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The Importance of being authentic
(Marianne Fry Memorial Lecture)

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‘Only as a questioning, historical being does man come to himself; only as such is he a self. Man’s self-hood means this: he must transform the being that disclosed itself to him into history and bring himself to stand in it’. (Heidegger, (1959) Introduction to Metaphysics, p143)

The published title is a bit misleading: It may convey the impression that being ‘authentic’ is some kind of skill or virtue, like being punctual or kind to animals. It could lead us to think of authenticity as a quality I could acquire – like clear skin if I use Nivea. When I look at what authenticity means in the lives of significant people I see it in an altogether different way. Authenticity is a bit like your life: you find yourself in it; you did not give it to yourself; it doesn’t quite belong to you, it could leave you at any time. And the more you congratulate yourself on it the more it leaks away.

When Marianne Fry decided to leave a promising career at the Tavistock Clinic and, instead, to involve herself with a new therapy called Gestalt – of very dubious reputation – she was answering a summons she experienced in her heart and following a music that seemed to her more authentic.

The word authentic has of course been hijacked in various ways Mobutu 1971 – ‘a return to African Authenticity’; Gentlemens underpants in M&S –brand name ‘Authentic’.

Fritz Perls – An Icon of Authenticity?

It would be lovely if I could this day hold up to you the co-founder of Gestalt Therapy, Fritz Perls, as an icon of authenticity, but I will not: his appetite for self advertisement spoils his image. That was his style. But it is not a simple as

that. At the same time let it be said that no one ever accused him of being two-faced, of projecting ahead of himself an image different from the person you met. In the two major attacks upon Fritz Perls neither accuses him of being a liar. Mary Henle, the brilliant and acerbic Gestalt psychologist accuses him of thoroughly muddled and inconsistent thinking and vigorously shakes off from her person any association with his Gestalt therapy, which, she shouts out, has nothing to do with her beloved Gestalt psychology (1986). Jeffrey Masson, that one-time Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Harvard, and later-on a psychoanalyst, makes a damning personal attack upon Fritz. Yet the worst that he can say about him is that he over-advertised himself, did not get on with his daughter and said some strange things about women. He quotes that bit from Fritz's autobiography written one year before he died: 'I believe,' says the modest Fritz, 'that I am the best therapist for any type of neurosis in the States, maybe even in the world' (Masson,1993.p.254). Of course, if we define authenticity as being consistent with oneself, then he was authentic. But authenticity is far more than self-consistency. Otherwise Bin Laden is a strong candidate for canonization.

Authenticity has to do with responding to the claim of truth upon me. What price will a woman or man give for their soul? Our exploration today – How do I become aware of that claim? Anyway what is truth and if everything we say is just a point of view how can anything be true.

Heidegger on Authenticity

Authenticity has to do with a person's 'standing in the truth'. This phrase I take from the philosopher, who, perhaps more than anyone else, best explores the nature of authenticity: Martin Heidegger. And this carries its own heavy irony, as I shall explain. It was when Fritz was 34 and in analysis with Clara Happel in Frankfurt that Heidegger's *Being and Time* appeared and like the Irishman and the elephant pills, the world of philosophy was never the same again. The irony in Heidegger's writing so profoundly about authenticity, is that it was only six

years later, in 1933, that he as one of the main leaders of the 930 academics who made a public vow to support Hitler's National Socialism, a regime whose twin towers were terror and lies (Schirer, W., 1962, p251). This shows a mega size intellect is not immunity from mega self-deception. I suppose it is a measure of our human capacity for self-deception that Heidegger could write so wonderfully about truth, and at the same time, team up with a liar like Hitler. Yet let's not rush to judgement on Heidegger: he was just a human being like the rest of us – not a hero like Bonhoeffer, or Koelbe. Just as everyone in this room carries within his/her body repositories of some extremely objectionable material, so in our selves as persons we carry pockets of inauthenticity. This is the human condition.

The subject of Heidegger's extraordinary book was and remained Heidegger's preoccupation throughout his long life: Being. This is the ultimately mysterious deep- down things, indefinable, inexhaustible. It is what allows me to utter that primary word 'I-Thou'. How does an Eskimo know he is an Eskimo – by meeting someone who is not an Eskimo. It is only in my contact with the world that I experience my own being. Just as the fearsome light of the sun is invisible unless it collides with an object like the moon or the earth; so, my *existence* is insubstantial until it engages with the earth. The paradox is as Heidegger never tires of pointing out in his school masterly fashion, that I can avoid experiencing the very being that constitutes my life and spend my life flitting, like a butterfly, from thing to thing. Footballers' wives. 'Only as a questioning historical being, says Heidegger, 'does man come to himself' (loc. cit. supra). 'Questioning' means 'engaging with'; 'historical' means consciously 'appropriating', 'making my own', 'taking possession of my inheritance'. So, authenticity depends upon my choosing to deliver myself over to the 'everyday' truth, such as my bodily limitations; such as the laws and governmental decision over which I have no control. Duress and fear do not take away that choice. What gets in the way is

my decision to deal with my life by telling lies. This can come from a fearful attempt to avoid the consequences of personal thought and freedom.

Although you could easily be forgiven for not noticing it, the subject of Heidegger's big and difficult book is you and me who are caught up in Being. And he calls us Dasein – the 'there being'. We can have, but don't have to have, *first hand* experience of what it means to be a person.. 'Human kind', says the poet T.S. Elliot, can bear very little of reality'. My authenticity is a function of how much of reality I can bear. And this in turn, as Robert Romanyshyn so well says, depends upon 'what we can bear to believe...because truth is always a matter of what the human heart, our organ of belief, can stand' (Romanyshyn 1992, p236 ft.nt.2). A close relation of mine went through a period of early adulthood when he could no longer bear to believe that he actually owed the state taxes. It is in the truth of our being that authenticity resides.

The Importance of Asking Questions

However harshly people may judge Heidegger – and when I read and remember the history of that time I certainly do *not* dare to judge him - Heidegger made three very important points which still form the basis of our practice of psychotherapy– and in these he is singing from the same hymn-sheet as many other philosophers and, of course as all of us Gestalt therapists. Let me tell you something interesting about Heidegger. If you scratch our Gestalt then vigorously enough you will find Martin Heidegger looking out at you,

Firstly, the human being is not a ready-made datum; I don't come into the world as a completed thing, like a Skoda off the assembly line in Poland; our being is very incomplete. It is more like we come upon the scene as a self-assembly kit – which can lie. Being born is like getting married to my humanity. Then comes the job of living through that marriage.

Secondly, our human existence is essentially about our achieving or failing to achieve our full self-hood; we have to *choose* ourselves into full humanity. *Authenticity is when I choose to become the person I truly am* and at every stage my question ensures that my appropriation is life enhancing. I am inauthentic when I fail in this project. This may not be at all as easy as it sounds. Heidegger himself was gathered up into the Hitler mania of his time. Maybe he saw this, maybe he did not: but what we do know is that any other course would have meant his losing the plumb job of Rector of Freiburg University. Just as breathing indicates life so questions indicate engagement with the world (my body).

