Podcast Series with Professor Miles:

On Boss's Monograph "Anxiety, Guilt, and Psychotherapeutic Liberation"

Rafi: Today we'll be talking on our podcast about a towering figure - a true founder of Daseinanalysis - Medard Boss, and one of his most important works: the 1962 monograph *Anxiety, Guilt, and Psychotherapeutic Liberation*. Miles, you've worked on Boss's legacy and on this exact paper for decades. Forgive me for shooting three questions at once:

(1) Who is Medard Boss?

(2) Why is this particular paper so important?

(3) Why is the title incorrect?

Miles: Well, you know, this is so interesting, because it's of central importance to me - and for the future of Daseinsanalysis - to know how it came to be extracted from psychoanalysis, differentiated from it, and from psychiatry. Of course, Boss was intimately connected with the latter professionally, but he also had other areas of interest that are not so well known and not so obvious yet were determinative for what Daseinsanalysis is.

He was born in the lovely town of St. Gallen in Switzerland - a small place. His father was Boss-Schmid, a hospital administrator. When he was young, Boss was drawn to drawing and painting, painters and paintings. His first interest was to become a painter. His parents said, "Sure, you can go and have some lessons in painting," and at quite an early age he did. Later in his life he bought important paintings by modern painters and had a very expensive collection. I don't remember which painting it was, but he once sold one of them, which he had bought early on, to buy an entire farm for one of his children in Brazil.

He came home and said to his father, "I want to be a painter. The painting teacher said I'm a wonderful painter and artist." And Papa said, "No, you're not. You're too young to know. It's too early."

"Well, what should I do?" he asked.

Roaming the hospital with his father, he became interested in what the doctors were doing. So, he put aside the plan to go to art school and instead went to medical school — more or less to please his father and because he was assured that if he did this, he'd have a means of earning a living. And he could always paint while being a doctor, which he continued to do throughout his life. He had a great interest in the visual arts.

He went to medical school, and there he was drawn to psychoanalysis and psychiatry. He eventually became a student of Eugen Bleuler, who had invented schizophrenia — or at least given a name to something we have known as schizophrenia since then.

In his early twenties he went on a kind of young man's tour before settling. He went to Vienna, among other places, on his tour of big cities. He went by himself, as Europeans tended to do in those days, roaming around for a year or two before settling down. He contacted Sigmund Freud and asked if he could be in analysis with him for a period of time. And he was — not many sessions, but some. This is recorded in an obituary by John Condrau when Boss died in 1990, and also in two interviews: one from the 1960s for Psychology Today and one in the 1980s with Eric Craig.

After finishing medicine and psychiatry residency, he did formal psychoanalytic training with Hans von Eschenbach, who was a member of the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society. Thus, he had all the credentials: a medical doctor, a psychoanalyst, with hospital experience. Freud, as you know, was not a psychiatrist, and his attraction to Jung was partly because Jung was a psychiatrist in a major hospital. Boss straddled both. His contact with Freud was brief, but his contact with Jung lasted ten years. Jung was Swiss, and Boss dove deep into the sorts of things Freud eventually said Jung was "putting his head into": archetypes, deep forces, the spiritual dimension. Boss was fascinated by it - not for days or weeks, but for ten years. He became familiar

with Jung's research on other philosophies and religious practices. He read about Eastern religious practices, which had drawn Jung's attention. So here we have someone who likes to paint, continues to paint, would readily go to an art museum, and probably preferred it if he had time for only one thing. When I visited his apartment and office, there were lots of books about painters lining his shelves. I didn't see many books on psychiatry or psychology - mostly books on painters and art. He bought paintings by Matisse and Cézanne back when they were cheap.

He was a small man - stout, big head, lots of hair. I like to describe him as patrician. He had that kind of dignified, formal self-presentation. But behind the scenes, I believe he was a very different kind of man. He was complicated - as most great people are. They're not one-dimensional.

In addition to working in Jung's hospital and having his own personal analysis, he was reading Indian literature and further Eastern religious practices, which fascinated him all his life. Then the war came. He served as an officer - doctors were needed, so they made them officers - but he didn't have much to do, because Switzerland was not very involved in fighting. He started to read. He heard about Heidegger, saw a small article in a newspaper, got one of his books, and started reading. He didn't understand any of it at first. But he eventually wrote to Heidegger and got a response. They became friends.

And so here is this painter/medical doctor/psychiatrist/psychoanalyst who now becomes a thinker. And the only reason Heidegger would have taken him on is that he saw in Boss not only someone interested in the arts and sciences, but someone willing to think - and rather late in life. Boss was 43 when they began their communication. He was already 43 - the very age at which you began your own path in daseinanalysis. It's late in life, particularly if you've been successful as a hospital psychiatrist. You both could have psychoanalytic practice and be done. But he was restless. By 1956 or so, he was thinking about places outside Europe. Between the time he met Heidegger and the mid-1950s, he was invited to speak to medical doctors in India about psychiatry - not psychoanalysis, not Heidegger - simply psychiatry. There were very few psychiatrists in India. He went in 1956 and again in 1958. At that point he was around 50 or 51. Again: late in life. In India he taught in hospitals but began to question his whole life. In a sense, the artist in Boss resurfaced - the one whose way of looking at things is more intuitive than calculative. This attracted him to Heidegger: the immediate emotional attunement to the world, more basic than what we later calculate and put into words. He appreciated that there was much that could not be put into words. What you put on a canvas - a Matisse or a Cézanne - you put in oil because you cannot put it into words. At the same time, he was earning his living as a psychoanalyst, where everything is words. So, these two influences - art and Eastern thought - mingled with Heidegger. He returned to India again in 1964. But the trips in 1956 and 1958 led to his book "The Travels in India of a Psychiatrist", which I believe is his most personal and insightful book. It was published in 1959 - the same year Heidegger gave his first lecture in Zürich. This book predates Heidegger's influence on Boss's Daseinsanalysis. In it you find the seeds of what Daseinsanalysis would become.

In 1952, before all this, he had given a very important lecture for a U.S.-funded radio station in West Berlin. It was intended for the general public, including listeners in East Berlin. This text is essential, because it shows how he presented Daseinsanalysis in plain language. He said:

"Daseinsanalysis is neither a philosophy nor inherently a psychotherapeutic way of perceiving psychotherapy. It is a new empirical research method - empirical in the basic sense of going after experience and concrete experience - a way of looking at things from psychology and psychiatry."

