

Transactional Perspectives on Occupation

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Part 2. Conceptual and Empirical Insights

Chapter 8

Being Occupied in the Everyday

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Abstract

This chapter draws on the stories told by elder New Zealanders as a way of illuminating the deeply contextual, habitual, relational and precarious nature of engaging in everyday occupations. In the telling we hear how routines matter because they give shape and structure to a day. Having a purpose, however, calls one into engaged activity with enthusiasm. Everyday occupations offer connectedness in time and with others. They can give a sense of continuity which stretches back into the distant past and which projects forward into the future. Memories and deeply held social customs matter. As such, those important to one's life who have died still stay as part of the livings' relational context. Paradoxically, we also hear how the ordinariness of familiar occupations is the context for the unfamiliar to be made visible. Precariousness is ever-present. These and other complexities of being in the everyday in advanced age, such as aloneness, and intergenerational relationships are analyzed vis-à-vis occupation using both a phenomenological and a transactional perspective. It is only by understanding the holistic, contextual nature of engaging in everyday occupations that one comes to recognize that when working with older people one must sensitively listen and think before acting. A transactional perspective provides the conceptual tools to support this practice.

Introduction

This chapter is designed around the findings from an interpretive phenomenological study which explored how fifteen, community-dwelling elder New Zealand Maori and non-Maori, aged 71 to 97, experienced aging in their everyday lives. Philosophically, the research aimed to uncover the ontology, or the ‘being,’ of being aged within the realm of going about the ordinary day. While the research methodology and methods were guided by Gadamerian hermeneutics and Heideggerian phenomenology, a fresh look is taken through a Deweyan lens to illustrate how a transactional way of thinking can throw new light on the understandings gained. Rather than simply approaching the thinking in a theoretical way, this chapter illustrates the philosophical similarities and differences in a raw way. It does this by anchoring the discussion within and around the elders’ stories of their everyday occupational experiences. Three notions congruent with Heidegger and Dewey are chosen as a means of structuring the interpretations; the habitual, the relational, and the precarious. For each, a poignant story from the research is presented, followed by a brief hermeneutic analysis of the text. A Heideggerian phenomenological interpretation is offered, followed by a Deweyan transactional perspective.

Congruences between Gadamer, Heidegger and Dewey have already been drawn (Garrison, 1999; Koschmann, Kuutti, & Hickman, 1998; Polkinghorne, 2000; Vessey, 2009). Vessey (2009) suggests “philosophical hermeneutics is often favourably compared to John Dewey’s pragmatism in at least three ways: in embracing the hermeneutic circle, in recognizing the importance of aesthetic experience, and in rejecting separation between theory and practice” (p. 209). Furthermore, the Gadamerian hermeneutic traditions of assuming the past is always in play in the present, and that interpretation is always on the way to understanding, clearly align with Dewey’s portrayal of the interplay between the means and the ends of interpretation (Vessey, 2009). Looking more closely, both Dewey and Heidegger were concerned with exploring, in a deep way, philosophies of experience in order to articulate the complexity of ordinary human existence (Dewey, 1909/2005). Yet rather than richly describing the meaning of ‘being’ through an ontological lens as Heidegger did, Dewey sought to elucidate the ‘original material’ of existence (Boisvert, 1998). That is, he aimed to elucidate real, everyday situations, like playing a game of cards, in a way that pragmatic solutions might be found for everyday problems (Dewey, 2005). The threads of humanism and social responsibility are evident in Dewey’s transactionalism. His philosophy is seen as fundamentally moral in its intentions toward guiding a thoughtful way of living

(Boisvert, 1998; Jackson, 2006). At this point, Heidegger and Dewey might be said to be fundamentally opposed (Margolis, 1998). While both situated their philosophies in ‘the world’, Heidegger focused on human experience and the nature and meaning of being in the world. In contrast, Dewey focused on deep understandings of the ways of responding pragmatically to life’s difficulties (Dewey, 1920/1957). In spite of such challenges, this chapter sets out to show how the philosophical continuities and differences can reveal deeper interpretations of peoples’ engagement in everyday occupations. One might ask, what is the point of doing so? At the close, Fiumara’s (1990) ‘listening attitude’ provides a way of bringing such interpretive thinking into practice focused on enabling occupations for those living in advanced age.

