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No Theory Solution Focused Practices Is a Way of Life: A Further Step to an Ecology of Mind

Nick Drury

nickdrury@knonews.org

ARTICLE

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Psychologist – New Zealand

"My sentences are all supposed to be read slowly" Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 57.

"In philosophy the winner of the race is … the one who gets there last" Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 34.

"In philosophy ….the slow cure is all important" Wittgenstein, 1968, §382.

Introduction

This paper sets out to explore some of Wittgenstein's writings as they pertain to Solution Focused Practices (SFP). One of the conclusions of this paper is that SFP is a philosophy, Wittgenstein's philosophy as a way of life for practitioners, and there is no need for any theory if you understand this. I shall begin by providing a summary of Wittgenstein's philosophy, then move on to look at Freud's influence on Wittgenstein. Each was dissolving problems. We then see the importance of describing family-therapy-as-a-system (rather than just the family-as-a-system); or how to think within a system we are part of, and the wider implications of that. This is an ancient problem. We can no longer stand apart from a system we are part of, and apply an Archimedean lever to it, as our traditional technologies have tried to do, but adopt a new "game" from within. Understanding SFP as a language game, or as a form of life, enables this to emerge. As an aside we see that this leads us into the new science of enactivism. There we find the profound ethics for the practitioner that go with that position.

De Shazer was following what is known as the 'later Wittgenstein' when he claimed that "solution focused brief therapy has no theory" (Korman et al., 2020, p. 2). However, sometimes in learning a new skill "training wheels" are useful, but they must be discarded (not internalised) as the skill is mastered (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). An ethics first philosophy follows if this is done.

The Challenge

Our story begins with Ludwig Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in 1929, after leaving more than a decade earlier with the claim that he had solved all the problems of philosophy. That was with his early work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* which sets out the picture theory of language, the idea that language allows us to picture things. This is the simple idea that we understand a sentence when we know what it pictures. Stated more technically, the logical structure of the picture is isomorphic with the logical structure of the state of affairs which it pictures. The cat is on the mat in both the word-picture and an imagined or possible reality.

However, Wittgenstein was also out to find the limits of what can be thought or said. We had been confusing or mixing up descriptions with explanations, or grammatical reasons with empirical causes, or what is a matter of sense (or nonsense) with what is a matter of truth (or falsity). The first of these pairs is philosophy, the second science. In other words, we had been mixing up philosophical grammar with science. As the propositions of logic can be true or false, but don't picture anything, they are therefore senseless. That is, they don't belong in the world of science. It turns out that this restricts us to only being able to say "the propositions of natural science"(2019, §6.53). However we cannot simply ignore philosophical confusions as any subsequent science will have rocky foundations. Prominent amongst these are self-reference puzzles, (e.g. "this sentence is a lie" – which sets up an infinite regress), which Wittgenstein was

against. This leads to a puzzle that has occupied the best minds in philosophy over the past hundred years. I will set out my understanding of this, but would suggest you read the controversy surrounding "the new Wittgenstein"[1], as this raises the puzzle again (cf. Hutto, 2006; Moyal-Sharrock 2007).

The puzzle is, as the picture theory of language is referring to itself (or self-referencing), it must be senseless (if we are to take Wittgenstein at his word). We cannot get outside language (even by gesturing or whistling, as Wittgenstein once commented to a friend). By setting out a picture theory of language, the *Tractatus*, seems to be attempting to say what cannot be said. (That is, it is attempting to be science, as only "the propositions of natural science" can be said.) It only rescues itself from being declared complete nonsense by claiming that although you can't **say** the propositions of logic (which make up the picture theory), the structure or form of logic **shows** itself when we are using language; when we are making sense to each other.[2] If you've understood this then you can throw away the metaphorical ladder Wittgenstein led us up, to get free from the tangles of logic. ("He must, so to speak, throw away that ladder after he has climbed up it" (2019, §6.54).) Ethics and aesthetics are similar in this way; we can't talk about them but they show themselves to us (more later). He had some trouble getting the work published at first, because no publisher wanted to publish a book in which the most important part can't be said (Monk, 1990, p. 178). Prior to returning to Cambridge Wittgenstein attended some meetings of the Vienna Circle who were trying to develop a philosophy of science based on the *Tractatus*, where he realized they had missed what was of central importance. This appears to have prompted him to return to Cambridge.