And he said it would be of "inestimable significance" for two reasons:

(1) it forces us to examine the basic presuppositions of psychology and psychiatry for their adequacy to the essence of man,

(2) it opens new possibilities for concrete research in those disciplines.

Its simple demand, he said, is to abandon preconceived abstractions and return to directly given phenomena - letting things and people reveal knowledge of their essence from out of themselves, from their unique way of appearing, rather than from what we impose upon them.

As early as 1952 he could say this not only because of Heidegger but because of his background in art and Eastern philosophy.

Later, in 1970, Boss wrote a foreword to a book of poems by his guru in India. In it he describes how, at around age 50, despite being a successful psychiatrist and academic teacher, he was in despair. Many of the best authorities in his field had been his teachers, yet he still lacked any real understanding of the essence and meaning of human existence. His patients suffered from the same thing. He realized that the scientific approach could only manipulate the human body skillfully, not understand human existence. So, he sought help outside the Western world. He went to India again, met many learned and saintly individuals, and finally encountered a Swami from Kashmir. They shared an immediate, non-verbal, pre-verbal understanding. In the Swami's presence, his torturing questions were stilled. He later learned meditation from him and practiced it for the rest of his life. Boss said he could not have fulfilled his heavy tasks as a doctor and teacher without this "fountainhead of mental strength." For me, that is the story of Medard Boss: a late-midlife crisis met by two powerful sources - Eastern philosophy and Heidegger's thinking - overlapping, transforming him into one of the unique figures in the Western tradition of the "cure of souls." And that is where we are with Daseinsanalysis today.

Rafi: That was a magnificent portrait, Miles — a whole life condensed into a living context for what daseinanalysis eventually became. Now that we have this background — the painter, the doctor, the psychoanalyst, the restless seeker, the late disciple of Heidegger — let's turn to the work itself.

Let's dive into the monograph, *Anxiety, Guilt, and Psychotherapeutic Liberation*.

Miles: The text appeared both as a journal article and as a monograph, a small book. Both in 1962. The English version came first, and then the German. The footnote to the journal article says that it was a lecture given at a Conference on Existential Psychotherapy under the auspices of the American Association of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, in February of 1962, here in the States. Then, in November of that year, it was given in German. So it seems the English version came first and was then turned into a small book for Boss' German readers. Still, I'm not entirely sure—it's possible he wrote it first in German and then translated it for February 1962.

Why all this talk about dates and languages? Because when it appeared in 1962 the title had already betrayed a problem. The English title *Anxiety, Guilt, and Psychotherapeutic Liberation* misrepresents what Boss was actually talking about, which the German title indicates.

We read "anxiety" and think about depression, symptoms, neuroses; we read "guilt" and think of conscience, morality, remorse; we read "psychotherapeutic liberation" and think that sounds straightforward enough. But for Boss, none of these three English terms really fit.

The German title is *Lebensangst, Schuldgefühle und psychotherapeutische Befreiung*.

Now:

- *Lebensangst* is not "anxiety." It means literally "fear of life," "dread of life." And this is not to be confused with a psychological symptom, anxiousness or anxiety.
- *Schuldgefühle* is not "guilt" but "feelings of guilt." This is not to be confused with moral sentiment.
- *Befreiung* is not exactly "liberation" but "freeing up," "setting free," and so making movement possible.

So, all three notions are misrepresented in the English title. How did this happen? Again, we are not entirely sure, but the heading of the first section gives it away. There, Boss writes in English: *"Anxiety and Guilt as Basic Powers in Human Lives."*

You see - he's not talking about a symptom (nervousness, even agitation). He's not talking about moral stance, like remorse or conscience. He's talking about existential structures as basic powers of *Dasein* for human life. He's talking about two of Heidegger's existentials from *Being and Time*: *Angst* and *Schuld*. So, if you read past the title and into the first section's heading, you realize he is really writing about something positive, not symptoms. If you read on this with that in mind, you realize what you're really going to hear about are basic elements of the structure of *Dasein* of which there are many more, perhaps as many as 30 that can be teased out of the pages of *Being and Time*.

Now, in this longish monograph - long for a paper, though small book as a book - Boss will also talk about neurotic anxiety, and about feelings of guilt in the ordinary sense - a sense that I have done something wrong and expect punishment for it.

To begin with, however, we have to be clear about *Angst* and *Schuld* as powers unique to *Dasein*.

He writes that many regard them as more powerful, more basic even than hunger and love. They would be indeed very powerful then. The point is that if there is something more powerful than hunger and love - the great driving forces of human beings would be these two existentials. Hunger, drives, appetites, needs - is very powerful, of course, but unlike other creatures, we are also driven by love. Now Boss suggests that these ontological existentials - *Angst* and *Schuld* - are perhaps even more powerful. He suggests that anxiety and guilt are considered in many quarters to be what, in the words of the poet, *bind the world inwardly together.* And further, if fear had not driven the earliest forms of life to preserve themselves by reactions of flight and if inhibitions had not bridled the aggressiveness of animals toward other members of the same species, life on this planet would have annihilated itself long before it succeeded in producing man, allegedly the crown of evolution.

Now, that's how Boss opens the monograph. I think it's easy to misread. It sounds like *merely* an evolutionary perspective. But if Boss, following Heidegger, is talking about *Dasein,* then he is talking about features of human existence, not animal life. Which raises the question: Why put it in these evolutionary terms? Why not simply say what Heidegger says about *existentialia* - structures of human life that set us apart?

One of Heidegger's chief arguments - and this is very much in the background for Boss - is that we are as individuals in the power of our uniqueness. Our thrown condition is puzzling, inexplicable. We don't know where it comes from. Indeed, we don't know where we come from. But we do know it sets us apart from animals. Heidegger is very critical of (that is, he wishes to clarify) Aristotle's definition of the human being as *zoon logon echon* - the living being that *has* language - which in Latin becomes *animal rationale*, the rational animal. Heidegger says: No, we are precisely not animals. We are not simply a living being with the addition of language. The entire tradition from Aristotle, through its Latin translation, through Descartes, culminating in Hegel and Nietzsche, and on into our times, is for Heidegger misleading.

Yes, our bodies function like those of other living creatures—*Lebewesen*, mammals like orangutans or chimpanzees. But because we are *possessed* by language, our being is entirely different. There is a quantum leap - borrowing the modern physics expression - between the smartest animal trained to remember a few words and the human being. What Aristotle understood, according to Heidegger, is that language and the "having" are about our being "had" (possessed) by language. Language is not something we acquire.

