be called an existential psychotherapist, or is interested in this approach, should read the entire book. The effort is not wasted and, really, having completed the book myself, I feel I have a richer and more complete picture of the field of existential psychotherapy.

I conclude that this book offers something for every type of reader. It is an essential tool for every psychotherapist, supervisor, educator, teacher and researcher in the existential approach. It is also a worthwhile read for students or professionals from other theoretical backgrounds. For instance, for those coming from approaches that are closely related to existential psychotherapy (for example person-centred or Gestalt therapy), this book represents a chance to gain a better understanding of the distinctions and similarities between these approaches, while also contributing to the realisation of our common philosophical worldview. For those who come from more distinctive schools of psychotherapy such as psychoanalysis or cognitive behaviour therapy, the book provides an opportunity for a fruitful dialogue on different philosophical and psychotherapeutic approaches.

Alex Harisiadis

References

May, R.E., Angel, E.E. & Ellenberger, H.F. (1958). *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Yalom, I.D. (1995). *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.

The Soul of Existential Therapy: Dialogues with Professors Todd DuBose and Miles Groth

Loray Daws (ed). (2020). London: Society for Existential Analysis.

Miles Groth's chapter on *Existential Psychotherapy in Embodied Theories* has been one of the most important works on existential therapy for me, one that has always been close to my heart and to which I have returned time and time again for almost two decades. I am therefore especially grateful to Paola Pomponi, the chair of the SEA, for the opportunity to review this second book in the SEA's *Dialogues* series.

Reading the manuscript driving across a locked-down Norfolk with my partner and daughter provoked intense discussions between us. There was something powerful about reading it out loud and sharing its resonances, a double dialogical process unfolding, in between the authors and in between us on the road. It resonated vividly with the wide-ranging relevance of this work to life in the world at large, and not just in the consulting room, and with the relational discovery and momentum of meaning. For me the manuscript mapped a journey out of both the constrictions of lockdown

and those of dogma and deficit correction in psychotherapy, reaching across broader horizons and open spaces.

The authors offer a significant vision for therapy as Soul Care, as a sanctuary for lived meaning based on meeting and hospitality, on making space for clients in all their complexities and paradoxes, hosting them without pathologising, patronising or directing, without colonizing them, re-scripting or 'eating them up'. As Todd DuBose puts it:

> *When we reduce another's otherness to our sameness, this hermeneutical violence is an act of cannibalising the other, ingesting the other into my schemas of interpretative metapsychology'*
>
> *Wherever there is a place 'better than' where one is and we see our task as privileging what shall be over what was or is, we are gnostic in our care, and unwittingly stigmatise wherever one is or was as less than…*
>
> *It can't be fixed or understood, only hosted…meaning is not imposed, or directed, but invited to show itself as it is, in its own way.*

Space emerges as the most crucial aspect of this careful and caring stance towards the Other, a situational and relational 'there' that we inhabit due to our thrownness and being-with.

Groth talks about "the where, which brings with it its when and demands its how and why". Making space, embracing and exploring what is there, where and when it is there, in the way that it is there strikes me as the core of phenomenology. I felt immensely moved by DuBose's expression of the space of existential therapy as a "khora space for expanded possibilities in impossible situations", "a space that need not require change, or progress, or conclusiveness, or cure, or even understanding", for "the therapeutic and the educative moments occur in that place that does not belong to any of us, that isn't created by any of us, or owned by any of us; there is no-thing to figure out".

DuBose brings in Heidegger's *Lichtung* when he writes "I clear or light up (and am cleared and lit up)" and he also describes the process of bracketing in therapy as the hard work of do-ing no-thing:

> *When our presence isn't noticed and calling attention to itself, and sans agendas of accomplishment, we then find the darkness lit up, including the lighting of darkness as darkness, allowing the darkness, like rose that is without a why, to be without justification or explanation. In that Taoist and Zen moment, perhaps, we might be caring well…doing nothing is something…*

'resolute anticipation', as we are living concretely every instant, committed with anticipation for the coming of the Other.

In what capacity do we act as existential therapists? Reading this manuscript, I was moved by how key aspects discussed by the authors were very much present in the clinical supervision group that I have attended regularly since 2017. One particular session stands out for me where, I believe, Spinelli linked anxiety to the experience of seeing or experiencing too much of life. How as existential therapists can we care for this? I am reminded that in their wonderful work *Caring and Wellbeing*, Galvin & Todres (2013: 130) show that the etymology of the word capacity derives from the Latin *capax*, meaning 'that can contain or able to hold much' and link this to care. Anxiety is the structure that contains us and that opens us up, the way we live the understanding of relational uncertainty, the sense that this matters, and might not be.

Both the everyday and the medical response to meaninglessness and anxiety have to do with questions on how to remove them more than on how to hold and care for them. However promising or solution-focused this stance may sound, ultimately it tends be rather inconclusive or even counterproductive, for it takes the opening and possibility granted by anxiety and closes it down. At the heart of existential therapy is the attempt to move toward "loosening throughout any closure of what is meaningful. It continues to host, to clear ways and light up and invite 'being there', which varies" (DuBose).