Fin de Siècle Vienna

The puzzle which Wittgenstein had resolved with the *Tractatus* was what are truly meaningful questions; "if a question can be put at all, then it can be answered" (2019, §6.5). Many apparently meaningful questions are not; they contain metaphysical assumptions that we can do without. It's helpful to understand Wittgenstein was coming from *fin de siècle* (end of the 19th century) Vienna, where a particular perspective was widespread in art, science, music, and architecture. A new Viennese modernism was emerging requiring honesty and authenticity. In architecture buildings began appearing stripped of all ornamentation. Klimt's art demanded a freedom from historicism and representation, instead it is seen as a pure expression of psychic or emotional states.[3]

An historical account of a shift to the observer's position in science helps make sense of this movement. From the time Aristotelian science was introduced to Europe in the 12th century, scientists adopted the position of God the creator outside the universe. They attempted to put themselves in God's shoes. Most are taught this is the "objective" position. Although early scientists were devout members of churches, gradually God became unnecessary. In the 19th century Pascal replied, on being asked by Napoleon where God was in his deliberations, "I have no need of that hypothesis". Shortly after Nietzsche declared God dead. Also in the 19th century Schopenhauer (1969) introduced Europe to Buddhism, where "God" is immanent rather than transcendent as He is in the Abrahamic religions. So Wittgenstein expresses this position by saying we cannot get outside the universe (or the world, or language). We may be able to become the world, but the old position of standing outside the universe is no longer tenable. Nietzsche and Schopenhauer appear to have been widely read in *fin de siècle* Vienna; but they have been overshadowed by the prominence given to Freud by Western scholars, who was largely ignored by his fellow Viennese at the turn of the century (Luft, 2003).

Freud

Shortly after Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge he explicitly likened his method of doing philosophy to Freud's psychoanalysis, describing himself as "a disciple of Freud" or "a follower of Freud" (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 41). However

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[1] The New Wittgenstein (Crary & Read, 2000) was what a group of scholars called their new reading of the Tractatus which was focused on just what Wittgenstein meant by "nonsense". They contended that if we are to take Wittgenstein at his word we would only have a therapeutic conclusion upon reading the book, and no other philosophical insights. We would be left in silence. Much ink has been spilled and I suggest the reading of Hutto (2006) and Moyal-Sharrock (2007).

[2] And we can see, in a similar way, the structure or form of SF shows itself.

[3] This Viennese modernism was said to be present in Schoenberg's music. He later migrated to the U.S. where he had an influence on his pupil John Cage. John Cage's 4'33" is a piano piece performed in the absence of all deliberate sound. (Complete silence except for the shuffling and coughing of the audience.) I look up SFP as embracing a similar ethos, a form of therapy stripped of all ornamentation.

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he also expressed major misgivings, stating to a friend that "psychoanalysis is a dangerous & a foul practice, & it's done no end of harm &, comparatively, very little good" (Bouveresse, 1995, p. xix). In other words he loved Freud's process but hated Freud's conclusions. Freudian psychoanalysis seeks to remove a patient's neurotic symptoms by revealing to him or her unconscious sexual desires that have not been acceptable to consciousness. (After World War I Freud was more open to the primacy of physical trauma; that is, to causes and not reasons.) But Freud's claims of having "discovered" *the* unconscious; the repository of these deeply held prejudices, was challenged by Wittgenstein. The "idea of an underworld, a secret cellar" (Wittgenstein, 1967, p.25), "sounds like science...[but] new regions of the soul have not been discovered, as his writings suggest" (Wittgenstein, 1979, p. 40). An adjective, "unconscious", has been substantivized, or treated as a noun. Where they shared common ground was in their attitude towards problems. Freud likened the dissolution of problems to riddles: "when the riddle they present is solved and the solution is accepted by the patients these diseases cease to be able to exist" (Freud, 1910, p. 148). Similarly Wittgenstein commented that problems are dissolved "like a lump of sugar in water" (Wittgenstein, 1993, p.183). Also they both saw the main "...obstacle seems once again to be the subjects will" (Freud, 1893, p. 271); "What has to be overcome is not a difficulty of the intellect but of the will" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p.17).

Wittgenstein uses the words "urge", "temptation", "charm", "fascination", and "bewitchment" in various places to describe our unwillingness to part with an analogy that "held us captive" (1958, §115); or what draws us into these metaphysical assumptions. His leitmotif to such temptations and urges that compel us to say it *must* be a certain way is, "Don't think, but look" (1958, §66). Whereas Freud is targeting neurotic symptoms, Wittgenstein is targeting metaphysics. (Examples to follow.) However his main critique of Freud, a critique that could be leveled at many psychotherapies today, is his confusion of reasons with causes. Causal claims are hypotheses or conjectures that are confirmed (or not) by agreed empirical experiments, whereas reasons are usually recognizable by the person as the actual reason for the action. Although causes are sometimes hidden and have to be searched for, reasons generally aren't. One example of the confusion continuing today is In cognitive behavior therapy, emotional disturbances are postulated to be caused by dysfunctional beliefs; and although that is sometimes helpful, Wittgenstein would claim that "dysfunctional beliefs" is just further reasons (or a different way of describing emotional disturbance). The language of causes involves experiments and the language of reasons involves agreement (Heaton, 2010).[4]

Freud also held a Hobbesian view of human nature; that our natural instincts were those of savage brutes. Without constant suppression our brutish instincts threatened to break through and disrupt society. By contrast Wittgenstein invites us to see the potential in human nature, and once revealed it offers us harmony. Wittgenstein was attracted to Goethean science, particularly his study of colors, and wrote on color in a similar way. This is more a "romantic science", that doesn't seek to isolate causes but rather aims to describe nature, finding similar or comparative forms (Beale, 2017; Seamon & Zajonc, 1998). As such it looks upon the claim that a theory is required as a superstition (called "scientism"), for you can learn much about nature via a living embodied engagement with it, for our spontaneous responsive movement provides a tacit knowledge of it (Shotter, 2012). This Goethean science thus trusts our human nature or natural instincts, and seeks harmony. It must be mentioned that although Wittgenstein invited us to see the potential of human nature, he was most pessimistic about Western civilization; and this scientism was an expression of the West's degeneration. But he also remarked that "[p}erhaps in a hundred years people will want what I am writing" (Drury, 1981, p. 94).