This is evident even in very young children, who show this difference long before mastering language. Experimental psychology today reminds us of something important, that as early as nine months after birth, it is essential to talk to infants. They are called *infants* because they are *infans*—without speech. But they are already falling under the spell of language. To be spoken to, even though they have no idea what is being said, is to be drawn further into language. Through the relationship - especially with the mother - they become possessed by language. That's why we call the first language learned the "mother tongue." So, we are possessed by language thanks to this relationship, and that marks our decisive difference from animals.

Back then to Boss' point: we are talking about existential powers, not symptoms, not anxiety as nervousness when we say *Angst*. Not moral conscience when we say *Schuld*. But something much more basic.

Boss says *Angst* is a positive power—it propels us into the future. We are always concerned about what will happen, though we don't know what it will be. We care about it, and that care opens the future. My cat may know what is likely to happen, but she does not care about anything other than to get out of harm's way if it is potentially dangerous. She doesn't concern herself with what the situation means. She feels hunger for the food she smells, but she does not concern herself over it. She just goes for it. She doesn't care about diet, nutrition, metabolism. So, *Angst* is positive. For Heidegger and for Boss, it is the anticipation of the future as meaningful. It is other than a reaction to a stimulus as the behaviorists have suggested.

The upshot is that we are always somewhat ahead of ourselves, anticipating what is to come. So perhaps one way of translating *Angst* - a way not often offered - is "in anticipation of." Not "anxious," but "anticipatory." Existence itself unfolds always in anticipation of . . ., always in anticipation of something to do, to make or to say, for example. Always somewhat ahead of ourselves, we are then never simply in "the present" as a dividing line, like a vbar (|) on the line running from past to future. We are always making the present by anticipating what is to come.

Now, to *Schuld*. It is not conscience. It is not, as Kant said, evidence of the deontological "moral law within me" and as powerful as "the stars above me." Heidegger, and Boss following him, mean something else: indebtedness, always being in arrears.

How is this positive? It is an element of our facticity - the way things are for us. Every choice I make leaves behind other choices that could have been made. Every realized possibility means that many are foreclosed. This accumulates. All that I could have done increases with the years. Every choice puts me even further in debt to the unchosen. Over a lifetime, one chooses: Shall I marry? Shall I father a child? Shall I move somewhere else or stay where I am? What shall I study? What shall I do with my life? Be a plumber, a surgeon, a musician? Each choice closes off other paths. Of course, in some cases I may be able to sustain two or more ways of life. Think of a da Vinci or an Albert Schweitzer. Yes, think of this man: Bach specialist, theologian, medical doctor.

Some choices preclude other choices. To father a child is a commitment of ten to fifteen years of care and that now means not being able to go off on an exploration mission on the high seas. Other projects - professional, artistic - may become impossible or have to be put on hold. If a woman decides not to have children, that too is a choice, but then she misses the incomparable experience of welcoming a child into the human community - of being loved by a child regardless of her economic means or physical appearance.

So, every choice means indebtedness to things not done. That is what Heidegger means by *Schuld*. Not moral guilt, but ontological indebtedness. This is why "guilt" is a poor English word here - it drags in morality and law. Just as "anxiety" is poor for *Angst* - it drags in psychiatry, psychology, psychopathology.

Boss begins with this. Later in the monograph he will discuss ontic manifestations such as neurotic anxiety, feelings of guilt resulting from remorse, but only after making clear that the ontological structures - *Angst* and *Schuld* - are something very different.

It became important for Boss to confront Freud, who created the „whole climate of opinion" (Auden) in which we still live. But Boss wants to challenge that. His aim is to show how these two basic existential powers - more basic even than appetites or love - are to be understood in terms of the therapeutic encounter. And the goal of that encounter? The freeing up of an individual for his or her possibilities, for existence.

And let me add one telling detail: this is the only book Boss dedicated to his children—Martin, Urs Christian, and Maia. He dedicated other books to Heidegger, to colleagues, but this one had special meaning. That matters, given the theme.

Rafi: If I understand you well, what you're showing, Miles, is that the entire monograph is easy to misread if one approaches it with the usual psychological vocabulary in mind. Boss's english title already invites that mistake - "anxiety," "guilt," "liberation" - words that in English practically pull the reader toward symptoms, morality, and treatment techniques. But once we follow your clarification and hear these terms as Angst and Schuld - as existential powers that shape the very structure of our being - the whole text begins to look different.

Even the evolutionary language at the beginning, which on the surface sounds biological, starts to work almost metaphorically: as a way of showing that these forces precede our deliberate choices, precede psychology, precede even our understanding of ourselves.

And then, when you bring in the decisive role of language - that we are possessed by it, that it draws us into a world of meaning from the very first months of life - it becomes clear that Boss is describing something much deeper than fear or remorse. He's trying to show how anticipation and indebtedness belong to the very architecture of Dasein: the way we "lean into" the future and leave an ever-growing trail of unchosen possibilities behind us.

So perhaps this is the right moment to slow down.

You suggested that some parts of the monograph, especially in English, make it difficult for readers to grasp what Boss is really doing. Maybe we could take a closer look at those passages together?

Miles: Yes, it sounds good. We'll look closely at the text and see where perhaps Boss made it harder for others to understand what he was getting at. There are translation issues, certainly, but with close reading and thoughtful consideration we'll find our way. There's quite a lot to look at in this monograph.

Maybe a synopsis should be my starting point. What I'm going to do is repeat and then add some thoughts to what I've already said about this monograph. It's for people who may not have seen my review and the text as it appeared in English.

So, I think it will be helpful if I read and comment a little, and it'll be more organized. At any point, if you want to stop for some questions, that's fine.

Rafi: Wonderful - a more structured walkthrough will really help set the groundwork. So yes, please take us into the text, Miles. I'll probably jump in with questions as we go.

Miles: The context of the German presentation of this was the rapidly growing importance of psychotherapy in clinical medicine, that is to say in psychiatry, around this time. Psychiatry was just becoming available for larger numbers of people outside of major cities, and on an outpatient basis.

General practitioners, for example, were reading about the usefulness of taking a stance toward their patients that was based on psychoanalytic principles. Sometimes psychiatrists with this background would come from big cities to small towns, perhaps 30 or 40 miles away, and spend a day. In that way, small towns started to become places where people could now go for psychotherapy. But it was still mostly an urban phenomenon (the so-called Northeast Corridor).

