

What does it mean to listen as a daseinsanalytic therapist?

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Abstract

I would like to consider the issue of what makes daseinsanalytic therapy special from a practical viewpoint. What does it mean concretely that, as a daseinsanalyst, I am interested in philosophical questions concerning human existence and one's own being?

My starting point is Heidegger's claim in 'Being and Time' that human beings always in some way know about their existence and are concerned about it "explicitly or not, appropriately or not". So as a daseinsanalyst I am alert to the existential dimension of the concrete experiences my patients are concerned with, I 'listen with a third ear' to it.

Of course, the challenge to detect a particular existential concern of a patient has to be met quite individually, depending on what we sense to be inherently consistent in a given context and moment. But the question is not only how to find a convincing ontological interpretation of an ontic issue, but also, whether it is essential to make it an issue in therapy at all.

These questions I want to discuss with the help of a short clinical example.

In Daseinsanalysis, philosophical questions concerning human existence play a central role. I want to discuss what this might mean in practice, particularly in regard to the contemporary daseinsanalytic view developed by Alice Holzhey. But first a few words about daseinsanalytic theory in general: In spite of its basic philosophical orientation, daseinsanalytic therapy can, in important respects, be defined as a therapeutic method based on Sigmund Freud's main principles. Just as psychoanalysis, daseinsanalysis considers childhood experiences as significant for the development of mental suffering. Also, regarding the method, most of us keep to Freud's fundamental rules of free association, evenly suspended attention and abstinence – Medard Boss, as we know, despite his disagreement with most of Freud's theoretical insights, nevertheless valued these rules highly.

Alice Holzhey, however, is especially indebted to psychoanalytic thought because, similar to Freud and in contrast to Boss, she considers *psychopathological symptoms to have a meaning*.

What is new is that for Alice Holzhey this meaning has to be understood *philosophically*. She understands mental suffering not merely as a suffering from reminiscences of childhood experiences, but also in a more fundamental sense, as a suffering from