While the three notions discussed in this chapter, the habitual, the relational and the precarious, are presented separately, existentially and pragmatically they co-exist. They are inseparable in the context of being in the everyday and of experiencing the situations of everyday life.

The Habitual

The habitual is, by its very nature, taken-for-granted. Habits underpin the unthinking manner of people going about their day. The participants who tell their stories in this chapter had most of their lives behind them. As such, they came into each day having already experienced innumerable other days and events throughout their life course. In conversation, they spoke of doing the mundane, always-there things in their day, of responding to things which unexpectedly appeared and of making time to do things which particularly interested them. Talk about ‘yesterday’ revealed remarkable similarities in the daily patterns, yet each story was uniquely personal, revealing a personal rhythm and flow of occupations. Curly’s story stands out. He said:

Yesterday, Monday, was just another one of those days as far as I was concerned. I usually rise about 7, 7:30, make myself a cup of tea, and listen to the 8 o’clock news. Then I have my breakfast, wash the dishes, and do whatever is necessary. If I have no odd jobs to do around the place then I will start reading. Or I play patience. I played a game or two of patience yesterday; I always find it interesting. Then I read the paper and I made lunch. I always have a nap every afternoon for an hour and a half, or a couple of hours, which I think is very beneficial. So yesterday, after my nap I made a cup of tea and started preparation

for my evening meal. Then I played some music. I play a lot of music. I am very fond of music. I have a whole lot of CDs, tapes and records; some old records; plenty of them. At five o'clock I had a glass of sherry, which is another thing that I think is good for me, and at six o'clock I listened to the news on the television. I am never at a loss; I can always turn to do something [Curly, 97].

As Curly describes his Monday as *just another one of those days*, his recounting of occurrences yesterday naturally blends with those that occur every day. Much like other days, yesterday he simply attended to his ordinary, daily concerns. And in saying he did *whatever is necessary*, Curly hints at doing the things which enable him to be, and to remain, where he is; living alone at home. Doing the necessary sustains his mode of going about his life in ways he is comfortable with. Additionally, Curly mentions doing the necessary first. Then, only *if* he has no *odd jobs* to do, he does other things. His words uncover a determination, a resoluteness, in pursuing a preferred way of being in his day. The indispensable things which are always there bring a temporal structure to his day. That is, in getting his *breakfast, lunch and evening meal* as well as having his *nap* and his *glass of sherry* at regular times, Curly's day already holds something to do at the beginning, the middle and the end. Being in a routine is a compelling and necessary way of going about his day. His routine evokes a sense of order and certainty in keeping on. Thus, the things Curly concerns himself with seem to speak to who he is as well as how he goes about his days in living alone as a 97-year-old. Being in a daily routine is an embodied experience of being in, and knowing how to go about, the day rather than a conceptual activity.

Turning first to Heidegger (1927/1962), the notion of 'Being-in' speaks to the interpretation of routineness as a mode of being engaged with things one ordinarily concerns oneself with. Essentially, the ontological nature of 'Being-in' is the fundamental human state of Being-in-the-world. The 'in' refers not to a spatial relationship but draws its meaning from the archaic German word "*innan*" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 80) meaning 'to reside' or 'to dwell.' It signifies being accustomed to, familiar with, or looking after something. In this way, being-in-the-world is already understood as having the character of everyday familiarity. As Curly says Monday was *just another one of those days*, he communicates a contextual understanding of his being 'there,' in yesterday, "in an everyday manner" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 171). Explained ontologically, the essential nature of being human is therefore not in our ability to think but in "our existing in a place with particular things and established ways of doing things" (Wrathall, 2005, p. 15). In other words, for Curly, being in

a daily routine is a mode of being absorbed or entangled in everyday matters; it is a mode of drifting along in the world. One day follows much like the others. Yet, Heidegger's (1927/1962) understanding of resoluteness as being a disclosing, allows us to hear Curly's determination to continue doing things in his preferred way. Through his daily routine he is "taking a stand for [himself] as a certain kind of person" (Crowe, 2006, p. 189). Curly's everyday routineness is how he is.

