Specialists without Spirit, Sensualists without Heart: Psychotherapy as a Moral Endeavour

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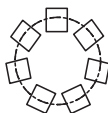
Specialists without Spirit, Sensualists without Heart: Psychotherapy as a Moral Endeavour

Farhad Dalal

Over the last few years I have come to question the centrality and value attributed to the ideas of 'analysis' and 'interpretation' in the psychotherapies in general and the analytic traditions in particular—ideas which draw on the prestige of the natural sciences.

The lecture develops the reasoning behind the shifts in my thinking and practice. With the help of the moral philosopher Raimond Gaita I will build on my prior thesis that the psyche is constituted by power-relations, to argue that it is also constituted by moral-relations. Gaita's understanding of morality has affinities with Winnicott and Bowlby, and is also deeply congenial to the group analytic sensibility. I will show how these ways of thinking contribute towards the ethical constitution of our inner lives. I will then touch on some of the consequences of this way of thinking for the practice of psychotherapy (whatever the school or modality), in ways that do not entail a collapse into emotivism nor a rejection of the rational.

I conclude that because psychotherapy is a moral endeavour, it requires the therapist to take up 'an attitude towards a soul' (Wittgenstein) rather than that of the detached clinician, and that therapy is better described as a very particular kind of embodied conversation rather than the scientistic conceptions of 'analysis' or 'treatment'.

Key words: ethics, morals, transparency, trust, meaning, responsivity, love, Gaita, Wittgenstein

Terminology and Methodology

In what follows, I will use the terms ethics and morality interchangeably, in part because there is no agreement in moral philosophy about the distinctions between them.

The article speaks to the generic field of psychotherapy, to the fundamentals of our profession and is not limited to specific schools or modalities; it concerns itself with the philosophy behind the psychology. In this sense the article focuses on ideas about practice rather than the practicalities of practice.

Further, I will not try to speak from an objectivist position, 'the view from nowhere' as Thomas Nagle (1986) has called it; instead, I will speak from a subjective viewpoint, from within an ongoing journey rather than from outside it. The danger in proceeding this way is that at the end it might turn out that all I will have accomplished is to reinvent a number of well-known and well-worn wheels. And in some senses this is indeed true.

But it is ever thus. We continually find things afresh 'for yet another first time' as Garfinkel (1967) once said—be it an insight, a taste, an idea, or the first smell of spring—as though we have never known these things before. In this process something comes alive for yet another first time. So in speaking to you in this way, I hope to bring alive for you, for perhaps yet another first time, something that has come alive for me.

And finally, given that I will be touching on terms like soul and love, I should flag up my attitude to these notions. Some might presume that having moved to the town called Totnes (recently twinned with Narnia) where crystal and angel therapy abound, that I have literally gone off with the fairies. This is not so. I will speak as a secularist and materialist. I will not be calling on higher powers. What I have to say is firmly grounded in the material, in the everyday, in the ordinary.

Preamble

In a book called *The Philosopher's Dog* (2004), the moral philosopher Raimond Gaita said this about their family dog Gypsy,

> We did not discipline Gypsy to make her *predictable*. We did it to make her *trustworthy*. (Gaita, 2004: 42)

The word pair 'predictability/trust' literally knocked the wind out of me. It crystallized many of the questions I had been circling around

for the last few years to do with organizational life, as well as our profession of psychotherapy; and particularly as the profession tries to come to terms with the powerful arrival of CBT—the Cognitive Behavioural Tsunami.

In what follows, one of the things I want to urge, is not to succumb to the panic being generated by this tsunami and rush into manualizing our ways of working. But nor do I want to advocate for a return to the arrogant complacency of the old status quo. It seems to me that here is an opportunity to really re-think what we are about.

Like many of you, I continue to ruminate about my practice: What do I think I am doing? What am I actually doing? What do I publicly admit to about what I am doing? Over the last few years my ruminations have been fed by the repeated appearance of the theme of forgiveness in various guises in the clinic.

It was in the midst of this sort of rumination that I stumbled across Gaita's work, which triggered the thought in me that the practice of psychotherapy is actually a work in ethics. I do not just mean that morality features in the *content* of the work, rather the activity of psychotherapy is in itself a profound moral endeavour, a practice in ethics.

But the thought of going public about this epiphany generated considerable anxiety in me as it goes against the grain of the ruling paradigm: this being that psychotherapy is a *scientific treatment*, and as such is concerned with matters of *fact* rather than of *value*. When matters of *value* enter the clinical arena—politics and morals say— then in the main we have been trained to think of them as expressions and symptoms of internal dramas, and for them to be reductively interpreted as such.

The First Assertion

My work to date has drawn on Norbert Elias to champion the views of Radical Foulkes over those of the Orthodox (Dalal, 1998, 2002). Like many others, I have been arguing against an idea of an individualistic, asocial and pre-social internal psychological world. This work may be summarized by the maxims that the 'we' is prior to the 'I', and that the 'I' is a conflictual entity constituted out of the varieties of 'we' that one is born into. The fact that the region of the 'we' is constituted by power-relations, leads to the first assertion: that the psyche is constituted and patterned by the field of power-relations one is born into.

In taking this stance, I recognize that I have already parted company with many colleagues whose allegiance lies with the internalist account of classical psychoanalysis. But this is where I am bound to begin.