Thirdly, the key to my becoming *the person I truly am*, at every stage of my life, resides in the *questions* I ask myself. The question is the sign that I am engaging deliberately with the reality. It is the pupil who does not ask questions who is not understanding the lesson. Suicide bombers don't ask questions. Just as the trajectory of my gaze decides what answer I receive from the phenomenon, so *the intention in my question decides the direction of my life*. One person will ask herself 'How can I get out of this marriage?' Another: 'What can I contribute to the happiness of this relationship?' Is it not our experience that there can be very little progress in therapy until the client asks himself: How have I contributed to my present difficulties? Every basic question launches us upon a road of authenticity or inauthenticity. And we have no idea where it will eventually lead us. Like getting aboard a bus without quite knowing where it is going.

Promotion in the Ranks

In 1934-1936 Franz Stangl was just an ordinary policeman at Linz in Austria. He and a friend Ludwig Werner had been awarded a special service medal for rooting out secret Nazis who were trying to undermine the Austrian Government at that time. However, by 1937 everything had changed, the Nazis took over and all policemen like Stangl and Werner were sacked. They both had reason to

be fearful of assassination by the Nazis because this had happened to some of their colleagues. So, they asked themselves the question: What do we have to do to protect ourselves and get promotion in this new regime? Together they cooked up a plan. They convinced a pro-Nazi lawyer, Dr Bruno Wille, for whom they had done a favour as policemen, to arrange for their names to appear on a list of people who had, two years previously, been working *secretly* for the Nazis. This was a lie; but it worked and Stangl got speedy promotion. So speedy indeed, that by 1942 he was commandant of the extermination camp of Treblinka, where about 1,000,000 human beings were murdered. Once we deliver ourselves over to a lie we have no notion where it will take us.

‘The Spirit of Gestalt therapy’

The *question* is all important: It determines what becomes of each of us. But then arises another question: what determines the kind of questions I ask? My question is the outcome of the kind of person I have thus far made of myself. Have I made myself into a person who is mean and stingy with his love? Do I need constant insurance against being made a fool of? Or am I the kind of person who loves first and finds out afterwards? Recently we had the annual Conference of the G.P.T.I. The chosen theme was ‘The Spirit of Gestalt’. During the Conference I asked many people: ‘What do you think is the spirit of Gestalt?’ There was very little unanimity. This was taken for granted, everybody was assumed to know what the power and secret of Gestalt is. Except me! I was the discontented one. Well, here is what I came up with: *Love precedes knowledge*. Talk about love is a bit like talk about truth – sounds a bit out of place in a Gestalt gathering.

This, I think, is the spirit and principle that drives Gestalt therapy. And this is inextricably bound up with authenticity. And I recall Robert Romanyshyn’s dictum that our lives unfold according to the dictates of our hearts, not according to our knowledge. It is this pervasive love that informs the *gradient of mounting*

importance in the questions we ask. The way I look at people is itself a question – and the response comes up to meet me according to my look. I may look in such a way as invites my client to say that she is doing well; that I *am a brilliant therapist*; in which case I am asking myself the question: How can I keep myself in the dark about what is going on? Then I remain locked between horizons of my own construction. Nothing new can access me. Like a great ocean-going yacht that never gets launched.

This is where I think Fritz Perls fell short; in not asking himself some important questions like: How does it help me to go on being the hero of my own story? These questions, like everything else in our lives, are given to us at critical points in our lives, which some call the ‘impass’ or the ‘fixed Gestalt’ (Sills et al 1995, pp73-4).

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries, (Julius Caesar, iv.iii.217)

Taking this tide at the flood is an act of self-transcendence, of going beyond myself, of venturing out on what Walt Whitman calls ‘The seas of God’. You can see the importance of the Gestalt principle that love precedes knowledge: If I have to be quite sure of the weather I will never get the boat launched. If parents are to wait until they are quite sure of the perfection of their offspring, the world will become depopulated.

Martin Buber calls it ‘The Existential Test’ (Hodes, 1972 p.42), and consolingly tells us how he failed at very important points in his own life (Buber, 1968 pp.30 and 41).

(Tell the story of Nicolai Berdyaev on the train to captivity in Siberia – refused to give the guards a bad time).

Berdyaev asked himself : Am I going to stay within the comfort and security of my familiar horizons? He was sent to military academy because that was what his father thought was best for him. There he disgraced himself by failing all his exams and laughing at the strutting of the officers on parade. His tutor sadly told Berdyaev's father that his son was intellectually disabled. In secret Berdyaev was studying the writings of Schopenhauer and Kant which really interested him. He was far more interested in talking with the pilgrims in the market place than small talk with visiting 'artistes' over expensive wine in his mother's drawing room. Berdyaev had a secret life.

The Glimpse of Beauty

What is it about this man that will bring me to say of him that he was an authentic person? He seems to me to have glimpsed some beauty that sustained him in his movement towards Truth. It was not religion or his commitment to religious dogma – even though he was a devout member of the Russian Orthodox Church and attended services regularly – he drew the sinister attentions of the church authorities to himself more frequently than was good for his health. His book 'The Creative Act' was speedily denounced as heretical. He was arrested – a rather frequent occurrence in his life – and charged with blasphemy. The sentence of perpetual banishment to Siberia for the second time was not carried out because the First World War intervened – speedily followed by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. He seems to me to follow the truth wheresoever it led him, but always and only when it was *life enhancing*. He would have nothing to do with killing or cruelty or injustice of any kind. This is why they threw him out of the army. Berdyaev's authenticity derives not just from this or that incident in his life; not just from his refusal to take part in a campaign of guard harassment on the long train journey to Siberia, not just from his firm defiance of Dzerzhinsky – the head of the secret police – during the six

weeks he spent in the Lubianka prison; his authenticity comes from the whole course of his life, the very nature of his discourse with the world from a very early age when he was labelled a dunce by his teachers and openly jeered at by his fellow pupils in military college because he refused to adopt the ambient spirit of aggressive militarism. Berdyaev was moving to hidden music, he was in love with a beauty that he had caught sight of and could never forget: and that beauty we call *truth*.

Berdyaev had no interest in truth as conformity, in truth as correctness, but only in what Heidegger calls “truth in the making” (Levin, p39 ft note 38 cites Heidegger 1927 pp51-63). This Heidegger calls ‘aléthia’ (hiddenness), which is what we are after in phenomenology. This, I think, is the beauty that Berdyaev glimpsed.

Summary of argument

Authenticity arises from the claim of truth upon me. Truth is the thing showing itself to me. If the thing does not show itself to me immediately then there is no truth. No truth, no claim, no authenticity.

What Is So? Exposure to the Claim of Truth.

Now let me demonstrate how questions serve to expose me to the claim of truth.

What? Why? How? and What for? Questions which address primarily our intelligence: they clarify and unify our world. They are the first step in transcending ourselves. We move beyond imagination and guesswork, theory and hypothesis to ask whether or not this or that *really is so*. With that question everything changes; because when I ask: ‘Is this really so? I move beyond myself – I move beyond what *seems* to be the case; I am no longer asking what I imagine, no longer asking what I think, no longer asking what I would wish, or what I might feel inclined to say, but WHAT IS SO? (Lonergan, 1975, p104). I

leave my own views aside and put myself under the judgement of the Real. When Berdyaev said ‘No, I shall not join in any persecution of the guards – they are not our enemies but just poor people like us.’ he was responding to the claim of truth upon him. Once I make the judgement *that this or that is so*, I expose myself to the claim of truth and everything is changed. We humbly invite the world itself to speak to us. This is what Husserl is after when he said when he said: ‘*We must return to the things themselves*’. And when Merleau-Ponty comes to define phenomenology he says:

Phenomenology ...a study of the *advent* of being to awareness, instead of presuming its possibility as given in advance (1945/1986, p61).

