



## Phenomenology, Psychotherapy and the Quest for Intersubjectivity

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### Abstract

*Intersubjectivity is a key concept in phenomenology as well as in psychology and especially in psychotherapy, given the reliance of the therapeutic process on its location in relationship. While psychotherapy encompasses a range of what Owen (2006) terms “talking therapies”, this paper focuses mainly on the Freudian model of psychoanalysis and its connection with Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology respectively. Freud’s recognition that symptoms have meaning, and that the methodical disclosing of their meaning needs to be guided by the experience of the patient, accords with the emphasis of phenomenology on empathic attunement to the lived experience of the other. Insofar as the orientation of psychoanalysis towards methodically disclosing meaning gives it a hermeneutic dimension, it is also compatible methodologically with the interpretative mode of phenomenology. While Karlsson (2010, p. 13) identifies seven centrally significant “points of connection” between psychoanalysis and phenomenology, Thompson (2005, p. 40) suggests that “psychoanalysis is already phenomenological in its latency ... . Indeed, Freud’s principles of technique make little sense outside a phenomenological context”.*

*Can it thus be claimed that, in the quest for intersubjectivity, sufficient common ground exists for meaningful dialogue between psychotherapy, psychoanalysis and phenomenology in general, and between Sigmund Freud, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger in particular? That is what this paper seeks to explore.*

*The paper proceeds from pointing to the ambiguity of the Freudian mode as simultaneously natural scientific and hermeneutic to exploring the fundamental points of difference and commonality between psychoanalysis and phenomenology, and in particular the significance of the role of the unconscious and intentionality in psychoanalysis and phenomenology respectively, as well as the orientation of both towards greater understanding of one’s being in the world. Ultimately, however, the authors conclude that, while the points of commonality would seem conducive to dialogue between the Freudian and the phenomenological in the psychotherapeutic domain, their differences in aims and approach, each shaped by a different view of humankind, continue to obstruct it. The quest for it nevertheless remains ongoing, as demonstrated not only by the academic endeavours of theoreticians such as Owen and Karlsson, but by the contemporary urge of second century psychoanalysis for a theoretically coherent turn away from the Cartesian and towards the authentically intersubjectively relational.*

## Phenomenology and Psychotherapy

Freud's innovations in the field of psychiatry remain not only influential but fundamental in the areas of both theory and practice in the broad mental health field, with the terminology in which his theoretical constructs, explanatory concepts and therapeutic techniques are embedded by now an established part of the cultural vocabulary. As a comprehensive model of psychic functioning, Freud's personality theory offers explanatory concepts for understanding human development, motivation and behaviour. In the field of clinical practice, it both roots and frames the process of psychoanalysis as a method focused on capturing "the genesis of otherness" in order to achieve its aim "to help individuals negotiate psychic difficulties – such as neuroses and psychoses – that arise from the dynamical conflicts between the instinctual forces" (Cutrofello, 2005, p. 122).

Despite the fact that the reliance of Freud's "meta-psychology" on the mechanistic, reductionist, and thereby positivist, model of natural science has been challenged by critics from various schools of thought, there is nevertheless consensus among contemporary psychoanalytic theoreticians that this is not the only philosophical framework within which psychoanalysis functions, but that two distinct and rival models of psychoanalysis are in fact operative. Nissim-Sabat (1995) asserts that, "from its inception psychoanalysis has embodied two conflicting traditional models for theoretical work: 1) Freud's mechanistic and reductionist, that is, positivist, natural science framework, his "meta-psychology", and 2) his interpretive, or hermeneutic, framework" (p. 163). This accords with Ricoeur's assessment that, "on the one hand, [psychoanalysis] aims to expose the sense of psychic phenomena and therefore proceeds hermeneutically or phenomenologically, respectively. Yet, on the other hand, it strives to explain these phenomena through recourse to the economics of psychic forces and their conflicts, following the ideal of the natural sciences" (Ricoeur, 1965; in Lohmar & Brudzińska, 2012, p. x).

