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Chapter 5

EXPERIENTIAL--EXISTENTIAL THERAPY: EMBODYING FREEDOM AND VULNERABILITY

Les Todres

Since the early 1970's I have been interested in the relationship between phenomenology, existentialism and hermeneutics. My enquiry into the possibility of conceiving academic psychology as a human science, as distinct from that of the natural sciences, led me to the work of Amedeo Giorgi (e.g.1970, 1985). Giorgi was engaged in considering how the phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl could provide both a philosophical underpinning for psychology, as well as a practical direction for qualitative research. In a certain sense, Husserl came to sit on one of my shoulders and, in spite of the critique of his so-called 'essentialism' by a number of philosophers and practitioners, he continues to beckon me in helpful ways. At the same time, I was also engaged in psychotherapeutic training, and through this, was introduced to the Daseinsanalytic approach of Medard Boss (1963, 1979) and thus to Martin Heidegger. Heidegger, in a similar sense, came to sit on my other shoulder, and in spite of my Jewish heritage and some real questions about his involvement with the Nazi Party, he remains a source of productive philosophical and personally dramatic beckoning that I have far from exhausted. I have also greatly benefited from other philosophers who have taken the broad traditions of phenomenology and existentialism forward in interesting and different ways such as Lévinas, Merleau-Ponty, Buber, Gadamer and Gendlin. Then there was some interesting work which linked Heidegger with Asian thought (Parkes 1987; May 1996). I saw this link as an important dimension which helped to suggest some radical spiritual implications for Heidegger's philosophy as well as for the transpersonal potentials of existentially-oriented psychotherapy. And who can forget Freud? This brief and overly simplistic personal--historical fragment may serve to begin to open up a path towards expressing a personal view of an experiential--existential therapy of a particular kind: where phenomenological--embodied process (the epistemological concern) and existential themes of actualities and possibilities (the ontological concern) come together.

The epistemological concern: phenomenological--embodied process

The rich implications of Husserl's thought for psychotherapy have still to be systematically articulated, but I would like to highlight three emphases that I have found very fruitful: languaging experience, horizon, and the lived body.

Languaging Experience

Husserl (1970a, 1970b) pointed again and again to the challenge of what it takes to be attentive to what occurs in experience. For him, this was not just a project of self-

knowledge but a philosophical project: how what appears in consciousness is the credible starting point for knowing what can be known and even more, for saying something about the relationship between the known and the unknown. He was thus interested in 'subjectivity' *how* we know, as well 'objectivity' *what* there is to know, even if this 'what' differs from the traditional western way of enframing 'reality'. His 'method' was to reflect on experience in a particular way: to attend to experience before it is categorized as 'inner' as opposed to 'outer', 'mental' as opposed to 'physical', 'intellectual' as opposed to 'emotional'. Within such a spirit, we were called upon to attend to experience before the so called 'objects' of experience are abstracted out from their flowing context; to suspend 'handed down' generalizations that may prevent us from looking again at what presents itself to consciousness. Such 'looking again' may be an important foundation for learning something new; and learning something new about oneself and the world may be a particularly important component for an authentic psychotherapy. It is thus no surprise that emerging and novel approaches to psychotherapy are concentrating less on the traditional emphases on 'cognition' and 'emotion' and more on 'attention' - 'how' and 'to what' to attend. And for Husserl, 'experience', in the way that he understood it, was the philosophically reliable 'place' to begin to attend. So, because the notion of 'experience' is so central to his path, Husserl needed to clarify what is meant by experience. Husserl (1970a) does this early on in his writings on 'consciousness', but I believe that the depth of the implications of 'experience' reached a more mature stage in his later writings on the 'lifeworld' (Husserl 1970b). I cannot do justice to the complex trajectory of his thought that threads through a number of years and writings, but there are a few things that are of particular import for the definition and practice of experiential--existential therapy as I see it.