If my first assertion has relied on the sociology of Norbert Elias, then my second assertion will lean heavily on the writings of the moral philosopher Raimond Gaita. And to confess this at the start—I am even more of a novice when it comes to moral philosophy than I am of sociology.

The Second Assertion

I begin with Foulkes' notion of belonging, which he said is critical to psychological well-being. Belonging means that we have a *place* in the world, but it also means that we find ourselves *placed* in the world. The fact that we find our selves *placed*, reminds us that power relations are intrinsic to notions of belonging and community.

Anyhow, as soon as one starts talking of belonging and community, then one is immediately precipitated into the territory of morals and ethics. At the very least, this is because communities define themselves in part, by the meaning worlds they sign up to. And of necessity these are moral considerations—what is a good life, and what is a bad life? What is right and what is wrong? These distinctions—these ways of life—form the boundaries of community.

To say that we live in the social world is also to say that we live in a moral universe; to say that the psyche is patterned by power-relations is to grant that it is constituted by a profound sense of good and bad. And to speak of good and bad, is to speak of ethics, of meaning and meaningfulness.

The second assertion then is this: the psyche is not only constituted by power-relations, it is also constituted by moral-relations. As Gaita says,

> We cannot radically rescind from the ethical constitution of our inner lives without becoming unintelligible to ourselves. (Gaita, 2008: 53)

In other words one cannot conceive of a Self outside, beyond or devoid of ethics, because ethics and morals constitute the self. Without them there would be no self to speak of, consequently the lives we lived would no longer be recognizably human, as they would have been rendered meaningless.

I now find myself somewhat be🗨️ed. Why does the idea that the self is ethically constituted feel so new to me, given that at the very beginnings of psychoanalysis we find Freud's vision of the superego, given that Klein's collected works are entitled *Love, Guilt and Reparation* (1998) and so on. Surely, all this speaks directly into the moral domain. And yet, despite these works and ideas being familiar, for me this felt like a new thought; I have to say 'for me' because it might not be 'for you'.

Meaning and Morals—How do they Arise?

I know that my importance to the world is very limited, and soon enough for all the difference it will make, it will be as though I had never existed. As someone called Martin Myers once said: 'First you're an unknown, then you write one book and you move up to obscurity' (http://quotedb. net/martin-myers/). More significantly, in a few billion years our entire solar system will be cosmic ash. From this perspective, our lives and preoccupations are utterly pointless as they make not one jot of difference to the future of the larger picture. This realization can lead to nihilistic despair about the present. One way out of this despair is to ask 'what is the universe for?' Or 'what is the purpose of existence?'

This attempt to give meaning to our brief and haphazard lives by imagining that we are part of some larger cosmic plan was closed off by Wittgenstein when he asked

> Why people think that an after-life should solve the problems of life or give meaning to life. Why should the meaning of the next life not be as problematic as the meaning of this one? (Wittgenstein in Gaita, 2004: 74)

And yet, despite recognizing my utter insignificance, my life nevertheless feels more or less meaningful to me. Is this hubris on my part? Or am I in the grip of a grandiose delusion?

I think it neither.

My view is this: we are meaning making beings in a meaningless universe.

So how do we make meaning? And is the meaning we make meaningful?

To ask these sorts of questions is actually to ask, where does our moral sensibility of right and wrong come from? This is because, as I hope it is already becoming evident, moral frameworks are intrinsic to meaning schemas. But how do they arise?

Socio-Genetic Morality—the Eliasian and Radical Foulkesian Account

It is the case that ethical capacities are innate in all human beings. However, much like the innate capacity for language, the socialization processes come to give our innate ethical capacity particular shapes and forms, creating cultural norms and so forth. These internalized conventions become aspects of the social unconscious. This is one aspect of the 'I' being formed out of the 'We-s' one is born into. Elias and Radical Foulkes would say that these processes not only penetrate, but also *create* the deepest corners of the psyche. This describes something very important: how pre-existing systems of conflicting moralities come to be established in individuals; *but it has little to say about how and why those moral schemas should arise in the first place.*

Instrumental Morality—the Internalist Account

The instinctivist streams within psychoanalysis, specifically Freud and Klein, derive the moral sensibility out of internal psychological mechanisms. An instance of this is Freud's derivation of the sense of social justice: he begins with the jealous older child's murderous feelings towards the younger sibling. The child solves the difficulty by identifying with the younger sibling. Next, Freud says, 'If one cannot be the favourite oneself, at all events no one else shall be favourite' (1921: 120). Freud tells us that it is this sort of dynamic which forms the basis for our desire for equality and justice. If I cannot have all the cake (which is what I would really like) then I will make sure that we all have exactly the same amount of cake. 'Social justice means that we deny ourselves many things so that others may have to do without them as well' (1921: 121). This is not a version of social justice that I find particularly inspirational.

In both the Freudian and Kleinian account the moral attitude is a structural psychological solution. It is a way of managing internal difficulties to enable us to live with other people. This sort of account renders morality *instrumental*. This sort of morality is a means to an end, the 'end' being the wellbeing, safety and survival of the self and the species.

This sort of account of how morality comes to be established in the self does not touch me, and nor does it move me. In contrast, when Gaita says 'we are ethically constituted' (Gaita, 2008: 53), I find myself moved and come to hear something for 'yet another first time'.