Since psychoanalysis inevitably retains this ambiguity, one may wonder with which particular version of the Freudian model one can begin in attempting to assess the possibility of meaningful dialogue between Freud and phenomenology. The problems one faces are not only diverse, but pivotal. The natural science model of psychoanalysis dichotomises the positions of psychoanalysis and phenomenology in their understanding not only of what is truly scientific in science as such, but of the reality of human being. From this perspective, the Freudian psyche is reduced to the "thingness" of the solipsistic Cartesian mind, and psychoanalysis hence trapped in the dualism that phenomenology rejects. If

science is taken as naturalism and reductionism in psychoanalysis, then phenomenology stands opposed to psychoanalysis. As Owen (2003) elucidates, "Natural accounts ... devalue meaning, consciousness, the sense of the other and the intersubjective relationship. ... Natural interpretation ignores the observable phenomena in favour of what is naturally causative of conscious phenomena. ... When taking the natural route, consciousness is bypassed and the meaningful intersubjective world is lost" (p. 247). Thus, it would seem that, as Nissim-Sabat (1991) concludes, "With a concept of science that is broader than natural science, phenomenology is incompatible with both the hermeneutic and natural science models currently espoused by psychoanalytic theoreticians" (p. 44).

However, approached from another perspective, psychoanalysis is neither a science nor philosophy. "[T]he object of psychoanalysis is the zone where the two realms overlap, that is, where the biological or somatic is already mental or cultural and where, at the same time, culture springs from the very impasses of the somatic functions which it tries to resolve" (Zupančič, 2007, p. 2). Owen suggests that the proper stance from which to read Freud are the details of how he worked, that he "disliked rule-bound practice" and did not, in his own words, "consider it at all desirable for psychoanalysis to be swallowed up by medicine and to find its last resting place in a textbook of psychiatry under the heading 'Methods of Treatment'..." (Freud, 1926; in Owen, 2003, p. 16). Contrary to the reductionist model of science associated with the version of psychoanalysis evident in the standard readings of Freud, psychoanalysis as a practice is, as Ricoeur argued, more essentially a hermeneutical science, in that, unlike in other natural sciences, in psychoanalysis the possibility of verification is "based on the narrative character of the psychoanalytic process" (Ricoeur, 1977; in Karlsson, 2004/2010, p. 4). Despite the significance of Ricoeur's distinction between the "hermeneutics of suspicion" characterising the search of psychoanalysis for hidden meaning and the "hermeneutics of faith" implicit in the focus of hermeneutic phenomenology on immediate meaning, the perspective on the practice of psychoanalysis as a "hermeneutical science" opens up possibilities for bridging the gap between psychoanalysis and phenomenology, insofar as it points to the key methodological significance in both domains of meaning, intersubjectivity and empathy.

With the focus of its search for meaning on disclosing the hidden in order to explain what is manifest or experienced, psychoanalysis engages with the unconscious. Phenomenology, on the other hand, begins with lived human experience, which is perceived as already "always 'meaning-full', always

orientated, and always value-laden” (Bracken, 1999, p. 84). For phenomenology, “The starting point is to find out how we find ourselves to be human beings who share the same intersubjective object-meanings in one fundamentally shared world” (Owen, 1994, p. 6). In contrast, given its inescapable Cartesian implications, for psychoanalysis intersubjectivity would imply “a thematic exchange between two objectively separate individuals, where one is trying to grasp the objectively separate emotions or experiences of the other” (Reis, 2011). Psychoanalysis nevertheless too deals with the meaningful realm of human interaction and is basically committed to the ideal that, in principle, there is nothing that is meaningless (Karlsson, 2004/2010, p. 79). While exploring the “distorted, illogical and pathological”, and thus apparently meaningless, realm of human understanding, with its subject matter the unrevealed zone of our existence that appears strange and unknowable as it remains outside the scope of logical understandability, psychoanalysis seeks to discover the meaning of the experientially meaningless – and thus it looks for a wider dimension of lived meaning that is to be hermeneutically disclosed in order to be re-lived meaningfully rather than logically understood (Karlsson, 2004/2010, p. 14).