Experience needs experiencing; to have experienced is to have 'gone through' an experience - a living ground of happenings that are concrete and specific: 'I was at home when I had this thought; the phone rang and it startled me.' One can be deluded or misinterpret one's experience but such delusion or misinterpretation always occurs with reference to a world of experience: the three-eyed monster shows its body, the unseen ghost enters my world. This is why Husserl was so interested in description: to attend to what happens in concrete experiencing as closely as possible and then to describe 'that' as it comes to one in everyday terms. This is not to say that his phenomenological 'method' did not proceed to reflect on what this meant for philosophical purposes, but he wanted such reflections about meaning to be grounded in 'that' and other experiences. There is one last thing I would like to draw out at this stage before thematizing the notions of '*horizon*' and '*the lived body*'. What is most originally announced in experiencing is the 'lifeworld', a holistic stream of happenings that are relational rather than exclusively 'inside' us or 'outside' us. Although my lifeworld is unique in some sense in the way that it is gathered for me, it is also shared with other persons, beings and things. Who knows where my lifeworld begins and yours ends? It is a realm of ambiguity whose meanings are forever negotiated. In a sense, even 'I' am not what I was and I carry this otherness as part of me. And this is where phenomenologically-oriented reflection is needed. Language of some kind (even art or dance) is deeply implicated in phenomenologically-oriented reflection, in that language provides the distance or space required to reveal something as 'that which stands out' and thus the possibility of relationality with things. The horizons of the lifeworld have multiple meaningful potentials depending on our mode of interaction, and language is an important mode of interaction. To live

both actively and meaningfully one may need both the intimacy-making closeness of phenomenological attentiveness to experience, as well as the space-making distance of phenomenologically-oriented reflection. Phenomenological process thus means a creative tension of closeness and distance, experience and reflection, never fully rupturing either.

Horizon

Clearly, parts of the unknown exist and live in our lives, even though we often don't know what they are in a thematized sense. Consistent with Husserl, I believe that there is another way that we can conceptualize what has been called the 'unconscious' in a phenomenological way. When Husserl attended phenomenologically to the lifeworld, he noticed that what is given to us in any moment of experiencing is never given to us completely or all at once (Husserl 1970a). Let us start perceptually: spatially, I do not see all parts of the tree even though it gives itself to me as a whole tree - I could not see the branches that I do without the 'more' of the tree that I cannot now see. Similarly, I do not see the tree now in all its temporal moments even though it has a history without which it would now not be what it is. Although not presently known in consciousness, some of these dimensions can become known - by walking around the tree or by visiting the tree at other times. But there are things about the tree which I may never be able to know: the appearance of the tree is connected to a disappearing horizon of spatial and temporal relationships as its background, out of which it is precisely so, now. We can do this thought experiment not just on a perceptual phenomenon, but on an emotional experience or on a behavioural phenomenon as well. This logic may have important implications for the phenomena that arise in psychotherapy. The point is that, in relation to a personal life, our experiences and behaviours disappear into an interdependent horizon of happenings that may never be able to be fully understood, even if they are the background without which the present moment would not be happening. This raises some strange questions: What is part of 'me' and not part of 'me'? How far do 'I' go out? How far do I go 'back'? The psychoanalytic tradition approached similar questions in different ways: this tradition saw how the effects of earlier times in one's life and one's involvement with intimate others could all live impactfully in one's present emotional, cognitive and behavioural life, even though what it was about these earlier times and involvements may be unknown. But the notion of the phenomenological horizon is more radical than this and asks: what are the ontological boundaries of the breadth and depth of the 'unconscious', if the 'unconscious' is conceived of as *experiencing disappearing into its multiple background horizons*? How far does such an 'unconscious' extend through personal history, others, culture, ecological connections, and even deep down and far out to 'who knows where'? The so-called 'unconscious' is not then 'inside' me: it is continuous with, and in relationship with, the depth, breadth and history of the 'world' - whatever 'worlding' is altogether, beyond our objectifying reductions (Brooke 1991). Within this perspective, there is a large limit to what we can know about 'what is in the dark'. Instead of the quest to make the 'unconscious' conscious, a phenomenological acknowledgement of disappearing horizons would ask a different question: what about the unknown do I need to *encounter* to help me live forward, and what can I trustingly leave and thank as the unknown? Note that I do not even presume here the '*knowing*' of the 'unconscious' as necessary, but rather a certain kind of encounter with the unknown in our lives, the kind of relationship that we have with such 'otherness'. The question of 'what kind of encounter' with 'what kind of unknowns' may be productive for

experiential--existential therapy. This question may be partially answered when I consider the next theme of the lived body, and further, when I consider the existential themes that Heidegger encounters in his phenomenological enquiries into human being and being-in-general.

