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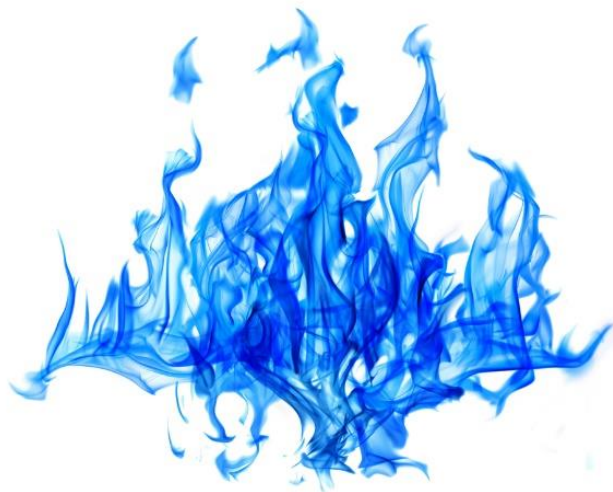# AND THERAPY OF EXISTENCE

Perspectives in Existential Analysis

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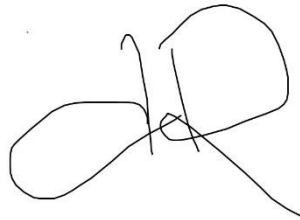
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Content

Introduction

This volume explores the interface of philosophy and existential therapy from six different theoretical perspectives. In this sense, the book focus on applied philosophy or philosophical therapy. Thus, the main conclusion from the book is that existential therapy is a philosophy and therapy of existence rather than a kind of psychotherapy.

Anders Dræby Sørensen

Negative Sociality

An Existential Study of Relational Alienation and Conflict in Jean-Paul Sartre and Ronald Laing

Introduction

In the tradition of Søren Kierkegaard, the central focus of existential theory is widely regarded as the subjectivity of the concrete and unique individual, assigning a subordinate status to social issues. This paper will help to rectify this situation by introducing the concept of *negative sociality* as an analytical prism to study the problematization of *relational alienation* and *conflict* in Jean-Paul Sartre and Ronald D. Laing. Using this concept makes it possible to examine *how Sartre and Laing elucidate the fundamental connection between human sociality and subjectivity*. To make sense of the concept, I will related it to the ideas of sociality in Martin Heidegger and Martin Buber.

Sociality to Heidegger and Buber

Sociality is as an explicit issue to Heidegger and Buber, who both turn against the tendency towards *solipsism* within the tradition of *subject*-philosophy from Descartes to Kant. Essentially, this solipsism involves that philosophy only takes the existence of the self and not the existence of the other seriously, because there is no necessary link between the subject and other subjects or objects. According to René Descartes and Immanuel Kant, I must understand the other person from my own self, which tends to make the other an alien, since my knowledge the other is firmly rooted in the content of my subjective consciousness (Descartes 1998; Kant 1999).

In 'Being and Time', Heidegger rejects the notion of the isolated subject by examining the ontological structure of human being as a *Dasein* (Being-there) that is always already *in* the world. Furthermore, Heidegger rejects the ontological separation between self and other by stating that Dasein exists as *Mitsein, a* Being-with others, as part of its Being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1996:118). Hereby, Heidegger only examines sociality as an essential feature of individual existence and not in itself (Schatzki 2008:233). However, since human beings exist in a primary coexistence with other human beings, one does not experience those *others* as alien beings from whom one distinguishes oneself. This ontological sociality is conditioned by Daseins responsibility for its own existence as possibility. Dasein can exist as *inauthentic* Being-with and loose itself in the *they* that is characterized by common impersonal relationships (Heidegger 1996: §29). Dasein can also exist as *authentic* Being-with in genuine relationships, which requires that Dasein is brought back from the they to

realize its own Being-towards-death. Since death exclusively belongs to the *jemeinigen* Dasein, human being realizes its authenticity in "solitude rather than in negative sociality" (Manning 1993:53), and authentic sociality is therefore mediated by a sort of existential solidity.

Similarly, in 'I and Thou' Buber Buber rejects the ontological separation between self and other by describing the basis of existence as a two-fold *interaction* between human beings and the world that furthermore can be separated into two kinds of *attitudes*. The secondary *I-It* attitude is the origin of the subject-experience in Descartes and Kant and represents a depersonalized sociality characterized by *distance* between the self (ego) and other beings (Levinas 2008:15; Buber 2004:30). The primary *I-Thou* relationship is a *mutual* one that takes place as a *meeting* between people as persons with a whole existence and it involves *love.* This true encounter represents personalized sociality and it resemble the authentic relationship in Heidegger's theory. However, personal existence does not derive from a relation to one's own Being-towards-death. Rather, personal existence involves an including relationship with the other as part of a *dialogical subjectivity* (Ibid: 28).

Both Heidegger and Buber describe human being as constantly having to oscillate between two modes of sociality that they tend to conceive as ontologically neutral. However, Buber also explains modernity as containing an ontological crisis. Thus, modernity involves a movement from loving I-Thou modes of involvement to instrumental I-It ways of interrelating and in Buber there is a strong tendency towards an ethical understanding of the I-Thou attitude as more positive.

Sartre and the Look

The first and second part of Sartre's ontological elucidation of human existence in 'Being and Nothingness' involves a distinction between two related realms of being: (1) the being of phenomena (*being-in-itself*), (2) and the human being of consciousness (*being-for-itself*). Fundamentally, this being-for-itself is *freedom* that is *nothingness* and as such transcendent negation of being.

To reject solipsism, Sartre also introduces *being-for-others* as a third ontological category, accounting for a further aspect of human subjectivity. Originally, the other is not revealed to me as an object but as a free subject who makes me aware of my own objectiveness as potentially being seen through the others *look* as an object (Sartre 2008:280). Thereby, this existence of the other-as-subject is revealed to me as *certain* (ibid:302).

Through the look, the other-as-subject reveals me to myself as having a *self* that is myself, and unlike in Descartes and Kant I cannot deduce this experience of *me* from my own consciousness. Rather, the experience is derived from an essential modification of my consciousness by the others gaze (ibid:262). Thus, unlike Buber, I do not become a whole

person but a modified existence through the encounter with the other person. Furthermore, against Heidegger's conception of Being-with, this encounter involves alienation through:

> …a negation which posits the original distinction between the Other and myself as being such that it determines me by means of the Other and determines the Other by means of me (ibid:315)

The encounter with the other reveals that the relationship between me and the other person is internal and not external. However, my encounter with the other is one of negation of myself. It does not only gives me an experience of the other as an inapprehensible alien but also of me as an outside that I am partly alienated from because it is not totally under my understanding or control: The "other does not constitute me as an object for myself but for him" (ibid:275). In other words, I become aware of the other-as-a-subject with a freedom that is not my transcending my own transcendence in a way that I am defenseless. To a certain extend my being-for-others is inapprehensible to me and it negates my capacity to freely interpret myself and though my encounter with the other constitutes possibilities to me those are alienated possibilities (ibid:263).

To Sartre, sociality essentially seems to be a matter of restricted freedom establishing an awareness of alienation. I can overcome this transcendence of transcendence by relating to the other as a subject to an object, almost as in Buber's I-it relationship, and thereby reduce him: I can transcend the others transcendence in turn and my former objectifier becomes the object. Consequently, all human relations can be perceived from a fundamental dialectic of domination, in which my being-for-others is matter of domination and subordination (ibid: 386). Thus, unlike Heidegger and Buber, to Sartre the being-for-itself is profoundly alone and initially he does not leave possibility for two subjectivities to engage fully in a mutual encounter:

> It is therefore useless for human reality to seek to get out of this dilemma: one must either transcend the Other or allow oneself to be transcended by him. The essence of the relations between consciousness is not the Mitsein; it is conflict (ibid:429)

Against Heidegger and Buber, the original meaning of being-for-others is *conflict* and sociality is fundamentally negative. In his play 'No exit', Sartre likewise states that "hell is other people" (Sartre 1955:47), and whereas Buber described love as an expression of a true encounter, to Sartre the project of love is fundamentally one of possessing the freedom and subjectivity of the beloved one (Sartre 2008:387-392). However, according to Sartre, I can seek to transcend the experience of social alienation and self-alienation by choosing myself authentically as freedom. B doing that, I set the freedom of others as a goal, which opens the possibility for genuine relationships (Sartre 2007:62), although Sartre fails to

make a full elucidation of the character of this relationship. Thus, firstly Sartre almost resemble Buber by describing how I become myself through interrelatedness, even though this is a negative mode of relating that modifies me. Secondly, Sartre rather resemble Heidegger by describing how I become an authentic self, capable of genuine sociality, through an individual instead of an intersubjective process.

