Introduction

This book aims to show that mortality is a fundamental structuring element in human life. It examines this structuring by looking at different ways in which the relationship between life and death may be thought about. The ordinary view sees life and death as dichotomous: death is the external endpoint of life and therefore life and death are completely separate. On this view, death is a negation of life and therefore contains no positive attributes. Against this stance that sees life and death as completely separate, this book explores views that see them as interlinked. Because they are interlinked, death can play an active role within life (this claim shall be explained in detail) and because it has a role in life it is not simply a negation of life. This position provides a robust view of death as something more than mere negation, as well as an account of how death is active in life and how it structures life and our conception of it.

Since the explanatory onus of this position is higher than that of the ordinary view, why should we adopt it? The answer is that on the ordinary account, death becomes a brute fact, devoid of all philosophical and existential significance. Contrary to that, I argue that death is not merely an external endpoint about which we can say nothing, but a structuring force that shapes life ontologically and influences our understanding of it every living moment. Within a view of the human being as finite, the question of our attitude towards death becomes a crucial factor, and whether we acknowledge this fact or remain oblivious to it, the ontological demand remains constantly active. This affects our view of ourselves, our choices and capacity to plan the future and relate to the present. In short, the requirement that we understand ourselves as finite structures human existence far more than the ordinary view allows. It is this continuous and significant moulding that I want to bring out by developing a new account of the relationship between life and death.

I focus on two conceptions of this relationship: the psychoanalytic conception of Sigmund Freud and the philosophical conception of Martin Heidegger. Both thinkers emphasise the extensive influence death has on everyday life and give an account of its structural and existential significance on both a personal and a metaphysical level. Freud's death drive and Heidegger's being-towards-death are two accounts of how death operates within life. By bringing the two together, this work presents a reading of death that establishes its significance for life, creates a meeting point for philosophical and psychoanalytical perspectives, and examines the problems and strengths of each. It then puts forth a unified view, based on the strengths of each position and overcoming the problems of each.

The question of finitude is philosophical and personal, conceptual and existential, and a central issue for human psychology. Every form of life is

finite, and every human life is accompanied by an awareness of this fact. Every human project, expectation and action takes place within this framework. This makes it a meeting point for philosophical and psychoanalytical enquiries and a good place to explore the relations between the two disciplines. By bringing together Freud and Heidegger this book creates dialogue between radically different languages and disciplines. As such, it must be read with an awareness of the constant translation, incorporation and synthesis taking place in it.

As a book that bridges two disciplines it must ask how psychoanalytic concepts and ideas can be applied in philosophy and vice versa. I address this question by focusing on both the similarities in the subject matter and the differences in technique, presuppositions and aims. Psychoanalysis and Heidegger's philosophy deal with the same subject matter; they are both theories about mental life, emotion and action. Dasein, Heidegger's name for a human being, and the Freudian subject are two accounts of these human phenomena. In this sense they treat the same subject matter and ask similar questions.

At the same time, their presuppositions are immensely different. Dasein is a phenomenal being, an active agent, and as such is perspicuous to introspection. The Freudian subject is split, conflictual and barred from its unconscious. From these two very different views stem two very different theories. But these theories also have commonalties that are often overlooked: both give a significant place to the world humans inhabit, seeing context, society and history as crucial to understanding the individual. Dasein is being-in-the-world, conceptually and practically embedded in its environment; the environment also plays a central role in Freud's account of pathological behaviour as unsuccessful coping with the external world. This emphasis on our rootedness in the world and on the worldly and bodily reality as significant to understanding mental events and processes is shared by both.

Furthermore, both Heidegger and Freud offer holistic views of human existence. Both attempt to explain and organise an entire field, and not just explain some isolated phenomenon. This is clear with respect to Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology. As for psychoanalysis, James Hopkins notes:

> Psychoanalytic like physical theory ranges holistically over a vast number of instances and cases. Although a certain amount of theory may be seen to be applicable in a given case, its justification consists in the way it serves to order and explain the whole field (1982, p.xli).

Additionally, both aim to account for the complex and interactive nature of the human being by providing a picture of a unified (albeit conflicted) and embodied human being, which has a developmental history, a social context and is situated in the world. Therefore, both theories place substantial weight on the influence of external conditions on the development of the individual.

