

Askey, R., & Farquhar, J. (2006). *Apprehending the inaccessible: Freudian psychoanalysis and existential phenomenology*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006, xix + 456 pp. (includes index).

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The relationship between existential phenomenology and Freud's conception of psychoanalysis in the contemporary literature is an undeniably neglected one, and the reasons are not so hard to determine. Both Freud, the inventor of a novel and monumentally influential treatment method, and existential phenomenology, a philosophical perspective and methodology that dominated the better part of twentieth-century European thought and culture, are perceived by many to be in a state of irreversible decline. Structuralism, post-structuralism, social constructivism, deconstructionism, and postmodernism have, in successive waves of intellectual fashion and influence, both challenged and usurped the central role that existential philosophy and phenomenology once enjoyed in both Europe and North America, whereas Freud's contributions to psychoanalysis and contemporary cultural mores have been under attack by competing forms of psychotherapy outside the psychoanalytic corpus as well as from recent trends within the psychoanalytic community itself. In the hey day of both Sigmund Freud and existentialism—beginning in the post-World War Two era and culminating more or less in the late 1970s, many psychoanalytically trained psychiatrists, psychologists, and kindred practitioners such as Ludwig Binswanger, Medard Boss, Eugene Minkowski, Erwin Straus, Roland Kuhn, Victor Frankl, R.D. Laing, David Cooper, and Rollo May avidly sought to fashion an existential-based method of psychoanalytic practice that made generous use of the dominant existential phenomenologists of their day. The principal philosophical influence was Martin Heidegger, but included in the conversation was a legion of existential philosophers including Jean-Paul Sartre, Miguel Unamuno, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel, Paul Ricoeur, Henri Ey, and even Edmund Husserl, whose more arid conception of phenomenology has only occasionally been embraced by clinical practitioners. Their papers filled the pages of myriad existential journals, nearly all of which have long since disappeared, devoted to the application of existential philosophy to clinical practice. Yet the dominance of Freud's most basic ideas, despite his many detractors, has not diminished, and the influence of and surrounding debate concerning the nature and significance of Heidegger's and Nietzsche's most radical views about the human condition persist as a cottage industry on the shelves of virtually every college campus book store in the Western world.

Since the 1980s the literature on the interface between existential phenomenology and psychoanalysis has steadily waned, as the intellectual excitement once

afforded to phenomenology has been usurped by the emergence of postmodernism, whose principal representatives are hostile to a body of literature they allege is locked in a modernist and outmoded way of thinking. In similar fashion, the contemporary psychoanalytic literature is dominated by efforts to put Freud in his proper “historical” context while citing relevant passages from the increasingly popular postmodernist critique of Freud’s biological perspective. Recent publications (Marcus and Rosenberg, 1998; Frie, 2003; Reppen, Tucker, & Schulman, 2004; Mills, 2004) have attempted to address the clinical implications of these developments while incorporating some of these ideas into the contemporary psychoanalytic conversation. At the heart of this debate is the status of Freud’s—and by extension, the psychoanalytic—conception of the unconscious. Whereas the phenomenological literature has traditionally rejected the Freudian unconscious, postmodernism has embraced it and in so doing established alliances with the psychoanalytic community that were never firmly established with the existentialists. Today, those clinical practitioners who embrace existential phenomenology are almost unanimously hostile to psychoanalysis and, with it, Freud’s conception of the unconscious.

It is thus a welcome departure from this trend that a new book by Richard Askay and Jensen Farquhar endeavors to reconcile Freud’s notion of the unconscious with existential phenomenology, a project that has traditionally been deemed impossible. This is an ambitious book that endeavors to trace the philosophical influences on Freud’s most fundamental ideas about human nature. The authors review the evolution of Freud’s notion of the unconscious, the role he assigns to the body and the instincts, and the place that free will enjoys in a theoretical perspective that is presumed to be rooted in a deterministic world view. This is a huge task by any measure, so the authors decided to limit its scope to the publications of Freud himself and ignore the vast psychoanalytic literature left in his wake. They also elect to not cite the many psychoanalytic practitioners who have, with varied success, endeavored to bridge existential phenomenology and Freud (e.g., Betty Cannon, Roger Frie, Jonathan Lear, Stanley Leavy, Hans Loewald, William J. Richardson, Anthony Wilden, to name a few). Theirs is a narrow scope indeed and the result suffers accordingly as the authors are left more or less exclusively to their own devices without benefit of a significant literature that may have served to buttress their valiant efforts.