Groth and DuBose's dialogues are an invitation to welcome quandaries as good hosts would, valuing the anxiety of truthfulness as a connection to what matters to us. Contrary to surface understandings of the existential approach, the authors argue that life is meaningful even when meaningless and that our freedom does not consist in constructing meaning but in finding it as Groth writes:

Meaning is there to be found, not made…Heidegger wrote about a concern or caring for that had one goal. It wasn't to make one better and better at making meaning. In fact, it was to make things more difficult by finding more possibilities in them. To be up to it is, for starters, about seeing the meaning – so much of it – that there is. There is so much of it that there is no need to make any more.

That meaning is found, not made, implies going beyond "the self-centricity of the human being as a producer of worlds".

We are reminded that language is much more than words, it concerns manifold ways of embodied attunement, expression, movement, disposition, connection:

But 'language' is most often misunderstood as solely verbiage.

Language, though, is a way of being, a web of enframing, an event, without which we cannot register any sensation. Languages are plural and are enactments of signification. Our focus is inviting a space to tease out the relationship between sensation and meaning.

I am somewhat familiar with what can be psychology's irritation and intolerance with philosophical language and ideas. So it was even more interesting to note my own response to the authors' wide-ranging and generous text. A breath of fresh air, a sense of having travelled far and wide just by reading these pages, of being initiated into different traditions and cultures. But suddenly an inkling of some suspicion too – have I learnt new things? Why are these enticing words not explained (spoon-fed?) in the text? What were these unfamiliar terms I was reading for the first time? Were they even existential? I noticed I was starting to feel ambivalent and fidgety over anything that I felt to be outside the perimeter of the existential therapy fence. Did my experience point to what the authors foreground as therapy's "prohibitions on overwhelming the Other, excessive focus on simplicity (over complex thinking)…excluding 'problematic' thinkers" in the name of a "simpler way to conceptualise and practice…simplistic therapy to care for a complex world"?

Looking the new words up complemented the reading process, amplified expression and enriched communicative possibilities, raising them to a shared voyage of discovery. These new languages would return me to the text at a more reciprocal level of reflexive sensitivity, exploring and taking them in as it felt right, rather than being told how to make sense of them. I am grateful to the authors for not pre-empting meaning and foreclosing worlds by leaping in and taking the unfolding of my exploration away from me. The authors grant the reader intimate entry into manifold relationships, entanglements and cultures, expanding the range of engagement, blurring the boundaries between inside and outside in a creative cross-talk as a welcoming appeal to the generative and inclusive, to participation, to polyphonic and polytheistic plurality…let's explore! I am reminded of Buber (1974: 9) when he wrote "primary words do not signify things but intimate relations".

How are we going to respond to a client that speaks in ways and of things that we cannot immediately understand? To a client that presents us with that which we find alien and difficult to decipher? DuBose similarly asks: "Are we khoranauts only when what is shared is comfortable for us?". Existential therapy is concerned with the disclosure, rather than engineering, of lived meaning (soul). It is living disclosure of significance where we cannot quite separate the somatic and the semantic, perception and conception—existence is always a hybrid of both bios and logos and description significance-based sensory selection, imagination and interpretation.

For me, the attempt to avoid fragmentation and stay with the wholeness and totality of clients feels very important.

As philosopher David Abram argued in *The Spell of the Sensuous*:

> *Imagination is from the first an attribute of the senses themselves; it is not a separate mental faculty but is rather the way the senses have of throwing themselves beyond what is immediately given, in order to make tentative contact with the other side of things that we do not sense directly.*
>
> (1996: 44)

Similarly, in her review of the art exhibition Private Lives Public Spaces, writer Leslie Jamison writes as follows:

> *From before she was born, I'd wanted to give my daughter a sense of the world as infinite – difficult, perhaps, and painful, but never closed, never static, always more of it, always another swath of sky behind the clouds, a sudden vistas from the trail, the possibility of a love you couldn't see coming until it arrived.*
>
> (2020: 52-54)

To me, this speaks directly of the extensive space of existential therapy that Groth and DuBose open up for us.

Monia Brizzi

References

Abram, D. (1996). *The Spell of the Sensuous*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Buber, M. (1974). *I and Thou*. New York: Macmillan.

Galvin, K. & Todres, L. (2013). *Caring and Well-being: A Lifeworld Approach*. Oxon: Routledge Studies in the Sociology of Health and Illness.

Groth, M. (2001). The body I am: lived body and existential change (existential psychotherapy). In Spinelli, E. & Marshall, S. (eds). *Embodied Theories*. SPC Series. London and New York: Continuum. 81-97.

Jamison, L. (2020). *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. Review of Private Lives Public Spaces, exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. New York City, through 1 July. (52-54)

Fiction's Madness

Liam Clarke. 2009. Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

This simply presented paperback is a volume of immense power, engaging empathically with the world of the Other via some of the greatest works of (mostly English) fiction. The book also includes discussions of Hesse's