Laing and the Threat of the Other

While Sartre describes how we are objects of others' look and how that make us feel exposed and imprisoned, in 'The Divided Self' Laing investigates a similar experience in order to understand the subjectivity of schizophrenic persons. Both Sartre and Laing grasp their approach as existential phenomenology, but Laing's ambition is therapeutic rather than philosophical.

Like Sartre, Laing outlines the paradox that all human beings are at the same time separate from and related to other human beings as an essential part of their existence and, against Heidegger and Buber, that we are somehow alone because no other person is a "necessary part of our being" (Laing 1990a:26). Quite similar to Sartre, Laing also makes a distinction between one's *being-for-oneself* and one's *being-for-the-other* and states that in any human relationship, the other is the object of intentionality for the own persons subjectivity.

This also applies within orthodox psychiatry, which experiences the patient through a technical "vocabulary of denigration" as a "*failure* of adjustment" (ibid:27). With the words of Sartre, the psychiatrist is thus involved in a transcendence of the patient's transcendence by avoiding "thinking in terms of freedom, choice and responsibility" (ibid:27) and relating to the other as a subject to an object, that is only comprehensible within the prejudging language of the subject (ibid:38). Consequently, the relationship is a conflictual one of possession and alienation that creates the same division between consciousness and behavior involved in the schizophrenic experience.

From an alternative position of love, the existential phenomenologist must leave his own world to learn how the patient experiences his world and himself in it. To do this, he must reorient himself towards a radical different way of being without prejudging the patient. Furthermore, Laing bears more resemblance to Buber than Sartre by opening the possibility for a close encounter if the schizophrenic meets someone "by whom he feels understood" (ibid: 165; Laing 1990b:39). Yet, opposite Buber, Sartre fails to provide a full elucidation of this interrelatedness.

Apart from this, Laing gets close to Sartre's description of the look, when he uncovers the schizoid as a person who:

…feels both more exposed, more vulnerable to others than we do, and more isolated (Laing 1990a:37)

Rather than being a meaningless failure, schizophrenia is understandable as an existential strategy that a person invents to live in a situation with unlivable external pressure. Schizophrenia arises in situations where the schizoid person is lacking *ontological security*, and this makes everyday living a perpetual threat to the person's self (ibid:42). As part of his insecurity, the schizoid person experiences sociality as a threatening reality, generating different types of anxiety. Thus, the person experience sociality as a negative dimension of existence: According to Laing, *engulfment* refers to a dread of losing one's identity by interaction with others, and the person either gets involved in a constant battle or seeks isolation in order to avoid being absorbed by others. *Petrification* refers to the dread of being depersonalized as an object by the others look and turned into stone, and the only way to avoid this threat is to depersonalize the other by turning him into an object first (ibid:43-51). The resemblance to Sartre's theory of being-for-others as a conflict regarding freedom is striking, although Laing only wishes to describe schizoid and not ordinary experience. This covers the fact that Sartre seeks to explore the ontological dimensions of sociality, while Laing rather wishes to explore its practical implications to certain people.

To Sartre, I become a myself through interaction with others, and Laing likewise describes how the schizoid person forms a false self-system by means of social interaction: The problem of being-for-others is analyzed as multiple self-systems that are established by identification of the self with the fantasy of the persons by whom one is seen (ibid:117). While Sartre made sociality involve a kind of alienation from the self, Laing thus describes how sociality might lead individuals to a division between a "true" inner being-for-one-self without relations to others and an outer alienated false being-for-the-other involved in meaningless relatedness.

'The Divided Self' primarily examines psychiatry as involved in a negative relation between psychiatrist and patient as well as schizophrenia as a subjective experience that occurs in relation to a negative conception of sociality. In his later work, Laing tries to explore schizophrenia as caused by negative social patterns between the schizophrenic and others (Laing 1990b:93). Thus, the negative perception of the connection between sociality and subjectivity is present throughout Laing's writings and to a certain extent the point to Sartre.

Conclusion

The concept of negative sociality has made it possible to distinguish between the perception of sociality in Buber and Heidegger on one side and in Sartre and Laing on the other side.

They all reject solipsism by examining sociality as fundamental aspect of human subjectivity. However, whereas Buber and Heidegger perceive this sociality in a neutral or positive way, Sartre and Laing initially perceive it in a negative way as fundamentally being a matter of alienation and conflict. We establish our socialized subjectivity through negative relation to others.

There are variations in the projects of Sartre and Laing, and whereas Sartre sees conflict and alienation as general conditions of existence, Laing only examines the implications of negative sociality to certain people. However, from these diverse positions they each provide an option for the individual to transcend negative sociality through either an authentic choice or a true encounter and then engage in genuine relationships like the ones described by Heidegger and Buber. Sartre and Laing positively widen the existential approach to human reality by exploring the negative dimensions of sociality that are not properly covered within Heidegger's and Buber's attempts to transgress the existential isolation of solipsism. However, in order to present an appropriate existential theory of the phenomenon of negative sociality they both fail to provide a comprehensive elucidation of the positive forms of sociality and interventions.

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Existential Teleology and Ethics

From Aristotle to Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmy van Deurzen and Michel Foucault

Introduction

Since the 1980's, parts of philosophy has taken an interest in the revitalization of the ancient Greek teleological ethics as a response to the inability of modern moral philosophy – since Kant – to set concrete goals for life (Foucault 1997; MacIntyre 1997; Nussbaum 1993; Nussbaum 2001). The question of the good life was significant to ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy, but it has vanished from modern academic philosophy. Now the sciences and social institutions answer the questions of how to live and what the goal and purpose of life are, but they reduce the good life to a technological issue. Even though modern academic philosophy does not take an interest in the good life, the existential tradition has reflected on human life and living since the middle of the 19th Century. In this chapter, I will examine whether the existential tradition implies a teleological conception of the content and direction of the good life that can form an alternative basis for modern ethics. Based on an examination of Aristotle's ethics and the ethics of the technological age, I will therefore outline the implicit teleological ethics in Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmy van Deurzen and Michel Foucault.

From Aristotelian ethics to the ethics of the technological age

Philosophers and historians usually regard Aristotle's ethics as one of the best representatives of ancient Greek ethics. Aristotle's ethical approach base on a strong version of *teleology*. Teleology is an explanation for a phenomenon in function of its end or goal (Aristotle 1994: 1095a). Aristotle explains the end or goal (causa finalis) of human existence as human flourishing (eudaimonia). Human beings achieve flourishing through a balanced use of human reason in everyday living as well as through the contemplation of universal harmony. According to Aristotle, the essence of human being is *reason*, and through the balanced use of reason in daily life, human being can cultivate a number of virtues and *bring forth* its substantial and universal form, which is already potentially present in the individual.

According to Heidegger, this bringing-forth is a concealment of something into unconcealment, which makes it appear as it is in itself (Heidegger 1977). Bringing-forth is essential to the teleological reason of ancient Greece philosophy, and Heidegger states that it differs from the *challenging* that rules in modern technology as a dominant way of revealing Being in modern times (Heidegger 1977: 14). Through this technological revealing, the human beings of modernity position themselves in the middle of the world and assume dominion over everything, including themselves. Thus, things and human beings only have meaning by becoming available as resources that are under control.

The revealing of modern technology contains the ethical belief that life is only significant and has quality in its readiness for use as a resource. This idea reflect in everything from human resource thinking in modern organizational theory to the notion that the goal of individual life is to develop skills and potentials and become a success through performance and achievements.

Foucault launched the equivalent term of *bio-power* to describe a form of power that takes human life as an issue, and this form of power emerges in the 19th Century (Foucault 1996: Ch. 5). In the 20th and 21st century, this power over life spreads, and the state and the individual human being become preoccupied with optimizing life (Rose 2006). Within this horizon, human beings conceive life as the essence of their Being, involving an essential functionality of life. Thus, the good life is perceived as a functional resource, grasped through terms such as quality of life, health and normality.