Dewey's (1920/1957) notion of 'habit' lines up closely with Heidegger's (1927/1962) understanding of being-in-the-world in an everyday manner. However Dewey's interpretation of habits as consequences of learning does throw a new light on the thinking. Accordingly, habits are "acquired predispositions to *ways* or modes of response" (Dewey, 1922/1957, p. 40). Hence, habits underpin a deeply learned way of functioning within everyday occupations (Cutchin & Dickie, In press). Interpretively, we hear this in Curly saying his daily after-lunch nap and glass of sherry *are very beneficial* for him. His words disclose his learning over time. He habitually engages in these two occupations because they contribute to his healthfulness at 97; they help him keep going day after day. Dewey's pragmatism is underpinned by the assumption that humans tend towards regular and repetitious ways of doing or responding; habits are laid down by previous ways of doing things. In other words, "habit-forming wears grooves....[making] subsequent learning more difficult" (Dewey, 1958, p. 280). In this way, we hear Curly describing the things that are *always* in his day, in the order they are *always* done. Yet, instead of the habitual grooves being fixed or static, Dewey understands habit-forming tendencies as a function of being highly sensitive, and responsive, to environmental complexity. "Each habit demands appropriate conditions for its exercise and when habits are numerous and complex, as with the human organism, to find these conditions involves search and experimentation" (Dewey, 1958, p. 281). Habitual ways, even when seemingly familiar, are always particular to the moment and context. Going further, Dewey's emphasis on morality and social responsibility means he understood habits as being "social or cultural phenomena that entail social relations, social classes, institutions, and customs" (Cutchin, 2007, p. 51S). In this way, Curly's daily routine can be seen to align with his socio-cultural context. His story lights up his valuing autonomy and self-determination. His everyday morality exists, not in a moral theory of goods, but in how the theory plays out in the "existential conditions and consequences" (Dewey, 1958, p. 433) of his everyday life. From a Deweyan perspective, Curly's 'uniquely' individual day is paradoxically situated within entrenched, historical ways of living in New Zealand society (Cutchin, 2007).

In summary, the habitual is, to Heidegger, an ontological mode of ‘being-in’, of dwelling in, the familiar; and to Dewey, a consequence of doing things as they have previously been done. A main distinction is the way Dewey’s pragmatism calls for seeing the social and moral dimensions of everyday situations, and the learning that reinforces a habit as beneficial.

Table 1: Summarising the habitual

The habitual	
Heidegger	Dewey
Being-in-the-world is always about taken-for-granted familiarity and ways	One reflects on habits and learns what is good or bad about them
What we are familiar with is enacted in an un-thinking way	The unthinkingness of habits makes learning more challenging
How one goes about things is how one is	Society shapes us to be how we are, but one also has a moral obligation to shape oneself to be as good as one can
For Heidegger: It’s about uncovering the habits that ‘are’ i.e. an ontological perspective	For Dewey: It’s about understanding our habits so we can improve performance i.e. a pragmatic perspective

The Relational

Just as Heidegger richly describes experiences as always occurring within a context, Dewey speaks to the dynamic nature of person-environment experiences, rejecting dualistic thinking about persons as somehow separate from the environments they inhabit (James, 1904/2005; Shank & Cutchin, 2010). Thinking about how time and relationships play out in a contextual way offers an alternative to habits of thinking in dualisms such as the separation of the past, the present and the future. This opens the way for understanding that the origin of things and history plays out in current situations (Alexander, 2006). In other words, continuities of time and relating exist. Events are continuously constructed and reconstructed over time (James, 1904/2005).

