

Dialogue with Boss, Heidegger, Freud, Sartre and Buddha— On Being Human

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Editor's note: This dialogue is a creative and rich way the authors, all serious clinicians, model the importance of psychotherapists reflecting on the philosophical principles that inform their work. Too often these principles operate at unconscious and uncritical levels. The exchange is an invitation for others to "go and do likewise." In Hakomi Therapy we know our principles are rooted in the sciences of complex living systems, eastern wisdom traditions, and the psychodynamic, humanistic, transpersonal, and somatic influences of the post-60s. The *Forum* invites articles that further explore the underlying assumptions of our work. Confer also, "The Psychotherapist as Faith Agent" by Greg Johanson in the *Hakomi Forum Vol. 3*, Summer 1985. Our dialogue here was first presented as a Conversation Hour at the 112th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, August 2004. We thank the authors for allowing us to publish it. Reprint requests: Steven Bindeman, Strayer University, 2121 15th Street North, Arlington, VA 22201 USA: email: bindeman@starpower.net.

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ABSTRACT: Medard Boss, who died in 1990, discovers that even in death, various issues pertaining to human experiences and existence remain unresolved for him. Somewhere in "a place" between heaven and the afterlife, Boss encounters Heidegger, Buddha, Freud, and Sartre, four of the main influences on his life and work, and on philosophy and psychology today. Boss decides to chair a dialogue with the four thinkers. The dialogue is cast in the form of a "conversation hour," with the participants playing the roles of identified thinkers.

Boss's primary aim is to explicate the essence of Heidegger's, Sartre's, Freud's and the Buddha's approaches to understanding and overcoming human suffering through a discussion on human existence; the main themes in their life's work; their views of the Self and Nothingness and the relationship between their theories and practice. Heidegger and Buddha emphasize the importance of having an ontological appreciation of the human condition, as does Sartre. For Heidegger, this involves understanding the fundamental characteristics (the *existentialia* or "Existentials") of human existence, such as Openness, Worldhood, and Temporality. The Buddha addresses the transitory nature of human existence, and discusses how this gives rise to suffering. Sartre adds that we lack any determined essence and must accept our radical freedom and responsibility, along with the anguish that accompanies freedom. Freud highlights the importance of having an ontical understanding of concrete human behaviors such as neurotic guilt, unresolved psychosexual complexes, and defenses. All four thinkers emphasize their life's work as being geared towards helping people gain insight and overcome emotional suffering. Additionally, Heidegger, Sartre, Freud and the Buddha debate the differences in their views pertaining to the self as *process* versus the self as an *entity*. This philosophy-psychotherapy dialogue makes a unique contribution to humanistic psychology, which more than any other therapeutic approaches has deep roots in the philosophical and spiritual traditions: Louise Sundararajan as "Medard Boss;" Steven Bindeman as "Martin Heidegger;" Belinda Siew Luan Khong as "Buddha;" Scott. D. Churchill as "Sigmund Freud;" Edwin L. Hersch as "Jean-Paul Sartre."

KEY WORDS: Psychotherapy, philosophical foundations, Boss, Heidegger, Buddha, Freud, Sartre. human suffering, human existence, Self, Nothingness, process

Introduction

The year is 1990 and the place is somewhere between the six realms of existence and Heaven. It is the early hours of the morning, but in this ethereal spot, time is measured in eons rather than hours. Medard Boss, the Swiss psychiatrist and daseinsanalyst, has just died. Upon reaching this place he is given the opportunity to tie up any loose ends in his past life, to facilitate his eternal spiritual growth. He decides to put together a meeting between the four most influential figures of his life: Martin Heidegger, Sigmund Freud, the Buddha and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Contributions to Psychology and Our Understanding of Human Suffering

Boss: Thank you for agreeing to meet at this "unearthly" hour. It is an honor to be here with four of the greatest and most influential thinkers of all time. The four of you have transformed the world, and me, beyond recognition. During my time on Earth I have been psychoanalyzed by Sigmund, maintained a 40-year working relationship with Martin, adopted from Jean-Paul his ideas of embodiment and of being-toward-others, and practiced meditation all my life—even living in monasteries in India whenever possible.

But even after a lifetime of studying your works, I am left with several unsettled issues. Specifically, I am interested

in exploring your respective contributions to the development of psychology and to the better understanding of human nature; your ideas concerning discipleship; the notions of Self, Nothingness; and your views on the relationship between your theoretical stance and your practice. I hope that by covering these themes this dialogue will help people to better understand what it means to be human. Perhaps I could start by asking how each of you views your own contributions to psychology and to the understanding of human suffering.