The word he uses in French translated as ‘advent’ is ‘*l’apparition*’ and this carries in it a sense of profound gratuity: it is used of the sun showing itself, or the Virgin showing herself at Lourdes; it is the opposite of studying the world as collection of things displayed in front of me like items in a shop window. The world discloses itself to me *as presence*, not according to my expectations, or my desires, or my wishes, or my projections but as that which is *other* than me and granted to me. Truth is the disclosure to me of a *PRESENCE*; we can *formulate* this by saying: there is something, and it is given to me.

This is what phenomenology is all about. This is why the training of psychotherapists is so long and laborious: we have to learn to allow the truth to disclose itself to us. We wrongly speak of grasping the truth. The Truth grasps us. And we stand judged by it.

Disgrace in the Ranks

In the late summer of 2002, a Central Intelligence Agency analyst quietly visited the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and entered the detention centre there. It housed there about 600 prisoners, many of them in steel-mesh cages unprotected from the savage sun of those regions. This analyst had been sent to find out what was going wrong there. He had the advantage of a fluent

knowledge of Arabic and a familiarity with the world of Islam. He was held in high respect and was entitled to report directly to the CIA Director himself. He interviewed at least thirty prisoners so as to ascertain how they came to be there. He asked himself the question: What is so? Once he had asked that and left himself open to the reply from the world he was thereafter under the claim of truth. He came back convinced that the U.S Army was committing war crimes in Guantanamo. The report he filed was enormously unpopular with certain very close advisors of the President, notably one very powerful Donald Rumsfeld. Nevertheless, the analyst stood by what he had *seen, heard* and *reported*. (Hersh, 2004). That CIA agent must have been a person of great courage to oppose powerful people like ministers of state and the military; particularly if they are being nice to you. (I recall the fear that I felt when Lady Caroline Cox gave me dishonourable mention in an article as a good example of the way an RE teacher was using his position to propagandize against nuclear weapons). This CIA analyst could have delivered a white-wash. He did not; despite the pressure on him, he permitted himself to be grasped by *the truth*. So, there is a very strong correlation between truth and authenticity.

Why are Gestalt People Shy Around Truth?

Now I am well aware that all this talk about ‘truth’ does not go down well in certain circles. But I don’t think we can talk about authenticity without entering this difficult territory. It seems to me that despite being enshrined in our code of Ethics and Professional Practice, we Gestaltists don’t *do* truth. Only two of the Gestalt manuals that I consulted – Kepner in his *Healing Tasks* and Zinker in his couples therapy book – feature an entry for ‘truth’ in their indices.

The shyness (about truth) is widespread in the Gestalt therapy and, indeed throughout the psychotherapy world-community about truth. Is this symptomatic of a lack of self-confidence in the worth of the project that we are engaged in? Just to be curious I once said to a Gestalt trainee over coffee, “John, do you

think it is possible for you to know the truth about anything?” He looked quite puzzled and a bit confused and took refuge in deflection: “I don’t know” he said. I then said to him: “Is it true or not that I am talking to you just now?” And yes, he could concede that, with some suspicion as to what was coming next, what kind of corner he was being backed into.

The question of truth is extremely important. Unless truth is to me the most important thing then I have crumbly legs; I have only a feeble foundation in the world. I would like to spend a bit of time discussing some of the reasons which appear to me to be behind this shyness. What I would like to address is that little voice in some of you which will have been commenting on that last story I told saying: But that was only his point of view.

A Summary of the Argument

Firstly there is a widespread confusion of *certainty* with *truth*. Secondly, people think that the *perspectival* nature of our perception makes truth impossible and makes one view as good as another. Thirdly, as a follow-on from the last one, people endow their personal experience with inerrancy. They say: There is *my* truth and there is your truth – and both are truth: one truth is as good as another. They don their experience like a set of body armour. And therewith protected, they pull back from exposure to any discussion of their position. Such folk have a way of talking about ‘my truth’ and ‘your truth’, as if truth was a bit of real estate.

Confusing Truth with Certainty

Little Jack Horner’s take on truth was certainty. He had no room for further questions. Once anyone says that we can’t have truth until we have *certainty* then they make truth into some kind of impossible Holy Grail. Truth and certainty are quite different concepts. People connect certainty with scientific

results and mistake this for truth. You hear it on the Radio 4 To-Day programme all the time.

Certainty' said critical Heidegger 'is the modern form of truth' (in Levin 1987, p68). Let me explain this: The world is opaque and full of ambiguity: 'The search for truth is an attempt to pierce the opaqueness of the world, an effort to make our conjectures about the world as accurate as possible. The quest for certainty on the other hand, is an attempt to eliminate the opaqueness of the world altogether and make it entirely transparent' (Dillon, 1979, p10). The reach for apodictic certainty underlies all fundamentalism. It is the basic flaw in the philosophy of the suicide bomber; it was also the flaw in the great project of René Descartes. Your suicide bomber confuses the certainty he has about his experience of outrage with the *belief* he has from his theology. His experience of outrage at injustice is immediate and real; but then it is brought into the factory of reflection and then to a long and complicated process of theological impregnation; the bomber then applies the certainty he has in regard to his outrage to the belief he has in the process and feels that if he dies for this he will enjoy everlasting beatitude. His basic mistake is to say: 'the world is what I *think*'. Whereas Merleau-Ponty will say: 'The world is *not* what I think but what I *live through*' (1945/1986 p.xvi-xvii;Fxii). His reflection is flawed because he omits to ask himself basic questions and because he has lost sight of the humanity which lay behind his outrage in the first place. We cannot split off experience from reflection upon that experience; yet we can not attach to naming our experience the same certainty that we had in regard to having experienced. The CIA analyst listened to the prisoners and the guards and saw what he saw and took enormously seriously the task given him: to report on his experience. His claim was not to a universal infallibility but to faithfully recount his experience and issue a judgement on that basis.

How sure can I be?

The question arises: How sure can I be that what I see is the case? Can I be sure enough to put my career on the line for it? Can I be so sure that I can afford to disagree with more intelligent and better qualified people than me? Notice this; the claim of truth arises not from the certainty but from the *evidence* that is presented to me. We don't have to wait for 100% *certainty*. Evidence is the world showing itself to me. Not an idea of the real; not just an appearance of the real; but the real world itself. Of course I can be mistaken; I can look down the road and mistake a lamp- standard stanchion for a seagull. Yet the only way I can know of a mistake is when I have experience of the real. The criterion of truth is always and ever: evidence. And *this* is 'the thing showing itself to me'. That is precisely what perception is.

Perception is not a vagrant act searching for something to perceive.

Perception is precisely that kind of act in which there can be no question of setting the act itself apart from the end to which it is directed.