However, one should not overlook the differences in technique and aim between the two accounts. While philosophy positions personal interest within a

general project, psychoanalysis is an intimate dialogue focusing on private experiences. These different practices indicate different aims – to come closer to an understanding of the world and to improve one's well being – that may nonetheless be seen as affiliated. Understanding and self-understanding both partake in a general quest for making sense of our surroundings and ourselves, a quest Heidegger approaches through hermeneutics and phenomenology, and Freud through an analysis of speech and exploration of the unconscious.

This leads to another similarity, coming from the opposite direction: some philosophical texts have a therapeutic dimension as a meta-philosophical ideal. Like any other form of knowledge or quest for knowledge, philosophy can be examined from the perspective of well-being. Epicurus used an analogy to medicine to argue that the philosophical value of arguments lies in their ability to solve human problems and relieve pain.

> For empty is that philosopher's argument by which no human suffering is therapeutically treated. For just as there is no use in medical art that does not cast out the sickness of bodies, so too there is no use in philosophy, unless it casts out the suffering of the soul (1994, p.87).

In this sense the exploration of death and the attempt to reconstruct its relation to life is, among other things, a therapeutic attempt to grapple with the general human concern with finitude. This is by no means an attempt to reduce philosophy to its therapeutic function; rather I endeavour to point out the importance of such a dimension, which has been largely overlooked in modern philosophy.[1]

A second issue we must address at the outset is the question of the status of Freud's theory today; a century after psychoanalysis has been established as a clinical practice and a cultural institution. A vast literature addressing the status of psychoanalysis has emerged, mainly dealing with the question whether psychoanalysis is a science. This literature was a steady stream throughout the 20th century in what came to be called 'the Freud wars'. Today there are signs of reconciliation based on recognition of the similarities between certain projects in psychology and cognitive science and the Freudian project of a science of the mind.

An exemplary work drawing the parallels between psychoanalysis and the cognitive sciences of today is Patricia Kitcher's *Freud's Dream* (1992). Kitcher views Freud's project as interdisciplinary in nature, trying to unify (in the terms available to 19th Century science) neurophysiology, psychology, sociology and anthropology. Freud's aim, Kitcher argues, was to provide an explanatory model of the psyche based on a quantitative physiological

[1] With the notable exception of Ludwig Wittgenstein and some of his followers. Other exceptions are Martha Nussbaum, John Cottingham and Jonathan Lear.

foundation (which Freud calls the 'economic' dimension), with a functional ('topographic') account of the various agencies and their interaction, and a causal ('dynamic') dimension. Although Kitcher judges the project to have failed, many argue otherwise. Contemporary work in evolutionary biology and in neuroscience is showing strong conceptual affinity with and empirical support for Freudian insights, in particular for the idea of an unconscious, dream theory and the model of the mind as containing separate functional domains (Solms, 2004; Hopkins 2005a, 2005b; Wegner et al, 2004). Mark Solms writes:

> [I]t appears that Freud's broad brushstroke organization of the mind is destined to play a role similar to the one Darwin's theory of evolution served for molecular genetics – a template on which emerging details can be coherently arranged. At the same time, neuroscientists are uncovering proof for some of Freud's theories and are teasing out the mechanisms behind the mental processes he described (2004, 58-9).

Similarly, we find evolutionary biologist Robert Trivers remarking, "All the machinations Freud imagined going on early in life had a reality […] which I had formerly disbelieved". He further says that his research on parent-offspring conflict was "congenial to the emphasis that psychoanalysis and related disciplines placed on family interactions" (2002, p.258).

Returning to the question about the scientific status of psychoanalytic theory, it seems that there can be no simple answer to the question because the question itself assumes we have a clear idea of what 'science' is. Therefore, what is important is not to try to answer the question, but to show that certain criticisms of psychoanalysis are problematic and sometimes dogmatic. This is particularly true of criticisms that are fuelled by suspicion of psychoanalysis and in particular of Freud's notion of the unconscious. To take two examples discussed at length by Adolph Grünbaum (1984), Popper's argument that psychoanalytic hypotheses are irrefutable and therefore not scientific betrays his misunderstanding of what a psychoanalytic hypothesis is. Similarly, Habermas' division of human knowledge into 'science' and 'culture' does nothing to aid our understanding of either, and hence arguing about which camp psychoanalysis should fall into is equally unhelpful.