Vague teleology of authenticity: Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre

The existential tradition involves a rejection of the strong versions of teleology, viewing human nature as having an essence that defines the true end of human being (MacIntyre 1997: 54). However, the philosophy of Kierkegaard might be said to involve a vague teleology, because it conceives human existence as a process of *freedom* that involves certain choices as a condition for the goal of an authentic *coming into existence*. Furthermore, Kierkegaard describes this coming into existence as a dialectical progression of three *stages* on the way of life that involves different existential states. However, since this progression is wholly dependent on individual choice, it is also possible to live an unreal inauthentic life, where one does not come into existence and become oneself.

To live according to the ethics of the technological age is an expression of inauthenticity in the first stage of this process of self-realization. Kierkegaard describes this stage as involving the philistine and the aesthetic form of life. The philistine has an unreflective lifestyle and he or she just lives from a mainstream consciousness according to the norms and values that exist in society. The aesthetic lives with a multitude of possibilities and desires sensual goals that are external to the self and might provide empty experiences of success (Kierkegaard 1964: XXVIII, 153; 1988: 192). However, to exist in truth means that one enters the ethical stage by stepping out from the crowd and making a choice between the opportunities one faces, whereby one can find one's own vocation. Unlike the ethics of technology, this process is not about self-realization as performance and achievement but about finding oneself. Yet, the ethical stage contains the same anthropocentrism as the technological way of being. According to Kierkegaard, one cannot become truly oneself only by oneself. In the religious stage, one must go beyond human reason and open oneself to God by a leap into faith (Kierkegaard 1964: XXVI, 124): To achieve the highest existential stage involves transgressing the human, instead of pursuing the goals that human culture, technology or reason gives.

The idea of an authentic orientation in life as a goal of existence is a recurring theme in the existential tradition and found in Sartre's writings.

Sartre transformed Kierkegaard's ideas about the existential process of freedom into a secular theory of human being as an indefinite being that has no original essence but must create itself through choices. Thus, in 'Being and Nothingness', Sartre makes a distinction between the being of phenomena (*being-in-itself*) and the human being of consciousness (*being-for-itself*) (Sartre 2008: xii-xiii). The defining characteristic of being-for-itself is *freedom* and according to Sartre, this freedom equivalent to *nothingness* and as such transcendent negation of being. Being-for-itself is conscious of itself, and following Sartre, the consciousness of freedom involves the recognition by the Self of the responsibility of making choices and the discovery of facing nothingness in the past and the future. The consciousness of freedom is so anxiety provoking that the individual tends to direct negations towards itself as an attempt to avoid facing anxiety. This self-deceiving flight from anguish towards reassuring beliefs is an attitude that Sartre calls *bad faith* (ibid: 29, 49). Thus, trough bad faith we seek to hide the truth from ourselves and escape the responsibility for making free choices by making our selves passive subjects of external forces or an inner essence. In an effort to deepen his conception of human freedom, Sartre describes how every human choice must be:

> … explained within the perspective of a larger choice in which it would be integrated as a secondary structure (ibid: 455)

Thus, in order to ground itself, the individual self needs existential 'projects', which must be based in his or her choice of a fundamental project. This 'life project' constitutes a person's totality by expressing his or her fundamental attitude to life (ibid: 570). Sartre elaborates how this project involves the fundamental freedom of the Being-for-itself, perceived a pre-reflective project toward a goal that grounds all secondary motives and reasons (ibid: 463).

However, the individual is able to choose a project of self-deception in bad faith, whereby he or she hides his or her real nature as Being-for-itself and lives as a Being-in-itself (ibid: 615). This is precisely what is at stake in technological ethics, where the individual chooses to live and shape his or her Being from the idea that it has an essential function.

Yet, the self is able to avoid self-deception by choosing a project of authenticity in good faith, whereby one faces one's own freedom and seeks to become what one freely chooses to be. In this way, freedom is the telos of existence, and because the exercise of freedom creates values that all human beings could experience, this authentic project expresses a universal dimension in the singularity of a human existence.

The art of existence: Emmy van Deurzen and Michel Foucault

As a reaction towards the instrumentalism and reductionism of modern technology, Emmy van Deurzen has attempted to combine Greek ethics and existential therapy in an interpretation of living as an *art* in the classical sense. According to Deurzen, human beings live in a constant confrontation with existential challenges that lead to anxiety, and as with Kierkegaard and Sartre, they can handle this anxiety in two fundamental ways: They can flee it in-authentically and escape into cultural visions of the perfect life, or they can face it authentically and take responsibility. This authentic living involves engaging in all dimensions of life and following the direction in life that one's conscience dictate as the right, whereby one becomes author of one's own destiny (Deurzen 2009: 43).

Deurzen's approach is teleological, because she speaks of the *truth of life* as a guideline for practical living. However, far less than Sartre, she addresses human freedom as the essence of this guideline. According to Deurzen, the individual must balance freedom from a sense of necessity, since she perceives life as stretched between a series of poles, which one must learn to embrace.

The art of living is not an innate ability but a capacity that the individual must learn through experience and by help from wise mentors. Opposed to a modern conception of technological expertise, this art of living base on an idea of wisdom. Furthermore, the ideal of life is not a technological norm of normality or performance. The ideal to follow one's own path of openness in relationship to oneself, other people, the world and spirituality.

Most of Foucault's writings include a *negative teleology of freedom* that point to his investigation of how freedom in the modern age is dominated by technology, whereby ethics is linked to social, economic and political structures (Foucault 1997b: 261).

Against this background, in his late works Foucault studied ancient ethics, which he believed could inspire modern ethics. Similar to Deurzen, he thought that ethics should be an *aesthetics of life*, formed as an art of living. However, contrary to Deurzen, Foucault thinks that freedom should be the ontological condition of ethics. Thus, ethics must be a reflected practice of freedom, a certain conscious way of being and of behaving (Foucault 1997c: 284). Teleology is to be understood as a mastery of oneself and in this context, contrary to Kierkegaard, Sartre and Deurzen, Foucault rejects the notion of authenticity, because he thinks that this notion points to the idea of a true self (Foucault 1997b: 262). Instead, Foucault wants to link the theoretical insights of the existential tradition of a practice of creativity. Foucault is inspired by Nietzsche, and the self is perceived as a form that can be shaped and reshaped so that we can master ourselves and create ourselves as a work of art instead of being dominated technologically as resources (ibid: 262).

Conclusion

The existential tradition contains the teleological foundation of an ethical approach that may serve as alternative to the so-called technological ethics. The concept of authenticity from Kierkegaard, Sartre and Deurzen may serve as a response to the technological domination of individual existence, and the existential concept of freedom from Kierkegaard, Sartre and Foucault may serve as a response to the cultural and institutional colonization of existence.

This chapter has been interested in whether the teleological dimension of the existential tradition might serve as a guideline for an alternative way of living. Deurzen and Foucault makes the most explicit rebellion against the technological age and according to these authors, an alternative ethics should take the form of an art of living, an art of existence.

The teleological question is whether authenticity or self-mastery should serve as existential goals of ethical practice. Furthermore, what is needed to actually to rethink the teleological dimension of the existential tradition, to see how a conception of the goal of life goals may look like in the 21st Century.

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The Relevance of Aristotelean Ethics to the Conception of Existential Psychotherapy

Introduction

Existential psychotherapy attempts to challenge the technological understanding of psychotherapy and reductionist tendencies in modern medicine. It does so by developing a psychotherapeutic practice based on a more *holistic* understanding of human being, not aimed at curing or healing patients but rather at achieving authenticity for clients. The main theoretical problem for existential psychotherapy is that it wants to understand itself as a psychotherapeutic method, commonly understood as a form of medical technology. Yet, existential psychotherapy wants to distance itself from the medical and technological framework of understanding and practice. This paper tries to solve this problem by discussing whether and how it is possible to re-conceptualize existential psychotherapy as an Aristotelian practice of ethics.