Perception and the perceived necessarily have the same existential modality, since perception is inseparable from the consciousness which it has, or rather is, of reaching the thing itself (PhP p374;F429).

Here Merleau Ponty is talking about pre-reflective perception.

It is impossible to de-compose any perception. Perception is like a person. You cannot construct him from parts like a Leggo model. 'It is impossible to break it down into 'a collection of sensations, because in it the whole is prior to the parts – and this whole is not an ideal whole' (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p`15). As soon as we try that, we see immediately it is *no longer* perception. So perception is a simple contact with reality. See what remains of your perception if you withdraw from it the awareness of reaching the thing itself? You pop a sweet in your mouth to relieve your boredom and then you say to yourself: 'I am not tasting the sweet; there is nothing in my mouth.'

When we say that our approach in Gestalt is perspectival, we are embracing the inexhaustible opaqueness of the world and giving up on the quest for apodictic certainty. We are humbly admitting that nothing we can say about a person or an event entirely encompasses that person or that event; this is why we are rightly against labelling people. We withdraw the claim of absolute truth from any proposition.

Flirting with Post-Modernism

Some writers will say: because perception is always perspectival, there can be no question of a claim of truth upon anyone. They dismiss the possibility of our immediately contacting the real. And as I look at the literature I see that this is precisely what has happened. Let me illustrate with words from three very eminent and insightful Gestalt writers.

L. Sapriel (1998) ‘everything is interpreted and this interpretation process does not get us closer to ‘truth’. ‘... whatever be the meaning arrived at, it cannot be concluded that it is a true or “correct” reflection of reality’. She collapses perception into cognition. She does not modify or qualify this first statement.

G. Wheeler (2000) ‘ The world we are aware of seems to come to us *already packaged*’ (p80) The world as it is (Kant) is ultimately unknowable to us ... all we have are our interpretative pictures ... *All we have to work with are constructions of our bodymind*’ (pp86-87). He seems to forget ‘awareness grasps itself as the awareness of a preconscious and pre-reflective life which is its absolute beginning’ (Madison 1981 p154).

A. Robine ‘... with this (post-modern view) comes the conclusion that there is no other reality than that which we construct ...’

Is it possible that the writers above are missing a very vital distinction: my act of perception does not give me truths like geometry but *presences*. As I look out my study window and see the oak tree being walloped by the storm wind from the sea, it makes sense to me but that *sense* is not of the conceptual order. The

conceptual order has to do with what is possible – but this is real - happening now.

Now, I do not for a moment deny the manifest fact that we shape our world according to our needs, desires, losses, hopes, ambitions and so on. Yet these writers seem to forget two things: (i) that, if I do not reach the real immediately in my perception, then, what we call *intersubjectivity* is an illusion – I don't reach you. Recall that my every perception has a built-in dependence on other people. Without the virtual or actual presence of another, nothing will make sense to me. Just as I need yesterday in order to make sense of to-day, so I need your perception in order to make sense of mine. If you are the only one who has seen the virgin on the mountain, then it looks as if your vision is confined to your own head. And the validation of my perception that I receive from you is not a matter of reassurance or analogy or inference, but of the presence in me of the bodily movement of your perception. And that is the foundation of intersubjectivity.

(ii) They forget that I *perceive* far more than I *think*. My perception of you now is not a thought; it is an immediate by one body of another body.

Oh, Look

You don't interpret my gesture. You and I are *immediately* in contact with one another, you don't reason it out, you don't make Desmond Morris - inferences from my body language. Is not this what we practice all the time with our clients? We don't sit there observing them and making notes about them. We respond from our hearts to them.

These writers also seem to forget that I perceive far more than I *think*... (cf PhP.p.62 red nt.bk p7) I am now thinking about all you together now; but what I am actually perceiving is greater than that. That is plain Field Theory, is it not? My perception takes in the weather, the feeling in the room, the tasteful *décor*,

and so on. What I interpret is only a small part of the whole field. It is only what I *think* that I construct. To say with Wheeler that *all we have* is ‘an interpreted world’ is to collapse perception into cognition. When I meet you, I also invent you to some degree, but I meet far more than what I actually *invent* about you. Your presence is not just far more than I can put words on, but *inexhaustible* to my experience. My thoughts are but a little section of our interaction. Every bit of me responds to every bit of you and we call this intersubjectivity. You are an inexhaustible mystery. We swap presences.

The Erosion of Trust in our Experience

I have devoted so much of our time to this question of immediacy in our knowledge because I see it as everywhere undermined. And if pure ability to know the real is questionable, then there is no truth that we can take a stand on, nothing is worth dying for and, ultimately nothing is worth living for. The idea that our experience is untrustworthy is widespread in our culture. I recall hearing John Humphreys on the To-Day programme proclaiming that now we can be sure that the traffic is increasing on our roads. A scientific survey has spoken. Medical studies seek more and more to banish the transcendent world from its investigations. Only those things which can be measured are real they say! (Recall the letter from the top doctors and scientists to trust chief executives. Times May 23rd 2006). So, Dr Edvard tells us that we waste our time and money if we use arnica. Hence error is eliminated but ‘at the expense of that reference to transcendence required for truth’. Is efficacy of a medicine determined merely by the correlation between the chemistry of the drug and the chemistry of the illness? If so then please explain why drugs so frequently fail. Dr Edvard’s position seems to be: that ‘either we know something with scientific certainty, or we relegate it to oblivion.’ Thus,’ says Professor Mike Dillon, ‘the philosopher may speak with absolute assurance, but not about the world’ (Dillon 1997, p.12). There is no immediacy between me and you or between me and the world if all there is between us is *reaction*. A man whose brother is very ill with

kidney disease offers to give him one of his own kidneys so that his brother may have a better life. Is that just reaction or is it self-transcendence. If there is no immediacy then everything is reaction and the whole movement of self-transcendence becomes problematic. Belief in the importance and value of my intervention is undermined. It becomes that descent into the boredom which plagued Antoine Roquentin in Sartre's novel *Nausea*. Even the sunshine lost its magnificence for him: 'I am illuminated within by an impoverishing light' (1965, p.28). In repudiating the fullness of life, Roquentin is repudiating his very existence. The effulgence of life *IS* my life. Because transcendence is not something I *do*; it is my very existence itself.

Merleau-Ponty says this transcendence is definitive of our embodied condition.

The human body is defined in terms of its property of appropriating, in an indefinite series of discontinuous acts, significant cores which transcend and transfigure its natural powers (PhP p193;F226).

Furthermore he says this is not just a *characteristic* of human existence it is what human existence is.

It is the deep-seated momentum of transcendence which is my very being, the simultaneous contact with my own being and with the world's being (PhP p377;F431).

In this sense I can be more or less alive: when the nourishment of reality is taken from me, my being goes limp.

The Self-Transcendent Question 'Is this worth my While?'