Freud: I see my contribution to psychology as making therapy into a more humane encounter. I think that you would agree that without my efforts towards establishing a scientific psychology, there might be not be "talking cures" as we know them today. Whether or not you agree with my metapsychology, you have to acknowledge that the very idea of a talking cure originated with my investigation into the unconscious, through my methods of dream analysis and word association.

Boss: Yes, I can say that in my own analysis with Sigmund, his "evenly hovering attention," as he calls it, was indeed a mode of attunement to me—one which allowed for my own self-disclosedness through moods to shine forth!

Freud: I learned a lot in those sessions too. Fortunately for you, they came some time after that period when I was working on my infamous "metapsychology papers"—which

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was when I was also trying to work through my analysis of the Wolf Man!

Sartre: [expels air from his pursed lips in that French manner] Phhh, whatever WAS your “project” in that analysis of the Wolf Man? Did you not recognize your own self-deception, when you ‘thought’ that the Wolf Man had urinated in the presence of Grusha, the maid—when in fact that was your own speculation, something that you inserted into the analysis! Who is analyzing whom in your psychoanalysis?

Freud: Ja, Ja -- tut mir leid! Such are the “parapraxes” or inadvertent mistakes of everyday life as they impose themselves even during the analytic encounter.

Boss: Yes, but might not it be more productive to look at such happenings as the “bodying forth” of the therapist, instead of resorting to the explanatory notion of parapraxes? That even as you sit there behind your patient, you are nonetheless “joining with” him—in Being-alongside one another?

Heidegger: I agree. I would even go further in saying that Being-alongside belongs to the ontological structural concept of “care”--whereby Dasein “makes itself an issue.”

But now I would like to go back to the question of our respective contributions to psychology. I see my contribution as helping to provide an existential foundation for psychology. This is why Medard came to me for assistance initially. I explained to him that psychology has become an ontic exercise in which psychologists merely measure different physical and psychic attributes of their patients according to an uncritically accepted set of “scientific” values. Instead psychology needs to go back to its roots in ontology and philosophy so that its foundations can be clearly recognized and understood. Only then can the true analytic of Dasein commence.

Freud: Perhaps. In your own excursions into the philosophies of your predecessors, you always attempt to uncover what is “unthought”—unsaid—in a thinker’s thought. Could the body in its sexual being be precisely what has all along been “unthought” in *your* own thinking?

Heidegger: My dear Sigmund, although I would never question the importance to the modern era of your insight into the centrality of sexuality to human mental health, I still believe that it remains no more than an unproven hypothesis. Moreover, I believe your way of understanding science leaves you completely insensitive to the lived experience of real people. You appear only to be interested in examining your patients’ experiences through the supposed objectivity of your science. But your pose of

clinical objectivity relies on metaphysical assumptions that are insufficiently grounded.

My approach to Daseinsanalysis on the other hand is grounded in the phenomenological reduction. This allows the scientific framing of the subject/object relation to be neutralized by placing it within brackets. What remains is the lived experience of the human being as it is experienced by him or her, described in a way that is unadulterated by theory. Furthermore, I believe that your ideas are too empirical. You appear to have dichotomized the subject-object relationship, and to have split the human being into too many psychic parts, for example the Id, Ego, Superego, the conscious and the unconscious. I see the individual and the external world not as two separate entities but as a unitary phenomenon.

Sartre: I agree with Martin that psychology needs a philosophical foundation and with Sigmund about the importance of the body and sexuality. However I think that you cannot have a serious philosophical discussion without the French point of view. And one point that the French view does add is about the central significance that our awareness of Other People as presences has for us.

I believe that much of our trouble stems from our refusal to accept the ambiguity, contingency, and impermanence that are at the heart of human existence. This is why we create false-Absolutes, false-Essences, and false-Gods, to perpetuate a set of self-deceptions which provide the illusions of stability which we crave, yet deep down know to be untrue.

This process of lying to oneself I call “Bad Faith.” And only by giving up the illusion of “essences which determine us” and by embracing one’s radical freedom can one emerge from Bad Faith (to a degree) and approach more “authentic” living. I believe that people suffer mainly from self-deceptions . . . from their own ignorance. They must accept that they are condemned to freedom, take up their responsibility and make choices.