Books on mental health were being read more and more by the general population. There was a lot of media interest in the subject. In this context, Boss writes in monograph:

"Psychotherapy was making claims on a steadily growing number of physical ailments, for which until now only purely somatic methods of research and treatment were considered competent."

He had an interest, for example, in psychosomatic studies and conditions that doctors were not able to treat and suspected had a so-called psychological source.

So, many people were being sent to psychiatrists after their medical doctors had said, "You're fine, there's nothing wrong with you, you need to talk to a psychiatrist." Psychotherapy as practiced by psychiatrists or the early humanistic psychologists was just being established as a profession throughout the country.

Boss adds:

"The astonishing spread of psychotherapy is going to force us to learn to see more and more clearly the fundamental inseparability of the physical and the psychic phenomena of human existence, both in its healthy and sick states, and to think much more carefully than before about the constitution of the essence and nature of our unitary capacity for existence."

This is from the monograph, and again it is very much in the tradition of psychosomatic medicine, which drew quite a lot of attention in the 30s, 40s, and 50s, although today it has more or less disappeared. It is now called consultative-liaison psychiatry here in the States.

Boss was a contributor to journals on psychosomatics. If you look at the yearbook *Daseinsanalyse* (1984-) that you and I are familiar with, you'll find that in the subtitle of the journal the word "psychosomatic" is still there.

So that lingers, even though as a discipline it's not taken in the same way that Boss did.

Boss conjectures in this monograph that the trend toward the greater utilization of psychotherapy is only one of many testimonies to a decisive change in the whole spiritual situation of our historical epoch.

This suggests an imminent overcoming of the centuries-old Cartesian division of the world into a realm of the physical and the radically different, immaterial, unextended, immeasurable spiritual. These are the very two parts implied in the notion of psychosomatic.

So, while psychotherapy continued to be interested in the psychosomatic, in Daseinanalysis we see a reverse flow: from differentiation of the psychic and the somatic back to beginning with their unity, or better the lack of a meaningful difference between the two. The psychic and somatic are inventions of the West to serve a particular view of nature and the world.

I would compare the effective non-difference to what you see in Einstein's quantum physics, where energy and matter are the same depending upon how you look at the phenomenon. Similarly, the psychic and the somatic are the same depending upon the way you look at them. Just as we speak of matter-energy, we speak of psychic-somatic. But it is just a manner of speaking considering a tradition inherited that must be gotten behind and beyond. Having had lots of experience with both traditions as doctor and psychologist, Boss thought Daseinanalysis was in a special position to accomplish this.

We talked a little about the title, so I won't repeat it here. But *fear of life* is not "anxiety" as a disturbance of affect, as psychiatrists and psychologists call it. And the feeling of ontological indebtedness is not remorse. He highlights these in the title simply because they are essential for understanding how Daseinanalysis works. What we're trying to do here, as he says, is understand how these are in fact fundamental powers of human being - and in fact something very positive.

We'll come back to the contrast between these ontological notions and our very impoverished language for naming them. Language is not able to do much when fear of life is contrasted with "nervousness" or "agitation," for example. So also, with "paranoia" in connection with guilt, the "Oh, I've done something wrong" inherent to paranoid ideation.

Let me add some detail before moving to new territory. From the Freudian perspective, neurotic anxiety and feelings of being guilty of having done something (might) lead to cognitive shifts in the direction of apprehensiveness or paranoid ideation, respectively. For Freud, these are traceable to events that have set in motion a sequence of processes leading to current experience and behavior. Certain events occurred that caused anxiety or suspiciousness to appear later in life. Here both anxiety and guilt could be traced back to trauma. This is his *traumatogenic* theory: people burdened by anxiety to such an extent they can't function, or so convinced they've done something wrong that they become suspicious and lack independence.

Freud saw this as causal. But Boss says: wait a minute, hold on just a second. Boss says in the text:

"In the reality of psychotherapeutic practice these psychological theories have been far from fulfilling the expectations reposed in them."

In the roughly 40–50 years that psychoanalysis had been on the scene - a long time - given his familiarity with it, he continues:

"An increasing number of psychotherapists can be seen abandoning their hypotheses of anxiety and guilt causation as illusions."

He goes on:

"In point of fact, it has not been possible by psychotherapeutic means to make one single person really free of anxiety and guilt on the basis of these psychological theories, in the way they had promised."

That's a big statement.

The problems related to *hidden* anxiousness and guiltiness (in the ontic sense) - what he calls "boredom neuroses" - are particularly stubborn in refusing to yield to any psychotherapeutic procedure aiming at dismantling conscience. That's from Boss, as he tries to understand psychotherapy's failure to cure people of two major sources of misery. He doesn't include depression here, but he focuses on anxiety and paranoia.

He is writing here for psychotherapists: "You promised a lot and based on psychoanalysis it was supposed to have been probable that you'd have clinical success. But in fact, it doesn't look like that is the case." So, something else is indicated here. To repeat:

"It has not been possible by psychotherapeutic means to make one single person really free of anxiety and guilt."

That's a very strong charge. You can imagine people in Vienna or New York listening to this man's audacity, suggesting that causality-based psychotherapy was not only theoretically incoherent but actually useless, that a lot of people had paid a lot of money for nothing, and that many claims for psychotherapy (especially psychoanalysis) had not been substantiated.

The failure of psychotherapy to reduce or eliminate feelings of guilt could be linked to approaching therapeutic intervention as a matter of weakening the conscience or superego. Freud explained their source as an overzealous superego weighing so heavily on the person that they could not make a move. The superego had to be made less severe. But the superego was a portion of the ego, which makes it impossible to act freely. How to understand this "making conscience (the superego) less severe"? Here the failure to make neurotic guilt less poignant is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of both guilt and conscience. Working from either psychodynamic or behaviorist principles, psychotherapists had failed to eliminate two of the most *prevalent symptoms* in the consulting room.

Boss is emphatic, and I'll read now a couple of sentences from the monograph:

"Psychotherapists themselves, after all, know nothing of any meaning and goal, because in their perceptual world, thinking as they do in scientific-technical terms and so-called dynamic chains of causation—early traumatic experiences—there are only factual and functional interrelationships: meaningless, calculable, predetermined, and quite neutral as to values."

Boss suggests that given their theoretical orientation, psychotherapists:

"are in principle oblivious to the sense of meaning of their patients' experiences and therefore lack a goal in their work. Since they are not oriented to meaning, how should these psychotherapists be in a position to remedy the boring meaninglessness from which their patients are suffering?"