Lived Body

The body grounds our experiencing. It gives us a position in the world from where we see, think, feel and act. But phenomenologically, it is often in the background, as the 'from where we live'. In a sense we are engaged 'out there' with things and situations in the world; we are not self-enclosed, but experientially 'there' with all the happenings of the lifeworld. So much so, that we are often lost 'there' or 'then', pre-reflectively caught up in 'the situation with Michael', 'my impending graduation', 'the gentleness of the rain'. And this is often fine. As a Japanese text says: 'not knowing is most intimate'. But in all this, we are countless times called back from 'what we are experiencing' to 'how we are experiencing' - every time we notice a feeling or sensation in a more focal way or even when we are looking for the right words to say. But I go too fast.

Husserl (1989) introduced the idea of the lived body and Merleau-Ponty (1962) took this emphasis forward in interesting ways through his notion of body--subject and body--object. However, in my view, it is the philosopher and psychotherapist Eugene Gendlin (1981, 1991, 1992, 1996, 1997, 1997a) who has most fruitfully laid out the therapeutic implications of focusing on the felt body as a 'royal road' for encountering the 'kinds of unknowns' that may be productive for experiential--existential therapy. Although Gendlin is sometimes appropriated as belonging to the humanistic and person-centred therapy tradition (he contributed to the development of non-directive therapy in the mid 1950's), and sometimes categorized as enacting a dualistic ontology by some existential thinkers, I do not believe that Gendlin's contributions are best understood within either a humanistic or a dualistic context. How so?

For Gendlin, what the felt body opens up for attention and interaction is not a self-enclosed 'inner world' of experiencing. Rather, it opens up the continuum between what is closest to self (the 'ownness' of having one's experience even before it is reflectively patterned by language) and what I have called the disappearing horizons of lifeworld contexts (even as far as to what can never be known). In his philosophy of 'entry into the implicit' (Gendlin 1991, 1992), Gendlin develops his own experience-near terms for what I believe I am referring to as 'horizon'. He refers to the 'more' of experiencing, 'unseparated multiplicity', the 'implicit', 'how interaction is first' and how bodily-felt experience is not first revealed as already formed 'units' but is before the 'patterns' which come to organize them. I understand these terms as indicating an ontological non-separation between 'inner' and 'outer' where what Heidegger called Being is exceedingly presencing to this particular person in 'thrown' and 'gathered' ways that are more than a known pattern. To attempt to make all of such 'unconscious contents' conscious would be like pissing in the wind. So does this mean that our encounter with 'what is not known' is futile and has no therapeutic potential when engaging in the phenomenological rhythm of attention and languaging? No, because one of the gifts of the felt body, as Gendlin articulates it, is that the changing and holistic felt-sense that the lived body carries from moment to moment, is a highly productive 'messenger', a messenger of what needs to be

attended to in one's relationship with 'what is there'. 'What is there' in one's living situation as given by the bodily felt sense contains relevant aspects of one's horizon for living forward in meaningful ways. So the lived body announces what needs to be attended to in the unknown horizon carried in more-than-conceptual ways. It is these more-than-conceptual presences carried in the body that can prefigure our perception, emotion and behaviour. The past is important, in this sense, as it is still living in some way as an inchoate presence; similarly with all the spatialities and othernesses into which I disappear, they are important as they are living inchoately in some way. The next question is: what is it about all this that is therapeutically important? Recall the earlier question: what is it about the unknown that I need to *encounter* in order to help me live forward, and what can I trustingly leave and thank as the unknown? The short answer within this perspective is that the body can tell me what does not feel right, what it is that requires interaction with, even if it can't immediately tell me how to live forward from that. This is not to say that the lived body is not deeply complicit in helping one to know if the next steps feel credible. But 'how to live forward from that' is a much more complex question, and I believe that this is where we need help from an ontological interpretive framework as we engage with the questions of existence: what it means to be, death, the future, others, ethical claims and a heart that comes from vast mysterious callings.