Psychotherapy as technology and applied science

According to Martin Heidegger, modern technology is the dominant way of revealing Being in modernity and it is characterized by a *challenging* (Heidegger 1977: 14). Through this technological revealing, human being anthropocentrically positions itself in the middle of the world and assumes dominion over everything including itself. Human beings, then, only have the meaning of being available as resources. There is a widespread tendency to conceive psychotherapy as a form of technology and applied science. According to Joseph Dunne, in modern times, we tend to define rationality as coextensive with technology. We rationalize almost every domain of human engagement from an instrumental reason, concerned with instructional outcomes (Dunne 1993: 5). Likewise, Louis Berger criticizes this attitude in contemporary psychotherapy by addressing what he terms *techno-therapies.* According to Berger, these techno-therapies are characterized by a strong reliance on instrumental thought and by an attempt to establish empirical evidence for the efficacy of the instructional outcomes of therapies, especially in terms of symptom-reduction (Berger 2002: 9).

The rationality and essence of arts

Existential psychotherapy must to be based on an alternative to the technological reason and challenging of Being, underlying the techno-therapies, and here Emmy van Deurzen indicate that one can turn to the kind of rationality, which is embedded in the practice of arts (Deurzen 2005: 216). According to Heidegger, the revealing of Being involved in this practice is different from the challenging that rules in modern technology. Thus, art is a kind of revealing characterized as a *bringing-forth* of something from concealment into un-concealment to appear as it is in itself (Heidegger 1977: 14). In other words, the rationality of arts is involved in a bringing forth of that which is already present but hiding in the phenomena.

Ancient ethics

In the 1980s and 1990s, the need within philosophy to find an alternative to technological rationality led to a widespread revitalization of ancient ethics as an art of living. Among others, Martha Nussbaum highlighted how the ancient idea of ethics did not involve a technological challenge of human being as a resource. Ancient ethics rather involved a rational addressment of existential and emotional needs, embedded in a practice aimed at bringing forth human flourishing (eudaimonia) (Nussbaum 1994: 3). Whereas modern human being tries to control itself and its surroundings as resources, the ancient Greeks considered human life as vulnerable to factors beyond human control. The Greeks invented ethics in a search to develop a rational art of living, dedicated to the realization of the good human life, safe from luck and reliance upon the external world (Nussbaum 1997: 3). Thus, the Greeks had the idea that logos is to illnesses and maladies of the human soul as medical treatment is to illnesses of the human body (Aristotle 1994: II:iv.). More specifically, this meant that ethics as an art of living should create human flourishing as a healthy state of the soul in *balance,* whereas the art of medicine should create bodily health by getting the body into balance

Aristotelian ethics

Usually, Aristotelian ethics is thought to be the clearest representative of ancient Greek ethics. Aristotle's ethics is grounded in a naturalistic teleology. That is, Aristotle describes how human existence has an *end* (causa finalis) and this end is human flourishing (eudaimonia), which is the goal of practical philosophy. Thus, whereas theoretical

philosophy is dealing with *theoria* as exact knowledge of necessary facts, Aristotle states that practical philosophy deals with *praxeis* as human actions in a changing life. All human actions have an ultimate end, which is human flourishing. Likewise, the purpose of practical philosophy is not to achieve cognition or knowledge but to be good practice (eupraxia) that has the aim of attaining flourishing. According to Aristotle, human being is not only individual. It is also social being. Whereas ethics is the art of the good life dealing with the flourishing of the individual, politics is the art of the good life concerned with the flourishing of society.

Thus, ethics is a rational answer to the question of what it takes to become a good person and thereby achieve the good life. Human flourishing is the unfolding of the substantial and universal *form* of human Being (causa formalis). Thus, the end of human being is the realization of its essential capacities that are already present (ibid, I.vii.).

In the discourse of ethics, human flourishing is an expression of human excellence. Since human being is a rational animal, human excellence must be a cultivated exercise of the capabilities and capacities of the human soul in accordance with a rational principle. Thus, human excellence is a cultivated use of reason regarding human emotions and actions (ibid, I.vii). In other words, human flourishing is living in accordance with the cultivation of an excellent character, and the excellent exercise of human capabilities and capacities is called *virtues* (arethé):

> …the Good of man is the active exercise of his soul's faculties in conformity
> with excellence or virtue, or if there be several human excellences or virtues,
> in conformity with the best and most perfect among them (ibid, I.vii.)

The virtues of the good character are habits or dispositions to act in certain ways in response to certain situations. Everyone has a natural potential for a good character, and we develop our character from practice. By cultivating his or her virtuous character through practice, the individual brings forth his or her substantial form for living, which is already present but hiding in him or her.

Aristotle distinguishes between intellectual and moral virtues. Moral virtues are not innate, but acquired by developing the habit of exercising them. A moral virtue involves both the rational and the irrational (emotional) part of the soul, since moral virtue implies to have rational control of the desires, feelings and emotions and to be able to use the right extend of a particular desire, feeling or emotion with a particular kind of action. Thus, virtuous action requires that the individual is able to choose how to respond to his or her own

desires, feelings and emotions. Aristotle define virtuous disposition as a mean between two extremes of excess and defect. Aristotle does not provide the actual content of the virtues from an abstract principle, but through a phenomenological mapping of prevailing moral conceptions in which the mean functions as a practical principle of structuring (ibid, III.vi.-V.i.).

Virtuous action also requires the development of an intellectual virtue for being able to choose, deliberate and take control regarding actions in response to emotions. This practical wisdom (phronesis) is not developed through theoretical studies but is acquired through reflexive experience as an ability to see the right thing to do under the circumstances (ibid, VI). In other words, the moral person's quest is aimed at the good and it is accompanied by an experience-based insight into the good that generates moral awareness and responsibility. Thus, human flourishing is not a matter of applying technical or theoretical knowledge in living. Rather, flourishing is a matter of *learning* by cultivating a good ability to understand and manage one's emotional capacities in situations and to act on them in a proper way. Accompanied by the development of a practical wisdom regarding the ability to deliberate and choose for one self in order to achieve or maintain a good life, based on life experiences. This realization of one's existential potentials involves that one holds oneself in a stable equilibrium of the soul, in order to choose actions knowingly and for their own sake.

From Aristotle to Deurzen

Technology is applied scientific knowledge possessed by experts, which is involved in an instrumental challenging of resources. Practical wisdom (phronesis) is practical knowledge, characterizing a person who knows how to live well. People learn this wisdom by doing and it does not deal with instructional outcomes but with praxis, which is the conduct and affairs of one's life as a citizen within a community and praxis has its end in itself. Following Heidegger and Foucault, ethics is an art of living, which aims at bringing forth the hidden natural potentials in the individual for realizing his or her ability to live well. The individual must use reflective practices that seek to transform oneself and thereby creating one's life as a work of art (Foucault 1997 a-c).

While existential thinking involves a rejection of Aristotelian essentialism, existential psychotherapy still carries several similarities with Aristotelian ethics. Heidegger sees the human being (Dasein) as a field of possibilities and he describes how human being must project itself in relation to these possibilities in a certain way in order to achieve an

authentic existence (Heidegger 1993). As in the concept of praxis, Dasein is at the outset concerned with itself and its own possibilities and Medard Boss describes how the existential guilt of human being consists in the individuals failing to fulfill all its possibilities (Boss 1963: 271). According to Boss, the aim of therapy is to help people accept their possibilities and assemble them to an authentic self. This is partly reflected in Deurzen who states that authentic living involves that the individual engages in all dimensions of life and follows the direction in life that his or her conscience dictate as the right so that the individual human being becomes author of its own destiny (Deurzen 2009: 43). There is a striking similarity between Deurzen's concept of authenticity and Aristotle's concept of flourishing. Similar to Aristotle's ethics, Deurzen conceives existential psychotherapy as an art of living directed at the unfolding of existential potentials. Furthermore, just as Aristotle describes the prerequisite for the good life as the learning of a balancing mean between extremes in life situations, Deurzen describes how human being must accept to live as suspended between various polarities. Aristotle describes how the development of practical wisdom and a good character must base on a phenomenological understanding of the virtues that exist in society. Deurzen likewise describes how the development of the individual's life wisdom and ability to live must be rooted in a phenomenological understanding of the values and assumptions contained in this person's truth. At the same time, this person is not perceived as an isolated being but as related to other people. Deurzen describes these processes in terms of learning, not in terms of application of scientific knowledge, and just as in Aristotle's ethics, existential therapy must focus on the process itself as a goal instead of pursuing specific instructional outcomes. The concept of practical wisdom (phronesis) provides us with the possibility of giving a more precise understanding of the type of knowledge, involved in existential psychotherapy: A reflected practical wisdom based on learning from life experiences. This kind of knowledge is not technological but philosophical. Furthermore, the idea of flourishing as a bringing-forth of the genuine possibilities that lie hidden in the individual human being resembles Deurzen's idea about identifying the life skills that the individual already has instead of focusing on instrumental skills. The idea of flourishing also informs her particular interpretation of the goal of authenticity as a concept for the good life that may serve as an alternative to technological life goals of perfection or normality.