Continuity of time: Past-present-future

While having routines in the day may mean that tomorrow is much like today or yesterday, routineness can bring certainty into everyday occupations. Rather than time being

a measurable, linear phenomenon, the stories illuminate the complex temporal nature of experiences as they are lived. The following story was told by Ferguson in his 98th year of life. He had already mentioned there was a lot he could not do now. When offered the opportunity of having a photograph taken, doing something he enjoyed, he chose having a whiskey. He went on to say:

I still like a drink but not as much as I used to. I don't suppose the day will come when that stops. I had a good port there and that's finished. This is the last of my Teacher's whiskey. They haven't made that whiskey for I don't know how long. I got a case when it was going off the market and that's the last bottle of it there. They were supposed to see me out. It looks like I will still be alive to see that finished. I like a scotch. I never was much fond of beer. The only time I drank a lot of beer was when I was younger. We used to come from Auckland on the truck and the first stop was the Albany Pub and we used to get a case, always a case of beer. There used to be a lot of pine trees about half way along the road from Albany to Long Bay. We used to stop at the pine trees and drink our beer there. We would go through a case amongst six of us; all in Big Bertha the truck; every weekend [Ferguson, 97].

As his story unfolds we hear a timeless flow in Ferguson's being in the moment, *still liking a drink*, to having a drink in the days still to come, and remembering back to buying the case of whiskey that *was supposed to see him out*. The words disclose his wonderment. How is it that he is still going while *his Teacher's whiskey* is almost gone? He always expected he would be the first to go. In the moment, while sitting enjoying a whiskey, Ferguson is suddenly entangled in his memories of having a drink. The events from his distant past, when he and his friends would always *stop at the pine trees* to enjoy their beer, were always, already with him. In this way, Ferguson's story reveals his past and future as being part of having this glass of whiskey. Although his days of drinking beer at the pine trees have long since passed, the experience is still with Ferguson. His enduring experience of enjoying a drink seamlessly connects occurrences distanced by time.

Turning to Heideggerian philosophy, Ferguson's sudden reflection back to times gone by does not mean he is living in the past; rather it shows how the past remains present to him. "The past' belongs irretrievably to an earlier time; it belonged to the events of that time; and in spite of that, it can still be present-at-hand 'now'" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 430). In other words, Ferguson's memories exist as a remnant of events in his history. It means the

memorable moments in bygone times are not entirely 'gone.' In this sense, history is "that which is past, but which nevertheless is still having effects" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 430). Through remembering, the historical is still present-at-hand, within everyday experiences. It shows that memories matter in advanced age. Yet Ferguson also thinks about enjoying a whiskey in the days to come. To Heidegger, dwelling is, at the same time, one of being in the past, present and future.

Dewey's transactionalism deepens the interpretation of Ferguson's story in similar, yet different, ways. As it did for Heidegger, time matters in Dewey's way of thinking (Boisvert, 1998). Memories are past situations relived (Dewey, 1920/1957). Yet, while Heidegger's understandings disclose how Being-in-the-world is, ontologically, a mode of being in the past, present and future at the same time, acting in the world is merely implied (Cutchin, Aldrich, Bailliard, & Coppola, 2008). On the other hand, Dewey's emphasis on people acting in the world opens up a situated understanding of how "the remote and the past are 'in' behaviour making it what it is" (Dewey, 1958, p. 279). In other words, in the continuity of time, thinking and acting in the present is related to situations separated by time and space (Dewey, 1958). Applying this way of thinking to Ferguson's story, we interpret how his choosing to have a whiskey in this situation was already "charged with echoes and reminiscences of what has gone before" (Dewey, 1920/1957, p. 1). It is Dewey's inclusion of human imagination that is revealing. He reasoned that "the past is recalled not because of itself but because of what it adds to the present" (Dewey, 1920/1957, p. 2). That is, memories become stories with dramatic structure that convey emotional importance to the listener. Memories also guide responses to the situation encountered. Ferguson's imagination allows him to consider alternatives to his present situation (Boisvert). He knows that one drink will be his last, but which one? The question of 'will I or won't I' is never far from his mind. Rehearsed in his imagination, Ferguson's 'dramatic tale' conveys a rethinking of his plan to have a case of whiskey that would out-last him. He will need more to see him through to the end of his days.