He adds that at best, they console themselves with more and new causal hypotheses—perhaps assuming a more potent death drive or some derivative congenital moral masochism.

I would ask you: listening to this from Boss all these years ago, how accurate was his prediction? How correct was he in making these challenges to psychotherapy in 1962?

Imagine: in 1962 he was a little over 60. Psychotherapy was still quite new to most people (other than professionals, artists and the monied), and already, as he showed, it was proving to be rather useless. It was a promised pharmakon for people's troubles, increasingly offered, yet increasingly shown to be ineffective.

Rafi: I would say very much so. He was a remarkably brave and independent man — qualities that are always admirable. I also had the thought that he shared with Freud a certain kind of courage. There is something comparable between these two gentlemen — and they were, in the truest sense, both gentle men.

People, I think, often prefer to be numbed. They like their drugs, and they like the illusion that relief can be purchased or prescribed. My thought is that it's all right — let people take their medication, attend psychotherapy that doesn't work, maintain their excuses and behaviors. It simply means there is still much work to be done. Yet people do receive tremendous benefits from these experiences, in ways that may not be visible or measurable.

Miles: Well, now for a more positive line from this speech. I'll read it to you, because I agree this is how things turned out, and some remedy is much desired. Boss suggested as the remedy, in the Daseinanalytic perspective:

"What we must do is to restore an attitude of due reverence before the actual authenticity of human phenomena. We must be capable of allowing what appears before us to remain intact, as what it immediately shows itself to be, in the whole framework of references inherent in what appears itself. We have to learn once again just to look at the things actually confronting us and let the phenomena themselves, which we encounter, tell us their meaning and content."

Here we have, in a nutshell, the fundamental discrepancy between the so-called psychodynamic psychologies and Daseinanalysis.

Rafi: Listening to this, Miles, I'm struck by how sharply Boss names the fundamental problem: that psychotherapy, as it was developing, became blind to meaning. It promised liberation but approached human experience as if it were a series of mechanical reactions — and then wondered why nothing truly changed. It's almost tragic: a discipline meant to help people live more freely ended up reducing their lives to causal diagrams. Let's go further.

Miles: Yes, let us continue. In this particular section, Boss quotes Freud, and he repeats this point very often in his writings. I think this speaks as straightforwardly as possible to the question you raised. Here's the passage:

"It was Freud who summarized the main intention of his whole psychology in unsurpassed succinctness in the following crucial sentences from his 1916 Lectures on the Introduction to Psychoanalysis: 'We do not seek merely to describe and classify phenomena, but to comprehend them as indications of a play of forces in the psyche, as expressions of goal-directed tendencies which work in unison or against one another. And here comes the major statement: We are striving for a dynamic conception of psychic phenomena. Perceived phenomena must, in our conception, recede behind the merely assumed tendencies.'"

So, Freud admits here that what appears—what we might call the "realness of the real," the phenomena themselves - must take a back seat to these merely hypothesized tendencies:

"By this mental procedure of his, Freud had aimed at nothing less than making the psychic phenomena quantifiable, calculable, predictable, producible if desired, or operable if regarded as pathological symptoms."

In other words, the phenomena themselves, what actually shows itself, are disregarded, and instead, attention is given to what is hypothesized to be going on in the psyche unconsciously, harmoniously or in conflict with the conscious life of the person. But that's the classical method of thinking in all the technical sciences. Here

psychological theories are seeking to discover psychodynamic causal connections among psychic formations, and in particular to locate the first cause in each causal chain. Says Boss:

"If this could be eliminated, all its following pathological effects and products were thought to have to disappear by themselves."

Let's back up for a moment, just to underline what Boss is saying here. He makes it absolutely clear:

"It cannot be proved by means of any set of facts, no matter how constituted, that what appears earlier in a life history, simply because it is prior in time, should also be the efficient cause of everything that follows and thus be the given reality itself."

Once and for all, he dismisses what Freud considered essential: finding the cause for current experience and behavior. As you know, Boss replaces Freud's causal "why" question with the Daseinsanalytic "why not." But this "why not?" is not actually a question — it's an imperative, grammatically speaking. This is the major difference between the two approaches.

This whole notion of psychological or psychodynamic causality is so hard to shake, especially given decades of developmental psychology and psychopathology, both largely informed by Freud's metapsychology. The assumption was that if you can dig into the unconscious and bring to light hidden causes for experiences and behavior, then the symptoms will go away.

But, Boss insists, *there is absolutely no way of proving that just because something occurred earlier in time, it is therefore the cause of something showing up later.*

This, of course, does apply to the world of objects and phenomena in nature, where causality works in that way. But we are not talking about billiard balls here. We are talking about existing human beings, and this causal model simply does not apply.

And that's the crucial point. This efficient-cause model has never applied to human beings. For Boss, it remains the central mistake of the whole psychopathological enterprise — on from psychiatry, which has always sought causes for mental illnesses, as if they were analogous to physical illness.

For example, psychiatry has done something like looking for something like the spirochete that causes tertiary syphilis, searching in the past of the individual, especially under the influence of psychoanalysis, for some change in the brain due to experience emotional trauma. But this is not possible. It is not possible in human beings to account for experience and behavior in that way. The brain does not feel or act. Only the human being does such things.

So, there we are. We've made one step further. The central issue is that causality — particularly psychodynamic causality — doesn't apply to human beings. Boss makes this very clear, drawing from Aristotle's distinction of several sorts of cause, in this case the efficient cause.

The efficient cause belongs to the realm of natural science. To assume it governs human existence is the crucial mistake of psychiatry and psychoanalysis alike.

So, if there is no causality of that kind, why do we behave the way we behave? Why do we make the choices that we make? What do we have certain experiences that we may keep to ourselves or report to others. The answer is because we are free. Choices are not reducible to rational explanations. Of course, sometimes you can find fragments of rationality in choices, but most of the time choices are immediate responses to circumstances, to exigencies that weren't expected when plans were made.

And freedom means unpredictability. At any given moment, anyone is free to choose precisely the opposite of what they chose before. Freedom is our great ally — but it's also what makes human behavior ultimately unpredictable because irrational. Here I recommend Boss's text on the irrational in therapy.