Through the Looking Glass

Turning now to SFP let me begin by expanding on the point made by Korman et al. (2020) of "the importance of the shift from describing the family-as-a-system to describing family-therapy-as-a-system cannot be overemphasized" (p. 52). SFBT or de Shazer weren't alone in this endeavor, as reviews of this period (late 1970s to mid 1990s) make clear (e.g., Thomas, 2013). There were many in the field of systems approaches to family therapy that were wrestling with challenges to "our" epistemology (how we can be certain of our knowledge). About a decade earlier Margaret Mead and Heinz von Foerster had introduced second-order cybernetics or "cybernetics of cybernetics". For the uninitiated this is

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[4] Wittgenstein ends *Philosophical Investigations* by noting that the barrenness of psychology is not due to it being a young science like physics was in its beginnings, as William James had suggested, but due to conceptual confusions. "The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us, though the problems and the method pass each other by" (Sec. II, p.232).

the conundrum of just how we think about (or in) a system of which we are part of. This was important not just to SFBT; for example it led to autopoiesis (mind is central to life) and the writings of Francisco Varela in biology. Bradford Keeney, a prominent family therapist, after writing a couple of books on this, "dropped out" to explore shamanism cross-culturally. One of the most popular and influential papers of the era in psychotherapy was Anderson and Goolishian's (1992) paper on "not knowing". This is the art of being with the client and jointly cultivating a new shared reality, without imposing your reality. The spirit of second-order cybernetics is captured in this quote from Milton H. Erickson (even though he probably never formally knew of second-order cybernetics): "My learning over the years was that I tried to direct the patient too much. It took a long time [to learn] to let things develop and make use of things as they develop... You let the subject grow" (quoted in Ray & Keeney, 2018, p. x).

The reader will recognize the problem that second-order cybernetics faced was a similar, if not the same, problem that Wittgenstein faced when he first arrived at Cambridge, and claimed later that he'd solved with the *Tractatus*. We have seen that he'd come from *fin de siècle Vienna*, which due largely to Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, were tackling an immanent universe with no longer a transcendent god-like position from which to view it from. "[T]here is no talking of 'reality' or our relation to it from a privileged or detached standpoint" (Hutto, 2006, p. 114). At Cambridge Bertrand Russell, a proponent of transcendence, was attempting to embrace the foundations of logic and mathematics by casting a "meta-net", which he called the theory of logical types, which he thought we could (eventually) capture the universe in. But Wittgenstein was having none of it; he could see that all this talk of "aboutness" (or the use of "meta") was just another attempt to move to a transcendent god-like position. Many people mistakenly embraced Russell's theory of logical types, including Gregory Bateson. It turns out that the problem of how to reason in an immanent universe is very ancient, especially in theology.

Both the Mahāyāna Buddhists (the Northern school which made its way to Japanese Zen via China) and a version of Christianity known as "apophatic theology", which is found today in the Eastern Orthodoxy, embrace this conundrum. Apophatic theology is also known as the negative approach to "God"; by embracing "not knowing" the "soul" or consciousness becomes one with "God". This is Wittgenstein's becoming one with the universe (or "world" as he says in the *Tractatus*), or more modestly an SF practitioner becoming one with the client. (The second-order cybernetic position.) In SFP the client is also invited into the "not knowing" with the miracle question; for ..."it happens while you are asleep". Theologically apophatica traces back to the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, a 5th century (possibly) Syrian monk, who wrote, amongst other things, the celestial hierarchy. Even earlier is the Mahāyāna philosopher Nāgārjuna, who wrote, presumably in the 3rd century, the foundational text of the Mādhyamaka school of Buddhism which stressed "emptiness" (i. e., the "not knowing" of Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). A third source for passing through the looking glass of "not knowing" is Spencer-Brown's *Laws of Form* (1969), which Bradford Keeney wrote enthusiastically about (but unfortunately mixed in Russell/Bateson's logical typing). All three describe/prescribe the emergence of any new form, such as when a client and an SF practitioner finds a new way of being for the client. Pseudo-Dionysius' "celestial hierarchy" pictures the emergence of the new way of being; each layer out from "heaven" the "angels" become more solid and less abstract. Escher's 1942 lithograph "Verbum" illustrates this. I won't say more here on this, other than indicate it may be a rich source for describing the creation of a new form of life in SFP.