Despite the self-imposed limitation in source material for this project, this book is over 400 pages long, so this review could not possibly do justice to the arguments employed with anything other than a cursory resume of the salient points addressed. Divided into three sections, the first seeks to review those philosophical influences—both acknowledged and unacknowledged by Freud—on Freud’s most basic ideas. These include Freud’s relationship with Greek philosophy,

the influence of Enlightenment and German Romanticist thinkers on his theories, and the footprints of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on nearly every aspect of Freud's thinking. The second section examines the relationship between Freud's psychoanalytic theories and the principal representatives of existential phenomenology, including Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and to a lesser degree Ricoeur. In this section—the fulcrum of this study—criticisms and commentaries by existential authors on Freud's contribution are reviewed and then compared and contrasted with what is known about Freud's take on phenomenology. The final section seeks to fashion a reconciliation between the historical impasse between the existential and psychoanalytic conceptions of the unconscious, or what the authors depict as those aspects of human existence that are “inaccessible” to consciousness. I will briefly review the gist of these three sections and then discuss the success of the enterprise the authors have mounted.

The first section, titled “A Regressive Archaeological Exploration of the Dialectical Synthesis of Freud's Philosophical Heritage,” is a fascinating and illuminating review of the many alleged philosophical influences on Freud. This section is all the more impressive given Freud's claim that philosophy itself “has had no direct influence on the great mass of mankind” and that “it is of interest to only a small number even of the top layer of intellectuals.” In fact, Freud was well-versed in philosophy, studied Greek as a student and expressed pride in his ability to read Greek myths and philosophy in their original language even in his old age, and was party to extensive philosophical conversations among his colleagues during the early seminal years of psychoanalysis' development. On the other hand, Freud was picky as to which philosophers he favored (principally the Greeks) and dismissed the bulk of them for their inability to express their ideas in plain language. We discover that there were many anomalies surrounding Freud's attitude about both philosophy and philosophers that puzzle us to this day. For example, Freud abhorred the philosopher's penchant for speculation, yet speculated himself about the nature of the unconscious, sexuality, human motivation, the purpose of life, and the necessary tools to obtain happiness. Freud rejected metaphysical thinking, yet developed his own form of metaphysics that he termed “metapsychology.” Freud embraced science over philosophy, yet time and again criticized the scientific perspective for its inability to guide the psychoanalyst in his clinical endeavors. Indeed, the authors reveal an acute and pervasive ambivalence in Freud's attitude about the role of science in his theories, evidenced in his embracing the Enlightenment philosophers' devotion to science (especially Bacon), only to reject most of its precepts when adopting the German Romanticist (Goethe, Schiller, Schelling) emphasis on: the weight of human emotion over reason; the role of the irrational and dreams on waking

consciousness; the influence of myths on our perceptions; and the supremacy of Greek thought and culture over “modern” sensibilities.

Everyone knows about the influence of Greek mythology (e.g., Oedipus, Narcissus, Eros, Thanatos) on Freud’s thinking, but he was also well versed in the pre-Socratics, Plato, and Aristotle. The authors emphasize the views of the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles, who said that life is dominated by the experience of love and strife, a view that is mirrored in Freud’s controversial thesis of a “death instinct” that he introduced at a relatively late period in his life. Freud praised Empedocles for his bold and unflinching thesis about the inherent and inescapable difficulty of life and embodied this view in his own theory of the two instinctual forces that dominate our existence, Eros and Thanatos, one drive embracing love (or life), whereas the other (which works simultaneously with its alternate) embraces death, or at any rate a withdrawal from those ambitions in life that occasion frustration and suffering. The other Greek thinker to whom the authors attribute the most influence on Freud’s worldview is Plato, without question the most important and influential Greek philosopher to whom Freud was indebted. None of this is news. It has long been established that Freud owed much of his notions about the nature of love and sexuality to Plato’s *Symposium*, and appeared to have derived his thesis of a tripartite structure to the mind (id, ego, superego) from Plato’s uncannily similar thesis in the *Republic*. The authors also note Plato’s emphasis on the role of reminiscence in self-understanding, a cardinal principle of Freud’s therapeutic technique: that we know more than we think we know, and that we do not know what we think we know (p. 61).

