

Ian Rory Owen. *Psychotherapy and Phenomenology: On Freud, Husserl, and Heidegger*. Lincoln, N.E.; iUniverse, 2006.

*[name unavailable]*

## Preview

Book Review. Ian Rory Owen. *Psychotherapy and Phenomenology: On Freud, Husserl, and Heidegger*. Lincoln, N.E.; iUniverse, 2006.

Ian Rory Owen. *Psychotherapy and Phenomenology: On Freud, Husserl and Heidegger*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2006.

This new book is the first interdisciplinary study of Sigmund Freud, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger by a practising psychotherapist. The definition of hermeneutics used by the author is in accord with those of Wilhelm Dilthey and Hans Peter Rickman. It is anti-deconstructionist and pro-transcendental in the Kantian sense. For Owen, rationality is possible and desirable, as long as self-reflexivity and justification are explicit. Links are made between the necessities of Kant's a priori categories, such as cause, and are applied to the everyday and the psychotherapeutic interpretations of mental process. In short, the work is unusual in connecting the commonality of interpretations of intentionality (mental process) in Husserl, in the "theory of mind" branch of psychology as well as the areas called "attachment" and "object relations" in psychoanalysis. Similarly, all these areas share with everyday experience the idea that there are mental processes (such as love, hate, vision and hearing) and that these present a manifold of senses about the same object of conscious attention. Psychotherapy, like the everyday, assumes that different forms of intentionality provide specific senses of reference to the object. For instance, to imagine something is not the same as remembering it or writing about it.

*Psychotherapy and Phenomenology* examines how psychotherapies work through psychological hermeneutics in identifying specific observable actions between people as meaning something specific. The author looks at the theory of psychological cause (that crosses time) for use in understanding emotion in the current relationship between clients and therapists. The identification of specific processes between people is tackled in general, in a theory of meaning, as a first step in knowing how to reason clinically. The conclusion is that therapy is a type of hermeneutics that is close to the "folk psychology" of everyday life, but one that makes explicit what is ordinarily implicit to common sense. Another major theme of the work is battling against natural psychology (as a quantitative science) and defending a view of meaning as publicly accessible and not unconscious or private. Owen argues for a new reading of Husserl against those painted of him by deconstructionist and Heideggerian studies. Rather than make an appraisal of its views for philosophy or hermeneutics, the notes below record its claims and its contents.

The author assumes that the research and development of therapy concerns gaining a more accurate understanding of the phenomena of meaning within its context of human relationships. There is hope of gaining a more accurate portrayal of important qualitative factors because it is possible to reject

naturalistic emphases. It is believed that a detailed consideration of meaning, intersubjective relations and meaningful motivations will win the day. It is possible to understand the relation between clients and therapists and changes in therapy without obscuring them by a focus on brain changes and the amount of stress hormones.

The book concerns itself with the most fundamental justifications that are necessary to interpret clients, their problems and the therapeutic relationship. Freud's influence is still operative and is called into question because of his metaphysical commitments rather than his method of free association and free floating attention. Specifically, appraisals are made of his ideas of transference, counter-transference and unconscious communication. Freud's influence for psycho-dynamic and other talking therapies harbours an interpretative problem because it cannot clearly delineate unconscious processes in relation to unconscious objects. On the contrary, the manner of showing any phenomena must indicate what those phenomena are consciously and intersubjectively: for both parties in the therapeutic relationship within individual therapy or indeed for researchers. It is claimed that the manner of human existence is adequately understood as co-empathic and intersubjective, in being able to share meaning. It is argued that intentionality has advantages over other types of psychological interpretation in that it distinguishes between a manifold of senses and their referent.

The view of phenomenology is that it theorises consciousness and does not rule out the existence of preconscious objects, unconscious processes or the elucidation of implicit, tacit or preconscious objects. One aim is to sketch a stance that interprets clients in terms of intentionalities as such an interpretative activity is important for deciding action. Theory should not fall into mistaken understanding. Whatever is decided limits and permits some types of interactions and excludes others. It is believed that all people can occasionally be inaccurate in their empathising of others.

It is always the case that intentionalities are interpretable through actions and contexts. The point of the work is that psychological senses do not perceptually appear, but rather, presentiated and learned meaning appears in some context.

The advantage of using the ideas of intentionality to interpret observable behaviour and conscious emotion is the following:

! Perception is what appears real and present to the five senses and the body. What appears perceptually has a number of co-appearing meanings with it.

! Some of the forms of intentionality are presentiation, including

empathy of another's perspective, recollection of what has been and anticipation of what might come to be. The class of intentionality called presentation includes depiction in visual art, the signitive intentionality of signs that relate to the referent and how imagination shows what could be the case.

! Conceptual intentionality, in speech and theory, should point to what exists. The task of theory is to demonstrate phenomena and not obscure them.