A Judgement of Value

If I live in a world where I can rely upon my perception then I can allow myself with confidence to go further and ask not just whether such and such is the case, but whether this or that is *worth while*: not just *apparently* good but really and truly *good*; my questioning then goes beyond questions of comfort or ease,

pleasure and pain, and engage with *value*. Now we enter a different order of things. So now I am leaving self behind and reaching out to goodness and beauty. We are challenged to move beyond national, institutional and personal advantage to the supreme value of *selfless love*. This is worth my while, this is worth devoting my life to, this is worthy of my love; this is worth suffering for. Those of you who are acquainted with the diaries of Etty Hillesum will recognise that this was precisely what happened to her. Her diaries begin with her preoccupation with her own ambitions – her studies, her interest in her therapist, her becoming a writer of distinction. Under the pressure of what Karl Jaspers calls ‘a limit situation’ – in her case the Nazi persecution of the Jews – the protective insulation is ripped off her middle-class life and she begins to value things in a quite different way and make choices. Let me tell you a little bit about her.

The Authenticity of Etty

It was in 1940 that war came to the country of Etty Hillesum; May 10th the very day which saw Neville Chamberlain leave office and Winston Churchill take over; that day thousands of German paratroops dropped from the skies and took control of key installations in Holland while the unstoppable panzers poured over the border and made for Amsterdam. That great convulsion of violence seized the world of a Jewish woman, Etty Hillesum, 26 years of age. She was a student and aspiring writer – a kind of trainee therapist, and a Russian language teacher. Nine months later Etty began her diary which is why we know so much about her. Three years later on the 30th November 1943 she died in Auschwitz.

In Etty Hillesum we have a young woman engaged ‘in *the making of truth*’. As you begin to read this diary you notice that the centre of her interest is not the cataclysmic event of German occupation but *her own interior life* – particularly her growing love for her mentor and therapist – Julius Spier. She speaks of her sense of crippling shame, about a rule-bound life, of her fear of letting go, of

allowing things as she said ‘to pour out of me.’ It is her goal, she declares, to articulate fearlessly her experience despite ‘that tightly wound ball of twine that binds me relentlessly’ and reduces her at times to ‘a miserable frightened creature ...’ The yearnings of love are never very far from her heart and she compares her hope to articulate her experience to ‘the final liberating scream that always sticks bashfully in your throat when you make love’ (ibid). She is taken up with making her *life stand in truth*; so that there is a faithful alignment between what she believes and what she does and at the heart of her intention is the enhancement of human life.

As you progress with the reading you notice three things changing. Firstly, we see her struggle as she questions herself about her love for Julius, whom she never names but always refers to as ‘S’, deepens. Secondly, she questions herself: ‘how am I to be in the face of the crippling and oppressive anti-Jewish laws and regulations’. She and ‘S’ support one another in the face of this terrifying and mounting threat. Thirdly, centre stage in her life, she more and more finds herself claimed by a growing *interiority* which sheds light on everything else. *This interiority is a constant feature of authenticity*. It is altogether different from the arrogant self-assurance of fundamentalists like President Bush (I’m told) President Ahmadinejad and others who see themselves as sacred repositories of the Truth. Socrates carried this interior light in him. He called it his *daimon*. When he was condemned to death on a false charge his loving friends wanted him to escape into exile instead. He consulted his inner light which forbade this. St Augustine also invokes this inner light and gives it a supernatural character (Conf. Bk.x ch,27). I have no desire whatever to appear reductive about these explanations and say: ‘Such an interior sense is nothing but....’ Whereas I agree with Augustine that this inner light is the presence of God, I insist on analysing the phenomenon further.

‘I am given to myself’

Unless you experience this for yourself it is a waste of time.

This interiority which features so much in the diaries of Etty may be seen as Etty’s response to primordial non-conceptual experience. Merleau-Ponty (a Marxist, by the way) speaks of it constantly :‘*I am given to myself*’. This is the most primordial awareness which is founded upon a *pre-reflective* experience of belonging; that global presence of the situation which underlies all further meanings

The central phenomenon at the root, both of my subjectivity and my transcendence towards others, consists in my being given to myself. *I am given*, that is, I find myself already situated and involved in a physical and social world – I am given to myself, which means that this situation is never hidden from me... (PhP p360;F413).

“Never hidden from me” means that ‘I am given to myself’ as present; as the yoke in the egg; as the heart in the organism; in every event of my life. It is, in fact, the very presence of the world to me.

This is not an emotion; it is a felt bodily experience of the value of one’s life. And here, we come again upon that principle which I marked as ‘the spirit of Gestalt’, ‘love precedes knowledge’. Herein lies the mystery of our accepting or not accepting that gift; our existence comes to us gift-wrapped in love. We don’t know what it is and we will never know unless we love it.

A Summary

At a point in her life Marianne Fry was challenged to declare if she wanted to make her career as a psychoanalytic therapist and said ‘NO – that is not good for me’. Berdyaev was challenged – give up this silly interest in the poor and settle into enjoying your status as a Russian Nobleman – and he said ‘that is not good for me’. That nameless CIA agent was pressured to white-wash what he saw in

Guantanamo and he said 'that is not good for me'. In all of these they are delivering themselves over to the claim of truth upon them – with heavy consequences.

This is the Self that is Given

Now Etty not only faced up to the awful reality of Nazi terror but embraced it as being the truth of her life. *Yes, it is so*, she said. And she went further and asked herself: 'Is my suffering and my joining in the fate of my people a worthwhile thing?'

For Etty as for all of us, what she was experiencing was not separate from who she was: This outrageous violation of her humanity by the Nazi terror, precisely because she was Jewish, was the existence that was being given to her. The challenge to her was to transcend this terror through love.

Here is an agonizing paradox: If this gift of myself is to mean anything it must mean that in *living through* it I find also my beauty and my belonging in the human community. And this applies to every situation – to incurable cancer to false accusation, to wrongful dismissal, to being expelled with some public disgrace from the very institute she had founded. It emerges that in her destruction must Etty find her beauty and belonging. On 25th July 1942 at 9:30 a.m., at a time when her heart is darkened by the numbing expectation that the Nazis are going to take her beloved 'S' away to the camps, she sits at her desk and writes '...the rose petals lie scattered among my books. A yellow rose has opened as far as it can and now looks at me large and wide. The two-and-a-half-hours I have left seem to me like a years' seclusion. There is a *vast silence* in me that continues to grow'. That is the glimpse of beauty. Her practical courage in the face of events demonstrate that this vast silence is not some form of dissociation. She went to Nazi headquarters; she spoke back to her interrogator. Furthermore, Etty is constantly questioning herself, turning her face towards the horror ahead. When Etty speaks of sitting in her 'vast silence' she is aware of

being in communion with the love that connects her with the rest of the world. Frequently, though not exclusively, it takes the form of her love for 'S' and her love for God, which seem more and more to be the same thing. This, it seems to me, is the secret source of her power to transform a situation of darkness and persecution into one of light and liberation.

A Different Way

Contrast this with the experience of Roquentin who experiences himself as 'illuminated from within by an impoverished light.'

I have no need to speak in flowery language. I am writing to understand certain circumstances. I must beware of literature. I must let my pen run on, without searching for words. What really disgusts me is having been sublime yesterday evening.....After that the next day, I felt as disgusted as if I had awoken in a bed full of vomit. I don't vomit when I'm drunk, but it would be better if I did. (Sartre, 1965, p85).

For Roquentin life is like waking up in bed of vomit. Vomit in a bed is an obscenity – something utterly out of place; but when you think about it that is precisely what a person who has lost all sense of truth becomes: something out of place. And as I say this I am mindful of some of our clients for whom such loss is their daily experience. And they come to us in hope of something better.