Does it matter whether I am moved or not? And ought I to trust that which moves me? I will attend to these important questions shortly. But first, I want to describe the account that does move me.

Empathic Morality—Gaita's Account

Gaita's derivation of morality fits well (in different ways) with aspects of the world views of Winnicott and Bowlby. And because this derivation of morality is relational, it is also deeply congenial to the group analytic sensibility. Gaita says that the seeds of our moral attitudes are to be found in the deep attachments we form with each other, and specifically, through the attachment called love. And it comes about in the following way:

As infants, the persons we attach to, start to matter to us. And because they matter to us, we come to feel concern for their well-being. It is this concern for them that makes us *want to* act in kindly and decent ways towards them and generates in us a sense of obligation to them. *It these sorts of considerate attitudes and behaviours, that are the basis of those that we end up calling moral.* And it is this that makes our lives feel meaningful.

Although obvious, the point I want to emphasize is that meaning is constituted by the kinds and quality of relationships one finds oneself embedded in. It is the presence or absence of our attachment objects, and the ethical quality of those relationships, that make our lives feel more or less meaningful.

It is as ordinary, and as profound as that.

Two (False) Problems of Altruism

But even here, there is a reductive and cynical understanding regarding our capacity for concern. This cynical viewpoint comes about because of the radical split made by Kant between duty and desire. According to his way of thinking, if an act makes me feel good, then because I will have benefited from it, by definition it therefore cannot be altruistic.

But why should I not feel good about doing a good deed? Surely the fact that I come to feel good is in part what motivates me to do the right thing. The cynic, and perhaps the psychoanalyst, might continue to insist that the apparent act of generosity is in fact disguised self-promotion: doing good in order to be seen-to-do-good and admired for it. This is often true. But to tar all acts of generosity with this

Machiavellian, narcissistic brush is to radically distort things. By no means do these perverse versions of kindness and generosity speak to the entirety of the territory.

If the first difficulty of altruism is caused by the split between duty and desire, then the second difficulty is caused by the split between the external and internal worlds. The fact that some acts of goodness are in the Machiavellian service of eliciting the approval of others, led Kant to suppose that the approval of others is always corrupting. He said that it was the responsibility of each person to work out right from wrong themselves, and to do so internally, without reference to others.

But this kind of radical exclusion of others is only possible in a solipsistic individualistic conceptualization of human life. The fact that we humans are social beings means that we both need and desire the approval of our belonging groups. Approval and disapproval are the means by which we calibrate our beings with others in our belonging groups. This after all is the import of Foulkes' claim that belonging is necessary to psychological well-being. In contrast, Rudyard Kipling's poem *If* (1895) valorizes the man who is indifferent to the opinions of others. To my mind, such a person is not to be admired but feared, because indifference to others is the stuff that psychopaths are made of.

The fact that at times the desire for the approval of others is for Machiavellian or narcissistic ends, should not be used to obscure the fact that the approval of others is intrinsic to our well being and something we can never do without. And this is the point: the grounds for approval and disapproval are intrinsically moral.

Gaita is arguing that that there are versions of obligation, civility, kindness and generosity that are ends in themselves, the basis of which are to be found in our responsive capacity for empathy and love. Here, we do good because we *desire* to do good to others, because we feel for them, because we want them to feel good. This capacity too is part of the human condition, a capacity that is common enough, in the love between some parents and their children, and in the love of some individuals for other individuals.

In sum, love, empathy and attachment are the generators of our ethical sensibilities and the attitudes and behaviours that we come to describe as moral. This is how Gaita puts it:

> Attachments and the joy and grief, which they may cause, condition our sense of the preciousness of human beings. *Love is the most important of them.* (Gaita, 2008: 27; italics added)

Interim Summary

There are several ways of capturing the bones of the discussion so far. The first is to say that there are two kinds of morality, one of which is an *instrumental morality* of the Freudian kind that is essentially *self-serving*; whilst the other is an *empathic morality* and is *other-serving*. There are echoes here with Freud's distinction between Eros and Agape.

Whilst registering the distinction between the two, it is important not to create a major split between them and hold onto a more nuanced position. As Gaita says:

> Fidelity and justice are not reducible to the material or psychological advantages they bring [but] neither are they separable from them. (Gaita, 2008: 8)

Another way of encapsulating the prior discussion is through a distinction between the Hobbesian idea that 'human nature is the enemy of ethics' (Alford, 2002: 22) in which ethical frameworks are a way of controlling a savage human nature; and Gaita's vision in which ethics are an aspect and expression of human nature. Once again the distinction is not to be taken as an opposition. Rather I want with Gaita to emphasize the second of these, which says that there are versions of obligation, civility, kindness and generosity that are ends in themselves, the basis of which are to be found in our responsive capacity for empathy and love.

I am not for a moment wanting to deny the darker side of human life. Of course adults, infants and children are also self centred, devious, hateful, demanding and difficult. But on what basis is it claimed that these aspects of the human condition are more real and fundamental than those of love, compassion and generosity?

The final way of characterizing the territory is to collate the three routes through which three versions of morality come to be established in each of us.

First is the process in which we unconsciously imbibe the pre-existing moral norms of the communities that we are born into. This is the 'social unconscious'.