Heidegger: Forgive me for reminding you of this, Jean-Paul, but it was my work in *Sein und Zeit* that provided you with the philosophical foundation for your existentialist philosophy. Your emphasis on human freedom is based on my own prior formulations of the average everyday situatedness and thrownness of Dasein, of “being-there.” In addition, your focus on authenticity rests on my earlier analysis of being-unto-death, being-with, and care.

Where we differ of course is that you are a humanist and I am not. By placing the human being as a conscious and constituting subject at the center of your philosophy you lose sight of the question of Being and thus fail to be

affected by its undisclosed openness. Nevertheless, in contrast to Freud your work seems far better grounded.

Sartre: I agree. When I wrote in the introduction of *Being and Nothingness* about psychic determinism, I was thinking precisely of Sigmund's metapsychology. However, psychological determinism, before being a theoretical conception, is first an attitude of excuse, or if you prefer, the basis of all attitudes of excuse. It is reflective conduct with respect to anguish; it asserts that there are within us antagonistic forces whose type of existence is comparable to things. It attempts to fill the void that encircles us, and to re-establish the links between past and present, and between present and future. Furthermore, psychological determinism provides us with a nature productive of our acts, and it assigns to them a foundation in something other than themselves by endowing them with an inertia and externality that is eminently reassuring because they constitute a permanent game of excuses¹ In short, this whole production is merely an exercise in Bad Faith.

Freud: In retrospect, I must confess that what I was doing was something along the lines of what Martin has called "phenomenology"—letting that which shows itself—namely, the psyche—show itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself—that is, in a free associative flow of images.

Boss: I think a distinction must be made between Sigmund's theoretical stance and his practice. In my view, while he appears to theorize like an empiricist, he practices like an existentialist. As I mentioned earlier, in my own analysis with him, he was always caring and humane. Buddha, what do you consider to be your contributions?

Buddha: I see my contribution as helping people to try and understand the nature and cause of their suffering, and to find ways to alleviate it.

My position on these issues is contained in my teachings of the Four Noble Truths, which I see as encapsulating the thrust of my work. In the Four Noble Truths, I talk about 1) the nature of suffering 2) the origin or the cause of suffering 3) the cessation of suffering and 4) the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

By suffering, I am referring to those experiences that are associated with the nature of the human condition such as aging, death, illness and loss. And by suffering I also mean our sense of discomfort in experiencing impermanence,

¹ Adapted from Sartre (1943/1956, p. 40).

imperfection and emptiness, which is realized through the constantly changing nature of our experiences and mind states. In other words, the basis of all existence is change and transformation. I think that a more accurate description of this condition however is "pervasive unsatisfactoriness," rather than suffering.

I believe that the cause of our emotional suffering lies in our inability to accept that change is in the nature of things. We desire for things to be permanent when in reality they are not. So, when things come to pass, as they naturally will, we suffer because we become attached to them instead of learning to let go of them graciously.

Views of Human Existence

Boss: Martin, how do you perceive human existence? Are our efforts to understand ourselves condemned to always being a "game of excuses" as Jean-Paul suggests?

Heidegger: My idea of human existence as Being-in-the-world recognizes that people actively engage with the world, rather than form mental representations of what they experience. I see human existence, which I call Dasein, as an ongoing process within the horizon of temporality, as an openness. I believe that people suffer when this openness is constricted or constrained. And this usually happens when they live inauthentically, allowing their lives to be defined or influenced by "the they," rather than taking the responsibility to make their own choices.

Freud: Let us not forget that the "I" must contend not only with the outer social world but with internalized others—and that these "self-objects," as my successors like to call them, are no longer anonymous, and no longer belong to "the they," or to the herd, or even to the primal horde, but rather belong to myself—to the way the "I" has chosen to relate to others.

Buddha: I agree with Professor Heidegger that the nature of human existence is openness. I see human existence as sharing with all phenomena three fundamental characteristics—impermanence, non-self and unsatisfactoriness.

Briefly, I conceive of the human being as a "psycho-physical complex" (made up of both matter and mind) that can be further divided into five groups of aggregates comprising form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness. If we examine these aggregates, we will find that none of them, either singly or collectively, has an independent existence, as they are each characterized by their transitory nature. I would therefore describe the human being as "a constant stream of consciousness."

