

NWRPA Friday Evening Seminars

Working with Clients with Long-term Depression: Adapting psychodynamic counselling
Frank Kelley an NHS psychodynamic counsellor.

Friday 10 April 2015. 6.30pm-8.30pm. Cost £7.50 or free to members. This includes light refreshments.

On 'Strictly Bipolar'

Andrew Shepherd, a doctoral research fellow at the University of Manchester and higher trainee in Forensic Psychiatry

Friday 8 May 2015, 6.30pm-8.30pm. Cost £7.50 or free to members. This includes light refreshments.

Venue: The Manchester Institute for Psychotherapy
454 Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton, Manchester M21 0BQ.

Information about the Association is also available on our website at: www.nwrpa.org.uk

Being in Time: An existential approach to the therapeutic conversation

Robin Hobbes

Robin Hobbes is a Transactional Analyst who takes an existential phenomenological approach to TA. He is the co-director of elan training, a humanistic and integrative training centre based in South Manchester. You can contact him at <http://www.elantraining.org>

While writing this summary of Robin's talk I realised that I am gaining a different perspective on my work as a counsellor.

Robin focused on the work of Martin Heidegger (1899-1986) one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, a view shared by Heidegger himself. His great influence however has been coloured by his enthusiastic membership of the Nazi Party.

Heidegger's approach is existential phenomenology. This view rejects the transcendental ego, the ego's transcendence of the world, which leaves the world spread out and completely transparent before the conscious. Heidegger thinks rather of human beings always being in the world and not separate from it. The therapeutic parallel of the transcendent ego is the belief that we view our clients objectively and from the outside, that our clients are separated from us rather than us both being in the same shared world.

Robin believes that existential phenomenology ideas lie at the interface between therapeutic and philosophical processes and is part of the philosophical tradition since Socrates of asking what is the best way to live life.

Heidegger's most important work is *Being and Time* (1927). His contention is that *being* gets lost in philosophy after the ancient Greeks. The way to understand being is through a *hermeneutic* approach. Heidegger's approach says that we should go from what we already know. (NB this philosophy is quite difficult to understand and I am not sure if my summary is a useful one.)

**Join the NWRPA for 2015
and attend all our Friday Seminars for free**

Each seminar adds two hours to your Continuing Professional Development

The annual membership fee is £25.00, or £20.00 unwaged

You can send a cheque made out to "NWRPA" to the address at the end of this newsletter
If you would like to pay online please email nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com for our bank details

If you are not a member and would like to **join the NWRPA**, please send a brief C.V.
along with your payment. Please include details of your training, experience,
the code of ethics to which you subscribe, and the name and contact details of a professional referee.

Being in Time: An existential approach to the therapeutic conversation

Existential phenomenology looks at ordinary experiences to discover the being of existence. This means letting something be what it is. This means that rather than looking at therapy sessions from the outside, for example by categorizing our client's experience in terms of, say, ego states, unconscious conflicts, sub personalities and so on, we let our client's experience be what it is which is close to a person centred approach. This also has some parallels here with the therapeutic approach of mindfulness.

Heidegger would say that we all spend much of our time in a skilful, non-cognitive coping mode, what we can call habits. For example we do not reflect on how to balance on a bicycle we just cycle. This way of being has a wholeness where we are not aware of any separation between ourselves and the world. That is unless there is disruption where we do jump out of this non-cognitive state into a sense of our self being separate from the world. It is here that we have a sense of a separation of subject and object. It is here where we categorize being into an object. This categorization then takes us away from understanding the totality of being. I am still not sure I understand all this stuff, but Robin said Thomas Szasz's famous book *the Myth of Mental Illness* is founded on this important idea.

For Heidegger our being matters to us. When our non-cognitive flow is too disrupted, when we are alienated from our being, it can bring us to a therapist. For Robin the task of the therapist is to ask what being means to the client. Now both client and therapist can mistakenly believe that we stand outside our world and think of ourselves as a unique individual with an unique trajectory. Rather than as being in a world of universal experience, a being that is a universal experience we share with our clients. *Dasein* is a German word which Heidegger uses to convey an opening into a world that we are all part of, and we need to dissolve subjectivity to enter this world. Here truth is not independent of experience but of being open to knowing.

For Heidegger whether we are authentic or inauthentic depends on whether we own or disown our experience. He maintains that human beings will swing between the two, and that our existence matters to us, it is something we all care about. One way of being inauthentic is of *following the one*. Both Robin and our members gave examples of this psychic presence which prohibits certain ways of being. For example wanting to a blank screen therapist, the tyranny of shoulds and oughts like I should not be dealing with my own stuff. One example Robin talked about was of a client saying *I have never been loved*. To think this one must know what it is to be loved.

Heidegger's book is called *Being and Time*. *Being Already*, is our sense of the past. *Being Now* is our sense of the present and *Being Ahead* our sense of the future. These are all what he calls primordial phenomena. He speaks of death as an impossible impossibility. That we know we will all die is a universal human experience. However it is something we will not actually experience, in an experiencing sense we are not there when we die. This makes death unique as it is both is and is not a part of universal human experience. I think I have recorded the following quote from Robin accurately. *The future is not later than having been, and having been is not earlier than the present*. I suspect if I could understand this then I could understand existential phenomenology. In turn thinking (or being) in this way would percolate into my understanding of the process of therapy.

In the publicity he wrote for this seminar Robin said he would *consider the presence of time in our work as therapists and counsellors: time as a being-already (past), as a being-always (present), and as a being-ahead (future)*. *How do they co-exist and what difference does a knowing of them make to the therapeutic project?* I do not know if I have this knowing but I do know that my experience of counselling, including being in a session, is richer than it was before Friday the Thirteenth.

Contact the Association:

Frank Kelley
Secretary NWRPA
53 Milford Drive
Levenshulme
Manchester
M19 2RY

Phone: 0161 432 8653 (Evenings)

Email: nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com

Website: www.nwrpa.org.uk