In addition to the relational nature of time, Ferguson's words hint toward his younger days of drinking as more about being with his mates. Having outlived his friends, enjoying a whisky offers a moment of being-alone-with his memories-of-mates. Continuity of relating exists in everyday experiences.

Drawing this section to a close, Heidegger's notion of being in the world means we are always in a temporal context. Existing is being in time. Distinctively, Dewey brings in a way

of understanding how our capacity to imagine alternative futures means we can change our actions in a thoughtful way.

Table 2: Summarising continuity of time

The relational: Continuity of time	
Heidegger	Dewey
Being-in-the-world is being in the past, present and future at the same time	The past, present and future are non-dualistic; they co-exist
The past can be present-at-hand in our current experiences	Engaging with memories is a reliving of past situations
Acting in the world is implied through experiences	The past influences how we think and act now
Being is always being-towards possibilities	Human imagination allows us to consider alternative actions over time
For Heidegger: We are always within time i.e. an ontological perspective	For Dewey: Understanding time informs our intelligent action i.e. a pragmatic perspective

Continuity of relating: Being-with-others

May’s story is offered next to illustrate the transactional nature of relating to others over time. As an elder Maori, she tells of her yesterday; a time of being-with her grandchildren:

Yesterday, I had a house full of grandchildren. They were at the school because they had a game of rugby and they all came back from there with their grandfather. I was sitting here watching TV when they came in.... there must have been about 24 of them, and they are all my mokos¹. Oohh, OK I thought, I’ll get something together.... Well I just brought out what I had in the cupboard. I got out a big pot and I cooked six of these packet dinners which make up a lot. It didn’t take long, only a couple of minutes. And they quite enjoyed it when I set my table up for them and it wasn’t long after that they were all sitting down around the table. Some fitted around the table and some were sitting on the couch. There you are, there you are, and they were quite happy.... I felt lovely knowing that all my

¹ Mokos is an abbreviation of mokopuna; the Maori term for grandchild or grandchildren (Moorfield, 1988).

mokos were all satisfied.... Well, there might be a time when they have got a family of their own and they do the same thing as I did for them yesterday. I gave them a lesson and hopefully that will come through for them in the future. Well on the marae², for the whanau³ that comes in, the old people always make sure that the family has kai.⁴ This is how we were taught [May, 77].

In this story, May describes her yesterday which suddenly changed from one of restful solitude to having *a house full of grandchildren*. Amid the unexpected, May's story reveals a sure-ness in what was called for. Without hesitating she knew to *get something together*. Knowing to provide for her visitors reaches back into her past, to *how she was taught*. These teachings were not formal lessons; they came through being on the marae. Rather than teach by telling, May's elders, through enacting the tribal ways, showed her what to do. As such, May's Maori heritage opens the way for her to know how to be with her mokopuna as their elder. Her preparedness is situated in her ancestral past. At the same time, she gave her grandchildren *a lesson* to serve their future by passing on the traditional ways. Thus May's way of being with her grandchildren yesterday was also a mode of having her ancestors 'with' her.