The Claim of Truth Upon Etty

The authenticity of Etty Hillesum meant her recognising the claim of truth upon her and her following it. This claim emerged for her gradually over time; it moved her to gratitude in the midst of terrible deprivation, to love her destiny, the 'Amor fati', to embrace her lot. And she did all this not knowing for sure, if she was on the right path.

My givenness is never hidden from me, says Merleau-Ponty, yet, like everything else about a human being it is not totally disclosed to me. That disclosure

belongs to the actuality of achieving selfhood, gradually, over time. The Existential tests that we spoke about earlier happen within this framework. Etty realizes more and more that she is drawn to 'S' – Much of her suffering comes from her love for him; and at the same time she is aware of a call – through him - to a life of recollection:

When I say I have come to terms with life, I don't mean I have lost hope.I have lived this life a thousand times and I have died a thousand deaths; does it really matter in what form it comes...I sometimes bow my head under the great burden that weighs down on me, but even as I bow my head I feel the need, almost mechanically to fold my hands....somewhere there is something inside me that will never desert me again (p171).

She has glimpsed some beauty that will not abandon her.

The process is a bit like falling in love. There is attraction and movement towards; there is recognition –there is 'response'; there is absolute claim – I realize I do wrong if I block it, I shall never be the same again: (Tomas at the window); it is unique in its quality; the claim is steady, unvarying and is embodied in every event.

Etty is aware of the supreme importance of her *remaining faithful to the course that her life has taken*; to the men she loves; to the pull of recollection; to the mysterious presence about her (p.78). 'Something has happened to me.....it is as if I had been pulled back abruptly to my roots...Last night, cycling through cold, dark Lairesse Straat ...I babbled it out...'God, take me by Your hand I shall follow you dutifully.....I only want to be true to that in me which seeks to fulfil its promise....I know I must seek you amongst people out in the world (p78)

Etty herself becomes more and more aware of this growing interiority which, like a clearing sky after a storm, comes to imbue the whole of her life. Yet it did

not remove her pain or take away the seizures of terror. Even as she lay at night in the barracks that was a transit camp for Auschwitz; this interiority, not dissociation, possessed her and transformed the situation.

‘At night, as I lay in the camp on my plank bed, surrounded by women and girls gently snoring, dreaming aloud, quietly sobbing and tossing and turning, women and girls, who often told me during the day, ‘we don’t want to think, we don’t want to feel, otherwise we are sure to go out of our minds’, I was so filled with an infinite tenderness, and lay awake for hours letting all the many, too many impressions of a much too long day wash over me, and I prayed, ‘Let me be the thinking heart of these barracks. And that is what I want to be again. The thinking heart of a whole concentration camp’.

Etty made her last diary entry, so far as I can make out, – on 13th October 1943 - very ill at the time – she is suffering a lot and yet full of gratitude for her life; ‘...all the friendship and all the people I have known in this past year rise up in overwhelming number and fill me with gratitude.....’ and she prays: ‘Oh God, I am grateful to You for having given me this life’ (p250). Etty sees herself as enormously gifted and the biggest of the gifts is her life – that is her truth. She embraces that truth. And this is what ultimately constitutes authenticity: being married to the truth.

Why Authenticity Matters to us as Psychotherapists

Ultimately, the authenticity which any of us arrive at is both given to us and achieved by us. Whether it matters that I end my life in a murder and suicide like a 7th of July bomber or wear myself out like Mother Theresa working for the poor in Calcutta is hidden from us. That people have a variety of beliefs about that question has nothing to do with the reality of your situation or mine; we are each of us summoned to live through it whatever folk may think or believe. Does it matter ultimately whether like Etty Hillesum, Nicolai Berdyaev, Mother

Teresa of Calcutta, I come to what we call authenticity or not? Each must answer that as best they can for themselves. What we can say and agree upon is that it does matter to our children; it does make a huge difference to those whom we love and educate; it does make a huge difference to the causes that we devote our lives to, like Gestalt therapy. Gestalt distinguishes itself by being in its teaching intolerant of phoniness and inauthenticity. In practice that is not so easy. Sincerity is not enough. To say 'I try to be fair, I try to stand up for what I believe in.' Professions of sincerity and of good intentions need to be supported by *enquiring questions* that deepen my understanding of where I stand and vis-à-vis other people. There is passage in a Jesuit philosopher, Bernard Lonergan, which I keep returning to and which I think has application here. I am not going to quote him exactly but paraphrase what he says which he in turn borrows from Edmund Husserl whose works, as you know, had the honour of being burned by the Nazis – even though they probably neither read nor understood them.

As I sit here and read you this paper, I am professing myself to you as an authentic teacher. But what I am is one thing, and what an authentic teacher is can be something else, and I am unaware of the difference. (Otherwise I wouldn't be standing here.) This unawareness goes unexpressed. Because I have no language to express what I am, I use the language of the tradition I unauthentically appropriate; and thereby I devalue, distort and adulterate that language.

Now, for me or anyone else to do this as an individual is bad enough; but this phenomenon can happen on a massive scale - even within our beloved Gestalt movement. Then the words are repeated but the meaning is gone. So I can talk about dialogue and dialogue is gone; I can talk about openness and openness is missing. The chair is still the chair of Moses but the Scribes and Pharisees have taken it over. The sacred name of Gestalt can be evoked but the ideal can have vanished and been replaced by the conventions of a clique. And the aggregated inauthenticity of individuals becomes the inauthenticity of a tradition. Then

when people come along to learn from us, and take upon themselves the teachings of our tradition, the more they introject that tradition the more inauthentic they become and the more phoniness will be embodied in their work. It is only in these terms that we can explain the contagion of anti-Semitism that infected every little pocket of culture and religion in Europe and that found its full expression in the ovens of Auschwitz.

End of Marianne Fry Memorial Lecture.

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FINIS

Left –Overs

The difficulty is that if the only world I have is the world as I perceive it, then all I have immediate contact with is an *idea of the world*. If the only world I have is the world of my thinking then there is no further court of appeal to decide what is real and what is unreal. Unless I can be sure that I am in immediate and real contact with the world then I see no way forward. I am locked into my own subjectivity and language becomes the temple of reality. And we are back to – There is my truth and there is your truth. We each of us are separate people; we each of us take a different view of the same reality. We are both right! And when we both enjoy the cherry tree in bloom and glance at one another which heightens our enjoyment of sharing we are both deluded. Intersubjectivity goes out the window. Love is total illusion. We are still in different worlds! The arrogant claim to absolute certainty is in fact the denial of that ‘living in truth’ which is the hallmark of authenticity. There are two aspects of this that we need to consider.

One I have come upon among what they call ‘new-age’ people: ‘There is my truth and there is your truth.’ I recall once introducing a workshop on spirituality and I had the temerity to say: ‘Any spirituality which cannot look evil in the face is hardly worth considering. Well I was stridently challenged: There is no such thing as evil ‘one person’s evil is another’s virtue – one person’s terrorist is another’s freedom fighter’. This is another version of ‘my truth/your truth’. It places truth in a preposition rather than in openness to learning. Private truth is as unreal as private language.

