exist' (p 276). As a definition, it is a graspable one, but seems reliant on an engaged reader keeping in mind all that has gone before. There is no seemingly easy way to keep abreast and refer back to things previously defined. While this points to the inevitable complexity involved with grappling with Husserlian thought, the definitions offered are clear, just concealed; this is a frustration.

I feel duty-bound to acknowledge that this book is not cheap. Its list price on Amazon amounts to £117 (for the Kindle it costs £34). It feels as if the price replicates the inaccessibility of the writing at times. Buying this book represents an investment in a tool for future use. Owen makes reference to wanting to make therapy more understandable and open to people, but neither the price nor the (predominant) style are aligned with this stated desire as it requires a serious investment from the reader in every way.

My work as a reviewer was challenged by this book. Normally I read a work quickly, then read it again in depth while making notes. Finally, I rapidly read it one last time to get another feeling for the overall flavor. I was unable to do that. The concentration required to make sense of Owen's

language does not lend itself to a quick read – it demands the reader’s unequivocal attention.

I find myself unsure of how to describe this book. Having finished it, I want to go back and re-read it and, in my present reflections, I feel positive about the experience. At the same time, especially in the first two parts, I found myself struggling to attend to the text and certain passages felt almost impenetrable. As I mentioned before, some of the case examples were insightful, and I find myself longing for more, in more detail, in part as more evidence of what can be done, but also as exemplars for the maps that are drawn and explored. The brief example of Vanessa was great, well articulated and supported the abstract theoretical reasoning. I wanted more, as upon Googling, it became clear that the author is an experienced psychotherapist and therefore likely to have a bank of relationships to draw from.

I would recommend this tome to colleagues who seem particularly interested in either Husserl and/or phenomenology, and indeed I have asked that it be added to the library catalogue at Regent’s University where it could provide a huge amount of value for the right reader, as well as leaving a positive experience in mind. That said, while it delivers, it is not for the fainthearted.

Ben Scanlan

The Spirituality of Awe: Challenges to the robotic revolution

Kirk J. Schneider (2017). Cardiff: Waterside Productions

About halfway through Dr. Schneider’s latest book, he recalls a memory of the ‘...religious experience of the secular...’ (p 61). While standing in the main quad of Columbia University in New York, he feels a combination of sensations and emotions: thrill, trepidation, fear, belonging, wonder and reverence for this ‘cathedral’ of learning. This is an example of the ‘Awe’ that he believes is detrimentally dwindling in the age of the ‘Robotic Revolution’ and that he urges us to recapture in order to retain our sense of what it is to be human. This is his central concern.

This slender volume is a manifesto (my term, not his) spurring us to preserve life-affirming and humanistic/existential values and practices, in the era of Robotics. The term ‘Robotics’, in this context, appears to act as a broad catchall word to express the generality of technologies and related services being ushered into the world through advanced computing, complex algorithms, cybernetics, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, biomechanics and many other broadly scientific developments advancing on multiple fronts. In particular, Schneider connects these developments with what is known as the ‘Singularity’, a term popularised by the Silicon Valley luminary