With the development of *The New Wittgenstein* (Crary & Read, 2000), sometimes called the 'resolute interpretation', a number of papers and books have been published on Wittgenstein's apophaticism (e.g., Fronda, 2010; Mitralexis, 2015; Vörös & Štrajn, 2019). As we've seen Wittgenstein wants to do away with much philosophy[5], and just be left with the propositions of natural science.[6] Just as the architecture of fin de siècle Vienna was without ornamentation, so too science can be cleansed of metaphysics. Metaphysics had been used as an explanatory aid in science, and if we follow Wittgenstein's instruction to "Don't think, but look!" (1958, §66), many of these fall away. We can see this as a naturally occurring phenomena in the history of science. For example, Einstein showed us that we could get by without the medium of ether that light supposedly moved through. Also at one time we thought that the sun and the planets movements were due to "crystalline spheres"; this lasted from the Greeks to Newton, when we discovered we could understand their movement without them. Same too for Noachian deluge to explain "catastrophist" geology, phlogiston in chemistry, and vitalism in biology, to name a few.

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[5] The "resolute school" wants to do away with *all* philosophy.

[6] This has pretty much come to pass these days, in a not so good way. What philosophy still exists shows itself as contradictions, hidden metaphysics, and assumptions that cry out for clarification.

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Metaphysics had arisen because we dug down to the axioms (the certainties) that our science or mathematics was built on. Wittgenstein coined the term "hinge certainties" to cover those absolute certainties we have in life, such as "this is my hand", or "human beings have bodies", or "earth existed long before my birth". He was countering Cartesian skepticism, which began by doubting everything. He called these "hinge certainties" because arguments turn, like doors do, on the basis of their certainty. Besides, anyone doubting them would have their sanity questioned. However, "no man has ever walked on the moon" was a hinge certainty when Wittgenstein was writing, but now the opposite is. Even in the history of experimental science we see propositions first offered tentatively as hypotheses, then theories, then as time passes we accept them as hinge certainties. "What a Copernicus or a Darwin really achieved was not the discovery of a new true theory but a fertile point of view" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 18). In this sense de Shazer is right in proclaiming that SFBT has no theory, and we shall see why it is a "fertile point of view". Hinge certainties, we shall see, turn out to be a matter of "know how" rather than "know that".

Language Games, SFP, and The Primacy of "Know How"

When we discussed the *Laws of Form*, the work of the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and Nāgārjuna, you will have noticed all three were reported as "described/prescribed". That is because all of these works mix descriptions and prescriptions. Much of mathematics and science consists of prescriptions, e.g., "drop a perpendicular", "look down a microscope", etc., before scientists and mathematicians describe what their experiences were as a result of following these prescriptions. We realize a piece of music by illustrating, with a musical instrument, the composer's commands. When Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge in 1929, it was with the realization that he (and almost everyone else since Augustine) had been limited by trying to fit everything into descriptive language or an ideal language. Hence his comments about "grave mistakes ... in that first book" (1958, p. x). As an example, J. L. Austin (1962) pointed out that the statement "I declare you man and wife" is an instance of a speech act that performs (and doesn't describe). Wittgenstein came to see that we can do much more than represent facts or model possible states of affairs when we use language.[7] The assumption that all language shares as a uniform function, the representation of facts, was a mistake (Hutto, 2004). A mistake that runs very deep in Western culture (Shotter, 2000). Wittgenstein was to offer a new understanding of how language works.

Language or speech makes sense not because of some sort of underlying logic (the logical form, or the manipulation of representations), but because we get drawn into an activity with the speaker. Wittgenstein coined the term "language-*game*" "...to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or a form of life" (1958, §23). From the time we are children we learn these skilled activities, not logic, in order to understand each other. Each "contains" a grammar, not a logic; and just as you can play games with no rules or fast changing rules (say throwing a ball around with friends) you can also play language games without fixed rules. Wittgenstein is famous for proposing that words don't get their meaning from what they stand for, but how they are used in language games.

SFP is a way of changing a form of life. So when Dan Hutto, a Wittgensteinian scholar and the foremost radical enactivist, heard Chris Iveson reading a SFBT case transcript, he exclaimed after the miracle question was explored, "this is philosophy translated into action" (Iveson, 2013). This is because SFP is a method of changing language games. Whereas most other therapies attempt to analyze the logical form of the client's utterances, albeit in their own school's unique and varied ways, SFP nurtures into existence a new language game. Other therapies search for an underlying theory; but as "nothing is hidden" for de Shazer or Wittgenstein (de Shazer, 1991, p. 73; Wittgenstein, 1958, §435), there is no need for an underlying unifying theory that explains everything (or in order to do therapy, or to support each other in living our lives well). "What is hidden is of no interest to us" (Wittgenstein, 1958, § 126). The Cartesian-minded have generated hundreds of different underlying theories to analyze problems with, and then leverage clients (Freudian, CBT, TA, etc.,), when all that's necessary is for the client to find a new form of life (Shotter, 2015). And a new form of life that may have no logical form (or grammar) similar to that of the problem language game.