In my teachings, I promote the notion of non-self, the idea that the self is a process, constantly changing and evolving. I believe that the view of the self as an enduring entity is an illusion. Take the example of the chariot. If the chariot is dismantled, no “chariotness” can be found. Rather it is the combination of its various constituents that gives rise to the chariot’s functioning. It is the same with human existence.

Sartre: I like that non-self idea. A human being is a Nothingness, lacking in essence. But as far as concrete relations with others, none of you has come close to the real interactive, passionate involvements among people that make up the human scene. Sigmund has all the actions occurring within one’s mind rather than between people. Martin’s notions of other people are so abstract and disembodied that they seem to have no connection with flesh and blood. How Germanic! Yet Buddha sounds like too much of a “loner” to me too.

Discipleship and Personal Philosophy

Boss: Perhaps we could now turn to the nature of discipleship. What do you think it is about the style of your teaching that encourages discipleship? How do you explain the depth of both your personal and intellectual authority?

Buddha: When I discovered the middle path, I showed people through personal example what overcoming attachment to things is like. The authority did not come from me; it came from the inner truth of what people experience for themselves. But I should add that discipleship is an inherent part of my culture; the Upanishads for example explained that sitting at the feet of a teacher is the preferred way of learning.

Freud: It was only by the means of discipleship that I was able to initiate a cultural revolution. By consistently extending the purview of science into the as yet unexplored regions of the unconscious, by way of the very specific techniques of psychoanalytic theory and methodology, I helped transform the way we understand and have access to the human psyche.

Heidegger: I see my philosophy as an attempt to overcome nihilism. My unconventional use of language was intended to help jolt people out of their modernist and metaphysical frames of reference. My work was therefore essentially anti-authoritarian and liberating, even if was often perceived differently.

Sartre: As Kierkegaard said: No person can truly be an authority for another. I just try to expose self-deceptions,

unmask falsehoods, and demonstrate how men or women can lead through committed, conscious choices and actions.

The Concept of Nothingness

Boss: Martin has touched an important theme, nihilism, and explained that his work was an attempt to overcome it. I wonder: How would the others here deal with the concept of Nothingness?

Sartre: What I’ve called a “For-Itself,” or basically a person, is the Nothing (the no-thing) that wants to be a thing. A person has no essence as Freud would have us believe. And as Buddha puts it, his existence is one of consciousness. Sigmund, you still haven’t solved the problem of how your supposed unconscious censor can choose what to censor without being aware, and therefore conscious, of its contents.

Martin, you’ve grasped that much but in my view your idea of the *Existentials*, a term you used to describe the fundamental characteristics of human existence, are still insufficiently fleshed out. For example, I think that your notion of Mitsein is too cursory and doesn’t account well for our concrete relations with Others. The whole sense of squirming under the Look of the Other is missing in your work, but then you hid from it yourself in those post-war years, didn’t you? And as my associate Maurice Merleau-Ponty would put it, your work lacks an adequate description of the “lived-body” dimension to our existence as well.

Heidegger: Although it may be true that my work lacks this dimension, my phenomenological method of inquiry has certainly paved the way for new efforts to incorporate embodiment into philosophical discourse. Why is it that the method of modern science forces its practitioners to formulate everything in the same way?

The problem of method in science is equivalent to the problem of the body. Or, to put it differently, the problem of the body is primarily a problem of method. Scientists, of course, think they have *the* truth about reality. Everything they investigate turns into an object. And in so doing, they turn the idea of truth into the concept of certainty, which is itself involved with the character of objectivity. By overturning the unquestioned assumptions of this objectivity I have opened up the problem of embodiment to its experiential dimensions, among others.

Buddha: I think that there is a misunderstanding of Nothingness as a goal, as something for people to strive towards. In my view, Nothingness points to the inherent emptiness of everything, including human existence. The idea that the human being is a No-thing demonstrates that

every being and every phenomenon does not exist in isolation but is related to everything else. I try to teach this idea of inter-relatedness in the notions of co-dependent origination and non-self. I understand that Zen Buddhists call this idea of emptiness, *Sunyata*.

Heidegger: I agree with Buddha here. Nothingness should not be understood as the opposite of Being. It is not nihilistic in nature, but refers to the ontological foundation of everything, making it possible for all beings to come into existence. I believe that the Taoists promote a similar idea in the concept of Tao or the Way. And I think that Buddha describes it well when he suggests that Nothingness highlights the inter-relatedness of everything. This is what I try to promote in my idea of Being-in-the-world, that the self and world are not two separate entities but intrinsically co-constituted.