It is undeniable that we would be hard put to fathom how Freud was able to fashion such a radical theory concerning the ubiquitous role of love and sex in human life were it not for Plato’s dialogues devoted to this very thesis (not only the *Symposium*, where the nature of love is revealed, but also *Protagoras*, where Plato entertains the thesis that all human life is devoted to the unremitting and unquenchable search for pleasure, Freud’s famous thesis of a “pleasure principle” that dominates our waking and unwaking life). But the impact of Greek thought on Freud was even more pervasive than the authors suggest. For example, they omit Aristotle as an influence on Freud’s thinking, despite their own report on Freud’s famous course work with Brentano during his university days, courses that were devoted to Aristotle’s philosophy. Even a cursory reading of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* reveals an undeniable convergence between Aristotle’s views about the nature of happiness and Freud’s meditation on this topic in his *Civilization and Its Discontents* (e.g., that well being is the consequence of both the development of sound character and luck; a capacity for both pleasure and the tolerance of unpleasure; and so on). Also omitted is that Aristotle’s emphasis on a capacity for honesty as the bedrock for the good life is also evidenced in

Freud's thesis that psychoanalytic treatment is founded on "truthfulness" and that any departure from it would render therapy ineffectual. Even Aristotle's views on the nature of friendship are reflected in Freud's conception of the transference relationship the patient effects with the analyst, one in which the kind and depth of confidences shared are unique in their undertaking and experienced outside the analytic relationship in only the deepest and most profound forms of friendship (such as Freud's with Wilhelm Fliess, or Michel de Montaigne's with La Botié).

This oversight and others I will note later are due to an important problem with this book: its reliance on Freud's theories to the neglect of his clinical treatment philosophy. Most of Freud's insights into the human condition came to him from his own life experiences, including what he learned from his clinical practice. The authors are under the misconception that Freud based his clinical philosophy and treatment method on his theories, specifically his metapsychology, whereas every psychoanalyst knows that Freud's theories were derived from his clinical experience, precisely the reverse of the authors' thesis. We shall see later how this error has served to guide many of their conclusions about Freud's conception of the human condition and the therapeutic instrument that he fashioned to relieve human suffering. For example, the bedrock of Freud's technique was rooted in the use of the mind that Freud called "evenly suspended attention," what is commonly referred to today as analytic neutrality. The source of this technique is a mystery, until one adds to the equation Freud's admiration for the sixteenth-century French essayist and philosopher, Michel de Montaigne, who was devoted to the Greek Pyrrhonian sceptic method of inquiry, which entailed the suspension of judgment and overcoming dogmatic assumptions of a speculative nature. The sceptics dominated the Hellenistic era of Greek philosophy, exerted an extraordinary influence on sixteenth-century thought and debate (Descartes employed the sceptic method in his *Meditations*), and coined the term, *epoché*, to characterize this use of the mind—a term Husserl himself borrowed for his phenomenological method (which was in turn influenced by Descartes). In fact, this mental faculty that Freud believed is so essential to the psychoanalytic enterprise—neutrality for the analyst, free association (or the "analytic attitude") for the patient—was also embraced by Heidegger in his post-*Being and time* use of meditative thinking, or *Gelassenheit*. As we shall see when we turn to the authors' treatment of the phenomenological literature and Freud in the following section, this critical feature of both Freud's method and that of phenomenology is surprisingly missing.

We have already alluded to some of the other historical influences on Freud's thinking earlier: the Enlightenment thinkers who emphasized the role of scientific inquiry and evidence in the accumulation of human knowledge; the