Second is the morality of rules and regulations. Here, one learns to say please, sorry and thank you in the right places at the right times, and useful though this might be as a social lubricant, in itself it can remain empty etiquette. This kind of morality is in conflict with desire, embodied as it is in the conflict between the Superego and the Id.

The third source of morality arises out of one's responsive feelings; here, actions construed as moral *are driven by one's desires and are not in conflict with them*. Here, there arises in one's body a genuine impulse to say sorry and thank you, because they give expression to feelings of remorse and gratitude that arise in response to the other.

It is clear then that we are neither fully determined as excessive social construction might suggest, and nor do we have unfettered free will as Kant conceived.

Individuation through Guilt, Love and Gratitude

If we put the moral emotions in the centre of the picture, then some surprising things follow out of it. For one, it leads to differentiation and individuation. This happens in several ways, the first of which has to do with guilt.

The classical psychoanalytic thesis proposes that guilt is only possible after individuation, at the point one realizes that the hated and loved objects are one and the same.

Gaita (following a Wittgensteinian line) reverses the sequence to say, that it is the experience of remorse that shocks one into wakefulness to realize that it is *me* that has injured *this* particular person. In this moment one becomes painfully conscious of self and other as beings, as distinct beings.

This reversal is resonant with the Fairbairn's enduring and telling critique of Freud and Klein: he said that they had mistaken techniques for causes.

The next differentiating mechanism is driven by the effects others have on us. Our attachment and dependence on specific others means that our well being, comes (in part) to rely on their good will. Our attachments make us vulnerable to the whims of those we attach to. It is this combination, that we cannot control them, and yet our well-being is in part reliant on them, that also painfully forces on us the realization these individuals have an existence that is separate from us, and yet we remain ever connected and dependent upon them.

This is how Gaita summarizes it:

> Our sense of the reality of others is partly conditioned by our vulnerability to them, by the unfathomable grief they may cause us. It is also conditioned by our shocked and bewildered realisation of what it means to wrong them. Remorse is that realisation. (Gaita, 2008: 34)

Perhaps the most critical of drivers in the individuation process is love; the persons we love become irreplaceable in our affections, and therefore individuated. No other child can replace *this* child, no other friend *this* friend, no other lover can replace *this* lover. Each is truly unique to me, and no other will do. Iris Murdoch puts it beautifully: 'Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real' (Murdoch, 1999: 215).

A small experience led me to realize something similar about gratitude. Whilst on holiday, on a singularly hot and sticky morning, we were suddenly bathed in a deliciously soft breeze. I noticed arising in myself a feeling of gratitude. But then, I became aware that there was no object for this gratitude—there was no where to put it as it were. In one sense I felt gratitude to the breeze itself, but in so doing I animated it, even more, I humanized it. You could say that I was falling into the error of anthropomorphizing the breeze. Maybe so. But what struck me through this entirely trivial experience, was the realization that I needed something or someone to receive my gratitude, and without it, the experience was somehow incomplete. So in a sense, gratitude creates a need for the other, and it too comes to render the other 'real'. And perhaps this is also why when there is no receptacle for gratitude (or blame), we find it necessary to invent gods or the fates in whom we can place these feelings.

This then, is Gaita's claim: that the moral emotions come alive when people are individuated, and the converse, that it is the evocation of the moral emotions, which individuates both self and other.

It follows, and we know it to be true, that it is easier to act ruthlessly against those not individuated, the faceless generic 'them', because here, there is no direct purchase for empathic morality. This is where rule based morality becomes necessary, but not in a straightforward way. Gaita argues that we are only able to meaningfully employ rule based morality by the device of remembering that the stranger is irreplaceable in someone else's affections, and so has a face for them, and it is this realization that humanizes them in our eyes.

I now want to turn to questions of 'practice', but in order to do that I need to step back and set up a frame within which to have the discussion. To this end, I start with Kant because although some of the problems we are mired in could be said to begin with him, so do some of the solutions to those self same problems.

Kant, Appiah, Buber
One of the key questions that Kant tussled with was that of human responsibility. He could see that much of the natural world operated as though it were mechanically following rules of cause and effect in a more or less predictable way.

It was critical for Kant that we did not think of and treat human beings as belonging entirely to the natural world. Because if we proceeded in this way, then humans would not have to take moral responsibility for their actions; their decisions would simply be the 'effects' of certain prior 'causes'.

The philosopher Appiah put it like this: to understand events in the natural world one looks for *causes*, but in order to understand human behaviour, we look for *reasons* (Appiah, 2005).

There is a deep resonance between Gaita's word pair predictability/trustworthiness, and Appaiah's cause/reason. A resonance that is perfectly encapsulated by another word pair, Martin Buber's *I-Thou* and *I-It* (Buber, 1958).

Predictability and cause, speak to the world of things, the I and 'it'. Meanwhile reason and trust speak to the world of human interaction, of I and Thou. It is these terms, trust and reason, more strongly than anything else, that shows that humans reside in a moral universe; and to say that humans reside in a moral universe is to say that they reside in the realm of meaning.

Having set up the frame, the purpose of which has been to sharpen the distinction between things and persons, I move onto discussing clinical practice.