### Psychotherapy and the Sphere of the Unconscious

Exploring some fundamental points of difference between psychoanalysis and phenomenology may allow for possible points of commonality to be rediscovered. We shall proceed by re-visiting the concepts of conscious intentionality on the one hand and that of the unconscious on the other.

No-one will question that the unconscious is the proper subject matter of psychoanalysis, but what needs clarification is in what sense words like “unconscious”, and, for that matter, even the word “conscious”, is used in this context, and in what sense one can talk about these terms. One cannot overlook the fact that, as Strong (1984) points out, “there is a certain ambiguity, or more properly an evolution, in Freud’s thoughts on the unconscious” (p. 52).

Strong (1984) elaborates on this as follows:

By 1915, ... in the article “The Unconscious”, Freud includes both the “conscious” and the “preconscious” (that which can come into consciousness) in a realm that has been “transformed” such that one can “know something about it”. Dreams, for instance, are never said to be “in” the unconscious, but are rather the “royal road” to it. And, when Freud wrote *The Ego and the Id* in 1923, he found that he could “easily bring the

concepts into order” (*bequem wirtschaften*) concerning the relation of the conscious state to that which is unconscious. He argues a few pages later that everything that is “preconscious” and “conscious” can be placed in the realm of the “ego” and that the rest of the psyche – which behaves “as if it were unconscious” – can be called the “id”. It is fair to say that even after this writing Freud’s use of the word “unconscious” retains both an ordinary and a more technical use, but by and large, after 1923, when he refers to “*the* unconscious”, as opposed to something being unconscious, he means the “id”. (pp. 52-53)

In order to explore these various shades of meaning we should begin by bracketing the usual way of looking at these terms. To do justice to both meaning-laden and value-laden terms like *mind*, *matter*, *conscious*, *unconscious*, and so forth, we have to aim for a deeper and more subtle sense of what makes the term meaningful within a particular discourse. For example, what we usually mean by *drives*, *instincts* and so forth may differ from the term’s meaning within the stream of psychotherapy. So, too, Freud’s conceptual construct was very different from the existing psychological notion of the unconscious as the realm that is other than the one we are aware of, as it always remains in contrast to the conscious realm. Freud (1905/1961, p. 168) defined a *drive* as “the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation”, with this concept thus one that lies “on the frontier between the mental and the physical”. If, for example, we take *libido* to be the core of the unconscious, we may very well identify it with the id (*das Es*), the “untamed and wild” in Freudian psychoanalysis that Karlsson (2004/2010) describes as akin to something like Laplanche’s version of the death drive and its *libidinal* and *sexual* character of a body ego. But, in Freud, it must be considered in a broader context that differs from the conventional notion of sexuality as a natural condition limited to the adult heterosexual relationship only. Freud included infantile sexuality into its fold. (Karlsson, 2004/2010, pp. xii-xiii)

But what, then, does *libido* stand for? Karlsson (2004/2010) argues that

... the *libido* concept, or the sexual drives, should not be understood as experienced sexuality, or even as possible to experience. The concept of *libido* should rather be understood as a theoretical construction, and as such expresses itself most clearly in Freud’s economic, energy point of view. (p. xiii)

Understanding of *libido* and of *drive* in this way helps us to see the phenomenological underpinnings of these meaning-imbued terms. While the sexual drive has a special characteristic position in the world of human experience, *libido* is a non-experiential, constructed, scientific concept that provides a psychoanalytic perspective. As such, the concept of *libido* is understandable against the background of a pre-scientific domain of a sexually vibrant but hitherto unexplored lived dimension of life-world experiences. As Zupančič (2007) submits:

With the term “libido” Freud designates an original and irreducible imbalance of the human nature. Every satisfaction of a need brings with itself the possibility of a supplementary satisfaction, deviating from the object and aim of a given demand while pursuing its own goal, thus constituting a seemingly dysfunctional detour. (p. 466)

Ricoeur (1969/1974b) re-visits meaningful variations of the term *libido* within the Freudian psycho-analytical context, concluding that, while it is beyond the grasp of the intellect, it is within the domain of experience, and is thus real that way. He argues emphatically that

... the reality of this realism is one which *can* be known. It is not unknowable. Freud is very helpful in this respect. For him, the knowable is not an instinct (*Trieb*) in its being as instinct: it is rather a representation by which instincts are represented. (p. 104)

With his submission that “there exists another, more specific form of the unconscious which refers to something *inadmissible to consciousness*” (Zupančič, 2007, p. 458), Freud seeks to unveil the unknowable nature of the unconscious in itself so that, in order to know it, one has to re-live it, thus keeping room for a human way of knowing that becomes synonymous with the way of being as well. The unconscious is not contained by the conscious ego; it has its own dynamics and desires which are capable of punctuating the ego’s actions. Freud in fact suggests that one part of the ego may itself be unconscious.

Karlsson (2004/2010) approaches the unconscious through a discussion of the opposition-pair of consciousness and the unconscious that makes it difficult to identify which is the real agent in the ongoing tussle between the latent and the transparent domains of the ego. More precisely, while the struggle and tension between the two fields is internal to the unconscious itself, there would appear to be a certain complicity at work between the opposed fields of consciousness and the unconscious. Williams (2001, p. 81) notes:

In his essay “The Ego and the Id”, Freud noted that the unconscious does not coincide with what is repressed by the ego; it is something more. ... Using the analogy of the horse, Freud writes: “Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id’s will into action as if it were its own” (Freud, 1923/1962, p. 15).

With its focus on the lived dimension of our experience, psychoanalysis prepares the ground for unearthing the deeper, suppressed root of one’s existential suffering that needs therapeutic remedy. The root of this pain and suffering cannot be rationally understood, but, by being unearthed, it can be existentially re-lived. “Freud described this goal as *wanting*; it is to make the ‘unconscious conscious’ ...” (Binnell, 1996, para. 40).

Freud held not only that the unconscious is causative, but that conscious intersubjective experience is also caused by unconscious communication. “What guided Freud, and continues to guide contemporary psychodynamic practice, is the concept that there exists a process of unconscious-to-unconscious communication”, and that this enables therapists “to interpret the unconscious of clients within their own unconscious” (Scott, 2003, p. 76).

The observation that the unconscious realm, of which a person was unaware, could play an important role in that person’s behaviour, became pivotal in psychoanalysis. Freud also learnt from Liébeault and Bernheim that, although patients tend to forget what experiences they underwent during hypnosis, such memories can return if the patient is strongly encouraged to remember them. This observation was important to the development of psychoanalysis. By persisting in utilizing the crucial therapeutic significance of insights and symbols, the therapist attempts to ensure that a certain re-organization of the meaning field of the patient occurs. As Sundara Rajan (1991, pp. 100-105) explains, this re-organization of meanings “gives a certain intelligibility” to the patient’s suffering, which “transforms, in a therapeutically significant way, the experience of pain”. The aim of psychoanalysis is thus not primarily to remove the suffering, but rather to enable it to be re-understood in a more meaningful, and hence bearable, manner. For “what man cannot bear is not suffering as such but meaningless suffering”. This is partly what is implied regarding both the limits and the possibilities of psychoanalysis by Freud’s assertion that, even if it is not possible to relieve the patient of the source of his or her suffering, “much will be gained if we succeed in transforming ... hysterical misery into common unhappiness” (Breuer



& Freud, 1895/1955, p. 305).