German Romanticists who, in addition to addressing the life of the mind in human endeavors, emphasize the role of passion and emotions. Freud would have never accepted that humans are “rational creatures” and insisted throughout his lifetime that his theory of the unconscious is rooted in the observation that something other than our capacity for rationality “guides” us in our conscious motivations and behavior, as well as the formation of neurotic and other categories of psychopathological conflict and misery. The authors go into exquisite detail as to where these influences originated, especially those that Freud failed to acknowledge. Chief among them are the influences closer to Freud’s lifetime, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Space doesn’t allow me to review in any detail the authors’ conclusions. However, the literature on Freud’s debt to Nietzsche is common knowledge (see Lehrer’s [1995] informative study of Nietzsche’s influence on Freud’s theories), including Freud’s famous claim not to have read Nietzsche for fear that people would think he derived his theories from him! The authors, as have others, treat this claim with suspicion given the amazing similarity between the two thinkers and the undeniable evidence that Nietzsche’s ideas were discussed in depth among Freud’s followers, in Freud’s presence and with his keen participation. Though we will probably never know whether Freud ever actually *read* Nietzsche in any depth, his ideas were certainly known to Freud. Did they influence Freud in any way, or were Freud and Nietzsche simply kindred spirits? We will never know the answer to that question with any certainty. Given Nietzsche’s impact on postmodernist thinkers, however, it does seem to help Freud’s cause to learn that Nietzsche embraced the notion of the “unconscious” as well as the influence of “instincts” on human behavior. Nietzsche also believed that we are not rational creatures; that language “makes” us and not the reverse; and that the “self” is an illusion because it is not the author of our actions or beliefs. All of these pronouncements were championed by Freud and are cardinal principles of his theory and technique. It is also instructive to note, though the authors do not, that Nietzsche (along with Schopenhauer) was a sceptic and that his sceptic sensibility guided him as well as Freud in their respective attitudes about the possibility of accumulating knowledge about the life of the mind with any certainty. Indeed, for Freud adopting a sceptic sensibility is a prerequisite for the relief of neurotic conflict. Did Freud “repress” his debt to Nietzsche or deliberately deny it? This question is a running theme throughout this work regarding all of Freud’s alleged influences, and even if we can never establish actual proof as to what is the case, the journey entailed in exploring the evidence is both riveting and instructive.

Despite the amazing parallels between Nietzsche’s and Freud’s respective ideas, we learn from this study that Schopenhauer’s conception of the “will” as the fundamental source of human motivation and behavior is equally important to

understanding the possible sources of Freud's conception of the unconscious. Clearly what the authors like about both Nietzsche and Schopenhauer is the importance that each gives to the biological nature of human existence and the role that instincts play in our lives. For the authors, Schopenhauer's concept of the "will" is virtually the same as Freud's conception of the "id," that portion of the mind that determines what we want, wish for, and believe on a conscious level. It is again surprising here that the authors are not acquainted with the work of Georg Groddeck, a contemporary psychiatrist of Freud's whom Freud explicitly credited as the source of his conception of the id ("it" in the original; Strachey Latinized it in his English translation to make it appear more scientific!). The idea is that we are ruled by forces we are unconscious of and that these forces, or drives, have a hold over our experience of pleasure and pain, happiness and frustration, misery and satisfaction. Though we can never control these forces nor completely satisfy them, we can come to understand them, and armed with this knowledge help to alleviate the otherwise incomprehensible sources of our suffering. A great deal of Freud's treatment strategy is rooted in the idea that we are not the authors of our destiny, that we are animals though highly intelligent ones, and that we are limited by the amount of happiness we can expect to procure in life, and keep. Though this sounds somewhat pessimistic to some, Freud and Schopenhauer alike believed that we are nonetheless capable of obtaining a kind of serene acceptance of our lot only if we are mature enough and sufficiently self-disciplined to accept the terms of our all too human condition. This is where both Freud and Schopenhauer diverge from Nietzsche, who believed that some day a new kind of human would emerge, a *Übermensch* (overman or superman) who would manage to throw off the shackles of such limitations and achieve a kind of ascendance that only a visionary such as Nietzsche could imagine. It is also worth noting that much of Schopenhauer's thesis is indebted to Eastern philosophy, which is abundantly evident in this thesis.

But the aspect of both Nietzsche's and Schopenhauer's respective philosophies that the authors find invaluable is the emphasis on the body in our psychological make-up. A full two chapters are devoted to teasing out the similarities between Schopenhauer's conception of the will and Freud's id as the core of their respective beliefs concerning the unconscious. Moreover, this is the one feature of Schopenhauer's philosophy that he unabashedly attributes to his metaphysics. Similarly, the authors credit Freud's "metapsychological" theories that are rooted entirely in speculation as a parallel to Schopenhauer's philosophy. What apparently saves these respective claims about a form of mental functioning that is devoid of conscious volition from the charge of unfounded *speculation* is the reliance of both thinkers on the role that biology plays in our lives. Of all Freud's influences, the authors claim that Schopenhauer offers the solution to the riddle

of how to render Freud's conception of the unconscious intelligible. The conundrum about whether or not we are in volition of our most basic motives implies that we lack free will is a topic that occupies much of the discussion surrounding Schopenhauer and Freud. For example, does the notion of an unconscious imply that we are "determined" by it, or does it suggest the opposite; that because the unconscious drives us, the unconscious is "freedom" itself, because nothing *determines* it. The discussion is intricate and raises many of the most salient questions on the subject.