The ontological concern: existential themes of actualities and possibilities

I would now like to concentrate on the interpretive phase of phenomenological--embodied process. Different interpretive frameworks move phenomenological--embodied process forward in different ways, meaningfully addressing what one is 'in' and providing some meaningful paths forward that speak to one's dilemmas and conflicts about how to live. But 'any narrative' won't do. Many of the interpretive frameworks that have arisen can be seen to be helpful. Thus from the psychoanalytic tradition, one could say for example that, amongst other things, Freud's interpretive framework is centrally guided by the quest to find liveable ways for passion and sexuality to be expressed within society and 'civilisation'; that Jung points out the possibility of experiencing one's personal identity as continuous with historical resources far greater than is given in one's personal history - and therefore the possibility of living forward with a sense of belonging to 'energized' resources that one learns to draw on in creative ways. As to Heidegger's (1962) interpretive framework for Being and beings, its value lies in providing an ontology that emphasizes a certain *directionality* for living that is highly compatible with the human realm, between earth and sky. And I also want to briefly indicate why an understanding of such an ontology can assist experiential--existential therapists in offering a 'meeting-with' clients that is ontologically invitational, and why such *ontological invitation* is relevant to psychotherapy.

On his way to being claimed by the thinking of Being, Heidegger attended to the phenomenon of what is given to human beings as human beings. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1962) began to articulate a number of fundamental themes which characterize human existence in an ontological way. He focused on the meaning of being human and how this cannot be understood without understanding the relationship between human beings and being-as-a-whole, with and beyond human beings. His characterization of the human condition was refined over the years and

took on a particular emphasis in his later works. Mugerauer (2008), for example, is able to read Heidegger with the benefit of hindsight and, as such, gathers together the complexity of his thought with reference to a meditation on the themes of homelessness and homecoming in both ontological and ontic contexts. This interpretation is exciting as I believe that it can provide healthcare disciplines with a much needed understanding of the possibility of well-being as a distinctive phenomenon and one that is not just defined as the absence of illness (Todres & Galvin, 2010; Dahlberg, Todres & Galvin, 2009). However, with reference to Heidegger's relation to psychotherapy, I would like to gather together what I see as two central themes from *Being and Time* that underpin his view of human existence: *the stretching--carrying of both freedom and vulnerability*.

Vulnerabilityⁱ

‘Dasein is that being whose being itself is at issue’. (Heidegger 2001: 124)

‘That Being which is an *issue* for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine.’
(Heidegger 1962: 67; 42)

The vulnerability that accompanies this existential task is encountered in the finitude which death imposes, the fragilities and needs of the human body, the insecurities of belonging, of being ‘thrown’ into this circumstance, culture and time. Beyond its specific circumstances, existential vulnerability can speak like a great wound of homelessness. For Heidegger, there is something unavoidable about such existential vulnerability and homelessness if I am to take on a life that is ‘mine’ to live. It is however within the gift of human beings to engage with or flee in many different ways from the existential vulnerabilities that are given with the human realm. We can even walk a path of great refusal, one that attempts to prop up the pretence or the hope of a kind of *invulnerability* that would deny the existential limits that are given. In my book, *Embodied Enquiry: phenomenological touchstones for research, psychotherapy and spirituality* (Todres 2007) I consider, through the figure of Narcissus, the many ways that we can become self-enclosed, cutting ourselves off from the relational openness that would re-introduce the vicissitudes of existential vulnerability. But implicit in this story of choice, of encountering or refusing the givens of existential limits, there is something else of ontological depth: a certain kind of freedom.