The Attitude of the Natural Scientist
The attitude that our profession is still in thrall to, is that of the natural scientist, with its ideals of objectivity, of reason purged of emotion, of impersonal detachment. This is why we grant more status to those designated as analysts over those designated as therapists. The scientific sounding languages of psychoanalysis and group analysis feed

	Things	*Persons*
Kant →	Cause	Reason
Appiah →	Cause	Reason
Gaita →	Predictability	Trust
Buber →	I-It	I-Thou

Figure 1

this view point: projection, matrix, nodes, networks, resonance, splitting, transference, dynamics, and so on. We garner for ourselves the prestige of physics departments by calling our clinical discussions 'scientific meetings'. Indeed, this Foulkes Lecture has been organized by the *Scientific* Committee of the Group Analytic Society.

When it comes to the study of things, the detached impersonal attitude of the natural scientist makes good sense. But even here, as the natural scientists themselves came to realize, their investigations were never entirely impersonal nor fully detached. This is why they came to invent investigative protocols like randomized control trials and double blind experiments—the intention of which is to remove the experimenter from the experiment. But now, when this same impersonal attitude comes to be utilized in the clinic, then it is no longer a scientific attitude, but *scientistic*. This is Wittgenstein's term for pseudo-science. The problem with the adoption of the scientistic attitude in the clinic, is that it achieves the exact opposite of its intentions: it actually distorts what it seeks to reveal. Let me explain:

When one studies a human face with an impassive eye, then, unlike inanimate things, the face that is being studied is affected by the impassivity, *and reacts to it.*

As is well known, if a mother were to keep her face impassive, her infant will first make efforts to enliven her, then if that fails it becomes distressed, and if that too fails, it falls into a kind of depression. Similarly, an impassive face causes adults to feel uncomfortable no less than infants. So when a patient gets anxious when faced with an analyst's impassivity, the easy mistake is to think that as the analyst is not doing anything, the anxiety must belong to the patient as it is emerging from 'inside' them.

It is in this way a conceptual error has been built into the heart of classical psychoanalytic theory.

The point, although a truism, is nevertheless worth stressing: humans are *ever-responsive* beings. The patient is influenced as much by what the analyst does as much as by what she does not do.

Gaita puts it like this:

> If our understanding of our inner life and its actuality are interdependent, if the concepts with which we identify and explore our inner life partly determine the character of that inner life, then a scientistic distortion of those concepts will not only distort our understanding, *it will distort the inner life itself.* (Gaita, 2008: 247, italics added)

The nature of the distortion created by the impassivity is this: the 'Thou' is distorted into an 'It'.

If the one-who-comes-for-help is primarily thought of as a diagnostic category then they are rendered 'it'. 'Itification' fits well with the paradigm of therapy as scientific treatment. Most powerful is our seemingly innocuous itifying category, 'patient'. In the mouths of some colleagues, the term is saturated with haughty condescension.

And the one-who-comes-for-help is also prone to render the helper an 'it' called expert or therapist. The realm of the 'it' is less about 'being with', and more about 'doing to' and being 'done to'. To this way of thinking the actual relationship is of no account, and if it is, it is only instrumental.

This is quite a thing to say: that the impersonal, detached attitude of the analyst that is so highly prized in our profession, actually distorts the clinical field. This of course is no surprise to the inter-subjectivists, who would concur with Gaita to say that clinical phenomena are being co-created by all those who are present, and not just 'found' by an observing analyst.

But I am not here arguing that we should not use categories—which is both nonsensical as well as impossible. As Buber says more poetically: 'This is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every Thou in our world must become an It' (Buber, 1958: 21).

This is the problem I am now faced with:

If the categorization process is necessarily a detaching and distancing process, and I cannot not categorize, then what is to be done? If the scientistic attitude is distortive, if 'Thou' is bound to become 'It', then where should I turn?

Wittgenstein: An Attitude towards a Soul

To begin attempting an answer, I have to start seemingly a long way off for reasons that will quickly become apparent, with a question that has engaged philosophers over the ages: how do I know that other people have conscious minds like me?

The positivist Descartian answer is that *first*, I observe behaviours, from which I infer and deduce that the other might also have a conscious mind like me. And it is only *then* that I decide to respond to them on this basis, *as if* they had minds like me. Here we have hypothesis and inference taking place in an isolated mind.

Wittgenstein reverses the sequence to say that first come our spontaneous responses to others. He says that these responses, which are spontaneously called out of us, are the *condition* rather than the *consequence* of ascribing states of consciousness in others (Gaita, 2004: 54).

> Out of such *unhesitating* interactions between ourselves and between us and animals, there developed—not beliefs, assumptions and conjectures about the mind—*but our very concepts* of thought feeling, intention, doubt, and so on. (Gaita, 2004: 61; italics added)

The key term in the above is 'unhesitating'. For example, the philosopher David Hume raised many grave philosophical doubts about what we can logically know with any certainty about the world, but he found that in day to day life these

> . . . doubts dissipated when they were overtaken by the pleasures of convivial conversation with . . . friends over a game of backgammon. (Gaita, 2004: 46)

Something is just called out of us, and when it is, there is no hesitation, no doubt. Wittgenstein puts it like this:

> What gives us so much the idea that human beings can feel? Nothing gives us so much as the idea, for it is not a matter of having an idea. It is not an assumption, a conjecture, or a belief, or even knowledge. (Wittgenstein, 1963: 283)

If it is not any of these things, then what is it?