On freedom: I'll give an example, one that is awful to have detail. Recently in the United States, there was the shooting of a speaker at a university in Utah. Immediately, investigators and psychologists looked for causes for the suspected gunman's act: his interest in firearms, his political positions and oppositions, his family situation, his economic background - but mostly about his personality and possible mental illness. But none of these factors could ever add up to his choice to act and fire a rifle. He might have made meticulous plans to do so, even threatened it, but at the last minute he could have chosen not to do it. We never know about choice since it driven by freedom. My cat is not free not to lick what is called "cat crack," a Thai-produced kitty "treat" that no cat can refuse licking. My cat is not free to refuse this creamy good. I am free to refuse a gin and tonic even though I know it will relax me and for an hour or so make me less apprehensive about things - and, as I drink such a concoction, usually easily fall off to sleep when I am in bed after a day of editing podcasts...

And this is the key: human freedom means that the alleged shooter might just as well have remembered *"Thou shalt not kill"* and scrapped the whole plan at the last moment. He did not, however, knowing full well he would either be instantly killed by police or eventually caught and brought to justice or commit suicide as many such marauders do.

Again, I invoke freedom in the case of children brought up in a disastrous home environment. Consider identical twins growing up in a harsh household presided over my vicious, mean parents. One becomes a murderer, the other a priest. Identical circumstances, identical genes if they are identical (monozygotic) twins — yet radically different lives. Why? Because choices are free choices. Freedom is mysterious, dramatic, and irrational.

Human freedom is not reducible to causal explanation. As Boss wrote, nearly everything about psychotherapy is irrational, precisely because it is oriented to this freedom. Therapy must reckon with this reality: freedom lies beyond causality, and that is what makes experience unpredictable, but also what makes change possible.

Free, I might decide to stop doing this podcast today. It wouldn't do any harm, but I could. You might decide to quit doing therapy altogether, change your life completely. You could, at any moment, choose to do the opposite of what you had planned. That's what freedom means. For example, you could leave your marriage. I don't think you will — but you're free to. Why don't you? Well, perhaps because you wouldn't want your daughter to grow up without both parents. But here's the point: there are plenty of fathers who abandon their children, even when they could support them. Some even deny paternity outright. Freedom means you could do that too — but you don't.

And this is where Boss's critique of causality really matters. If causality determined behavior, then all fathers in similar circumstances would act the same way. But they don't.

Human existence is not determined by causes in the way natural processes are. Each person remains free, at any moment, to act differently than expected, to transcend what has been.

When we try to predict, we rely on probabilities, generalizations, and sociological trends. We love polls, studies, counting, but they are as misleading in their predictive validity as weather-forecasting.

In 2025, given your education and financial status, the probabilities are that you will remain with your daughter. But freedom always allows for the unprecedented. What will be the case when she is 18 years old? Or something could happen tomorrow that completely overturns a lifetime of having followed role models, ideals, and acting consistently and in a disciplined way. And that is the mystery and drama of human existence.

So, again, why do I think you won't abandon your child? Because I fall back on the most common pattern: most fathers don't. That's the general case. In our social world we constantly rationalize this way, explaining behavior by assuming the most probable scenario. But your freedom means you could do otherwise, and, from my perspective, it *would not* surprise me. One unprecedented life event could suspend all of that role modeling and consistency.

Again, think of the timid 22-year-old who suddenly committed an act of violence I mentioned earlier. For years he was quiet, shy, harmless. Then within months he has become politically radical, starts fantasizing, and eventually acts in a way that surprises everyone. "He was a quiet boy, a nice boy." But he might just as well have taken a completely different path, not one that was attracted to politics, by becoming a professional gamer with his boyfriend.

People constantly surprise us. Someone may smoke for 16 years — as I did, two packs a day — and then suddenly stop. One day, in 1981, I looked in the mirror, smelled my clothes, and said: “This is no good.” I handed a full carton of cigarettes to a stranger out on the street and never smoked again. People had been saying that smoking tobacco was bad for the heart, lungs and, in men, the bladder. But the ritual of lighting up and the feel from the nicotine were delightful. Who wants to give up something delightful, like tobacco or chocolate or wine?

Why did I stop smoking? Was it in response to an unconscious force? No. I didn’t *react* — I acted. It was an existential decision, an act of freedom.

All the medical knowledge I had about smoking hadn’t stopped me for years. What changed was my existing. And that’s what Boss insists Freud overlooked. Freud gave precedence to unseen, hypothetical forces; Boss gives precedence to what shows itself — the phenomenon of lived experience.

Let’s take another example. A woman, around forty, comes to therapy reporting lifelong anxiety and a sense of worthlessness. She reports a long history of childhood abuse. She insists she’s felt this way her whole life.

Now, there are theories — Maslow’s hierarchy, Erikson’s stages of identity formation, even schizoid personality theory — that would link her current experience directly to early deprivations. But Boss warns us against making causal leaps.

That something earlier in life history preceded what comes later does not make it the efficient cause of what follows, as we have heard. Human existence is never to be explained in such terms. The real question is: Has this woman *never* had moments of joy or pleasure? I would bet she has — maybe few, but they happened and they were real. Surely, in infancy there were those moments of *jouissance*.

Even after thirty-five years of suffering, a moment of freedom could change everything. In the blink of an eye — a *kairos* moment – on which you gave your lecture recently — her self-understanding could shift. And all of the past, though not erased, would lose its determinative power.

That’s why it’s so important for us, as therapists, to show up freely ourselves, to model freedom, so that it can be mirrored (perhaps) by the analysand and yield existential change.

In therapy, decisive change occurs in an instant, not by uncovering hidden causes but through a moment of freedom in which the person sees and decides differently.

Conversions, sudden transformations, decisions that alter the whole course of life — these don’t unfold causally or gradually. They happen suddenly, like a flash. And they reveal that the determinative factor is not the past, but the freedom of our present-making existing.

Such change does not “cure” something supposedly fixed long ago. What is decisive is how the present is now lived.

Someone could argue that perhaps early events — or rather the perception of those events — might shape the person permanently. But memory itself doesn’t work like a tape recorder. Human memory is never a mechanical playback of traces laid down somewhere in the brain and stored. It is imaginative, re-creating the past anew each time. Memory reinvents. Thirty-five years of supposed misery can be reinterpreted in a moment of *kairos*. Memory is creative, not archival. Which is why Freud’s notion of preserved unchanging unconscious traces is misleading.

People often mention the body — posture, gestures, the so-called “muscle memory.” Yes, a person’s comportment tells a story. But we have to be precise here. Muscles do not remember; only a person remembers. To speak of ‘muscle memory’ is a misnomer.