Strong-willed Cartesians are apt to argue that all Wittgenstein has done is replace the notion of an underlying logical form with the notion of an underlying grammar (and 'grammar' used in an idiosyncratic way). However Wittgenstein points out you can imagine someone learning a highly rule-bound language game such as chess "without ever learning

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[7] When you view the duck/rabbit your focal point shifts from the tip of the ears (beak) to the nose (back of the head). Laws of Form is a shifting (prescribing) and naming (describing) calculus.

or formulating rules. He might have learnt quite simple board games first, by watching, and have progressed to more and more complicated ones" (1958, §31). The grammar or the rules are not separate and underlying the game (as they are with regards to logical form), but just a quicker way of describing the game. "Stay on the surface" (Wittgenstein/de Shazer). Talking of chess, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1984) had a chess grandmaster defeating skilled opponents in a five-seconds-a-move game whilst simultaneously adding numbers delivered at the rate of one a second. Once a skill is mastered, it becomes purely "know how", and the "know that" rules (or "training wheels") can be discarded.

The rules or grammar of our forms of life are the agreements we have made with each other, which are somewhat arbitrary and unsystematic, based largely on traditions or customs, but in plain view. By contrast the way of theory seeks to reveal a hidden ordering ideal, which, it is implied, once known we can be more certain of our judgements. The Theory of Mind (ToM) is an example of the way of theory: it proposes that we socially navigate via everyone having formulated a ToM, and claims that people attracting an autistic diagnosis either haven't developed one or theirs is inadequately formulated. Wittgensteinian scholars say this is nonsense (Leudar & Costall, 2009), for we see people's greed and generosity etc., immediately and directly in the ways they carry out their actions, and without reference to a ToM. Even our pets and small infants, who aren't capable of developing a ToM, can tell if Aunt Mary is having a bad day. Another example of how the way of theory entraps us: the theory that light required a medium, called the ether, to travel through stemmed from the observation that a bell in a vacuum, when struck, makes no sound. Einstein allowed us to get outside that picture "which held us captive", a picture that we were trying to extend. "Don't think, but look" (Wittgenstein, 1958, §66). The way of theory can also have pernicious effects because the interdependencies at work in any complex "ecosystem" like psychotherapy defy schematic description; too much emphasis can be placed on one causal factor and others may be omitted (Shotter, 2000; 2015). We will see that there are new philosophies of social science and therapies that are embracing the no-theory "method" (staying on the surface) a little later.

Radical Enactivism

Wittgenstein's philosophy has led to exciting developments in the social sciences that we will briefly explore next. Perhaps the most inspiring is radical enactivism, which Hutto (2012) once described as "far from being the barbarians at the gates [of cognitive science] … now occupies the cafes and wine bars" (p. 228). Whereas Descartes begins his philosophy by doubting everything until he discovers that thinking and the idealizations of geometry (e.g., the angles of a triangle equal 180°) are his only certainties, and then building a science from that, Wittgenstein urges us to find the "hinge certainties" before embarking on a scientific endeavor. Because of Descartes skepticism we have been taken over by "scientism", the idea that unless we find a scientific explanation for everything we should doubt it. But Wittgenstein starts with a huge number of certainties. So Wittgenstein's philosophy uncovers a whole lot of psychology ("that everyone would agree to" (1958, §128)), so much so that Starks (2019) considers him "our greatest natural psychologist"(p.38) even though most psychologists haven't read him, and don't acknowledge him with "their" insights and discoveries. Radical enactivists (Hutto, 2013; Moyal-Sharrock, 2016) acknowledge Wittgenstein as a father of enactivism; although as Boncompagni (2013) points out Wittgenstein wouldn't be a scientist of any kind, because he remains a philosopher. However he does provide a framework for cognitive science, and clarifies a couple of important problems that enactivism has struggled with.[8]

A key insight for understanding radical enactivism is to see the difference between the "fast thinking" processes of intuition compared with the "slow thinking" processes of representational (or social) thinking (Drury & Tudor, 2023). Humans have two systems of cognition: a primary system which is the same as other animals, in that it is largely intuitively driven, which Jonathan Haidt (2006) calls the elephant; and a secondary system, which has more recently evolved, which is language driven, which Haidt calls the jockey. Once we have mastered a skill, as the Dreyfus demonstration (with the chess grandmaster) described above illustrates, the jockey can daydream, as many of us do when driving. If the jockey starts taking too much notice of explicit rules, that may have been acquired when we learned

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[8] One of which is the so-called "hard problem" of consciousness, or how the brain appears to generate experience. See Boncompagni (2013) or Kirchhoff & Hutto (2016).