This takes us to the second section of the book, the one devoted to a dialogue between phenomenology and Freud. Here the authors explore territory that is familiar to anyone who has looked for a response from the principal phenomenological thinkers to Freud's controversial theory of an unconscious "portion" of the mind. Again, nothing particularly new here. Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Ricoeur all had something to say about Freud's conception of the unconscious and all rejected it in their own fashion. For Sartre, there is no unconscious and he insisted that everything Freud attributed to its existence could be explained by his own notion of "bad faith": that we are merely deceiving ourselves into not owning up to views we secretly harbor but disavow, so we do not know ourselves with sufficient thoroughness to determine our "fundamental project," i.e., the *true* motive that lies beneath the official ones. Even Sartre late in life admitted that he was too indebted to a Cartesian reliance on the primacy of consciousness to realize that the matter is more complicated than that. Yet Sartre's critique of Freud's thesis of "a lie without a liar" is compelling as far as it goes. Sartre also accused Freud of relying on a notion of the unconscious as a "second subject" which Sartre rejects as a kind of mythology rooted in the notion of the unconscious as a secret deity. If such a deity exists, says Sartre, he would be *me*, which would make me omniscient, not "unconscious." The authors, however, show that Freud explicitly rejected the misconception of his believing in a second, unconscious subject, though Freud's notion of three "agencies" (that comprises human subjectivity) in the place of a single self does lend itself to the conclusion that if there are several selves or "agencies" instead of one, then how are we to understand the precise nature of such agencies if not as second and even third "subjects," as Sartre claims? This, it seems to me, is *the* pivotal question at the heart of this book's thesis. Yet it is a question that is not satisfactorily engaged, let alone resolved.

With Merleau-Ponty we see another tack employed to deconstruct Freud's thesis of an unconscious. For Merleau-Ponty the unconscious is "located" in the body, beneath cognitive awareness and at a level of perceptual engagement with the world that the human subject "embodies" but does not necessarily *know*. The unconscious becomes that which is ambiguous, rather than unknown or

unconscious, as such. Whereas Sartre distinguishes between a *pre-reflective* form of consciousness that is in the world and, hence, not “aware” of its acts while in the making, and a *reflective* form of consciousness that is in possession of its acts by virtue of the secondary act that follows the pre-reflective one, as a way of distinguishing between so-called unconscious and conscious operations, Merleau-Ponty prefers to think in terms of a life of ambiguous perception that is embodied in our relationships with the world—or what the psychoanalyst would term relationships with “objects” that are mental representations of the world. Merleau-Ponty is more sympathetic to Freud’s thesis than perhaps the other phenomenologists (he was married to a psychoanalyst) and it is a pity that he died before he was able to complete a major work (*The visible and the invisible*) that was partially devoted to examining Freud’s theory of truth by employing a phenomenological critique. Both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty offer illuminating interpretations of Freud’s importance as a thinker at the most fundamental level, but the authors clearly favor Merleau-Ponty because of his emphasis on the body as the pivot of our being in the world. His preoccupation with the body and the role he assigns it in human perception and cognition provides the authors with what they take to be the necessary link to Freud’s theory of the unconscious, which they take to be fundamentally rooted to his conception of instinctual drives. I agree that Freud’s detractors (especially those in the psychoanalytic community) would benefit from Merleau-Ponty’s indispensable exploration of the body as something other than a strictly “biological” portion of an otherwise purely psychological creature. But to say that the body is the foundation of the unconscious, and that it proves the validity of an instinct-based conception of the human organism, goes further than I am comfortable with. For those, however, who embrace Freud’s instinct theory (that consciousness is made up of mental representations of instinctual forces embedded in the deep recesses of the body) Merleau-Ponty’s preoccupation with the nature of perception would no doubt complement this thesis more seamlessly than the other phenomenologists.