That’s the difference between a natural-scientific model and an existential one. The nervous system transmits impulses, yes, but it doesn’t *act*. People act. Tissues don’t have memory; human beings remember. Reducing freedom and behavior to brain processes or reflexes is inadequate. But again — brain tissue doesn’t *act*. That’s the old cortical reflex model made famous by Pavlov, which attributed human behavior to mechanical responses. It's no accident that he was funded by the government. In a way he set the trend for that sort of "collaboration." No. To ascribe actions to nervous tissue is to mistake physiological processes for existence. Only the human being acts. Tissues are mediated by electrochemical charges, but they do not choose.

That’s why I resist this reductionist language. To try to explain the human being in terms of the brain is to lose sight of existence itself. And Boss is absolutely clear: existential analysis begins with the phenomenon of lived freedom, not with hidden causes or neural reflexes.

Rafi: As you were saying, Miles, freedom stops being a romantic abstraction and becomes something far more unsettling - and far more promising. If nothing in a person’s past determines what must happen next, then even the most entrenched patterns can open. A single moment, a single decision, a single kairos moment can reconfigure everything.

If we take Boss at his word - and set aside causal hunts in favor of what shows itself - then our footing shifts. Anxiety and guilt are no longer neurotic leftovers to be removed but native structures of human existence. They don’t invade a life; they belong to it. In Heidegger’s terms, they’re ways our being discloses itself. So, the task isn’t to eradicate them, but to hear what they reveal - about freedom, responsibility, and how a person is standing in their world.

Miles: Yes, they are part of every human being, not symptoms of illness to be eliminated. If someone presents in therapy, whether psychiatric, psychotherapeutic, or Daseinanalytic - expressing anxiety about life, or the feeling of always being behind in what one might have done, that is an opportunity to talk about important things. These are not symptoms to eradicate, but openings to discuss what matters most to the person - what is impending and what is possible, what has been unfulfilled, what has been sacrificed. This is a radically new view of the human being. Anxiety about life becomes a phenomenon to be heard, to be described, to be explored.

When someone says, “I’m always anxious about what’s to come,” the usual cultural message - on television, in advertising - is that this is bad, and you ought to get rid of it fast. When I hear the word 'anxiety' I hear a question. And so, I say, tell me more about what that experience is like for you. So also, for "I'm depressed most of the time." That is a question for me. I am open to hear what that means for the individual. I do assume the analysand and I have the same experience which we respectively denote as being-anxious. Each person’s anxiety, each person’s *Lebensangst* (anxiety about life), must be understood in terms of a situation and context--in short, an existing.

As the discussion unfolds, the person begins to talk about the forward movement of their life, the uncertainty of what’s to come. And the truth is this is a favorable track to be on since we can never know what’s to come in any case — in the near future or distant future. Circumstances change physically, environmentally, politically, all so rapidly. The weather, the body, events in faraway cities that ripple into our own lives — all these are beyond our control, and yet they determine the future coming towards us, each of us differently.

What happens in analysis is that the person is disabused by the attempt to control the future. Instead, they are invited to be more open to it — whatever it will bring — and not to be shocked or paralyzed by unexpected events. That said, some experiences are shattering and we cannot avoid this: the death of someone dear to us, a horrible accident, an aggressive malignancy, a natural event that destroys our home, and the rest.

For Heidegger and for Boss, being ahead of oneself is constitutive of being human. We are always a little bit in, a bit *of* the future. Otherwise, we could not complete the step into it with the other foot so to speak.

Dasein is essentially ahead-of-itself. Human existence is always already projecting itself into its possibilities, unlike animals, as we have seen, which are driven only by instinctual impulses. Animals are driven by impulses and drives — for food, safety, sex. Their repertoire is limited. Once they are safe, fed, and not in heat, they sleep. For us, it's different. We are always reaching into the future apprehensively. The word "apprehend" literally means "to grasp onto." This anticipatory stance is one of taking hold of what is coming out to reach us.

Meanwhile, of course, our bodies function in the environment, which we conveniently call the present, giving the *Umwelt* a temporal valence. But we know this and a cat doesn't. It has no grasp of a future and thus no past. Something like the present which would demarcate the two is therefore also beyond the scope of their awareness. Their world is in this sense all environment.

Our temporal awareness is the basis of a very different view of human existence. Concern is about the future, reaching ahead — and this is never a disorder. It is an essential feature of being human. Existential anxiety about the future is not pathological but an inevitable, basic feature of Dasein. Without it, authentic freedom would not be possible. Or is it the other way around? Heidegger seems to be of two minds about this. No matter: the centrality of freedom remains.

You asked me once: if Boss writes that we should avoid being preachers or educators as analysts, then how can we help other human beings in practice?

Well, that brings up a crucial point. We don't preach, and we don't teach. Preachers give advice. For example, *"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."* The advice has the force of a dictum or commandment, but it is still at the start only advice. Teachers educate, help us learn to think. But analysis is neither. It does not belong to the world of priests and professors.

What we do is set up an environment in which the individual can take charge of her life and the decisions she must make. In the analytic situation, she may discover options she hadn't considered before — options once dismissed, forgotten, or never even imagined.

The task of analysis is not to advise or instruct but to open a space in which the other may encounter possibilities of existence that had previously remained hidden.

Boss uses the image of restoring feelers to the individual — like the antennae of insects. For us, these feelers aren't physical, but existential: a sensitivity to what surrounds us, to possibilities waiting to be seen.

Think of someone walking through a garden. After many trips, on the ninth or tenth, she suddenly notices a flower that had always been there. It wasn't the flower that changed — it was her openness to it. This is the case for a possibility. I sometimes think of this as the flower seeing us, and only then do we see it in return. So also, for a possibility. It catches sight of us and we respond. Analysis creates this environment of openness. It frees us to see things we couldn't see before — or better: to be seen by things that were already there.

Existential analysis frees the other to be addressed by possibilities which, though always present, have remained unseen. Heidegger speaks of this as a "clearing" (*Lichtung*). A clearing is not about shining a spotlight on something but making space so that light can enter and things may show themselves that have been there all along.

And, again, this is crucial: daseinanalysis does not mean pointing things out to people, suggesting, advising. That only takes away the possibility of discovery, disclosure. Instead, daseinanalysis provides a clearing, some silence, a "space" in which things can appear.

Rafi: Miles, could you linger a bit longer with this notion of the clearing?

It feels central — this idea that, in daseinanalysis, we do not illuminate a person with interpretations but instead make a kind of space, a quiet openness, where things can step forward on their own.