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the skill or a result of too many causal accounts (or theories) generated by Cartesian science, we are at risk of choking (Hutto & Sánchez-García, 2015). We say the person over-intellectualized it.[9]

Radical enactivism is one of the new "E" approaches to cognition, and as a family they are sometimes referred to as the 4E approach; although there are marked divergences amongst them (Newen et al., 2018). The basic and common idea of all schools of enactivism is that sensation and movement are inseparable. So one of the E's (in 4E) stands for extended or extensive. This was well illustrated by Bateson (1972) in a thought experiment where he imagined he was a blind man, and asked where his mental system is bounded. "The handle of the stick? ...my skin? ...halfway up the stick? ...the tip of the stick?" (p. 459). Of course the question is nonsense as our attention, in situations like this, is flowing around a circuit. A circuit that includes the tapping of the stick, one's hearing, and the street. When we sit down for lunch a different circuit comes into play, or is *enacted*. Noë (2009) uses the fact that all animals with nervous systems have developed more motor nerves going to the senses than sensory ones coming from them to illustrate the blind man analogy. Thus we are circuits of activity that include the environs; we are undivided holes. This is particularly difficult for people growing up in Western cultures to get a feel for, as they have grown up in a culture that stresses what Alan Watts referred to as the "bag of skin" boundary (Watts, 1989). This is partially driven by property and individual rights. Because of this Western people are seen as "weird" in the eyes of many indigenous people (Henrich, 2020); and it accounts for our science and technology living off nature (instead of with nature) from a Southern perspective (Connell, 2007).

This idea is further developed by enactivists turning to von Uexküll's (2010) notion of an *umwelt* (the world as experienced). All creatures are only sensitive to those features of the environment that hold significance for them. The cattle tic waits on a high branch (often for several months) anticipating the odor given off by cattle (butyric acid), then drops in that direction. The bacterium sense a concentration in sucrose and immediately moves towards it. Responding to signs, cognition, is basic to all forms of life. Signs that resemble their targets are the most basic, and symbolic signs such as words or alarm signals (that have no resemblance to their target) were the last to evolve. The intuitive system, which characterizes all creatures, does not always make the best decisions, but they are fast and economical that are usually good enough within their *umwelt*. SFP is for when it's not good enough. The old idea that the function of perception was to get a clear picture of the world gives way to the idea that perceiving is a "know how" skill to maintain attunement with a world (a world that is salient to a form of life) (Noë, 2009). "Change-blindness" demonstrations illustrate what's missed if one has too narrow an *umwelt* (Simons & Chabris, 1999).[10]

Furthering this theme enactivist encourage us to consider that our fast animal intuitive minds are responding to sensations, not perceptions. When we first encounter the duck-rabbit we see it only one way, say as a rabbit. It's only later that we notice it can also be seen as a duck. At that point our sensation (of it as a rabbit) becomes a perception (which we tend to comment on); and now we have a choice between two perceptions. In other words perceptions are interpreted sensations (Wittgenstein, 1958); or a difference of fast and slow thinking. Similarly, enactivists stress the difference between intentions (with a "t") and intentions (with an "s"). An intention (with an "s") is the representation of the intention (with a "t"). Intentions are your reasons. It's highly doubtful that animals and toddlers have intentions, although they clearly have intentions. More obviously, the bacterium swimming towards the sucrose has an intention without an intention. The catch-phrase of Hutto's enactivism is that cognition is mostly without content (Hutto & Myin, 2013), and that's because it is mostly animal-like.

Intersubjectivity

Wittgenstein also saw a number of hinge certainties in regard to intersubjectivity and the genesis of morality. As you may have figured out, the rational riders are relatively powerless if the intuitive "elephant" wants to go somewhere; the elephant's intuitions, which are not always accurate, are shaped by life, culture and evolution. (Recall Wittgenstein's and Freud's agreement about the "will".) The "elephant" contains older aspects of the self, far older than any shallow image one may create on social media. The "elephant" evolved to have direct (intuitive) access to the minds of others in

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[9] Perhaps a more "fitting" metaphor for these two systems, which gets at their (poetic) integration, would be the *direhorse* and rider from Cameron's (2009) movie *Avator*, as there is an emphasis on two-way attunement. The elephant or direhorse can be seen embodying "know how" whist the rider or jockey is seen as utilising "know that" knowledge; however I suspect the rider is capable of being more "know how" when she embraces a poetic style.

[10] The most famous change-blindness demonstration has participants counting the number of times a group of people pass basketballs, and most fail to notice a person in a gorilla suit walk into the middle of the scene (Simons & Chabris, 1999).

humans, and is thus a "relational elephant" (or self). The human "elephant" is a "mind-reader". Ciaunica (2014) argues that it is due to impairments in this relational self that autism occurs. She further contends that the ontogenetic development of our relational self begins in the womb; our sociality precedes our empathy (Ciaunica, 2017). From 22 weeks onwards there is evidence of reciprocity in the maternal-foetal relationship.

Wittgenstein made a number of remarks about this "mind-reading" abilities, contra Descartes, which he summarized in the following aphorism:

> "I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking." It is correct to say "I know what you are thinking", and wrong to say "I know what I am thinking" (A whole cloud of philosophy condenses into a drop of grammar; 1958, p.222e).