The chapters on Heidegger’s engagement with Freud, however, occupy the most thorough critique of Freud from a phenomenological perspective. Askey was co-translator of Heidegger’s *Zollikon seminars* into English, so he is well equipped to mount such an exploration; not surprisingly, most of the Heidegger material is based on the *Zollikon seminars*, talks that Heidegger gave to a group of psychiatrists at Medard Boss’s invitation. This is both a virtue and a fault. The virtue is the thoroughness with which the authors delve into Heidegger’s views about Freud’s theories and the problems he has with it; the fault lies in perhaps relying too much on this one source of Heidegger’s views at the neglect of other important source material. Granted that the *Zollikon seminars* is the only account available on Heidegger’s views about Freud. There is much in Heidegger (some

of which he himself may not have been aware) that coincides with Freud's treatment philosophy in significant ways. Because the authors neglect to examine Freud's treatment philosophy in anything more than a cursory way, they overlook those aspects of Heidegger's later philosophy that complement Freud's technical recommendations.

The authors list four principal objections to Freud's theories that Heidegger outlines in the Zollikon Seminars. The first concerns Freud's theory of repression and other defense mechanisms, generally. For Heidegger, because there is no "unconscious," there is nothing "into" which wishes can be "repressed." Moreover, Heidegger objects to Freud's thesis that neurotic and other psychological conflicts are the consequence of trauma, the memory about which the individual "instinctively" defends himself by erasing it from consciousness, via repression or other defense mechanisms. For Heidegger, there is no alleged "trauma" to defend ourselves against. Rather we are always dimly aware of what we are anxious about, but in denial of its *significance*, i.e., what the "event—cum—trauma" *means to me*. But by ascribing the child's intolerance of painful experience to a form of denial instead of "repressed trauma," Heidegger is unwittingly substituting a *different* defense mechanism in Freud's arsenal in place of repression, namely *denial*. Had Heidegger (and the authors) been more familiar with competing trends in the evolution of psychoanalytic theory and technique he would have realized that analysts have historically debated these very questions: are unwelcome experiences genuinely *repressed*, which induces a hypnotic amnesia of what was once experienced? Or does the painful experience *remain* somewhere on the periphery of conscious awareness, but missing something: the *significance* of the event and thus without the requisite *meaning* that would otherwise bring it front and center to the forefront of one's consciousness? This is the kind of complexity that Freud proposed when he observed what extraordinary recall obsessional neurotics, unlike hysterics, typically possess, yet seem helpless in determining the importance of one experience over the other, because any sense of their relative significance has been pushed from awareness (via *dissociation*). Heidegger and Freud were actually much closer to agreement on the basic outline of this tension than the authors suggest, perhaps because Heidegger himself failed to see the connection.

Another concept with which Heidegger takes issue is Freud's theory of transference and its principal vehicle, projection. Freud's notion is that after children repress (or in the case of obsessionals, deny the significance of) painful feelings concerning a father or mother, these harbored but nonetheless unconscious memories are subsequently transferred (i.e., displaced) onto friends, lovers, and therapists with whom they become intimate, so that they experience, for example, the analyst "as though" he were the embodiment of the patient's father or

mother. Heidegger objects to the mechanistic quality of Freud's formulations, that repressed ideas are "inserted" into an "unconscious" as container, only to pop out later when projected onto persons and situations that trigger "recollections." But is it the phenomena in question that Heidegger takes issue with, or the language employed to explain them? What the authors—and apparently Heidegger—fail to notice is the *human* drama that Freud is trying to describe, employing admittedly mechanistic and quasi-scientific terminology, but not in a good way. Even in Freud's many discussions about the nature of transference and how it presumably works, he acknowledged that the term should be understood as simply another word for love. The problem with humans, says Freud, is that we are born "premature" and remain dependent on our parents for a duration that is unique in the animal world. Our struggle throughout childhood is to painstakingly and ever-so-gradually wean ourselves off this extraordinary dependency. The problem each of us encounters is that of learning to accept that growth and maturation entails separation from the protection and narcissistic gratification we are wont to maintain, not only with our parents, but in all our relationships. Freud maintained that we never entirely recover from the grueling, trauma-ridden era of our interminable childhoods, and that we remain haunted by a kind of "lack" at the core of our being, as we wend ourselves through the world of relations with others, because we are stained by the remnants of disappointment about what our parents could or would not give us. Hollow inside, never really confident of our place in the world, we obstinately persist, like Sisyphus, seeking signs of legitimation from everyone who constitutes our world; but most of all, from the people we genuinely *care* about. Substitute Freud's emphasis on the word love with Heidegger's care (*Sorge*) and their respective views of the human condition become extraordinarily compatible, if not identical. Freud's treatment plan was not to "cure" individuals of medical conditions, but to help his patients learn how to deal with the hardship of living with greater *authenticity*, a project that Heidegger would have clearly embraced (and according to Medard Boss, did).