The human entity's (Dasein) co-existence in the world is fundamental to Heidegger's (1927/1962) ontological understanding of the meaning of being. Accordingly, "the world of Dasein is a *with-world*" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 155); meaning we can never be fully alone, even when no-one else is present. As humans, the situated nature of being-in-the-world is always a mode of 'Being-with-Others.' That is, our ways of being in the everyday are co-determined. Interpreting May's story, the moment of knowing to provide food for her visiting grandchildren was disclosed to her through her early times of being with the tribal elders. Even though her elders have long since passed-on, they are still 'with' her as she goes about her day. May's deeply held understandings of how to be a Maori elder are disclosed to her and 'call' or appeal to her to provide food. Ontologically, "the call comes *from* [her] and yet *from beyond* [her]."

Whereas Heidegger thought in terms of everyday moments or encounters, Dewey embedded his thinking in everyday 'situations.' In doing so, Dewey set out to convey the idea that actions are not a consequence of a single event or even a set of events. They occur within

² A marae is the meeting place of people who share ancestors and place

³ Whanau refers to the extended family

⁴ Kai is the Maori term for food (Moorfield, 1988).

situations that are contextually whole (Campbell, 1995). As in the hermeneutic circle, understanding particular events adds to the understanding of the whole situation. And understanding more about the situation itself enables a greater understanding of the single events it entails. Interpreting this in the context of May’s story reveals how the events of being with and watching her elders, all those years ago, and the call to pass on the tribal ways to her descendents, come together in the situation of providing for her visitors. She only comes to understand the meaning of passing ancestral ways on through the situation she suddenly finds herself in. The meaning of everyday activities is acquired. Here, Dewey’s thinking about social customs as being shared habits of solving everyday problems adds further understanding (Campbell, 1995). In May’s giving her grandchildren *a lesson* yesterday, she set created a determinant for how they will be with extended family through their future actions. She acts to pass on cultural customs. Hence Mays actions yesterday can be seen as being “saturated with story and transmitted meaning” (Campbell, 1995, p. 125). More than this, Deweyan thinking means her customary beliefs were consolidated through her experience (Capps & Capps, 2005). May’s interactions reveal a continuity of relating both with those who have gone before and those who are yet to come. The human experience is one of connectedness (Hollis, 1977). This continuity is part of who we are in our everyday lives.

To summarise, being in the world is, to Heidegger, a mode of being with others regardless of the context one is in. Even when no-one else is present, we are still ‘with’ others in the world through our memories, our feelings, our experiences. The distinguishing feature that Dewey brings is his account of culture. Our customary ways of doing things are determined through our community and social relationships.

Table 3: Summarising continuity of relating

The relational: Continuity of relating	
Heidegger	Dewey
Being-in-the-World is always a mode of ‘being-with’ other people	Our past relationships become determinants for our current, situated actions
Because we co-exist in the world, we can never be fully alone	Social customs & cultural ways are for the group, what habits are for the individual
In everyday moments we can still ‘be with’ those who are absent or who have passed on	The human experience is always one of connectedness
For Heidegger:	For Dewey:

We are always in a with-world

i.e. an ontological perspective

Understanding how relationships determine behaviour informs ongoing action

i.e. a pragmatic perspective

The Precarious

There are things done in a usual day that are so deeply familiar they do not call for thinking; they are just done. It is this very characteristic which shows as lost when the accustomed experience is suddenly not there. Experiencing the unaccustomed is not a thing outside the body, like encountering an unfamiliar object; it is an embodied in-the-world encountering. It is an experience of things simply not being right. Talk of such events tumbled out in the midst of elders' stories of going about the ordinarily mundane everyday events. Christina was telling of her engagement in music:

I have to present a cup for music at the local College prize giving each year and last year they had a temporary stairway placed in front of the stage. It had 15 steps...and for the first time in my life I felt a bit uneasy going up the steps. My sight has been weak all my life but the hesitation is unusual. So, I didn't go up the steps. The headmaster was quite gallant and came down the stairs to me. I presented the cup at the base of the steps instead of going up. Now I had gone up the steps at the side of the stage for 12 years, but the new temporary stairs with no supports were a bit worrying to me. But that is a bit strange for me because I had never even thought about going up stairs before. The hesitation was most unusual for me because I have 14 stairs here and I used to run up and down them....This was something where I hesitated, especially with the steps, and that annoys me [Christina, 93].