Freud: From my research into the human psyche I learned that Thanatos, the death instinct, is more deeply the fear of annihilation, the fear of experiencing a return to the Nothingness before birth, before temporal and spatial awareness. We overcome this fear only by internalizing and integrating the functions of containment and insight, which help us to acknowledge our loss of omniscience. We then create the spatial and temporal boundaries that enable us to live in the world in a constructive way. Consequently our capacity to overcome our fear of Nothingness is the foundation for our ability to live meaningful lives.

Sartre: People are the sort of beings who introduce Nothingness into existence. A person inserts a “nothing” between the discrete things of the world. Without people there would just be the totality of Being. It is the individual person who differentiates distinct objects and meanings by the insertion of such Nothingnesses between them, and so partitions Being into a set of meaningful objects.

The Relationship Between Theory and Practice

Buddha: Professor Boss, you mentioned earlier that you learned a lot from the others about psychotherapy. I would like to hear more about that.

Boss: Well, from Sigmund, I learned about the importance of the therapist keeping an open mind when he is working with the client. From Martin, I learned about phenomenological seeing, “letting things be seen as they are,” rather than looking for assumed forces or drives behind the phenomenon. This type of seeing is accompanied by letting-be.

Heidegger: [interrupts]: Yes, to go to the encounter. The word “idea” comes from the Greek *eidos*, which means to see, face, meet, be face-to-face.

Boss: From Jean-Paul I also learned about something that is left out of the picture in Martin’s approach, especially regarding the fact that he fails to emphasize the importance of individual embodiment to everyday experience, even if he does acknowledge our essential connectedness to each other with his notion of the *Mitsein*. Theoretically, I believe that it is good for therapists to practice quiet listening, and learn to see things for what they are. However, I am curious as to how a person could develop this kind of attitude without the skills and training to quiet down the mind. In my view, the mind is constantly carrying on an internal dialogue. Without the discipline to reduce this rumination, how do we maintain an open mind? I believe that meditation can help therapists to develop this stance.

Freud: While I can see the importance of quiet listening, I do not believe that religions in general can provide viable therapeutic models since they are no more than illusions to compensate for the mortality of our father-figures. Religions merely serve as divine systems of superego ideals. Although perhaps necessary for any society to function, such systems provide little more than crutches. They help to create dependent people.

Sartre: I have to agree with Sigmund on that one.

Buddha: I beg to differ. From emulating the way I live my life and following my teachings, my followers learn self-discipline, not dependency. From practicing meditation and right-mindfulness, they learn to master their negative emotions, and discover freedom from the passions that enslave them.

Freud: I would like to return our attention to Martin’s contribution to the foundations of psychology. I believe that Daseinsanalysis places too great an importance on the situatedness of the human subject, especially with regards to how the patient perceives it himself. This is wrong because the analyst, already having been successfully psychoanalyzed, is in a far greater position of expertise and authority than the patient to ascertain and to judge the patient’s specific degree of mental health. The subject of analysis should be the defensive postures of the patient, not merely his diverse states of being situated in the world.

Heidegger: (Looking slightly annoyed) Ach, Sigmund, you provide categories for self-understanding that are themselves insufficiently established. You don’t seem to appreciate how the human condition is one of being thrown into the world – without built-in categories. The “I think” is always a situated consciousness – as my teacher Husserl

once put it, "consciousness is always consciousness of something."

Freud: Perhaps you forget, but like Husserl, I too attended Brentano's classes where he called that phenomenon "intentionality."

Heidegger: Yes, Sigmund. In fact I would suggest that there is a tension in your work between a more phenomenological approach to understanding the mind and an inclination toward natural scientific explanation. Moreover this tension between understanding and explanation can be said to be a tension which exists, whether acknowledged or not, in all of the human sciences.

Buddha: (Sensing the rising tension, tries to change the subject) I believe that most of our emotional suffering is self created and that each of us can take the responsibility to overcome it. I recognize that it may be difficult for some individuals to do so. I have therefore enunciated a set of practices which I call the eightfold path which can serve as a guide for individuals who wish to take responsibility for their own psychological and physical well being. Briefly, this path addresses three aspects of human existence—morality, mental culture and development and wisdom.

Boss: I have found meditation useful in my personal life and in my practice as a therapist. It has enabled me to quietly listen to my patients.