Yet Heidegger's objection to couching such ideas in concepts like "projection" is well taken. R. D. Laing (1960), whom the authors mention as one of the existentialists who sought to integrate psychoanalysis with phenomenology (but do not elaborate), abandoned the term projection and substituted in its place the term, *attribution* as a better way of getting at the basic idea, but in less mechanistic fashion. According to Laing, I don't "project" qualities or beliefs or feelings onto other people via some mechanism in my head. Instead I "attribute" such beliefs or feelings to others and treat them as though they actually harbor these thoughts *about me*. Similarly, when I become an *object* of such attributions by others, I cannot help but "see" myself as the others "see" me, because (as

Heidegger would concur) a bit of “who” I am at any moment in time is what others make of me, based on what they see in me, and in that sense, attribute to me. We don’t “introject” into our unconscious what others “project” onto us, but rather *experience* the attributions that others are always making about us, all the time; they are an aspect of “who” I am. But only the analytic situation permits the kind of relationship and conversation about that relationship that reveals these attributions to us, helping us achieve a distance from their power.

Heidegger is correct in saying there is no “unconscious,” only *being*, which is another way of saying that what is hidden from us is not the “content” of an unconscious portion of the mind, but rather the *meaning* of such and such a circumstance that, perhaps chronically, eludes us. The psychoanalytic *process* (if not its theory!) is basically an instrument that, depending upon whose hands take a hold of it, can be used to disclose that meaning, under the right conditions, patience and luck. This is why Heidegger has such a problem with Freud’s efforts to determine the ultimate “cause” of neurotic symptom formation, the manifestation of which becomes increasingly intolerable with age. Heidegger is also correct in saying that a traumatic “injury” cannot “cause” me to suffer consequent repression and psychic conflict, like a nail can cause a tire to lose air. And Heidegger is equally insightful in suggesting that it is not literally the “past” that elicits the kind of anxiety I have come to associate with the burden of living, but a *future* I am trying inexorably to nudge into the present but, despite my best efforts, I cannot seem to make *real*. Consequently, my neurotic conflicts are merely rooted in *fantasy* about that which I cannot get hold of, until I reach a condition of uneasy acceptance or resignation that, as it occurs, releases its death-grip. There is a mystery here, concerning the relation between the accessible and inaccessible, and no one knows for certain the role such distinctions play in the outcome of a given analysis.

Such amazing and perhaps unexpected similarities between Heidegger’s and Freud’s respective perspectives does not imply there aren’t important disagreements as well. Freud was convinced that the unconscious exists and insisted that clinical evidence made this claim unassailable. Freud—and for the most part, the contemporary psychoanalytic community—simply did not have the philosophical tools to resolve the kind of questions his clinical experience elicited. Heidegger accused Freud of using the concepts of cause and motive interchangeably, and he did. Heidegger also insisted that seeking the cause of one’s current situation in one’s history was not the right question to be asking, and he was right on this score as well. Even Freud, who often sought to locate the original cause of his patients’ symptoms in a specific traumatic event in the earliest stages of childhood, had to admit he could never be sure which event was critical in a given patients’ history. Wherever he looked, there was always something earlier that

served as a precondition, whatever that earlier something might be. But Freud would have probably agreed with Heidegger that the concept of unconscious motive and its role in the etiology of symptom formation, though alluring, is ultimately untenable. He simply had nothing to replace such a wonderful concept with. The pity is that Freud came close to agreeing with Heidegger that such “motives,” if they exist, are simply not known to us, and that becoming aware of our motivation for behaving in such and such a way will always remain “unknowable” in the literal sense, because the only thing that matters is the *context* in which the events in our lives is disclosed. In other words, how we imbue them with *meaning*. Freud’s interpretative schema was founded on the premise that everything subject to experience is meaningful, and that the *absence* of meaning elicits the kinds of anxiety that manifest the incidents of denial and amnesia that brought his patients into treatment. Though the authors say that Freud would have never embraced Heidegger’s ontological perspective and would have likely remained satisfied that his project was on ontic one, it seems to me that Freud’s notion of an unconscious, despite the problems enumerated, only makes sense when approached from an ontological perspective. This frame of reference, though not explicit in Freud, was nonetheless *implicit*, if not in theory, then certainly in practice.