Christina discloses feeling *a bit uneasy* on the stairs as being a first-ever concern for her. Her uneasiness comes in the moment of anticipating being on the stage presenting the music award. We hear her sense of being taken-aback as she has *never thought about* going up steps before, she just has. On other occasions the steps were just there. But in this event, the stairway's readiness-to-hand withdraws. Christina encounters the stairs in a way that is unaccustomed and troubling. Her hesitation does not seem right as Christina compares 'these' steps on 'this' day with the stairs in her usual day. She ordinarily goes about her day, going up and down stairs without thinking about the going up or the going down. But the stage stairs are suddenly not there for her in the usual way. The hesitating holds Christina back

from being on the stage to present the music award. She is suddenly attentive to how uncomfortable she feels in the midst of this usually familiar activity.

Ontologically, the stairway's usual readiness-to-hand can be seen to withdraw (Heidegger, 1927/1962). The stairs are not at her disposal in the usual way. Christina experiences the uncomfortableness of the unaccustomed and hesitates. Heidegger talks about the 'uncanniness' of experiencing the unfamiliar. He uses the German word "*unheimlich*" which literally translates as "*unhomely*" (King, 2001, p. 96). Conversely, canniness is characterised by 'just knowing what to do' as occurs in a 'without thinking' engagement. In a mode characterised by uncanniness, or anxiety, the person is brought back from his or her absorption in the customary. Heidegger describes the experience as being one in which "everyday familiarity collapses....Being-in enters into the existential 'mode' of the '*not-at-home*'" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 233). Just as Christina speaks of finding these *new temporary stairs* as standing between her and being on the stage, not-at-homeness is always situated. Experiencing it is at all times "thisly" (Harman, 2007, p.28). It presents while doing this thing, in this place, at this time. As such, not-being-at-home may spring into the light or remain in the shadows in any one moment; it is not predictable.

Returning to view the story through a Deweyan lens offers a different, yet similar, way of thinking about Christina's experience. Everything is transacted in a context. "The world is a scene of risk; it is uncertain, unstable, uncannily unstable" (Dewey, 1958, p. 41). Accordingly, Dewey describes stability and instability as existing in a non-dualistic way. Stability and precariousness, then, coexist within all situations. "The stable exists amid and because of the precariousness and vice versa" (Alexander, 2006, p. 190). In other words, the shakiness of Christina's actions (her hesitating) only occurs because she is so used to going up and down stairs in an unthinking way. So, even though a stairway seems solid, unchanging, Dewey's thinking suggests "no one thing is completely stable or precarious; the question is one of degree, cause, and consequences" (Alexander, 2006, p. 190). Hence the precarious can present itself in any situation. For Christina, at 93, her hesitating causes her to rethink being up on the stage. We 'hear' her worry, not of the stairs themselves, but of falling, of hurting herself, of the embarrassment in front of such a large audience. Instead she waited. As a consequence, she simply presented the music award from the bottom of the steps. She still did what she went there to do.

In summary, Heidegger speaks of the comfortableness of experiencing things in an accustomed way, and the uncomfortableness in the moment of experiencing the

unaccustomed or unfamiliar. An important difference with Dewey’s account of the world as being both stable and precarious is how we can learn from such experiences and change how we act.