Conclusion

We are able to conceptualize existential psychotherapy as an Aristotelian practice of ethics. This conceptualization serves to solve some of the conceptual and philosophical problems

involved in the discussion of the nature of existential psychotherapy. If we omit the universalism and essentialism, the inspiration from Aristotelian ethics might also open some new perspectives on therapeutic practice. In my own therapeutic practice, I have successfully used the idea of a bringing-forth of hidden potentials as a guide. The idea of the balanced life has also given me a lot of inspiration and to me the idea of human flourishing as an objective of existential psychotherapy somehow seems more usable than the idea of authenticity.

The concept of practical wisdom helps to inform the rationality involved in Deurzen's conception of existential psychotherapy as an art of living. This art involves a reflective capacity to learn through life experience and with help from wise mentors, and instead of a modern concept of technological expertise, this art of living base on an idea of practical life wisdom. Furthermore, the ideal of life, which is involved, is not a technological norm of normality or performance but an ideal of following one's own path of openness in a fundamental relationship to oneself, other people, the world and spirituality.

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A Discussion of Narcissistic Sexuality

Introduction

The narcissistic disorder represents a complex and often misunderstood phenomenon, named after the mythological character Narcissus who could only love himself, rejecting anyone who attempted to relate to him in an intimate way. To the extent that we consider love and sexuality as related, the concept of 'narcissism' represents an apparent paradox in the understanding of human sexuality and its role and function in psychological life. However, although the writings of Sigmund Freud link the concepts of narcissism and sexuality, researchers and writers have paid little attention to the relation. In this article, I will discuss the phenomenon of narcissistic sexuality in order to investigate how conceptualizations of sexuality relate to the existential construct of narcissism within the ancient Greek, the early existential and the psychoanalytic tradition.

Ancient Greek tradition: Sexuality and the myth of Narcissus

According to Peter Thielst, the ancient Greeks considered Eros as a fate of humanity that was given by the gods. Thus, Eros was a quality that one should not avoid or attempt to overcome but accept as a necessary force of human nature, enabling the family's continued existence (Thielst 2011: 17). From a slightly different perspective, Michel Foucault explores how the Greeks concerned themselves with sexual behavior and pleasure as an ethical problem of self-practice. In addition, Foucault shows how the Greeks generally conceived sexuality as necessary force that could bring harmony into human nature. Yet, he states that the Greeks also thought that this force had the power to destroy a human being if it denies or practices its sexuality in an uncontrollable way. Therefore, men had to fear all excess and practice self-control in the sexual control they exercised over women as part of the household (Foucault 1992: part 3).

Correspondingly, the problem of Narcissus was, according to the myth told by Ovid, not his love for himself. The problem was the fact that Narcissus did not follow his human nature by rejecting the love of the women who fell in love with him. Thus, the idea of Hybris is a phenomenon caused by deficiency. Because the problem of Narcissus consists in his transgression of humanity, related to his denial of sexuality and his love for hos own mirror becomes Narcissus' punishment and nemesis (Ovid 1984).

Early existential theory:

Søren Kierkegaard's problematization of the self-absorbed seducer

In his book 'Either-Or', Søren Kierkegaard uses the figure of Narcissus to explore the so-called aesthetic stage of existence. This stage of existence represents persons who are living for the immediate satisfaction of the senses, being only able to see themselves in terms of the senses. The aesthetic is a kind of person who is living on the very surface of things, without internalizing actions or awareness of his or her own subjectivity (Kierkegaard 2009).

Kierkegaard examines different types of aesthetes and one of them is Johannes, who is a seducer, only concerned with the erotic conquest of women for the sake of his own pleasure. The character of Johannes is an example of the self-absorbed kind of aesthete, but Kierkegaard shows how this kind of self-absorbing behaviour does not derive from self-love but from fragile and fluctuating self-esteem. Thus, this self-absorbedness represents a compensatory escape. Through this self-delusion, Johannes seduces himself to overlook his own self. Through the attention he gets from women, he avoids feeling his own inner pain and despair.

At last he fell in love with himself like Narcissus (Kierkegaard 1968: III-B37)

Thus, Kierkegaard compares Johannes to Narcissus, because they both fall in love with their own self-reflection as extensions of themselves. However, they are both convinced that their self-reflections are not extensions of themselves. Johannes is self-absorbed, smug and grandiose in his appearance and Kierkegaard explains the erotic dimension in the case of Johannes as a matter of pure self-projection and self-lust. Just as Kierkegaard does with the example of Don Giovanni. However, similar to Ovid, Kierkegaard perceives this self-absorbedness as a matter of deficiency and describes how it covers a form of despair regardless of any attempt to conceal it. According to Kierkegaard, the solution is to acknowledge oneself and take responsibility for one's own life. This is required in order for sexuality to become intimacy with a beloved person in relations if sharing and commitment. A person, whom one perceives as a whole person rather than just an object of lust (Holly 1984: 115). Similar to Plato's *Symposium*, the existential stages in Kierkegaard's philosophy involves an evolution of love and sexuality from a basic instinct to a pure love of Beauty or God. However, whereas Plato final stage involves a rejection of earthly sexuality, to Kierkegaard the dedication to a higher power involves charity (Plato 1994; Carlsson 2010).

Psychoanalytic perspective

The clinical conception of narcissism originates from Sigmund Freud, who linked it to the sexual development of the ego. Freud distinguished between: (1) A *primary narcissism,* which is a natural part of early development. The development of primary narcissism begins from an autistic and autoerotic phase, preceding the relation to an external object as tied to the child itself. (2) A *secondary and pathological narcissism* occurring later in development whereby sexual drive is withdrawn from objects due to object-frustration through a mechanism of defense, and then re-invested in the ego as self-libido (Freud 2001).

Thus, similar to Ovid and Kierkegaard, Freud perceives narcissism as grounded in a tragic mode of existence. However, later prominent psychoanalysts as Karen Horney, Alice Miller and James Masterson are closer to Kierkegaard. They all perceive the pathological narcissist as a person who does not love him-/herself too much but rather too little, compensating for a deficient state of self-alienation or self-fragmentation that involves lack of self-love (Horney 1994; Miller 2008; Masterson 1990). Heinz Kohut likewise distinguishes between healthy and pathological narcissism. He describes how persons with so-called narcissistic personality disorders might attempt to counteract the subjectively painful feeling of self-fragmentation by forced sexual activity (Kohut 2009: 119). Hence, there is an overlap with Kierkegaard's seducer, pointing to narcissists being fixated on sexual gratification rather than enduring intimacy.

Otto Kernberg represents the tradition of object relations. He emphasizes the way in which the affectively charged internalization and structuring of early object relations is fundamental to the development of the ego and human motivation. According to Kernberg, human sexuality is rooted in biological functions, whereas sexual desire originates in the early relationship between child and caregivers. During puberty, this desire becomes erotic desire, including the desire for a sexual relationship with a particular person (Kernberg 1998: Ch. 1+2). The capacity in a person for mature sexual love involves the experience and maintaining of a love relation with another person, integrating tenderness and empathy. Eroticism presupposes the development in this person of a capacity for whole or integrated object relations that involves achievement of a self-identity (ibid.: 87).