This brings us to the third and final section of the book, which seeks to achieve a resolution to all the objections raised by phenomenologists against Freud, while preserving in Freud that which remains legitimate and even invaluable to the future development of phenomenology. Though this book accomplishes in superb fashion the goal of critiquing the unconscious from a phenomenological perspective, by demonstrating how a scientific/causal conception of human behavior is untenable, it fails to account for the importance of Freud’s technical principles (which, ironically, both Heidegger and Medard Boss admired) and how they manage, after nearly a century, to hold up under scrutiny *without* recourse to the alleged scientific validation concerning the existence of “psychic reality” that most contemporary psychoanalysts continue to defend. The authors do acknowledge that Boss, like many other existential practitioners, drew a line between Freud the theoretician and Freud the practitioner, and that he concluded the one bears little relationship with the other. Boss’s position is that Freud’s technical principles are perfectly consistent with a phenomenological perspective and that, in fact, they make little sense outside a phenomenological framework, explicit or implied. For some reason, the authors reject this thesis and insist there is no separation between Freud’s theories and technique and even that his technique is a manifestation of his metapsychological theories! How could they arrive at this conclusion? Apparently, Freud’s technical principles (which are the outcome of the relationships he enjoyed with his patients and

what he learned from those experiences) are *opaque* to anyone not privy to the kinds of intense relationship that analysts typically endure in their day-to-day practice; in effect, a form of *meditation*. Consequently, the authors fail to recognize the two Freuds. Moreover, by denying this duality they fail to recognize the inherent phenomenological component of Freud's treatment philosophy. Although the authors cite Freud's technical papers and note his use of neutrality in favorable terms, they somehow fail to capitalize on their impressive research into Freud's massive twenty-three volumes of collected works. The only discussion of his treatment strategy pertains to the common generalization that Freud reduced psychoanalysis to "rendering the unconscious conscious." While this is indeed one component (and a contested one, at that) of psychoanalytic activity, what it is that specifically leads to psychological change remains a mystery to everyone, including Freud.

Another problem was the authors' decision to locate the fundamental leitmotif of Freud's contribution in his theory of instincts, a theory that even Freud once questioned, characterizing its flimsy scientific validity as "our mythology." That said, the authors set out to establish those influences in Freud's pre-history from which he derived inspiration for his theory of instincts in the first place. This also explains why the authors embrace Merleau-Ponty's focus on the body. The problem with this tack is that they neglect the far more compelling evidence that what is most valuable in Freud and supported by other phenomenologists (such as Husserl and Heidegger) is Freud's novel employment of the *use of the mind* embodied in the psychoanalytic process, by patients and practitioners alike. Freud didn't invent neutrality, or evenly suspended attention; they were there already in the sceptics from Greek antiquity. But he did invent its use in the treatment of psychological conflict that endures as one of his most radical contributions to contemporary therapeutic practice, even "non-analytic" ones.

Lastly, there is the problem of the authors' decision to eschew the writings of those analytic practitioners who have sought to integrate Freud with existential phenomenology. It is understandable that such a project would have added yet more length of an already lengthy book, but had they at least familiarized themselves with this literature it may have lent to their reading of Freud a more comprehensive edge, resulting in a more sophisticated treatment of those elements in Freud's contribution that are most compatible with the existential phenomenological tradition. Likewise, the authors may have been able to recognize Freud's singular debt to the sceptic tradition (as well as Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's). They may have in turn come to reject Freud's metapsychology as a creature of his over identification with science in the service of his theories. Finally, they may have come to appreciate that there is more to Freud than a theoretician and technical wizard, but a savvy witness to: the inescapable importance that each

person's history holds for them; the inherently frustrating nature of the world in which we live; and the myriad ways we have historically sought to alleviate a manner of suffering that is an unrelenting component of the human condition. In other words, that Freud was not merely trying to treat, let alone cure, "mental illness," but was endeavoring to help us accept the inevitable angst that being human entails; surely as existential a project as any phenomenologist ever conceived.

This book is a wonderful journey through the probable historical influences on many of Freud's most basic assumptions, and a moving as well as illuminating conversation between the existential phenomenologists and Freud. Though it is ultimately disappointing, it nonetheless provides a rich resource into the complex intersection between the two most important intellectual traditions that emerged from twentieth-century thought, and for that we should be unreservedly grateful.

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