It is that which is unhesitatingly called out of us, which Wittgenstein calls 'an attitude towards a soul'.

The word soul is not being used here for an entity in the religious sense. What soul means here is that the being has the capacity to suffer 'and with the possibility of . . . [the suffering] going deep' (Gaita, 2008: 239).

At its simplest, soul means the capacity to feel, to feel deeply, and for the feelings to be meaningful.

Another way of talking about this attitude is to say that one finds oneself *moved*.

This is key: It is the *response* that is called out—say pity—that reveals the sentient nature of the other. One does not feel pity for a stone, however hard it is kicked. This attitude towards a soul is akin to Buber's notion of *I-Thou*, and both are ethically constituted. I speak here of nothing more mysterious than empathy.

On Being Moved: Responsivity

We are still mired in the ideological battle between the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the emotionalism of the Romantics, of head versus heart, of thought versus feeling. The cognitive and analytic schools tending to privilege thought over feeling, and the humanistic, feeling over thought.

According to classical psychoanalytic ideology, it is the interpretation, delivered by the detached analyst that is the key to change. In his later years Foulkes himself was not much for making interpretations, still less transference interpretations.

> The modern tendency to put transference interpretations totally and explicitly into the centre of the analytic procedure is open to grave doubt. This can be overdone and in fact reinforces the neurosis. It seems to me that the transference phenomenon, thought essential for human relationships and for analysis to take place, is nevertheless in a certain sense the victory of the neurosis over both the therapist and patient alike. Thus I cannot agree with *the monopoly* conceded in certain techniques to the transference and its interpretation. (Foulkes, 1978: 116, italics added)

In contrast to the values of detachment, I have been arguing for the values of responsivity and its interconnectedness with meaning and ethics.

Critical to the interconnectivity are the emotions as they are the vehicle through which we come to register our ethical responses. Our emotions move us. And the ways that we are moved—towards or away, opening or closing off, are in themselves expressions of our ethical response to what is moving us.

I am not by any means advocating that we dispense with our rational faculties, which are also deeply responsive. Here is the thing: *both* faculties, the rational and the emotional, do *cognitive* work. But the cognitive work of one is not fully explicable, nor reducible, to the other.

Pascal captured the sentiment perfectly in his aphorism (paraphrased) 'The Heart has its reasons which Reason does not understand' (Pascal, 1958: 79). But in order not to collapse into anti-rationalism, we ought to remember that 'Reason has its reasons which the Heart cannot always follow'.

The Clinic

I am now going to recast the reasons why people come for psychotherapy into the language being developed in this paper, as having to do with responsivity and meaning. Mostly people come because

something has gone awry in their responsive capacities. This they commonly describe *symptomatically* as difficulties of living with other people, be it shyness, panic attacks, fear, anger issues, and so on. But they also come because of ruptures in their meaning schemas. This they commonly describe *symptomatically* as suffering from depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and so forth.

They come because they feel bad—and often enough they think that they feel bad because they are bad.

We have arrived at the heart of the issue. I will try now to describe as carefully as I can, why I think what I have come to think.

If our responsivity is integral to our humanity, then it is exactly this capacity that has atrophied or been damaged in the one-who-comes-for-help. Further the damage has come about precisely because of being treated as an 'it' by significant others during the developmental processes. It follows then that the detached attitude of an unresponsive therapist will necessarily reproduce and reinforce this self same experience of being an 'it'. It is for this sort of reason that I think the therapist needs to be responsive rather than removed.

Wittgenstein famously said that some things cannot be said, but only shown. To this I would add: some things cannot be *explained* but only *experienced*, and it is only then that they can be metabolized and become meaningful. And for this to be possible, it requires the therapist to come out of their analytic bunker to be responsive, and be responded to.

In the to-and-fro dance of gesture and response between protagonists, each comes progressively to be attuned to the other. With hard work and some luck, on occasion each finds, and is found by the other.

It is in this moment of finding and being found, that meaning comes alive. Moments like these, few and far between, are at the heart of therapy.

And when this happens, I think it is an experience of love. I do not say that the experience is akin to that of love. I say that it *is* love.

If the therapist is able to risk being present as an ethical being with their values and sense of right and wrong intact, then they are bound to be present as a responsive being because our responsivity is integral to our ethical sensibilities. If only on this basis, it can be seen that the ideal of the therapist's detached neutrality is unsustainable.

Foulkes himself was well aware of this, when he said 'what I mean by "following the group's lead" is *following with discrimination*' (Foulkes 1948: 139, italics added).

To discriminate is to make choices, and these, however scientific and objective they might seem are always ethically constituted.

Aside: take these two statements:
Psychotherapy should be evidence based.
The only evidence that should count is quantitative evidence.
Are these scientific claims, or moral injunctions?

In arguing for responsivity I am arguing against the convention which makes not-responding a virtue. Many therapists have turned not-responding into an art form, of finding elegant ways of not answering questions and so forth, because they think that in responding they will be acting out in some way. And sometimes that is of course true. But it is also the case that this way of being reproduces and reinforces earlier experiences of being not responded to, of being treated as an 'it'.