Kernberg also states that severe psychopathological dysfunctions disturb the development of this capacity for mature sexual love. He conceives the common cause of borderline and narcissistic personality disorders as being a failed integration of the sexual and aggressive charged self and object representations, leading to a lack of ability to integrate positive and negative introjections and identifications (Kernberg 2004: 265). Thus, pathological

narcissism is on the same level as borderline personality. However, narcissists are persons who have excessive need to be loved, but only have a marginal capacity to feel love and empathy towards others. These persons have experiences of emptiness if they do not get their desire for admiration and power satisfied. Furthermore, they feel envy towards others who have what they themselves want. They idealize those whom they believe can give them what they need and despise and devalue others. Basically, narcissists exploits others, but this surface is a defense against a paranoia which is dominated by a fundamental rage. Almost like in Kierkegaard's description of the self-absorbing persons core despair, Kernberg shows how the narcissistic person's apparent lack of object relations, does tend to mask scary and aggressive laden object relations, lacking good internal objects.

The mature position involves an ability to associate sex with caring and loving, perceiving commitment as the most important aspect of relationships. According to Kernberg, the narcissistic persons are incapable of mature sexual love and they have a tendency to perceive all sexual relationships as games between exploiters and exploited (Kernberg 1998: 95). Similar to Kierkegaard's seducer, the narcissistic persons rather tends to associate sexuality with power and influence. Research shows that narcissism is likely to be related to histories of short-term sexual conquests and low relationship commitment (Foster 2006: 367). If they involve themselves in a relationship, they will often choose to engage with partners that idealize them, or partners who possess some admired properties, such as fame or wealth, which they can incorporate in a symbolic way for narcissistic gratification. In the context, Kernberg quotes van der Waals for saying that the problem isn't that narcissists only loves themselves and no others, but that they love themselves just as poorly as they love others.

Conclusion: Narcissistic sexuality and therapy

From Ovid to Kierkegaard and forward to Kohut and Kernberg there is a close linking of the perception of Narcissus and / or narcissism to conceptualizations of sexuality, involving a paradox associated with a state of deficiency. These writers articulate Narcissus and narcissism as problems concerning sexuality that must be analyzed and handled for the improvement or retention of human wellbeing.

However, it is also clear that neither Ovid, Kierkegaard or Kernberg understands narcissism as involving isolated or specific sexual disorders that must be conceived as objects of specific sex therapies based on research findings (Denman 2004: 256). They rather perceive narcissistic sexuality as a secondary aspect of narcissism. According to these authors, narcissism must perceived from an understanding of maturation or ethical formation of the individual person. Following Kierkegaard's and Kernberg's perspectives, the ambition of this perception is to help a basically vulnerable, frustrated and desperate core of a person.

In this article, I have demonstrated a close link between narcissism and sexuality. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that narcissistic sexuality has the characteristic of being fixated on sexual or egocentric gratification rather than on enduring intimacy and commitment. I have also tried to show that psychotherapy must be directed at a wider ethical or psychological development or learning process than involving a pure focus on the sexual problems.

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Differences and Similarities

between Existential Therapy and CBT

Introduction

In this essay, I will compare and contrast the cognitive-behavioral approach to psychotherapy with the existential approach by addressing theories of Aaron Beck, David Clarks and Adrian Wells, Jeffrey Young and Emmy van Deurzen.

The cognitive-behavioral approach

Aaron Beck established *Cognitive therapy* (CT) on a clinical basis for the treatment of depressive patients. This gradually led to the development of *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy* (CBT), integrating methods and concepts from behaviorism and behavior therapy. As a reaction against the psychoanalytic understanding of depression as aggression turned inward, Beck describes depression as an expression of the activation of a *cognitive triad*, where the patient interprets its world, itself and its future in a negative way (Beck 1970: 255-6). Whereas classical psychoanalysis bases on the ontological principle that drives are fundamental to human psyche, the cognitive approach bases on the ontological principle that *cognition* is fundamental. This means that cognitive structures are the major determinants of human behavior and feelings. Beck took inspiration from Jean Piaget's cognitive-constructivist theory of development, assuming that different experiences lead individuals to construct cognitive *schemas* that contain basic assumptions about themselves, the future and the world (Piaget 1972). Human beings use these schemas to organize perception and behavior. The depressive person has formed a *depressive schema,* containing *dysfunctional assumptions* (Fennell 2009: 172; Williams 2009: 263)

> His interpretation of his experiences, his explanations for their occurrence, and his outlook for the future, show respectively, themes of personal deficiency, of self-blame and negative expectations. These idiosyncratic themes pervade not only his interpretations of immediate situations but also his free associations, his ruminations, and his reflections (Beck 1970: 285)

Critical incidents activate dysfunctional assumptions that produce *negative automatic thoughts,* leading in turn to other behavioral, motivational, emotional and physical symptoms of depression. This produces new negative automatic thoughts, forming a vicious circle. According to Beck, *systematic logical errors* maintain the depressive schemas. Following the integration of behavioral components in the establishment of CBT, different theorists have started to focus on the way in which *dysfunctional life strategies* maintain dysfunctional schemas and assumptions.

The CBT-approach bases on the conventional diagnostic approach to psychopathology. It covers more psychopathological phenomena than depression. As an example, David Clark and Adrian Wells developed a cognitive model of social phobia following the general cognitive idea that expectations and interpretations produce negative emotions. States of anxiety are due to a systematic overestimation of the danger in a given situation (Clark 2009b: 54). Based on early experiences, patients have developed dysfunctional assumptions about themselves in social situations, leading them to interpret normal social interactions in a negative way viewing them as signs of danger. These interpretations trigger in social situations. The interpretations in turn trigger an *anxiety program,* consisting of three interlinked components: (1) the somatic and cognitive symptoms of anxiety; (2) the safety behavior in which the patients engage to reduce threat and prevent feared outcomes; (3) and a shift in the patients attention to monitoring and observation of themselves (Clark 2009b; 127-8).

In other words, depression, social phobia and other disorders are specific psychopathological phenomena that are due to deficient learning of cognitive structures and behavioral skills. Therapy is primarily oriented towards faulty cognition and behavior. The strategy of therapy is to target this deficiency through a corrective learning process, including behavioral experiments, verification of expectations and confrontation of beliefs. More accurately, therapists use a variety of emotional, cognitive and behavioral techniques, designed to suit individual patients. This includes debating irrational beliefs, gathering data on assumptions one has made, learning new coping skills, keeping a record of activities, engaging in Socratic dialogue, carrying out homework assignments, forming alternative interpretations, changing one's language and thinking patterns and confronting faulty beliefs etc. (ibid: 140-3; Beck 1970: 319-30). In recent years, the approach of CBT includes a broad range of strategies that Nicole Rosenberg lists as follows:

(1) A *psychoeducational strategy* aiming at educating the patient in his mental illness;

(2) An *insight contracting strategy*, with the aim that the patient obtains a better understanding of his mental processes;

(3) A *problemsolving* or *coping strategy* aimed at learning the patient new skills and new ways of thinking and acquiring more effective ways of coping with problems (Rosenberg 2007: 244).

In the 1990's, the second wave of the cognitive-behavioral tradition was established. This included Jeffrey Young's *schema therapy,* integrating elements from attachment theory. Young developed schema therapy for treatment of patients with personality disorders that have proved difficult to treat with traditional short-term CBT. Schema therapy is a clinical educational method, focusing on *early maladaptive schemas,* defined as:

> …self-defeating emotional and cognitive patterns that begin early in our development and repeat throughout life (Young 2003: 7)

The inspiration from attachment theory reflects in the assumption that learning of early maladaptive schemas result from unmet core emotional needs in childhood (ibid:9). If patients develop these schemas, they will either surrender to them by using cognitive filters and self-destructive behavior patterns, or they will block the release of the schemas by cognitive, emotional or behavioral avoidance, or they will overcompensate by the help of cognitive or behavioral patterns (ibid: 34-5). Therapy is a learning process, involving:

- An *assessment and education phase* where the goal of treatment is to teach patients to strengthen the healthy schemas, so that they can learn to navigate, negotiate with or neutralize their dysfunctional schemas;
- A *change phase* where the goal is to learn cognitive, emotional and behavioral changes aiming to help the patient to fight the maladaptive schemas and destructive ways of coping (ibid: 44-5).