Questions such as what Freud was trying to do, what the empirical basis of his theories is and what is the outcome of psychoanalysis, are not questions one could hope to answer without paying serious methodological attention to the interdisciplinary nature of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is an historical discipline, bringing together elements from sociology, anthropology, philosophy and of course psychology. Not only do questions about the status and nature of psychoanalysis use concepts that are themselves fiercely debated, but moreover each question could be approached from a range of perspectives, because of the interdisciplinary nature of psychoanalysis as a comprehensive

science of the psyche. What I hope to achieve here is simply to set up the issues and present some responses I find compelling and productive.

Moreover, the question of the scientific status of psychoanalysis does not concern us here, as the classification of psychoanalysis as a scientific discipline would not alter its philosophical significance. This significance, discussed at length by philosophers such as Richard Wollheim (1982, 1984, 1991, 1993), James Hopkins (1982), Jonathan Lear (1988, 1998, 2000, 2004), Sebastian Gardner (1993), Marcia Cavell (1993) and others, has become by now well established.

Questions about the testability of psychoanalytic hypotheses, its efficacy as a clinical practice and its empirical confirmation – although important – do not pertain to the philosophical view of psychoanalysis as a theory of the mind. In what follows I would like to treat psychoanalysis, and in particular Freud's corpus, as a set of philosophical theses about the psyche and its relationship to the body that adds up to a sophisticated developmental theory of the agencies making up the human mind.

In light of this discussion, a final analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis can be proposed. In the same way that philosophy is not a science, but a discipline that has an important relationship with science, psychoanalysis could be thought of as maintaining an influential relationship with science, rather than as a scientific discipline. My aim in this book is to focus on psychoanalytic theory rather than on its practice, for this is a philosophical essay and my interest here is to draw out the metaphysical picture underlying Freud's discussion of death. Therefore, I do not make any further references to psychoanalytic practice. Viewing psychoanalysis as related to – and not a part of – science allows us to focus on the philosophical ideas underpinning it.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

The book contains three parts. Part One presents the psychoanalytic perspective on death through Freud's reading of the death drive as opposing the life drive, Eros. Chapter One explains the difference between Freud's drive and the similar notion of instinct, and sets up the scientific and historical context within which Freud conceived of the death drive. Although Freud posits the death drive within a dualistic view of life and death, this position does not maintain its stability, and the development, change, and re-articulation of the death drive and of the dualistic position are traced in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three shows how Freud's formulation of the death drive oscillates between two positions. On the one hand, he persistently supports a dualistic picture of life and death drives; on the other hand he regards the death drive as a primary force within life. Through a textual analysis of Freud's late work I argue that the first, dualistic position contains inherent inconsistencies that render it invalid. But the second position has problems of its own, which are

next analysed. I ask the following questions: what is the explanatory value of the death drive? How can we explain the economic clash between seeing the death drive as the source of aggression and as the Nirvana principle, aiming towards elimination of tension? Are the life and death drives distinguishable, and if so what is the relationship between them?

Other problems include the lack of clinical and empirical support for the death drive hypothesis; the unclear distinction between sadism and masochism; and the dynamic and overlapping nature of the drives as eluding classification. The solutions I offer to these problems support the conclusion that the death drive is a fundamental primary force active within life. I argue that the death drive is an umbrella term for several dimensions and tendencies that are not entirely consistent with one another. I end this part with a new reading of the death drive that explains which elements of it are still illuminating despite the problems detailed above.

Part Two engages with Heidegger's account of death. Although Heidegger's later work takes issue with death through his discussion of mortals, *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*) contains his most systematic analysis of death, on which I focus.[2] I clarify Heidegger's concept of death and respond to criticisms that the concept is incoherent. I argue that Heidegger's notion of death contains both temporal finitude and finitude of possibility, so only a combined understanding provides us with a full and coherent account of death. I then explore the tension between authenticity as individuation on the one hand and sociality and *Mitsein* (being-with) on the other. This tension, symptomatic of all dimensions of Dasein's existence, is particularly prominent with respect to death because of death's individuating force. However, I argue that the ontological significance of death is not limited to tracing the boundaries of life. I see death as a *border* concept, which on the one hand limits Dasein, but also works constantly within Dasein, endowing it with meaning as finite.