Freedom

The freedom that is given to human beings is not just the freedom to choose, giving one some meaningful level of personal agency. It is more radical than this. Rather it is a freedom that participates in an *ontological openness* in which self, other and world cannot simply be objectified as ‘something’ that is settled. Narcissus hoped to possess and grasp himself in a fixated and irrevocable way, thus possessing and grasping others. He refused the ambiguity of the freedom that was offered. However, the freedom of openness is not an absolute freedom, but rather a relational and situated one, a freedom *for* the beings and things of the world, rather than a freedom that is ‘above it all’: ‘Freedom is to be free and open for being claimed by something.’ (Heidegger 2001: 217) There is a certain soberness in Heidegger and a certain madness in Narcissus, even though both are passionately interested in freedom. However, whereas for Narcissus, it is freedom *from* the wound, for Heidegger, it is freedom *for* the wound: ‘Now how is it with consciousness? To stand in the clearing,

yet not standing like a pole, but rather sojourn in the clearing and be occupied with things.’ (Heidegger 2001: 225)

In his sobriety about the truth of suffering and the responsibility to exercise a situated freedom, is Heidegger’s analysis suggesting a merely stoical therapeutic implication to us as existential therapists? Does this mean that what we can hope for is to help facilitate our clients to become resolute in authentically facing the vulnerabilities of what has been existentially given, and to facilitate the independent courage to exercise personal freedom and agency in spite of all this? So far so Sartre. No, I believe, with Medard Boss (Boss 1963,1979), and from encountering the full trajectory of Heidegger’s (1971) thought, that the facing of finitude and existential vulnerability does not just leave us with becoming preoccupied with finitude and vulnerability as ‘objects’ or figural phenomena. Rather, such encounter potentially carries a more foundational gift: the capacity for greater *intimacy* with what appears, in actuality and possibility, with self, others, and world - the human realm, between earth and sky. This willingness to feel and take on an existential level of human vulnerability does not mean that one resigns oneself to specific vulnerabilities in life that can be avoided -- it does not mean becoming passive. Rather it means that one is more pointed towards dealing with the kinds of vulnerabilities that *are* possible to deal with within the existential limits that surround them. Giving ourselves *to* the existential vulnerabilities of life constitutes a path of embodied intimacy. This can lead to a greater sense of being-at-home in one’s body and world, and a greater sense of empathy for others as fellow carriers of existential vulnerability.

So far I have indicated the potential gift of encountering existential vulnerability. But I would also like to indicate something of the gift of encountering existential freedom. The gift of taking on the freedom that is ontologically given constitutes a greater *creativity*, to see the world and situations with a certain freshness and novelty; a freedom *for* a non-repetitious future, a freedom *for* possibility. Such freedom is often scary because it is in tension with our need for a certain sense of security. Heidegger’s (1962) meditations on *das Man*, the ‘They’, and authenticity focus on the different ways in which greater freedom of thought, interaction and self-identity is avoided or embraced. He indicates the great cost of avoiding one’s ‘ownness’ and the responsibility for one’s life, but also the cost of leaving the ‘familiar’ in order to take on a life that is uniquely one’s own: for this journey of taking on existential freedom confronts us with many ethical and moral issues. Through his articulation of ‘care’ as an ontological structure, Heidegger points out that human beings are called to be the ‘there’ of being, to *care* for Being and beings. So this kind of care goes hand in hand with concern about one’s own existence as well as that of others, and even about all phenomena in the manner of their appearing. This kind of freedom is thus a ‘letting be’ kind of love. So the gift of encountering this kind of existential freedom is a kind of freshness of welcome where others and things are not just imprisoned ‘as they were’ but can become the ‘what next’ of what they are becoming: the creative welcome of the future. This is not just a gift to others but is a gift to myself as the giver of freedom: I myself experience a certain freshness and novelty in my perception and thought.

Coming back to the issue of a client in psychotherapy, these gifts circle towards the heart of the everyday present, and towards the heart of the everyday future. I would thus like to revisit the earlier question about the value of Heidegger’s ontology as an

interpretive framework that may give a powerful *directional emphasis* to the carrying forward of embodied--phenomenological process.