The reason why straight CBT does not work with personality disorder is that people who have not learned early adaptive schemas need a more thorough treatment. However, in general, it can be viewed as a common assumption in both CBT and schema therapy that

the patients have never learned to do cognitive and behavioral 'self-care', which they have to learn through therapy. Since the motivation for change and the personal responsibility for the way of responding to events is crucial to both these theories, the educational notions of choice and responsibility is the core of the cognitive-behavioral approach. The therapist must take a very intervening and active role as a teacher or consultant to facilitate the learning process of the patient. Therapy is present-centered and very strategically oriented to specific mental conditions and structured around clear goals and techniques of treatment.

Comparing with the existential approach

Whereas the cognitive-behavioral tradition bases on the ontological idea that cognition constitutes the essence of human being, the existential tradition rejects any essentialist conceptualization of human being. Instead, the existential approach bases on the ontological idea that existence is the core of human being and that existence precedes essence. This also involves a rejection of the conventional diagnostic approach to psychopathology, based on the idea that it is possible to make a fundamental distinction between essentially normal and pathological ways of functioning. Whereas the cognitive-behavioral approach focused on the incorporation of dysfunctional and maladaptive thinking leading to emotional and behavioral disturbances, Emmy van Deurzen articulates the object of existential psychotherapy as the *dilemmas of living* that must be "addressed in moral and human terms rather than in terms of sickness and health" (Deurzen 2007: xiii). These dilemmas are not manifestations of specific dysfunctions but expressions of diverse difficulties in relation to coming to terms with life's challenges. People inevitably experience anxiety in the confrontation with the challenges of life and have a tendency to turn away from them and lose themselves in shared cultural ideas of the perfect and problem free life, which paradoxically might lead them into misery and distress (ibid: 17). Thus, these problems come from a misguided philosophy of life. The biggest challenge to these people is not to overcome the dilemmas of life but to affirm and make "creative use of the very paradox involved in living" (ibid: 18). Unlike the cognitive-behavioral approach, the aim of existential therapy is not to cure people or change their dysfunctional way of adapting to the world but help them *learn the art of living* as a personal way of tackling life's problems. Thus, similar to the cognitive-behavioral approach therapy is a learning process, but the aim of learning is described in terms of discovering a meaning with life and living authentically

rather than in terms of achieving more adaptive ways of functioning. While especially the CBT approach put much emphasis on the unlearning of dysfunctional cognitive schemas and assumptions and therefore primarily focus on the transformation of the inner consciousness, van Deurzen furthermore puts more emphasis on encouraging the clients to explore the ways in which they relate to the world as dimensions of worldly being. In addition, whereas the cognitive-behavioral approach tends to put emphasis on the learning of specific functional cognitive, behavioral and emotional skills, van Deurzen finds it more importance that the clients learn their own personal answers to life's challenges:

> Attempting to coach people who feel alienated in particular skills or in ways of expressing themselves may be counterproductive and result in more rather than less alienation (ibid: 20)

However, similar to the cognitive-behavioral approach, van Deurzen provides much emphasis on the notions of choice and responsibility by assuming:

> …the importance of the client's capacity for making well-informed choices about her own life and her attitude towards it (ibid: 2)

Additionally, just as the cognitive approach assumes that human being has learned a certain schematic disposition in relation to how it organizes perception and governs and evaluates behavior, van Deurzen describes how a person's way of relating to the world connects to the meanings he or she has created through his or her life. In turn, the learning process in the existential therapy focuses not on unlearning of old schemas, assumptions and strategies, strengthening of healthy skills and acquirement of new skills but on uncovering, exploring and developing those assumptions, talents and values, which are already there, even though they may be deeply hidden (ibid: 21). Whereas the cognitive-behavioral therapist tends to work as a teacher, using specific techniques and strategies, the existential therapist works as a *mentor in the art of living* and stresses understanding and reflections first and techniques second (Ibid: 25). According to van Deurzen, the practice of existential therapy must base on wisdom and integrity rather than on technical expertise, and the therapist must therefore have achieved autonomy, openness, existential maturity and sense of perspective on the human condition (Deurzen 1998: 112).

Conclusion

In CBT and schema therapy, the focus of the learning process is on a collaborative relationship where the therapist assists the patient in identifying dysfunctional beliefs schemas and discovering alternative strategies for living and promotes corrective experiences that lead to new skills. As the patient gains insight into its problems, it must actively practice changing thinking and acting. Similar to the existential approach, the cognitive-behavioral approach therefore emphasizes the individual's responsibility for his own life and the opportunity to make choices and change his living conditions. Both approaches also stress the importance of the here-and-now encounter and emphasize the ability of human being as a reflective and acting creature. Whereas CBT does not put much emphasis on relationships, schema therapy has more in common with the existential therapy in emphasizing human relationality. One of the major differences is the focus in existential therapy on the authentic dimension. While there are differences between the two approaches there are also similarities, and many insights and practices from the cognitive-behavioral approach might be integrated into existential therapy. Especially schema therapy focuses on learning new skills and strengthening existing skills for cognitive, emotional and behavioral self-care, and this insight can be integrated into the existential focus on the learning of the ability to live life in an authentic way.

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A Problematization of Therapeutic Neutrality

Introduction

The therapeutic relationship between therapist and client is a crucial element in psychotherapy. An investigation conducted by Orlinsky and Howard in 1986 even concluded that the primary factor in successful therapy is *the relationship* that therapists form with their clients (Orlinsky (1986)). Thus, the constituent process of the clinical situation is a certain kind of *interpersonal activity between two human subjects*. In this article, I will try to accentuate psychotherapy as a dialectic relation, established between two subjects. I will do this in order to problematize Sigmund Freud's traditional psychoanalytic conception of the analyst as a neutral field. The main purpose is to discuss *how far it actually might be rewarding to take into consideration a conception of analyst subjectivity, how such a conception may work in therapeutic practice, and whether an orientation towards analyst subjectivity has any negative sides.* In order to make this discussion, I will draw on insights from relational psychoanalyst Stephen Mitchell and existential psychotherapist Ernesto Spinelli, and see whether their criticisms of the neutral stance have any similarities.

Sigmund Freud: The analyst as a blank screen

Freud invented the most traditional conception of psychotherapy. Fundamentally, he understood the human personality as a biologically drive-based system of psychic energy, shaped by childhood experiences. Freud called attention to the presence of unconscious processes, conflicts and defence-mechanisms beyond individual behaviour. Neurotic disorders in adults were considered to be the effect of repressed and split off sexual conflicts in childhood, and the therapeutic aim of the psychoanalyst was to assist the client in making these unconscious conflicts conscious, reintegrating his or her personality. In the clinical situation, the client approached the therapist according to patterns from his or her childhood, making *transferences* of past feelings and attitudes. In return, the therapist should act according to a principle of neutrality as a *blank screen* for the projection of the client's feelings and attitudes in order to throw light on his or her way of approaching relationships.

> The doctor should be opaque to his patients and, like a mirror, should show them nothing but what is shown to them (Freud 2001: 118)

This means, that the practice of psychoanalysis involves an asymmetrical relationship, where the client is supposed to reveal his or her subjectivity as a decentered subject to the therapist, being a transference object or "sterile field" (Rachman (2004)). Freud acknowledged that the therapist might experience emotional reactions towards the client's transference, accounted for as *counter-transference.* However, the trained therapist should work on keeping a neutral stance and not reveal any personal information. Thus, the analyst's emotional state must always be one of objectivity and neutrality. The double question is (1) whether it is actually possible at all for a therapist to eliminate him- or herself as a real person in the clinical situation, and (2) whether such an ambition might not also "preclude an empathic, authentic and warm attitude" towards the client and thereby reduce therapeutic effectiveness (Lemma (2007), 45). I will try to outline two alternative approaches that accept a notion of analytic subjectivity: a *relational psychoanalytic approach* and an *existential psychotherapeutic approach*.

Stephen Mitchell: Intersubjectivity in the therapeutic relationship

Mitchell confronts the traditional conception of psychoanalysis by articulating a paradigm shift from drive theory to relational psychoanalysis. According to Mitchell, mental problems are due to disorders in our interpersonal relationships rather than caused by repressed drives. Therefore, he introduces a relational model, integrating of insights from object-relations-theory, attachment theory, interpersonal theory and self-psychology. According to this model, not drives but relationships with other people are basic to our mental life and personal development. Thus, our mind is "fundamentally dyadic and interactive" (Mitchell 1988: 3) and all psychodynamic phenomena are conceived from:

> a multifaceted relational matrix which takes into account self-organization, attachment to others ("objects"), interpersonal transactions, and the active role of the analysand in the continual re-creation of his subjective world [and] which encompasses both intrapsychic and interpersonal realms (8-9)

The human self is relational by design. We are connected and constructed as subjective and individual human beings through ongoing inter-subjectivity.