Table 4: Summarising the precarious

The precarious	
Heidegger	Dewey
An uncomfortable experience of ‘not-being-at-home’ arises in the midst of the unfamiliar	The world is a risky place
We come to experience the familiarity of something when it is gone	Stability and instability exist as non-dualistic characteristics in the world
Not-at-homeness is particular to the context and is not predictable	The precarious can happen, influencing the consequences of what we do
For Heidegger: Not-at-homeness is part of our human experience i.e. an ontological perspective	For Dewey: Understanding the precarious can determine future plans i.e. a pragmatic perspective

Occupational Practice as Listening

The stories shared in this chapter show how Heidegger’s and Dewey’s philosophies can light up and deepen understandings of elders’ engagement in everyday occupations. They reveal how theoretical understandings of aging come up short. Theories are not enough to ‘hear’ what it is to be in the everyday in advanced age. To hear beyond the facts, the myths and the common assumptions about aging and the aged, calls for another approach. It calls for ‘listening’ for that which is hidden from the outside; the experience being in the everyday in advanced age. Bringing these ideas forward into the world of practice, it implies practitioners who listen in different ways, beyond the self-evident and the taken-for-granted, will have richer understandings to call on when making practice decisions. Fiumara (1990) refers to “the listening attitude” (p. 145). It is a ‘way of listening’ that influences not only what the practitioner hears but also what the person is drawn to say. Listening is a mode of ‘inviting.’ It invites talking openly and reflecting deeply. Listening is also a mode of ‘showing.’ It shows that experiences are heard, understood and affirmed. Hence, listening is a way of informing practice through being attuned to what is otherwise merely hinted at. The questions which ‘need’ to be asked in the moment will come in the midst of listening. As such, ‘practice as listening’ is not a turning away from the doing of practice but a turning

towards it. Practice as listening invites conversation in the direction of what is ordinarily covered over. Thus, listening also involves silence which opens up the space for that which may be said.

Fiumara's (1990) listening attitude as a way of informing practice lines up alongside Dewey's transactionalism as being a way of thinking. Put another way, a transactional approach calls for an 'attitude or "habit of mind"' (Jackson, 2006, p. 60) that aims to deeply understand experiences in order to find solutions to everyday challenges. Dewey's pragmatic approach is deeply moral. It is "a way of employing intelligence for the betterment of humankind in general and of the individual in particular" (Jackson, 2006, p. 60).

Conclusion and Key Points

Both Heidegger's and Dewey's thinking dwelled in the complex realm of ordinary, everyday human existence. This means there are fundamental points which seem to line up in their philosophies, and those that diverge. In spite of those differences, both Dewey's transactionalism and Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology can inform a way of thinking, a listening attitude, that guides how we come to think about, and understand peoples' occupational experiences.

This chapter has approached the conundrum of understanding how Heideggerian phenomenology and Deweyan transactionalism might inform an occupational understanding of the world through sharing four ordinary stories told by elder New Zealanders, aged 77 to 97 years. In turn, and collectively, the stories told by Curly, Ferguson, May, and Christina allow the reader to listen for the way notions of the habitual, the relational, and the precarious can play out through doing everyday occupations. Intentionally, the text aimed to light up what bringing in a transactional lens, alongside a phenomenological lens, can add to our understandings of occupational engagement. Both approaches have their place; the Heideggerian perspective illuminates the experiences and meanings of understandings of being in the world while the Deweyan perspective reveals understandings of acting thoughtfully in the world of everyday situations.

In bringing the chapter to a close, one question is left; 'how might the practitioner or researcher know when to choose a Heideggerian versus a Deweyan perspective?' We suggest it will be when the fundamental notions appeal; that is, when the basic underpinnings feel right. Essentially, Heidegger wanted to know what 'is.' Heidegger's truth is grounded in a primordial disclosure of things as they exist in the world. In contrast, Dewey wanted to know

what works. Dewey's truth is only validated if it solves practical problems in the real world (Blattner, 2000). In relation to understanding the world of human occupation more deeply, both have their distinctive place.

Key Points

The philosophies of Dewey and Heidegger both offer rich guidance in understanding peoples' everyday existence

Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology offers a way of thinking about that which is ordinarily concealed in peoples' engagement within everyday occupations

Dewey's transactionalism offers a way of thinking about human responsibilities and thoughtful ways of responding to occupational challenges in everyday situations

Bringing a 'listening attitude' to peoples' stories about doing ordinary, occupations is a harbinger to deep understanding

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