What is evident from the foregoing overview of various shades of the meaning of “the unconscious” in psychoanalysis is that, for psychoanalysis too, the unconscious is to be seen as a sphere of meaning and intention. Lohmar and Brudzińska (2012, p. x) point to Ricoeur (1965)’s interpretation of psychoanalysis “as a theory of subjectivity and thus as a theory of subjective experience”, and his emphasis that, in line with phenomenological description, “the kind of subjective experience which psychoanalysis brings to light is always an intentional and sense achieving experience”. What this points to is the sense-bestowing phenomenological meaning dimension of terms such as “the unconscious”. As Karlsson (2004/2010, p. 19) reiterates, “Phenomenology does not study the unconscious of psychoanalysis; that aim is reserved for psychoanalysis itself”. Nevertheless, insofar as phenomenology illuminates “the conditions for the possibility of something like the unconscious” (ibid.), it opens the way for a dialogue yielding interesting possibilities.

Karlsson (2004/2010, p. 13ff.) underlines some points of connection between the philosophy of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, starting with their shared interest in *the subjective* (in terms of experience, feelings, bodiliness) as the field of study. Ricoeur (1969/1974b, pp. 119-120) points out that, with his *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl widened the horizon of transcendental subjectivity to include within the domain of the subjectively meaningful the hidden (whether latent or implicit) dimension of intentional acts or meanings – thereby making the unconscious part of experience accessible to phenomenological description. “The approach is from the conscious and the explicit to the unconscious and the implicit.”

Like Freudian psychoanalysis, “Husserlian phenomenology also began with a critique of reflective consciousness and introduced the theme ... of the prereflective and unreflected. ... The unconscious which is involved in the phenomenological method’s theme is the unreflected domain that, interestingly enough, is ‘capable of becoming conscious’ ... ” (Ricoeur, 1969/1974b, p. 102). Husserl concurred with Freud that “some modes of intentionality do not become conscious”, but held that they nevertheless “can be elucidated by comparing the manner of conscious givenness of objects of different kinds” (Owen, 2003, p. 82).

A further commonality between psychoanalysis and phenomenology pointed to by Karlsson (2004/2010, pp. 15-16) is the deliberate break of both with the natural attitude in order to ensure openness to meaning as it emerges. In phenomenology, the

*epoché* or bracketing of the natural attitude in order to reach back to “the thing itself” allows for an unbiased reflective stance towards the epistemic subject, whereas in psychoanalysis the process of free-flowing attentiveness allows for opening up the field of the concealed. “That the psychoanalyst would have a kind of psychoanalytic screen through which the analysand’s storytelling is filtered must certainly be considered as an outdated and scurrilous portrait” (Karlsson, 2004/2010, p. 6).

On the whole, phenomenology affirms the need for delving into the interiority of self-consciousness. However, in phenomenology the lived dimension of empathic interaction is central, with intentionality shared through empathy. Since experience is not subjective, but inherently intersubjective, one can empathically recognize that another person is in pain even though one can never know another person’s pain directly. This is the central position in phenomenology, although there is scope for variations within it. According to Thompson (2005), “Whereas Husserl begins the individual’s relationship with oneself and goes from there to ‘others’, Heidegger begins with our relationships with others and then sets out to investigate how to determine, or reclaim, our relationship with ourselves” (p. 42). Ultimately, as Ricoeur (1969/1974a) asserts, “It is in spite of itself that phenomenology discovers, in place of an idealist subject locked within its system of meanings, a living being which from all time has, as the horizon of all its intentions, a world, the world” (p. 9).

### Phenomenologically Oriented Psychoanalysis

“As an art and as a science of healing human suffering ... psychotherapy, as a process, is primarily based on the *art of relating* and the *science of understanding* ...” (Vrinte, 1996, pp. ix & 22; italics added). In the context of the psychotherapeutic encounter between the two contributors to the narrative and interpretative flow of the search for meaning, insight, self-knowledge, self-control or self-actualisation, the intersubjective and the scientific are thus inextricably interrelated, with the “art” framed by the “science”. When the science of understanding – or scientific meaning – proves incongruent with the intersubjectively shared intentionality of empathic understanding – or lived meaning – a therapist may turn to questioning the epistemic, scientific and philosophical approaches to man and his world in which his or her training and practice are rooted.