> One cannot become a human being in the abstract […] Embeddedness is endemic to human experience – I become the person I am in interaction with

> others. The way I feel it necessary to be with them is the person I take myself
> to be (275-6)

We are pursuing and maintaining relatedness. Psychopathology involves a failure to relate and grow, rooted in certain conflictual interactional patterns in our relational world. We internalize such patterns at an early stage in life, re-experiencing them in adulthood (148). Furthermore, we are not just passive victims of experience. We are also active creators and perpetuators of our conflictual relational configurations (172).

Mitchell describes this as a position in between psychoanalytic determinism and radical existentialism. The aim of therapy is to give the client – who is stuck in a maladaptive relational matrix – an increased awareness of

> …himself as both the design and the designer that makes possible a richer
> experience of living (270)

Psychoanalysis does not involve treatment for a mental disease. It involves a loosening of relational restraints, generated when the client was grooving up. According to Mitchell, the therapeutic relationship is almost similar to other human relationships. That is exactly why it allows the client to experience and change the basic structures of his or her relational world. This involves a two-person approach to the therapeutic relationship where the therapist is not an objective field outside of the client's world. Rather, the therapist is rooted in the client's relational matrix (292). The therapist is not a blank screen but enters a personal relationship with the client, which however:

> …does not grant a license to the analyst to do whatever he feels like. He must
> always strive to sustain […] the analytic attitude, by continually reflecting on
> and questioning all the data of the analytic hour and maintaining at all times
> a concern for the patient's ultimate well-being (293)

The job of the therapist is to help the client understand and reshape his or her relational patterns, and the therapist offers his or her own different – but not more real or mature – perspective on the constant transference-countertransference integrations.

> What is therapeutic is not a surrender to the analyst's illusory wisdom and
> control, but a gradual restructuring of the relationship on more collaborative
> terms (301).

To offer the client this space, the therapist must operate with a lot of restraint and make sure that mutual love and hate develop and appear in the therapeutic relationship, but only within some limitations. As the client is encouraged to be irresponsible and surrender to the situation in order to let feelings emerge, the therapist must love and hate *responsibly,* which involves "to be aware of and to cultivate his feelings, associations and reveries" (Mitchell 2003: 131). The therapist must let his personality be present in the clinical situation, but only by using responsibility as a shaping factor and never occlude the focus on the client's well-being (134). This means that Mitchell allows inter-subjectivity in the therapeutic relationship as recognition of the fact that the therapist cannot ignore his own person. As well as an introduction of a useful factor for therapeutic effectiveness. However, he maintains a notion of psychotherapy as organized around an asymmetrical relationship, because he replaces the principle of neutrality with a principle of responsibility, even though he also introduces some element of symmetry.

This principle of responsibility is very important, because Rachman points out how the move beyond neutrality involves the danger of letting lose "the exhibitionistic needs and tendencies of a narcissistic analyst"(Rachman 2004: 221). Therefore, the self-disclosure of the therapist must be used very cautious and not facilitate a way for the therapist to satisfy needs for admiration, love or an obedient audience: "Such disclosures are disguised as tenderness, but are actually self-serving" (229). As Cooper correspondingly points out, it is important not to detract the inclusion of the therapeutic subjectivity from seeing it as an analytic function. Therefore, he suggests a distinction between analyst disclosure and self-disclosure (Cooper 1998). Analyst disclosure is selective and must only be used as to uncover elements in the clients relationship to the therapist – that is from the analyst's perspective some sort of asymmetry must be retained in order to restrain the mutuality in the therapeutic relationship and the main focus must be on the client's developmental process. Even though this approach no longer views the therapist as a blank screen, it is important that the therapist does not take a full step out of anonymity and discloses his or her own life experiences or manipulates the client.

Ernesto Spinelli: The therapeutic relationship as an interactive encounter

Spinelli's alternative to Freud is rooted in the tradition of existential psychotherapy, which has a philosophical and scientific foundation quite different from that of psychoanalysis. In contrast to the Freudian conception, the existential approaches emphasizes that human

personality has no universal essence. Instead of reducing human beings to their nature, this perspective perceives human beings from their *existence.* That is the way we are in our world with others and ourselves and what it means to us. The person is not a fixed entity but is constantly in a process of becoming. Therefore, the existential approach bases on a phenomenological perspective, emphasizing our levels of experience as we exist and give meaning to our self and our surroundings. Furthermore, this perspective involves that we are not separate and distinct entities but beings-in-the-world, whose experience of ourselves and others "emerge of, and through and irreducible grounding of relatedness" (Spinelli 2007: 12). Accordingly, Spinelli views our subjectivity as an expression of relatedness and thereby his idea of human being has strong similarities to Mitchell's notion of a relational self:

> …no self can be 'found', nor individual 'emerge' other than via the a priori interrelational grounding from which our unique sense of being arises (Spinelli 2007: 14)

From different perspectives, Mitchell and Spinelli both reject strong individual subjectivism, although Spinelli uses a broader concept about relationships, covering relationships with self, others and the world. In this respect, Spinelli is very influenced by the intersubjective existential-phenomenologist Buber and his distinction between 'I-It' and 'I-Thou'. The latter is an attitude towards the other grounded in interpersonal relatedness between subjects, whereas the first is an attitude towards the other grounded in objectification and control.

> The primary I-Thou can be spoken only with the whole being [...] I become through my relation to the Thou; as I become I, I say Thou. All real living is meeting (Buber 2004: 17)

Spinelli accentuates the 'I-Thou' attitude and – like Mitchell – he highlights the quality of the relationship between therapist and client. He views the therapeutic relationship as an interactive *encounter* in an intersubjective realm, where both parts have to recognize the "specialness and uniqueness of the on-going relationship" (Spinelli 2006: 208). Like Mitchell, he also challenges the ideal of neutrality and wants the therapist to acknowledge his or her feelings towards the client without "acting upon them", in order to prevent abuse. Instead, the therapist must encounter "self and other as beings who strive to approach mutual responsibility and equality" (67) and regard the feelings as useful for the relationship. Spinelli does not think it is possible for the therapist to ignore his or her own person and completely avoid self-disclosure. Yet, he also see the dangers in this self-

disclosure because it often serves the interest of the therapist and not that of the client (163). However, the therapist is engaged in the relationship and has no ability to be objective. The therapist may make a certain use of disclosure as long as it does not take away the focus from the client (Spinelli 2007: 163). The therapist must attempt to bracket all his or her personal preferences in order to be able to step into the client's world and with the client explore the client's experience of the interpersonal realm through an exploration of the therapeutic relationship.

> …the therapeutic relationship is seen to be the 'microcosm' through which the 'macrocosm' of the client's lived reality is expressed and opened to enquiry (Spinelli 2006: 186)

Unlike Mitchell, Spinelli does not explain mental disorders as the result of early experiences even though he perceives them as emerging from relations, and through therapy the client can develop an awareness of his relational way of being and open up for a reconstruction.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to problematize the traditional psychoanalytic idea of therapeutic neutrality by addressing ideas from Mitchell and Spinelli. Even though they address psychotherapy from different traditions, there seems to be many similarities. Both emphasize the fundamentality of human interrelatedness and the quality of the therapeutic relationship, and they explain how this relationship gives an opportunity for the client and the therapist to explore and change the client's relational way of being. To be able to engage in this process, the therapist must acknowledge his own subjectivity and allow himself or herself to engage in the relationship with the client. The therapist will be ineffective if he or she tries to act as a blank screen but it is also very important that the therapist does not occlude the focus on the client's wellbeing. Even though it is not possible or preferable that the therapist tries to attain neutrality, the therapist will still need to be responsible or bracket his or her own preferences. Psychotherapy involves an intersubjective interaction between two persons, but it must always be oriented towards the wellbeing of the client and not the therapist's needs for attention.

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