The action of ontological invitation: a specific kind of directional--interpretive framework

Being the kind of experiential--existential therapist that is informed by the issues pointed to so far, I attend to my client, Sarah, in a way that implicitly includes both an epistemological concern and an ontological concern. The epistemological concern comports me towards the facilitation of the carrying forward of Sarah's phenomenological--embodied process. A focusing-oriented therapist in the tradition of Gendlin (1996) would in many ways recognize what Sarah and I were doing. I help Sarah to come into contact with her bodily felt sense of her situation, 'how things are', 'there', and the quality of the felt senses that may benefit from attention. I provide a space in which Sarah can often pause so that she can bodily sense into something fresh or complex in her present experiencing, something that may want more room or some kind of expression, or even some privacy of being 'let-be'. And I accompany Sarah in her quest to find words that best describe the moment to moment nuances of what she is experiencing now. As the process unfolds, there is an intensifying sense of inclusive welcome from both Sarah and myself to the presencing phenomena that come from 'somewhere' into Sarah's lived body, to a form of language that feels right for it, and by that, into the space between us, even palpably presencing in some way as if 'in the room' or even interacted with in my own body. The experiencing changes and the languaging moves forward in unanticipated ways that do not necessarily have a logical or narratively coherent trajectory. Sometimes Sarah sighs with relief as something unknown carried by her in her lived body, in some kind of 'close-to-it' way, differentiates--distances itself into languaged meanings that say something of what it was, and is now carried forward into the meaningful company of her conscious life and projects. She does not necessarily solve 'it' but now can begin to 'care for it' as part of the phenomena and 'beings' for which she is called to be responsible. Informed by my epistemological concern I attempt to be very respectful and facilitative of all the ways she is herself practising phenomenological--embodied process, the rhythm of concrete experiencing and languaging, where implicit horizons of her lifeworld gather in just 'this way', for now, towards the task of living forward.

But what of my ontological concern, my ontological invitation to Sarah? Do I speak to her of death, responsibility, existential guilt, freedom? I very seldom do this unless it comes up thematically as an issue from Sarah herself. So how am I directionally focused? In what sense do I embody an ontological invitation to Sarah that speaks of the potential gifts of existential vulnerability and freedom?

A Heideggerian interpretive framework acts indirectly rather than directly as part of an 'otherness' that is difficult to specify. (We need studies of how different ontological frameworks inform the implicit invitational presence of the therapist, and how such implicit invitational presence acts in the concrete situation of therapeutic interaction). But there is something that I *can* say about the shape of my ontological invitation to Sarah. Both Heidegger (1962) and Boss (1963) have written of an 'anticipatory care' that is different from an 'intervening care'. It involves caring for

people in their possibilities. So when Sarah speaks about different levels of struggle with intimacy, in addition to just meeting her specifically in those details of her life, I also see ‘in’ those details their connection to the ontological shape of human possibility as a whole, as briefly indicated in this chapter. As such, any experiential presence or phenomenon is understood as something not to be ‘got rid of’ but something that is already calling towards greater intimacy and freedom, even if in very frustrated or misunderstood ways. My ontological invitation is a process one: to facilitate ways to be in a relationship of ‘welcome curiosity’ with whatever experiential phenomenon arises and where it may be calling to (and from). So, in my ontological invitation, I stand specifically in this ‘process way’ of inviting - of helping to show that any experiencing is connected to a larger movement towards intimacy and freedom. In his writings on psychopathology, Boss (e.g. Boss 1963) demonstrates, through a number of case studies, how so called ‘psychopathological phenomena’ can be understood as a truncated attempt to achieve more healthy existential possibilities (for example, the need to ‘devour’ another can be seen as a truncated attempt to become lovingly at-one-with). Thus, within this hermeneutic framework of an ‘ontological invitation’, I stand as an ‘otherness’ that offers not just an interpersonal relationship of potential shared humanity, but also represents, for now, the ‘ethical’ calling of Being. My presence and care are directed towards this specific experiential phenomenon as it presents itself (without looking suspiciously for anything else there); it helps Sarah notice how the intentionality ‘in’ the experiential phenomenon can find a place in her personal, embodied and social world, and open up possibilities for her. Together, we are engaged with the ‘no simple answer’ of how Sarah’s emerging ‘possibility face’ can live in the world. Concretely, in my ontological invitation, I may then often frame my reflections in terms of the ‘towards’ of the experiencing (for example, the ‘something missing’ that the sadness reveals). This reveals more of her human world – between sky and earth – the limitations and the possibilities there. Sarah tastes more of the ‘freedom--wound’ quality of living a human life (Todres 2007); as such, she is released more into the *intimacy* of ‘wearing’ the we-wound-vulnerability, the anxieties, insecurities and mixed feelings associated with intimacy and finitude. She is also released more into the *novelty* of the freedom--creativity of not trying to reduce being-self or being-other to a certainty or a thing. The horizon of Being can begin to be left as ‘horizon’ - to be ‘let-be’ as a mysterious, but supportively beckoning other. At its outer boundaries, a Heideggerian ontological framework thus melds with what has been called ‘spiritual’ possibilities of a particular kind - the possibility of a non-objectifying experiencing that disappears into a great supportive mystery. This kind of ‘unconscious’ actively calls, not just to ‘homeless’ lands but to homecomings within the homeless.