The consciousness of others is a lived experience for the patient and a "second hand" for therapists. For instance, if therapy theory had any difficulty in adequately understanding the consciousness of others, then there would be the promotion of depression instead of helping clients decrease it. Low self-esteem might be increased rather than encouraging the ability to know oneself more accurately with respect to one's strengths and weaknesses.

The ideas of co-empathy and intersubjectivity emphasise that mental work is done in achieving meaning. It is concluded that empathy is best understood as co-empathy in the context of intersubjective influence in culture, society and history. Traditions and social conventions supply meaning. Individuals create themselves in relation to these already existing social institutions. When it comes to an understanding of intersubjectivity, Freud, unlike Husserl, has no self-reflexive relation to the topic of the co-constitution of meaning. Let us consider what this means.

In two-person relationships, what appears for self is the other responding to self. The other's other is oneself. Simultaneously, what appears for the other is their empathising of self. Through the medium of the living body, primary emotion is affective intentionality about the current relationship that is influenced by the past. Inaccurate emotions misrepresent the current relationship and are perpetuated in the present because of insufficient reality testing. Linguistically-constituted secondary emotions can be an accurate identification of secure ends, or they can misrepresent the current relation altogether. The case of mis-interpreting primary or secondary emotion places what is felt in a wrong context. Emotion can be more accurately linked to another context through discussions with clients. It is preferable to speak about emotions as anticipations about problematic attachment relationships in the present or the past. Freud's idea of the "unconscious proper" is found unacceptable. From the perspective of phenomenology, it is necessary to have an adequate inter-relation of self and other.

What is known as transference and resistance are re-stated more clearly. They are clarified and re-interpreted in the following way. Resistance is an anxiety about self-disclosure that inhibits free association leading to silences,

absences or withdrawal from therapy, or to the omission or minimisation of the discussion of important topics. The anxiety is in relation to the fear of the unknown response from the therapist. Clients may anticipate that their therapist will be unable to understand. Or for other reasons they find speaking the truth painful, shameful or embarrassing. Therefore they are unwilling to say what is true on their mind. What is called transference is a complex set of anticipations in relation to retained past experiences about other people. It most often occurs in important intimate relationships particularly with loved ones and friends. It spans time in that it gathers up past experience and re-presents it in the present and future. But transference as an interpretation is an inaccurate intellectualisation of emotion and relating.

It is argued that the interpretations spoken by therapists are not just of the sort of naming causes, as Freud thought. Interpretation in the more general view is making sense and suggesting possible causes whereby clients should be free to disagree and discuss a possible cause from their own viewpoint. Such discussions can be furthered when clients reflect on what has happened in a meeting and return to the same topic of conversation at a later date.

With respect to the psychodynamic preference for interpreting unconscious intentionality, the book concludes that the psychodynamic position is unclear and therefore more liable to interpretative error than interpreting conscious experience. What is unacceptable from the phenomenological point of view is that a realm of objects that can never appear consciously, and can never have conscious referents, could ever have been credible.

With relation to the past, there are motivated, believed, associated, remembered and retained connections to others and social contexts. In the simple situation of being in the presence of another person, it is possible to empathise what their perspective is: what they are talking about, how they feel, what their intentions are towards oneself and what their psychological world is like. In their physical absence, it is possible to imagine empathically what their childhood was like, how they are with their family, and what they will be like at the next meeting with them. All these objective experiences in awareness provide clues as to how the forms of intentionality interact.

Husserl and Heidegger focused on intersubjectivity as a shared, public or communal existence, concerning what is believed to exist or not, it also applies to the everyday psychological region of lived experiences. Their views are contrasted in order to improve the attention to mental processes as a necessary interpretation that makes everyday life understandable. Specifically, others can be understood because they too feel and think in ways that are somewhat like our

own ways of thinking and feeling.

It is argued that what phenomenology means for theory, practice, supervision and research is an argument for the creation of accounts that compare inter-relationships between multiple perspectives on the same object and multiple contributions to the same relationship. Psychotherapists should be better than everyday people in being able to explain meaning and understanding. It is necessary to have justified interpretations of intentionality concerning conscious, publicly accessible meanings and experiences. To provide informed consent, avoid negligence, and fulfil the duty of care, means being able to justify one's actions and decisions concerning alternative possibilities.

The point of clarifying therapy concepts is to make sure they fit their referent experiences and are interpreted within an accurate understanding of their domain. In relation to talk and action in therapy, a philosophically-based pure or theoretical psychology would be a hermeneutic approach that self-consciously considers the practical outcomes that specific beliefs permit or discourage. In answer to psychodynamics, rather than claiming there is unconscious intentionality that has unconscious objects, it is more acceptable to attend to intentionalities that have conscious and preconscious objects. Specifically, confusion occurs when the conscious sense of others is rejected by a tradition that requires the "inappropriate" relating of clients to be distinguished and fed back to them, yet has no clear means of specifying how this can be achieved.