Unpacking this, he begins by pointing out that it doesn't really make sense, in this context, to use the word "know" of ourselves. (We'll later explore where it does.) "It can't be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I *know* I am in pain. What is it supposed to mean – except perhaps that I *am* in pain?" (1958, §246). Then there are characteristic expressions of pain, fear, joy, etc., and "...other people very often know if I'm in pain" (1958, §246). So the aphorism makes sense because I express what I'm thinking/feeling, which you can see; and I can see the natural expressions of your thinking/feeling. When Wittgenstein was challenged by a Cartesian as to what he is seeing in interpersonal encounters: "But if you are *certain*, isn't it that you are shutting your eyes in the face of doubt?" They've been shut." (1958, p.224e). In other words, if a Cartesian said to Wittgenstein they could be feigning pain, aren't you shutting your eyes to that?; Wittgenstein's reply indicates that he prefers to trust people and his intuitions first; rather than take the stance of the Cartesians who are taking their doubts to interpersonal relationships.

Perhaps you are thinking Wittgenstein was a little naïve in being so trusting. But it is difficult to understand others, without adding the further handicap of mistrust (as the Cartesians do). However the opposite position (exemplified by behaviorism), which claims that if you observe the expressions of others, they will be transparent to you, is not always correct. "Even if someone were to express everything that is 'within him', we wouldn't necessarily understand him" (1982, §191). "He is incomprehensible to me means that I cannot relate to him as to others" (1982, §198). Late in life he wrote to a friend and said how difficult it was for people to understand each other; "... if some people looked like elephants and others like cats, or fish, one wouldn't expect them to understand each other" (in McGuinness, 2012, p.450). So unlike the Cartesians Wittgenstein is saying other minds are not inaccessible to us; but unlike the behaviorists, he doesn't believe that others are completely accessible either. "One human being can be a complete enigma to another" (1958, p. 223e). Is there an escape from this dilemma for therapists and others working in SF practices?

Ethics First

The problem we were having came about as a result of putting ontology (what a thing is) first. Ever since the advent of psychiatry (or Cartesian science) we had wanted to *know* the other. Wittgenstein joins hands with Emmanuel Lévinas here, by dethroning ontology and putting ethics first (Overgaard, 2007). Wittgenstein stressed, especially in comments about the *Tractatus*, that the most important part was ethics; and Lévinas (1998) claims that the reduction of the other to the same (e.g. a diagnosis) in order to understand her/him, is an act of violence. SFP eschews diagnoses, and can be looked upon, not as an ontological language game (as most therapies are), but as an ethical language game. Along with Seikkula's *Open Dialogue* (OD), which facilitates the recovery of primary intersubjectivity within social networks (which has been particularly effective with psychosis), which Seikkula refers to as "a way of life" (2011, p. 185), SFP can also be regarded as prescribing a "way of life" (or, we might, following Wittgenstein, say a "form of life"). The University of Jyväskylä in Finland is conducting research on treating trauma, marital difficulties, and various other problems using OD (Seikkula et al., 2015). Similarly, the European Brief Therapy Association is continuing Alasdair Macdonald's work by collecting a vast expanse of research showing that SFP, as a form of life, is applicable to diverse people experiencing a diversity of problems (EBTA, 2022).

To understand what I mean by "ethics" let me illustrate by example. In my work as a family therapist I would often ask seven year olds, in front of their parents, what they would do, if when walking home from school on their own one day, wanting to get home in a hurry on account of wanting to go to the bathroom quite urgently, they encountered a three year old, on her own, who had fallen off her tricycle and was lying in the middle of the road with a bloody knee.

I never met a young child who didn't recognise the ethical obligation that we all have to others; they all answered the scenario most appropriately. We would then explore their and others (including the parents) relational responsibilities, especially the question of whether the parents allowed their children to look after them at times in an age appropriate way. (I found in families that didn't and care only flowed down, subsequently had difficult teenage years.) This is Father Zossima's ethic that both Wittgenstein and Lévinas were drawn to: ""everyone of us is responsible for everyone else in every way, and I most of all" (Dostoevsky, 1958, p. 339).

Schopenhauer (1969), who we saw was an influence on *fin de siècle* Vienna and Wittgenstein, wrote that if a man (sic) "no longer makes the egoistical distinction between himself and the person of others, but takes as much interest in the suffering of other individuals as he does his own, ...then it follows ...[he] ... takes upon himself the pain of the whole world" (1969, p. 378-379). Boothroyd (2019) extends this relational self as having obligations not only to each other, but also the environment. Each one of these is *showing* rather than *saying* what is going on when acting relationally. Wittgenstein once said "I have a soul more naked than most people; that is, as it were, what my genius consists in" (Backström, 2013, p.24). He doesn't believe he has a soul, as this passage reveals: "My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul" (1958, p. 178). He is referring to his "soul" as his relational self, and in this passage, he is saying that is unencumbered with much in the way of a fabricated self. Wittgenstein's contribution to enactivism is to dissolve any gaps between perception and action (Boncampagni, 2013). But sometimes it is difficult to be completely for the other (Mkhwanazi, 2013). Despite embracing an ethic that says clients are making (or have made) the best decisions they can, an attitude that fosters compassion, some SF practitioners say it is difficult to forgive some. At such times we must thank those clients for identifying work I need to do on myself.