The second aspect is this – it is an appeal to personal experience – as if there was any other kind of experience. We have to distinguish here the sense in which an experience – like my dream in which the cat follows me down the stairs as I run away from a violent man who has broken into the house – is infallible: Or phenomenologically I see the cherry tree in blossom and my heart sings with joy and I want to sing and rejoice in it and stand under it, and gaze close up at the beautiful blossoms. Then I say to myself that experience is just an evolutionary throwback to primitive man who rejoiced in the promise of an abundant harvest. (I’ve heard a psychologist seriously say this on a Radio 4 –Today programme). If I ensconce myself in a particular meaning as the truth, then I am entering the domain of inauthenticity because I am in denial of the patent ambiguity of reality. If I am open to the truth then I must be willing to defend my position with reason.

If there is no contact with actuality there can be no intersubjectivity.

So how do we deal with this?

To directly challenge the position stated in [Proposition 1](#), would involve demonstrating that there is a world apart from *my thinking* and I do not think that is possible – from this position: as soon as I take the first step I am, in that step, back where I started out from – my thinking.

. A client comes to me and I gradually realize that I don't want to see him, I don't want to understand him, I want to pretend that I am careful around him and I don't experience that (Schwartz-Salant in Levin (ed.) 1987, p146). I can dimly discern that I am in the process of repeating with him the experience he had with his parents. And it is ever so hard to admit the real situation between us. I stand baffled by and uncomprehending of what is happening.

of truth will not go away; it is of a different order to other claims upon me. It is certainly not being generated by me (it is altogether different from the clamouring of what we used to call my super ego!).

But someone may object – What you call truth is simply a point of view on the world. The nature of our perception is that we can see only one side of a thing at a time and the side that we see is simply a function of our culture. If I am a 27 year old Jewish woman in Amsterdam in 1941 then of course I shall see the German deportations as unjust and violent. And if I am a young Nazi officer then I shall see them differently.

All we have is an interpreted world. There is your truth and there is my truth. One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter. The corollary of this position is a total compromise of truth.

Secondly, there is what is called the principle of autochontous organisation; this was a discovery of the Gestalt psychologists of the 1920's in Berlin. It means that the Gestalt (you) 'organizes itself and generates its own internal coherence; the configuration of parts within the Gestalt contexture, is intrinsic to the sensuous content' (Dillon, p81). When, for instance, I gaze at the structure of an orchid it is apparent to me that I am not imposing that structure upon the flower. It comes to me bearing that structure already. This principle maintains that 'there are intrinsic relations obtaining among the parts of the perceptual whole, that these relations are grounded in phenomena and that they constitute the perceptual significance or fundamental meaning of the perceptual experience' (Dillon, p66).

A lot in me knows that I am not inventing the world. Bumping someone's car in the supermarket car park is not a point of view. This event is presented to me with the reality of myself. '*I am given to myself*' says Merleau-Ponty; he calls this 'the central phenomenon at the root, both of my subjectivity and my transcendence towards others ... I am given to myself, which means that this situation is never hidden from me (PhP p360;F413). I can hide it from myself and then I fall into what Sartre calls 'bad faith'; this way I avoid the psychological and social consequences of personal thought and freedom. Berdyaev could have avoided knowing about and involving himself with the anti-Jewish demonstrations of Hitler's brown shirts in the 1930's – he felt he had to organize a counter demonstration which, for a man who was already worried about his health, was not at all advisable.

And if remove '*truth*' from the domain of rational discourse which is Gestalt therapy, then I remove also the possibility of authenticity which is nothing else but standing in the truth.. After all is not the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty – which I hold is the undergirding philosophy of Gestalt – called 'A philosophy of Ambiguity (deWaelhens)?'

Here again in the person of Etty as in the person of Nicolai Berdyaev we have this active taking up and transformation of their human lives. This is not just a process of thought, but a bodily engagement with a meaning altogether beyond what is warranted by the situation.

This raises a problem does it not? If transcendence is our very being, if there is no way we can escape our taking up situations and transforming them, and if this constitutes *authenticity*, then a common drug-pusher can be said to be as authentic as Etty Hillesum. Well, the difference is in the nature of the transformation which the person brings about. One day a German soldier moved with compassion for the suffering of the Jews gave a bag of carrots and some cauliflower to a friend. Instead of railing in hatred at the German soldier, Etty's

heart went out to him in compassion, as it did also to the young Nazi officer who interrogated her: 'German soldiers suffer as well. There are no frontiers between suffering people and we must pray for them all' she wrote (p.175). Etty's life, like that of Nicolai Berdyev is a life of 'truth in the making', not truth grasped. 'It generates a field of interpretation within which something concealed comes to presence, lets itself be seen'. Always, always, 'truth-in-the-making' as Heidegger calls it, must be judged by the difference it makes: whether it promotes and enhances life'. Sincerity is never a test of truth-in-the-making. There is no one more sincere than a suicide bomber, but his action is not life enhancing.

The Guiding Light:

Nor is the guiding light, the inner conviction, however sublimely experienced a sufficient criterion of authenticity. Berdyaev, Etty and also that icon of authenticity Socrates, all spoke of their following an inner light which constantly alerted them to any departure from the way of truth. This cost Socrates his life.

Insertion???

The claim that a person has been on the mountain and seen God and now knows what's what with special enlightenment, is to be viewed with great suspicion. This is a reach for *certainty* rather than truth.

Certainty – a substitute for truth:

Everyone of us is challenged to ask himself/herself how much we are infected by the modern craving. Indeed, one could say that the 'daimon' or inner light of the authentic person is precisely uncertainty and ambiguity. This is the humble acknowledgement of the truth of our embodied condition – that we do not know for sure. Etty speaks of 'an inner regulation, which warns me every time I take a wrong path, by bringing on a depression' (p213). What she speaks of here is what Gendlin calls 'felt meaning' in her experience, her lived body responding to a situation. But in contrast to this she lives with the uncertainty of what is going to happen to the man she loves, what is her fate and that of her family, what will it be like when they go to Poland.

On 17th April last a 21 year old Palestinian suicide bomber killed 9 people in Israel and injured scores more. The following day a BBC reporter interviewed the mother of this bomber and asked what she thought of what her son had done: 'he has done well' she said. 'The Israelis kill our people, we must kill them'. In other words her argument is based on

hatred and revenge, the logic of which leads to the wholesale destruction of human kind. This is private truth and it is inauthentic because it is in denial of reality.

I want to challenge as inauthentic the reductive opinion that all views are equally important and all have the same right to command attention. Such a position is based upon the presupposition that each person possesses a kind of self-regulating rationality dependent upon individual observation that can detect errors, as a smoke alarm detects a fire, and this ensures that an individual is always in possession of the truth. The test here is no longer whether it promotes life and is self consistent, but a certain feeling in the stomach or diaphragm. This canonizes a certain construct of experience and omits the authenticating dimension of commonality. If I am the only one who sees the alien space-ship then I would be well advised to use whatever wits remain to me to get help rather swiftly with my problem. It is used to justify the views of people who will not tolerate their views being challenged, either because they feel unable to defend those views or, in extremes, these views are socially unacceptable such as racism, paedophilia or religious fundamentalism.