Questioning of the epistemic and philosophical basis of the firmly-rooted scientific model of Freudian psychoanalysis, and seeking to escape its entrapment in the dualistic epistemology and metaphysics stemming from Descartes, Kant and others, led to a search for an alternative model rooted in a philosophy

more consistent with the intersubjective reality of human existence. Drawing on existential philosophy, as well as the work of phenomenologically oriented psychoanalysts such as Binswanger and Boss, and, in more recent times, May, Yalom, Van Duerzen and Spinelli, contributed to the development of existential-phenomenological psychotherapy from Heidegger's *Daseinsanalytik*.

According to Dallmayr (1993, p. 235), Heidegger's intensive interactions with a group of medically trained psychiatrists in Zurich and his critical estimate of their positivist construal of depth understanding, a construal which relies narrowly on libidinal drives seen as a psychosomatic causal mechanism, ultimately led to his developing his *Daseinsanalytik* (analysis of *Dasein*), from which evolved the existential-phenomenological therapeutic approach of "existential analysis" (*Daseinsanalyse*). To cite Cohn (2002) in this regard: "Surprisingly and mysteriously, Heidegger, in the end, returned to his own beginnings, to the phenomena, to his original aim 'to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 58). This return can be seen in his lectures in Zollikon" (p. 20).

Petzet (as cited in Cohn, 2002) recalls that,

In September 1959, Heidegger started his Seminar for Medard Boss and other psychiatrists with a drawing that showed five half circles, each entered by an arrow: (< . This drawing is meant to show that human existence is essentially never just an object that is somewhere present, least of all an object closed in itself. Rather, this existence consists of "mere" potentialities – neither visible nor tangible – to perceive and be aware of all that encounters and addresses us. (Cohn, 2002, p. 23)

This emphasis on the fluidity and openness of human existence demonstrates its basic incompleteness, and Heidegger compares this with the more object-like representation of psychological constructs:

All the usual capsule-like representations (common, at present, in psychology and psychopathology) of a psyche, a subject, a person, an Ego, a consciousness have – in an existential approach – to be relinquished and give way to a fundamentally different understanding. (Petzet, 1983/1993, p. xxxi)

Lubisi (2002) notes that, while "Husserl's phenomenology influenced qualitative research and psychotherapy alike, ... Heidegger applied the ontological theme of 'being in the world' to Husserl's

phenomenology" (p. 2). Binswanger's importing of Heidegger's phenomenology into psychotherapy culminated in the existential-phenomenological paradigm of psychology. Although Binswanger's *Daseinsanalyse* was initially intended to apply Heidegger's *Daseinsanalytik* to psychopathology, he ultimately, after some ten years of further inquiry, developed his *Daseinsanalyse* further in light of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* "that provided him with phenomenological tools to differentiate facts from their essence and thereby to detect and identify the pure eidetic forms of alienated experience" (Sindoni, 2002, p. 658).

Phenomenology provided the much needed tools for understanding pathological deviations from an authentic mode of being in the world. Interrelating Husserl's eidetic phenomenology with Heidegger's existential analysis, Binswanger attempted to understand the sense of being human in one's human destiny in a way that reveals the meaningful dimensions of the patient's being in the world in terms of the "world design" that is revealed for him.

The essential eidetic constitution of the maniac was further cleared up by recourse to Husserl's examination of temporality, where the intentionality of the usual lived experience of the present (*praesentatio*) seems to be pervaded by the correct connection with the past (*retentio*) and the essential link with the future (*protentio*). The defective character of the lived experience of time peculiar to the maniac project constrains the patients, nails them down to mere "momentariness", to a kind of bustling (as clinicians are wont to say), because their acting is no longer capable of recovering from the past, nor can it detach itself from it to be present and project *itself* into the future with somebody and in the way in which it from time to time decides to "be with" that somebody. (Sindoni, 2002, pp. 661-662)

Binswanger points to the significance of Husserl's contributions in this regard. Not only did the *transcendental epoché* help to suspend all doctrinal judgments, but it also provided much needed protection of the essential structure of the subject.