Buddha: I understand from Professor Boss that the mental culture component of the path, which I am told is referred to as meditation in the West, is well received and commonly practiced today. With meditation, I am more concerned with people adopting a meditative attitude and using it as an aid for understanding the workings of their mind, rather than their just using it for sitting in a concentrated way while still alienated from everyday living.

I am not promoting the idea of individuals being loners, as Professor Sartre suggested earlier. I have always emphasized the importance of insight-meditation and right-mindfulness. By this I mean maintaining an open, non-judgmental attitude towards everything that we experience and perceive. I understand from Professor Heidegger that he advocates a similar idea in his notion of meditative thinking. However, in meditation I stress the kind of experiencing which gives only the barest of attention to what is going on in the mind, rather than the non-discursive thinking that Professor Heidegger recommends. I also believe that Professor Freud is promoting a similar attitude when he recommends that therapists adopt what he calls "evenly-hovering attention" towards their patients' experiences.

Sartre: I like your emphasis on taking responsibility, Buddha, but your way to me sounds too programmatic (and therefore in Bad Faith) and curiously disengaged. The point of theory is to get to a more engaged and authentic practice, through an exploration of our fundamental projects and choices. It should end up with our being more involved (or engaged) in the stream of life, not trying to sit outside of it meditatively.

Heidegger: I think that Jean-Paul has misunderstood the idea behind adopting a meditative attitude, or letting-be as I call it. Letting-be does not imply inactivity or indifference. Rather it involves the idea of becoming more open, more empty within ourselves, but richer in possibilities. It promotes, as Buddha puts it, an ability to engage with the world in a non-judgmental way, to quietly listen.

Freud: I think that I now understand better the meditative attitude that Martin and Buddha are talking about. I try to promote a similar idea when I suggest that therapists give equal notice to everything their patients say, by simply listening to them in an attentive way. I am glad to learn that therapists can acquire this skill through meditation.

Conclusion: Integration

Buddha: I have enjoyed our discussion concerning the different perspectives about being human and about human suffering. As I was more interested in helping people understand the nature and cause of emotional suffering, I have been less concerned with helping them deal with their own specific issues or concerns. I can see from Professor Boss's and Professor Freud's explanations, that there is a need and certainly a place for psychologists and psychiatrists to help individuals deal with issues that meditation alone cannot overcome. I have also learned a lot from hearing Professors Heidegger and Sartre explain about the existential understanding of the human condition. This has helped me to appreciate that the particular differences between individuals are more a factor of culture, nature, and nurture, than they are of anything else, and that in their deepest Being, all human beings strive for the same thing: the sense of well-being we call happiness.

Sartre: An existential psychology must be one which encourages an active embracing of our radically contingent human condition and our ensuing freedom and responsibility for our choices. We should judge the importance and success of our therapies by how much we can actively engage with the understandings that arise from them in the context of our lived worlds of meaning-filled actions.

Freud: It has given me great pleasure to participate in such a dialogue. I have been given a wonderful opportunity to reflect further on the ambiguous relation between theory and practice in my work, and to find the occasion to acknowledge some of the many unresolved conflicts to be found therein. I am especially proud to find recognition of the continued importance for my central idea of a talking cure. I would still wish to stress the necessity of scientific rigor for all of our investigations within this great field of psychology.

Heidegger: The discussion here today reminds me of the numerous seminars Medard and I conducted for more than ten years alongside his medical colleagues at his home in Zollikon, Switzerland. There we covered Freudian and existential psychoanalysis, and Indian philosophy. The space opened up by the dialogue amongst these diverse points of view has proved to be especially enlightening in many cases.

Boss: This has been a fascinating and informative discussion. I believe that this philosophy-psychotherapy dialogue, which has never taken place before, makes an exceptional contribution to our understanding of human existence and suffering. I thank you all for the opportunity to enlighten so many people. It has certainly helped me, and I am sure, many of my colleagues on Earth to gain a more nuanced understanding of your personal philosophies and how they have informed each of you.

The parallels and differences that you have highlighted in your thinking and practices, despite the radically different intellectual and cultural milieu in which you operate, will provide psychologists for many years to come with a broad range of ideas and perspectives from which to draw. In my lifetime, I have always been keenly aware of the need for psychotherapists to understand the philosophical and spiritual roots of our work. I see this unique engagement among philosophy, spirituality and psychology as my final contribution to humanity.

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