It is for these sorts of reasons, over the last years I find myself becoming increasingly transparent in the clinic. By transparent I do not mean speaking about my own life issues, but transparent in regards to what is arising in me in response to what is taking place in the consulting room. This then results in aspects of me being much more visible. In effect, by putting myself on the line in this way, I am continually risking myself. And that seems perfectly fair to me, as I am expecting, inviting and requiring the ones who come for help (singular or group) to also risk being present in the room in all their complexity.

The attitude I am describing (with the help of Gaita) is somewhat different to the way the analyst's emotions are conventionally understood in our field, this being primarily as counter-transference and as being 'caused' by the patient. The convention is that the analyst keeps these feelings to themselves, whilst they analyse them for their informational content regarding the state of mind of the patient. And following this, if the analysis has got somewhere, the analyst makes an interpretation. I think this sort of process sensible, but if this is all that takes place, then it is devoid of spirit and I think it entirely sterile.

On Love

I have been arguing that the moments we find ourselves being moved are important and ought to be attended to because they reveal something. What is revealed, particularly through the movement called love, is the humanity of the one who is loved. And this is the important thing: it is revealed to both, the one who loves and the one who

is loved. This shows just how wrong is the sanctimonious injunction that you first have to learn to love yourself, before anyone else can love you. The reality is otherwise. It is through being loved by others (if we are lucky enough) that we come to know that we are loveable. This surely is the significance of parental love: it reveals the child's humanity to itself, and so it comes to think of itself of value. If love is absent then something never comes alive, and perhaps it is killed off entirely. And let us not forget the power of the child's love to transform the parent. For many an adult, this is their first real experience of being loved.

Similarly, in the clinic, I think that it is the therapist's attitude of love that is critical to the therapeutic endeavour.

Trust in the Face of Uncertainty

I have been arguing all this while that we ought to give more weight to our emotional responses in the consulting room, but in doing so I am not arguing that it is the only thing we ought to give weight to. Just because something feels right does not make it so. This was the crucial error of the Romantic vision, an error repeatedly reproduced by many a humanistic and person centred therapist.

It is because the emotions are not entirely to be trusted that Kant privileged the reasoning processes over emotional ones. But no certainty to be found in the rational realm either. This is readily demonstrated by the fact that despite utilising the reasoning process, intelligent individuals continually arrive at different conclusions.

But there is a more fundamental problem with positivist claims of objectivity, and it is this: all rational systems (even mathematics) have to build on something that they cannot prove: axioms. Axioms are deemed to be self-evident truths not requiring proof. But when axioms are stripped of their scientistic clothing, they turn out to be nothing other than an experience, perhaps even just a feeling, but always something subjective. *Every rationalist objective edifice is built to some degree on subjective sands*, and so, as with the emotional realm, there is always room for doubt.

For example, there was a famous occasion when Bertrand Russell became utterly exasperated by the fact that despite his best efforts, he was unable to get Wittgenstein to concede that it was certain that there was no rhinoceros present in the study that they were having their argument in.

So we need not be all that perturbed by the unreliability of our emotional lives, because uncertainty and ambiguity are intrinsic to the human condition.

Having said that, the problem remains: given that there is no certainty, how do I decide when and whether I ought to trust the response arising in me? Gaita answers:

> When we are moved we trust what moves us and trust that we are rightly moved. We trust wisely however, only when trust is *disciplined*. (Gaita, 2008: xxxvii)

I was perplexed: what does it mean to discipline trust? Then I read Fred Alford who echoes Gaita in saying this about pity:

> Pity is an intense experience of attunement . . . [but] pity needs to be *educated* . . . to feel pity towards the right person to the right extent . . . (Alford, 2002: 138–42)

I came to think that both of them are actually speaking of the cultivation of wisdom and thoughtful reflection.

Each of them addresses the difficulty in making decisions when one is mired in subjectivity, of knowing how to proceed when one is 'in the thick of things'. Bion famously spoke of the difficulty of 'thinking under fire', which I would reframe as the difficulty of 'responding with authenticity in the heat of the moment'.

One anxiety reducing strategy utilized for decision making in these turbulent subjective waters, is to fall back on rule making and rule following. For example: only speak in and through the transference; never gratify a patient's wish but always interpret it, and so on.

Rules and expertise are indeed helpful when trying to navigate the turbulent subjective waters of the clinic, but by themselves they are not nearly enough. I am not of course advocating mindless rule breaking as the answer to mindless rule following. As a character in a comic novel by Terry Pratchett says: 'Look, that's why there are rules, understand? So that you *think* before you break them' (Pratchett, 2001: 251).

On this point there was a telling and crucial study conducted by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1988). They showed films of three groups of people (novices, teachers, and experienced practitioners) doing resuscitation work, to members of each of these groups. Each was asked to rate the skill level of what they observed. The interesting

thing for our purposes, is that the teachers rated the novices most highly. It turned out that this was because the novices being novices, proceeded mechanically by following the rules they had just been taught (if A then do X). Whereas the experienced practitioners were continually breaking rules, and improvising (even though A, I think it better to do M). I would say that they are exercising the wisdom (rather than expertise) that they have accumulated over years of practice, and in so doing they turn out to be more *efficient* than pedestrian rule followers.