As had been clarified, thanks to Husserl, the egological pole thus acquires the significance of reference pole for the explication of all the possible eidetic cross references, making it possible to arrive at that real "I" (lived body, *Leib*, to distinguish it from the body of the organic functions, *Körper*) that lives and experiences its own

world, a world within which it expresses being its discomfort and its anguish. (Sindoni, 2002, p. 659)

Despite occasional overlapping with the Heideggerian perspective of *Daseinsanalytik*, Husserl thus was, and remained, the principal inspirer of Binswanger's *Daseinsanalyse*, acknowledged as the unquestioned "maestro" in his thinking on psychopathology, notwithstanding the important role played by other philosophers.

Critical of Binswanger's theory of existential analysis as being a "subjectivistic revision" of Heidegger's philosophy, Boss offers a counter position to Binswanger, interpreting *Daseinsanalyse* from what he believes to be a proper Heideggerian perspective. Boss interprets the Heideggerian *Dasein* as a "world disclosure" that "does not happen like agency happens", and is instead to be understood as "lively ... and perceptive openness in the world" (Scott, 2002, p. 664). Accordingly, Boss argues that,

Not only is it most appropriate for a theoretician or philosopher to pay attention primarily to the ways – to *how* – beings appear, therapists also should give their attention primarily to patients' ways of living with the world openness of their own experiences and relations. (Boss, 1971; in Scott, 2002, p. 664)

Edited by Boss and published in 1987, the *Zollikon Seminars* now brings into focus not only the detailed record of Heidegger's intensive engagement with psychology and psychoanalysis during that period, but in particular his "hope that his thinking could break away from purely philosophical inquiry to benefit those in human suffering, including psychiatric populations" (Scott, 2002, p. 665).

In his book, *Psychoanalysis Outside the Clinic*, Frosh (2010) highlights the point that "psychoanalysis arose at the end of the nineteenth century as a practice rooted in the clinic" (p. 1). This reference to the idea of a metaphorical space as a setting for an encounter between someone in psychological distress and a trusted therapist, allows for reconstruing that space in terms of relationship and thus for locating the therapeutic encounter methodologically in the phenomenological realm.

If the clinic can be thought of like this then what becomes central to psychoanalysis is not only a set of specific theoretical constructs (crucially the existence of a dynamic unconscious, but also including notions such as free association, transference and interpretation), but also a

live encounter between people, albeit of a special kind. This "liveness" seems absolutely crucial to the practice of psychoanalysis. This is because the capacity of the analyst to understand the patient, and of the patient to benefit from that understanding, depends on the two of them being locked into a visible relationship which can be tracked and reflected upon. (Frosh, 2010, p. 2).

In this light, the bridge between psychoanalysis and phenomenology thus inheres in the movement from metaphorical space to methodology.

Young (2010) defines existential psychotherapy as "a method that operates on the belief that inner conflict within a person is due to that individual's confrontation with the 'givens' of existence" (p. 3). In this regard, Laing (1995) expresses his indebtedness in the practice of psychotherapy to the efficacy of phenomenological methodology in providing access to the essential dimension of reality:

Phenomenology thus takes us into the issue of *what it is* one is describing. The discipline that addresses itself to *what is* this, that, anything is called ontology. Phenomenology is a critical discipline for any science. All explanations require descriptions in order to explain. What we take anything to be profoundly affects how we go about describing it, and how we describe something profoundly affects how we go about explaining, accounting for, or understanding what is what we are, in a sense, defining, by our description. The critical reflective monitoring of all this is existential phenomenology; and the use of this discipline, the effective skilful means of this discipline, its pragmatics, its efficacy in the practice of psychotherapy, is what I want to address ... (p. 204)