With this interpretation in mind, I analyse the tension between individuation (as authenticity) and relationality (which is all too often mistakenly identified with inauthenticity) with respect to death. I do so by showing why the dichotomous view of authenticity and inauthenticity is untenable, and therefore why we should re-read them as interdependent. This does not eliminate the possibility of an authentic encounter with death, but reconstructs it within a framework that sees inauthenticity as a necessary dimension of Dasein. This component is the social dimension of Dasein, to which Heidegger assigns two existentiales (fundamental structures of Dasein): *Mitsein* and *das Man* (the "They" or the "One"). The difference between the two

[2] Although the discussion focuses on *Being and Time*, I make some references to other texts from the 1920's and early 1930's surrounding the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927.

existentiales is analysed and the discussion concludes with shifting the focus of the analysis from authenticity to sociality.

Part Three is a meeting point combining Freud's and Heidegger's positions to create a unified view of life and death. It starts from the conclusion of Part One – that Freud's dualistic view should be replaced with an understanding of the death drive as the source of aggression. From this it works towards a unified view using the strengths and advantages of each thinker's position. The main premise of the unified view is that seeing life and death as dichotomous is inadequate and should be replaced by a position accounting for the influence of death on life and explaining how it takes place.

I therefore replace the life/death dichotomy and the sharp distinction through which they are usually understood, with a view that acknowledges and explains death's fundamental effect on life. The origins of this stance are found in both thinkers: Freud gives the death drive an active and significant role in the organisation of the psyche while Heidegger illustrates the constant presence of finitude in life through being-towards-death.

But both perspectives also have limitations and inconsistencies, which must also be addressed. Part Three is a series of encounters that engage with these limitations. The encounters show (1) how death influences life, (2) what are the ethical implications of this influence, (3) how these ethical implications make possible an authentic relationship to the death of the other, (4) how an authentic relationship to the death of another enables affective states other than anxiety to lead to authenticity, and finally, (5) given that death is covered up in inauthenticity, show that there is an unconscious attitude towards death, contrary to Freud's claim that the unconscious does not contain any understanding of its own mortality.

To summarise, this book provides a framework for understanding death as an active force within life. It presents an account of death as a non-pathological moment structuring life and shows that constructing a reflexive attitude to death is central to understanding life. This view rejects the dichotomy detaching the two and proposes to re-introduce death into life to create a unified view of life and death.

NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND REFERENCING

Freud: I translate the German term *der Trieb* as 'drive' to distinguish it from another German term also used by Freud, *der Instinkt*, which will be rendered here 'instinct'. Throughout the text I use the Strachey translation in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, but wherever the term 'instinct' appears, I replace it with 'drive'. There are two exceptions. The first is the title of the essay *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (*Triebe und Triebschicksale*), which I did not alter in order to avoid confusion. The second is the adjective 'instinctual', which is maintained as the translation

for *Triebanlage*, as there is no English alternative for it. A detailed discussion of these terms is provided at the beginning of Part One.

Heidegger: whenever a term is first mentioned I give the German term in brackets and present the alternative English translations in a footnote. Three terms that are widely familiar by now are retained in the German original: *Dasein*, *Mitsein* and *das Man*. I translate *Sein* as 'being' and *das Seiende* as 'entity', rather than following Macquarrie and Robinson, who use an upper case 'B' to mark *Sein* ('Being') and lower case 'b' ('being') for *das Seiende*. Their translation creates a double confusion: firstly, by giving the impression that being (*Sein*) is a noun rather than an infinitive, and secondly, by obfuscating the distinction between being and entity. A detailed discussion of these concepts is provided in Part Two.

All works will be referred to in brackets, containing the author's name, year of publication and page number. All English quotations of Freud are from *The Standard Edition*, referenced in the common abbreviated form (SE followed by volume and page numbers). The Standard Edition reference will be followed by the German reference to the *Sigmund Freud Studienausgabe* (FS followed by volume and page numbers). In a few cases where I refer to a text not published in the *Sigmund Freud Studienausgabe* the reference is to the *Gesammelte Werke* (hereafter GW).

English quotations of Heidegger will be from the best translation available and the English reference will be followed by a reference to the relevant volume of the *Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe* (GA followed by volume and page number). English quotations from *Being and Time* are from the Macquarrie and Robinson translation, although this translation is sometimes modified. Where this occurs the modification will be indicated in brackets. The English quotations from *Being and Time* will be followed by a reference to *Sein und Zeit* 7th edition (hereafter BT and SZ, respectively).