

EDITORIAL

Since the last issue, with the invasion of Ukraine, the world has taken yet another lurch into instability and chaos. Should we be surprised?

Perhaps it is not a coincidence, but readers may have noticed that the word ‘existential’ is appearing more and more frequently in popular discourse. Some of these references use the word rather loosely but the intention is clear. There is an awareness that is hard, if not impossible, to put into words that not only are things not what they seem, but also that things will not be what we assumed they would be. What have been called the ‘absolutisms of everyday life’ are challenged. This is indeed existential. We are forced to answer the question, “Given the prevailing conditions, how do I want to live with other people in the world, and what am I prepared to do about it?”.

This question uncovers what in philosophy is known as ‘the veil of ignorance’. This is a thought experiment in which people are asked to consider which principles they would select for the basic structure of society if they had no knowledge ahead of time what position they would end up occupying in that society. This choice is made from behind a ‘veil of ignorance’, which prevents people from knowing not just their ethnicity, social status, gender and so on, but also anyone else’s idea of how to lead a good or flourishing life. The conclusion, not surprisingly, is that most people would opt for a society based on honesty, cooperation and mutuality. If only it was that easy. Existentially, people are rarely that rational and bad faith and living with the paradoxes and dilemmas of human existence have a way of manifesting themselves in ways that frequently seem at odds with the original intention. But the original question remains. The majority of the papers in this issue explore this issue in various ways.

We begin with four more contributions based on presentations given at last year’s SEA Annual Conference. Haran Rasalingam explores the challenge racism presents to our ability to engage successfully with our clients. Continuing the theme of ways to engage positively with difference, Rafał Miętiewicz writes movingly about respecting people and their differences, rather than simply tolerating them. He argues that this attitude opens up enormous possibilities for growth, awakening and simple, human decency. He embeds his theoretical considerations in an analysis of four case studies.

Marium Akhund also engages with difference in a creative way, in her exploration of the lived experiences of adult third culture kids and their existential concerns of belonging, identity and authenticity, while Alix Velasco asks what it means to be an ‘existential mother’. Motherhood, she writes, is laden with age-old expectations and social messaging which are often unconsciously internalised or even positively embraced. Her paper explores the crisis that can arise when one’s experience fails to conform

with social conditioning, and how purposefully applying an existential framework can give meaning and direction to the crisis.

We have included seven further papers in this edition of the *Journal*. Alice Weston's paper seeks to draw the reader in to experience the imminence of encounter in Merleau-Ponty's concept of Chiasm. As we experience his philosophy, she argues, we become enmeshed – both moving and being moved by what we read. What, she asks, does this mean for the therapeutic encounter? Merleau-Ponty also inspires the next contribution, by Ross Anderson, who employs his philosophical insights to examine the way that alcohol distorts our perception and changes our relationship with our bodies.

Greg Madison, whose work will be familiar to readers of this *Journal*, this time contributes a paper which begins with the assertion that CBT is a form of therapy that offers 'change' as an outcome, but it says little about how that change comes about. He offers Eugene Gendlin's 'philosophy of the implicit' as a possible contribution to philosophies of CBT, with the acknowledgement that adopting this view could imply modifications in its practice. Evgenia Georganda, in her fascinating paper, sets out a heuristic project in which developmental theories and existential concerns are synthesised in an effort to explicate human dilemmas and existential psychotherapy. Chris Cleave, meanwhile, proposes an innovative method for 'phenomenological literature-reviewing'. As he says, little guidance exists for the phenomenological conduct of a literature review within qualitative research. Here he reimagines literature reviewing from first principles as a phenomenological enterprise central to the conduct, as well as the contextualisation, of research.

Our papers conclude with two substantial contributions from Anthony Stadlen and Miles Groth. Anthony reminds us that Freud and Boss published case studies and dream analyses as paradigms for psychoanalysis and Daseinsanalysis respectively. This paper, a 1996 improvised lecture, explored Boss's claims in his analysis of the paradigmatic 'dream of a healthy European' in his second dream-book, *Es träumte mir vergangene Nacht, ... [I dreamt last night]*. The first part of Miles' paper (the second part will be published in our January 2023 edition) focuses on Medard Boss' introduction into existential analysis of Carlos Alberto Seguin's notion of the therapeutic *eros*.

This edition concludes with a number of book reviews which are so engaging and thought-provoking that they might be fittingly regarded as small papers in themselves. We are grateful as ever to Ondine Smulders for collecting, compiling and introducing this section of the *Journal*, and we would urge readers who are interested in any of the publications we have received for review to contact her for more information on what is involved.

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