

Medard Boss and the Promise of Therapy

Miles Groth. 2020. London: Free Association Books.

Miles Groth is Emeritus Professor of Psychology, and, since 2021, founder and president of the American Daseinsanalytic Institute. He is also an outstanding Heidegger scholar, well-known, I am sure, to a number of Society members, partly through his past contributions and presentations in events organised by the SEA, but also through various papers published in past editions of this journal.

Whilst being a well-established writer on therapy and Heidegger's work, Groth, as this book indisputably reveals, is also a chronicler and archivist with a sharp and meticulous eye for detailed and thorough research (or research, as I like to think of it). As the title states, his focus is on the work and writings of Medard Boss. This is a welcome and much-needed contribution to Daseinsanalysis (DA), and, more generally, to existential approaches in therapy (ET). Space deters me from elaborating on this but suffice it to say that a more rigorous clarification of the uses and meanings of the various linguistic terms, phrases and neologisms that we encounter in Heidegger, DA and ET is long overdue. Groth sets out to do just this and more.

The book consists of two parts: Part I is titled "Daseinsanalysis" in print' and Part II goes under the title, 'A new beginning for therapy'. Appendices follow which are, essentially, forewords, afterwords, comparison charts of different editions of certain publications by Boss, tables of contents of different editions, as well as notes. The last section of the book is an international bibliography of Boss's writings, surely serving as the definitive reference source for anyone who wishes to delve into Boss's work, whether from an academic or professional point of view.

Part I covers Boss's earlier publications, which were under significant influence by Heidegger himself, his two dream books, the centrally important text *The Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychology* and, finally, the *Zollikon Seminars*. Groth offers the reader considerable insight and knowledge through his ability to track and distinguish discrepancies and differences between various editions of these publications. This can, at certain times, feel a little exhausting, as the finer nuances of certain points can themselves feel like distractions from a wish to grasp some of the novel contributions that Boss brought to therapy. However, it is only when I read the book in its entirety that I realised that this was a necessary *feldweg*, or field path, that I needed to stay on to finally experience a certain clarity, precision, openness, and understanding of Boss, DA and ET.

Part II is itself in two parts: 'Boss, Heidegger and the East', covering Boss's *A Psychiatrist Discovers India*, and a short piece that offers personal reflections on therapy, being a 'therapeut' and the singular relevance of Boss's thinking about therapy. This is especially important and timely

given the way in which therapy has become increasingly seduced by a more manualised and technical approach to engaging with clients/patients in our current world. Of course, much of this can be attributed to the influence of the medical model, as Groth so correctly states, but also to the way in which language itself can so fundamentally mis-characterise ourselves, others and the world.

Groth records and highlights Boss's travels and stays in India in the Fifties, which alone reflects quite a different picture of his thinking as a therapist to that presented in his earlier major publications under Heidegger's more direct influence. For example, Boss said that he had experienced three 'miracles' (*wundere*) (p101) whilst in conversations with different sages and gurus, which deeply affected his outlook on therapeutic practice.

Groth's comments and reflections on Boss clearly show how deeply influenced he is by the latter, offering some interesting and challenging perspectives of his own on being a therapist, or therapist. For me, these merit serious consideration, even if they might well seem a little questionable for the general therapeutic community. But here is what I really like about this book: that both Boss and Groth are onto something crucially important. It is their belief that, as Groth puts it, "[p]sychotherapy has possibilities that have not been realised" (p129). Both address this challenge by taking their own paths, emphasising that it is possibility rather than actuality (read: theory, abstraction, naturalistic explanation, technique) that opens this path.

As a companion piece to this review, in the next journal issue I will review Groth and Fazekas's *Dialogues on the Renaissance of Daseinsanalysis: What Does 'Existential' Really Mean?*

Mo Mandić

The Red of My Blood: A death and life story

Clover Stroud. 2022. London: Penguin Books.

I have read a lot of good books (and some less worthy too) but seldom does the universe place the one I need in my hands at the time I need it. I have had books speak to my experience before, Andre Carl van der Merwe's *Moffie* in particular. On that occasion, I had the uncanny experience of seeing much of my adolescence on the page and the tangible vision of the future I escaped, my avoided future, if you will. But I came to that book more than twenty years after the fact. So, I cannot express how excited I am to have recently come across this book. The right book at the right time.

As the subtitle says, this is a book about death and life and it is exactly the focus I needed. Despite the differences between myself and the author, like Stroud I have been recently bereaved, like her I was there at the passing, so we share a familiarity with death. But the dying has not been the problem...