Similarly, in this regard, there is a danger that our trainings capitulate to the demands of positivist efficiency ideologues to train therapists in the impoverished language of skill sets and competencies. And even when they are not doing this, it seems to me that in the main our trainings foster the cultivation of expertise over that of wisdom. But of course, wisdom cannot be taught, it can only be shown.

Returning to the clinic, if I remain convinced that what is arising in me is meaningful, even though I might not be able to articulate the entire what and the why of it, then I think that I am ethically bound to give expression to it in some way. This view point is in sharp contrast to the person centred therapist and the classical analyst, both of whom think that they should do their utmost to keep themselves out of the picture.

But it is also the case that I give expression to my response, not as unassailable truth, but as a gesture into an ongoing conversation. In doing this I am both modelling and inviting the ones who come for help to do the same. What happens next is that that which is voiced is tested and transmuted in the forge called 'conversation'. It is in this sense that I think of the activity of therapy as responsive ethical conversation rather than as analysis.

The reality is this: we cannot help be moved, we cannot help but feel. Thought is always passionate.

Gaita again:

> A dispassionate judgement is not one which is uninformed by feeling, but one which is undistorted by feeling. (Gaita, 2008: 89)

Elsewhere he cautions

> if we fear that our thought has been distorted because we have been sentimentally moved, then instead of trying not to be moved, we should strive to being not sentimentally moved. (Gaita, 2008: 252)

In responding, we are being called upon to trust something in the face of uncertainty. And in doing so we trust something that might well turn out to be false. That in itself is not a problem, if one has trusted and acted with sincerity, *and if one remains open to dialogue and revision*. Protocols and manualized decision-making process are of no help in this sort of situation because they drive the process down pre-determined lines, rather than staying open to the present and venturing into the unknown. The trust that is required to go forward as an ethical being, is disciplined trust, which we might even call wisdom.

To Conclude

At the conclusion of this article we are left with two anxieties that we can never escape and nor can we resolve. The Enlightenment anxiety is that feelings ought not to be trusted because they are so fickle, instead one should trust Reason. The Romantic anxiety is that the approval of others ought not to be trusted as it is corrupting of one's true opinion—instead one finds truth by looking inside to one's feelings.

The first is an anxiety about our subjectivity and the second about our capacity for objectivity. What is true is that neither should be entirely trusted, because the discourses we are born into to some degree pre-empt not only what we are able to think but also what we will tend to feel about certain things, as well as the sorts of people we will look to for approval—generally the more powerful. But we are not entirely determined, cultural sheep. We are also to some degree Kantian beings, capable of questioning and inquiring into the conditions of our existence and transforming them. I say 'to some degree' because we are not as free as Kant supposed us to be. Nevertheless, these compromised capacities are all I have at my disposal, which is why the problematic notion of *discipline* becomes so very important.

There are many things I have not been able to attend to in this article, for example shame and justice which make a bridge between politics and psychology. Nor have I had the space to make links with others who have spoken on similar matters, Farenzi, Sullivan, Frankl, Levinas, Bollas, the intersubjectivists, the phenomenologists, and so on. I have focussed on the loving emotions and made almost no mention of hateful ones. I have concerned myself entirely with the activity and attitude of the therapist and not attended to the contribution of the ones-who-come-for-help. I have spoken at the

level of ideas and not fleshed these out with clinical material as is usually the case in our profession. I have left out these and other valuable elements in the service of clarity and brevity and not because I think them unimportant.

What I *have* done in this paper is to place ethics at the centre of the human condition, and at the centre of our work as psychotherapists. I have said that this requires the therapist to be a responsive presence. But this responsivity needs to be a thoughtful and 'disciplined' one. I have also followed Kant to say that because human beings are not things, it is unethical to treat them as such. To my mind this is one of the key charges to be made not only against the cognitivists but also certain streams within the analytic schools: that their forms of treatment are unethical precisely because they conceptualize and treat the ones-who-come-for-help as things—despite their rhetoric asserting otherwise.

There is an apocryphal story of desperate soldiers lost in enemy territory. They find a map, which they use to find their way to safety. They then discover that the map they had used was for another territory altogether. The moral of the story being that even when one gets to where one was hoping to get to, it is not necessarily because of the reasoning that was utilized in the process.

In my view, whatever the school, cognitive, analytic or humanistic, the therapies that prosper do so, not so much because of the rationales endemic to each of the schools, but because of the therapist's ability to bring to the work an attitude towards a soul.

I think that at this historical moment we can draw moral courage from Gaita's fighting words (aimed at philosophers but also pertinent to us):

> We should cease to look for [reductive, positivist] justification while at the same time refusing to concede that this is intellectual dereliction. (Gaita, 2004: 50)

He urges us not to succumb to the demand that we subject our work to the impoverished version of evidence that is prized by policy makers in today's world, and to argue why this is not an intellectual cop out, and nor is it negligence on our part.

This article then is my attempt at swimming against the mechanistic tide prevalent in the cognitivist therapies, as well as the scientistic tide prevalent in some of the analytic therapies, and trying to do so without succumbing to the anti-rationalism promoted by sections of the humanistic traditions.

I have been arguing for the privileging of a certain version of fluid-ity, subjectivity, responsivity, engagement and authenticity in which not only is our work grounded, so is our very humanity.

Acknowledgement

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