Young (2010), in turn, comments on the seminal significance in the mental health field of Laing's phenomenological orientation:

... Laing's phenomenological research into schizophrenia is seminal: he carefully explored the actual experiential meanings of the words used by those involved to "co-construct" the phenomena of schizophrenia from the accounts of patients and the friends, family members and mental health professionals directly working with them. This led to a totally different "concept" of schizophrenia: instead of it "being" an illness that is primarily genetic and/or

biological, with symptoms like meaningless language, and only treatable by medication, it can be seen as an individual's rich, metaphoric and high meaningful linguistic reactions and explorations of essentially dysfunctional and distorted relationships and as a desperate attempt to obtain a sense of self. This perception led to new forms of "treatment", mainly drug-free and in therapeutic communities, where different "relationships" can be formed. (pp. 4-5)

### Summing Up and Some Concluding Remarks

What Freud and Husserl share in common is an attention to intentionality, with the unconscious too viewed by both as a realm of meaning and intentionality. According to both the Freudian and the phenomenological traditions, our knowledge of ourselves and our world is perpetually bound up with consciousness. We can come to know even the unconscious only by making it conscious. Karlsson (2004/2010) approaches the shades of meaning of the unconscious through a consideration of the opposition-pair of consciousness and the unconscious. It is this reduction to the level of signification that allows us to perceive the possibility of a dialogue between these two realms. Although the unconscious appears as something strange that is beyond experience, it is nevertheless "inside" the subject, even though something that has never been grasped in conscious experience.

While the differences in approach of psychoanalysis and phenomenology may appear to be great, the similarities are not insignificant. Nevertheless, as Binnell (1996) points out, while both these methods aim to enable the individual to gain greater insight into his or her sense of being in the world, the crucial question is what exactly it is that one is being given insight into. "For the psychoanalytical approach, it is the repressed material in the unconscious; while, for existential phenomenology, it is the life situation of the individual as a whole in relation to the 'unconscious' fundamental project" (Binnell, 1996, para. 40).

Thus one is able to discern two different

views of humankind and the psyche. One approach is more concerned with the role of the past in causing the present, and how to "fix" the mistakes of the past. The other approach is a direct attempt to awaken humanity to entering into a state of existence that is for-itself, and reaching for the highest level of actualisation, or authenticity, that it is capable of attaining ... (Binnell, 1996, para. 41)

One can look forward to some positive outcome of this kind of academic exercise aimed at discerning possibilities for meaningful dialogue between Freud and phenomenology. While a challenging task on many fronts, scholars like Owen and others continue to grapple with exploring more deeply meaningful conceptual themes common to both psychoanalysis and phenomenology. We conclude with Owen's formulation of both the need for and the ultimate aim of this process, and Karlsson's hope in this regard:

Despite the use of [terms such as] "hermeneutics", "intentionality", "empathy" and "intersubjectivity" in some areas of psychotherapy and psychological research, there has been no in-depth explanation from the original source in philosophy about what these ideas mean. ... The ultimate aim of this work is to show the importance and ubiquity of making sense of the psychological world but there are many necessary steps to be trod before the ultimate aim can be achieved. (Owen, 2006, p. 3)

Karlsson's hope is that phenomenology will, more specifically,

... make a contribution to building a firmer bridge between psychoanalytic theory (including the metapsychology) and clinical practice, and thereby make psychoanalytic theory and practice more solid and scientifically cogent.

... help psychoanalysis to be grounded in one adequate (for its purposes and conditions) epistemology. (2004/2010, pp. 19-20)

### Referencing Format

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In addition to her academic endeavours, Archana Barua has had a number of short stories and poems published in Indian literary journals, with a collection of Assamese poems published in 2009 under the title *Tumi Noi Hoi Bo'bor Parā*, and a collection of her own poetry published in 2012.

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