Introduction to Gendlin’s response

Eugene Gendlin responded to this chapter in the personal style by which he has become well known, where philosophy and reflection emerge freshly in the uniqueness of this embodied moment even as they implicitly carry ‘ontological’ themes and contexts. This sets the scene for understanding how the ‘ontological invitation’ spoken of in the above section, can only be offered in process ways that are alive between therapist and client, in forms that are not necessarily best captured by ‘handed down’ philosophical categories, even those as penetrating as Heidegger’s.

Gendlin unfolds his response by focusing particularly on the meaning of 'coming home' as a felt experience, how this can occur in the immediacy of a therapeutic relational encounter, and how questions of 'ontology' may most meaningfully be dealt with in therapy in 'process terms' (Gendlin 1997a) rather than in 'philosophical content' terms.

The process and sequence of Gendlin's response

I read your paper when it came, and pondered . . . and took the ponder with me. . . I'll comment in the form of asking you. That way the potential of the ponder won't get lost.

In the last part of the paper you re-assert the usual homeless questions. I felt a big gap. No, you can't tack those back on unchanged, after all that. I thought, 'But what *actually does* go there?' Then I took that question with me. But now I'll ask you.

The forties and fifties were still before most people got in touch with their feelings. Young people found their feelings, then their mothers also did. You're not old enough to remember the time. Since about the eighties people don't think finding their feelings is remarkable anymore.

Before that, people in this culture were inwardly homeless, concretely so every day and especially at night. Questions had not only no thinking--answer but also no felt referent either. Intellectual thinking (philosophy, theory) hasn't caught up with this, but the spirit is different today. Not so haplessly lost.

And now, with the focusing stuff we come actually home, grounded inside, in the body, and the body on the earth and in the big unknown that we're part of and sitting in. But the larger home we don't know although we feel ourselves in it.

So all those ontology questions need to re-emerge different. We're between life and death, with immense pain all around us and some in us, and the beauty of it all - every little leaf and dot of light and shadow shape on the wall, just as before, but? I loved the description on page?? and more and more every line. What I mean by 'home' is thick all through here. How different this is in your body from 'clinical distance', from the arguments about 'not gratifying the patient', about restitutional symptoms, or the old type of existential analyst who would argue with her about death, responsibility, existential guilt and freedom, no different from the other kind of analyst arguing with her over being more feminine - no lived felt line into her body from either one. Here, these issues do not now come up in the old homeless general terms; they come up in specific ways in seemingly small but real versions, not even recognizably the same issues.

From Heidegger you pick the one spot in all of Being and Time, where he has a human concern along three lines. Made me smile.

You seem to say as therapist you might tack on some ontological question but I feel sure you wouldn't really, or only to ask into her sadness for whatever would come back out of that and lead to those topics. So, I have to ask you how Heidegger's earth

and sky stuff and your ‘freedom wound’ changes when it is ‘released into’ the real two people process you practise and described up to this spot, rather than into the generalities you have in this last half of this last paragraph. It poses a real ponder: In what new shape are these dimensions unavoidable now?

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ⁱ In my interpretation of the notion of freedom--wound where I refer to terms such as anxiety and ownness, I have been inspired by Heidegger's exposition of 'unheimlich' [etymologically: not-at-home-like, *editors' note*] and 'eigentlich' [etymologically: own-like, *editors' note*] respectively, though take full responsibility for taking these forward in my own ways.