Throughout this paper I have said again and again in different ways that my authenticity depends upon my fidelity, my adherence to the truth, to the state of things as they are; this is the hand that I have been dealt. I am authentic if I take this for what it really is and move to bring it forward through transcendence.

I do not think that any person is exempt from the possibility of saying NO to our humanity as Stangl did. Any of us is open to becoming a merchant of inauthenticity. Our existence, our lived body is *given to us* whether we like it or not. But we are challenged to run with this and through it to become human. We can become truth in the making or to grow in untruth. I do not know what it is to be an authentic person until I live through it. This is what the ancients used to call Amor fati; to love my destiny. This is the daimon of Socrates, the vast silence of Etty. Like parents love their children before they know them; like a man or woman love one another before they properly know one another; like we love the outcome of our enquiry before we know it; like we are open to love our client before we have properly engaged with him/her. Like we love the world and its ways even though it will eventually kill everyone of us.

The Importance of being Authentic

Yet there is one fact we must hold onto in the midst of all the ambiguity. Our Perception itself is immediate and certain and True. When we look at someone we want to see that person, we want to hear them, we want to meet them. (Make insert here from Mallin on percep5tion of others as Gestalten. Intentions. We know others and the world through the intentionality that we discern in our own bodies. Is that just viewpoint? If is not then how can my perception of others be just a point of view? Analyse the process of coming to know another. The Principle of autocchonthous organization –as in Alii p.26 Dillon p.81. Intersubjectivity. Then introduce below.

Of course I can be mistaken and think that Peter is Tom. But I could never come to recognise my mistake unless I could compare my mistaken experience with the genuine thing. What is not ambiguous is the immediacy of my contact with a person. Ambiguity has to do with the meaning we put upon what we actually perceive. To say that experience is fundamentally ambiguous is to say that it's meaning is not inherent or apparent in it, but that it lends itself to multiple understandings, multiple interpretations (Mitchell 1992, p58).

Gross miscarriages of justice – like in the case of Sally Clark – happen when lawyers or juries take interpretations of experience as apodictic evidence. In the documentary on T.V. relating the story of the Frieddlenders in 1988 in the New York village of Newark, accused of hundreds of counts of sodomy with young boys, it was obvious at this distance that the interpretation placed upon the witness of some children – obtained by hypnosis - combined with the current hysteria of those years to deliver a ferocious and probably unjust sentence upon Jesse Friedlander, a boy of nineteen who could not possibly have committed those acts in that time scale.

Our notion of truth has been damaged by the lies told us by our parents, teachers, rulers – all claiming to stand for the truth. But it also indicates a deeper malaise – an inability to trust our

own experience as a source of truth; the heavy reliance upon ‘statistical evidence’ evidence based medicine, the dominance of CBT; our observations are dismissed as hearsay; the dismissal of the march for peace – and the falling back upon statistics. Nihilism. Cf Levin. Show replaces substance. where do we find truth? Return to the things themselves. in other words it is part of our disconnection from our bodies as the infallible evidence of what is true. The necessary and sufficient criteria of truth is always and ever evidence; and evidence is the thing manifesting itself to me. There is here a conundrum: why is it that we do not recognise what is obvious, evident, and before us? Well later on in this address we shall look more closely at this conundrum. The fact is that we have it in us to disregard, not to see what is plainly before us. I once said to a friend of mine who put a misconception on something I did for him: You know, if love jumped up and bit you on the face you still wouldn’t recognise it, would you.

The deeper malaise of disconnection from our lived bodies has a long history and has insinuated itself into every pocket and crevice of our culture. No longer is it your body that decides – yes such a food is good for me, but it must be attested by science, physics and engineers must be called in to validate the swings our children play on. It has even come to pass that people find their confidence in their immediate perception undermined. Nothing is certain unless it has been declared to be so by rigorous scientific investigation. We forget that entirely before any formulated cognitive act our lived body perceives the other person, and indeed it is this perception that makes our cognition possible.

Now the perception of others is anterior to, and the condition of, such observations, the observations do not constitute the perception. A baby of fifteen months opens its mouth if I playfully take one of its fingers between my teeth and pretend to bite it. And yet it has scarcely looked at its face in a glass, and its teeth are not in any case like mine. The fact is that its own mouth and teeth, as it feels them from the inside, are immediately, for it, an apparatus to bite with, and my jaw, as the baby sees it from the outside, is immediately, for it, capable of the same intentions. ‘Biting’ has immediately, for it, an intersubjective significant. It perceives its intentions in its body, and my body with its own, and thereby my intentions in its own body. (PhP p.352)

So there is a way in which I can be confronted with the truth and cannot escape its claim upon me. Socrates is certainly an icon of authenticity. Lets see what happened to him. In 406 BC

Socrates was approached by a group of men who wanted his support in the indictment of 8 military commanders for the failure of a military campaign. Socrates refused and made enemies. So the question is how could he be sure?

If even a tiny splinter of this doubt creeps into psychotherapy it will undermine the client/therapist relationship. This person sitting in front of me; Am I really meeting him or her or are we just playing hide-and-go-seek in a forest of projections.

Of course there are different kinds of truth:

1. There is the truth of the thing itself: the undeniable presence of other. DIY – you find that the shelf just won't fit. Like the unfortunate who put diesel into his petrol driven car. We don't have to know what that other is to be able to acknowledge its presence. It is there – quite independent of our thinking. That poor guy can't just magic the diesel back out of his tank.
2. There is the truth of conformity – between my judgement and the other not me. There is a load of diesel in my petrol tank', I tell the garage man. The judgement expresses my experience. The other is no longer an anonymous something – it has become diesel – in a place where it should not be.
Price in Morrison's is cheaper than in Sainsbury's
My train departs at 18:18! And so on
This kind of judgement is all too fallible – I may be mistaken but I can only recognise it as wrong through comparison with what I know to be right.
This is the domain of lies: knowing something to be the case I can deny, distort, misconstrue it.

Example for Chain of Command

And we can have no idea of where it will take us.

This launches a person upon a trajectory which is called 'bad faith'; this is a stance of sustained dishonesty and pretence replete with false justifications. This is apparent in the interviews which Gitta Sereny conducted with Stangl all those years later, after he was brought back from Brazil where he had fled with his wife and children, while he was awaiting trial at Nuremberg: he throws up a camouflage of straightforwardness and good intentions

and devotion to duty; whereas in fact it is all a scared attempt to evade consequences of his self-deception and the pain of self-reflection. In such a person there is a personal disengagement from the truth that lights up everyday life! Opaqueness, double standards, elective blindness, and a banal facility for lying mark such a person. A person on the trajectory of bad faith may cease to experience what in this paper I call the claim of truth upon him or her.

The Loss of Wonder

The condition of being embodied is a package deal. It can be both delightful and highly unsatisfactory. On the one hand we can talk and laugh and enjoy a whole range of mind blowing experiences which are denied to angels if there be such creatures. On the other hand there is this factor called time which is like the cloth holding our experience and it. Experience passes. Every single thing I do takes time. When I try to cheat time by hurrying I meet with an accident.

I hear use authentic in the sense of being genuine, being what I profess to be; negatively not being false, not hiding behind a façade, being two faced. Put that way it all sounds easy-easy. We all want to be genuine and authentic. No problem.