A Relational Self

A Cartesian legacy which so pervades Western culture that most people do not recognise it as a problem, is the "individuated substantive self", which Wittgenstein had an "enduring hostility to" (Sluga, 1996, p. 323). It undoubtedly is a major contributor to the ecological crisis and wealth disparity (Henrich, 2020; Klein, 2014). We begin our dissolution by noting that Wittgenstein noted that we use the word "I" in two distinct ways, or in two different language games (Sluga, 1996). We use it as an *object* when we say "I've put on five kilos this winter"; and we use it as a *subject* when we express our mental states, as in "I think you're cute" or famously "I think". When we use "I" as subject no object is referred to. Descartes error was in not recognising that the subjective use and the objective use of "I" belong to different language games.

As this is difficult for most people who have grown up in a Cartesian culture to get their heads around this idea that "no object is referred to". It is helpful to go over Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism in the *Tractatus* (§5.6 ff). (Solipsism is the philosophy that only I exist, and everything that I am experiencing is a product of my own mind.) He pointed out that the subject isn't in the world, just as the eye isn't in the world I'm seeing. (I can't see my eye except in a mirror, and then it's only a reflection.) So he wrote, "what solipsism means, is quite correct, only it cannot be said, but it shows itself" (§5.62). (If it could be said, who would you be saying it to?). The subjective use of "I" is similar to the "it" in "it is raining". It refers to the context. Or the eye (I) isn't in the world, there is just the visual field. (We are back describing an imminent world again.) Many Westerners locate the "I" as "somewhere behind the eyes and between the ears" (Watts, 1989, p.54). But when freed from the compulsion to be constantly monitoring themselves or objectifying themselves they begin to experience a more integrated bodymind that is centered in their body (Ilundáin-Agurruza, 2017).

The compulsion to be constantly monitoring oneself is fuelled by what Foucault (1977) called "panopticism", which has increasingly become the mechanism of governance in Western cultures. Jeremy Bentham (circa 1800) had designed a prison where the guards could see into the cells, but the prisoners couldn't see the guards looking; and so the prisoners started monitoring themselves, knowing what behaviors the guards looked for. Foucault argued that panopticism has become a metaphor for an ever increasing disciplinary society, that comes with various forms of surveillance, over the past 200 years. It leads to the "fabrication" of selves, and it has intensified under neoliberalism over the past 40 years (Rabinow & Rose, 2006). Now if "you multiply enterprises [as neoliberalism urges], you multiply frictions, ...and you inevitably multiply judges" [to regulate frictions] (Foucault, 2008, p. 175). Thus, neoliberalism generates a "nanny state". Twenge (2017) details the consequences of this obsession with safety are for children born after 1995. One consequence is they are growing up with far less unsupervised time, and are reaching

the "leaving home" stage immature, with demands for "coddling" lasting well into adulthood (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). This in turn increases their exposure to mental health terms, which has what Hacking (1995) calls a "looping effect" on this population. This is the self-fulfilling prophecy of these labels, which drives them into like-minded groups. With all this objectification of self we have largely lost sight of Wittgenstein's subjective sense of "I" (and with it the relational self).

As an aside, and is helpful to our analysis, I think that Wittgenstein would have approved of Trigant Burrow's take on psychoanalysis (Drury & Tudor, 2022). Burrow (1949), an American contemporary of Freud, claimed it made more sense to regard mother as the "love subject" of the infant, and not the "love object" as Freud claimed. Both were in agreement that the child is one with the mother, or has "oceanic consciousness" at birth. Where they differ is that Freud saw us as frustrated narcissists objectifying the mother when we can't access the breast; Burrow saw us remaining in radical communion and harmony with not only the mother, but also each other, despite frustrations at times. From this sense of unity we gradually objectify ourselves, argued Burrow, especially after language develops; but we retain an intuitive sense of our sociality. However, this is all too frequently lost sight of. For his troubles Burrow was ex-communicated from the psychoanalytic fraternity. Without any acknowledgment of Burrow, a similar idea has arisen with the triune brain (Maclean, 1973), the social brain (Siegel, 1999), the social engagement system (Porges, 2009), or the collective brain (Henrich, 2016). We also find it in the "Great Mother" of some religious traditions; and the idea amongst numerous indigenous societies that "I" comes from "we" (e.g., "*ubuntu*"). This subjective self is called the "relational self" by the enactivists, and it is to be contrasted with the "fabricated self" which has "no ontological status" (Butler, 1990, p. 185). However the fabricated self is occluding the light of the relational self today.

Conclusion

The way of theory, or the obsession with finding theories to describe SFP, furthers the Cartesian legacy to find levers to manipulate the world with. By way of contrast, seeing SFP as an "applied philosophy" facilitates the development of the relational self. This would be a further step to an ecology of mind. This paper has set out to show that SFP is Wittgenstein's philosophy translated into action. Shed of all theory SFP allows us as practitioners to embrace Wittgenstein (and Lévinas) ethic and way of life as relational selves.

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Nick Drury
Email: nickdrury@knonews.org