Could you unfold this further?

Miles: Heidegger came to it after years of struggle. If there is something unique about human beings - different from stones, roses, or even deities — it is that we are *Da-sein*: the "there" where a lighting up of things can happen. Human existence is the place of openness, the clearing in which beings can appear as what they are.

In his early writings, Heidegger often emphasized the "Da," the human being as the locus of being. But later he criticized himself for this. In the 1930s, when he re-read *Being and Time*, he marked in his own copy: *"No, this is wrong. Too much focus on the human being. The focus must shift to Being itself."*

So, his language had to change. Instead of talking about Dasein as the center of things, he began to describe being as the source of this lighting up, this clearing.

And where does this light come from? Heidegger says: it is simply given. We find ourselves in this situation. We didn't decide it should be so. We cannot escape it except at death. Could it be otherwise? Sure. But then we wouldn't be having this conversation. The openness of the clearing is not chosen by us. It is given with existence itself, without explanation and without why. Just as the greenness of plants or the blueness of the sky is simply given, our being-in-the-clearing is given. There is no causal explanation. It is a fact of existence. Leaves that produce what animals need to metabolize nutrients could be blue. The sky could be green. But they are not.

This is difficult for many to accept. People want explanations for what is given. But Heidegger - and Boss following him - insist that like the blueness of a clear sky existence itself has no why. It is groundless. We must come to terms with that.

So yes, this situation is puzzling. It feels counterintuitive, even irrational. And that's exactly why science finds itself at a loss here. Boss's response is clear: It's not that science is bad. Science is fine - but science is a human invention which cannot explain its inventor. If we want to understand what science is, we must first understand what a human being is. So far, this has not happened. In principle, it can't happen. Science is an achievement of human existence. It cannot explain existence, for it depends on it. So, let's not put the cart before the horse. The horse is us - human existence. If we're going to understand the cart, science, we must first understand existence.

Heidegger was convinced that because we fail to understand existence, science has gone wild — leading to nuclear weapons, environmental destruction, plastics, pollution, mass media, and technologies that end up being inhuman. Without grounding in an understanding of existence, science will inevitably produce results that are destructive of human being and nature alike.

Boss's goal is not explanation, but rather liberation, therapeutic liberation. And that means the other person twisting free to exist.

Rafi: Listening to you, Miles, I wonder: this approach restores breath, freedom, mystery — all the things our age is starving for — so why has it not blossomed? Why has such a human stance remained so rare?

Miles: I think there are two main reasons. First, since around 2010, Daseinanalysis has been in a kind of holding pattern. It lost momentum. Why? Because of the tsunami of science overwhelming everyday life. Psychotropic medications, the medicalization of ordinary experience, the silencing of the poetic, the suffocation of mystery.

Scientific reductionism has suffocated the very phenomena which therapy can bring to light. It leaves no air for the poetic, for mystery, for freedom.

Boss wanted to allow those basic features of human existence — freedom, mystery, openness — to catch fire again. But instead, they were deprived of oxygen by scientific and technological culture.

As a result, there has been a period of quiet in Daseinanalysis. Progress slowed. But I think now a change is under way. People are becoming more suspicious of medicalized life, more uneasy with technology's whirlwind of distraction. There's a growing discontent — and discontent is often the seed of renewal.

Today, we live in a tornado of technology and stimulation. Constant distraction. But people are beginning to feel uneasy about it — suspicious of the influences that so thoroughly dominate our lives. There is a growing discontent, and that's a good thing. It may take time, but such discontent can become the fertile ground for something new.

Worshipping science has led to our becoming unwell. For example, medicine now can give us lifesaving procedures, yes — but sometimes the result is that people live longer yet in worse shape than before. Is that truly desirable? Or might it be better to let nature take its course? Not every extension of life through technology is a gain. Sometimes it is better to let existence fulfill itself in its own time, rather than to force it on by artificial means.

For myself, I don't own a smartphone. I keep a simple portable cell phone for calling a taxi if I need it. And I refuse to be constantly in touch with everything happening around the world. I don't need to know what the weather is in Thailand or what's going on in outer space.

In fact, one of the problems today is that we have too many opportunities, too many choices. And this overwhelms people. It bewilders them, weighs them down. Saying "no" to all these seductive promises of pleasure and success will become difficult, but necessary.

So, yes, Boss's work didn't spread widely in his lifetime. But I'm not discouraged. The immediate success wasn't there, but I believe daseinanalysis is slowly coming into its own and with developments beyond Boss and his close circle (Condrau, Hicklin). Some of the inner possibilities of daseinanalysis not yet uncovered are becoming visible.

So, yes — science has become extremely successful, but very often inhuman: inhuman in its effects, in its assumptions, in its disregard for existence itself. The scientific worldview, where it claims to explain human existence, becomes inhuman. For existence is not an object, but the very openness in which objects can appear.

I think daseinanalysis, even if quiet for a time, has a future. It presents a different vision of human beings - not reducible to scientific categories, not confined to pathologies, not silenced by medications.

Rafi: Staying with this theme of what actually shows itself in human existence - and not with diagnostic labels - there is something Boss discusses that we haven't touched yet, and it feels important. I mean the boredom, the void, the "boredom neurosis" he describes, which seems so different from what today gets called depression.

Could we linger there for a moment, Miles? I think it would help listeners and readers if you could unfold how Boss understands this boredom - what it reveals, how it differs from depression, and why it so often becomes a central reason people seek therapy.

Miles: Well, yes — the text reflects some changes that were happening in his practice, and in the practice of so many therapists around that time, in the 1960s around the time of the monograph.

The "boredom neurosis" had already been given different names, presenting as a sense of *ennui* or lack of interest in anything, all very vague, and it was distinguished from the classic neuroses that were familiar to him from Freud's day — from psychoanalysis and psychiatry — and which, by the way, have nearly all disappeared by now from the pages of the DSM and the ICD. I am thinking of the classic anxiety neurosis and obsessive-compulsive neurosis (different from "OCD").

What he's pointing to is what increasingly became the reason for people to seek out therapy. They could not find in their lives of work and relationships anything that really grabbed them. And as a result, they would say,

"I'm bored. I don't find myself attracted to anything. I just don't want to get up and do anything." Their appetite for life was diminished.

Now — how is this different from depression? Well, the person who's bored is . . . well, let's again stop and consider the most important matter phenomenologically: to decide what it is we are talking about when we're talking about being-bored and being-depressed.

This varies from individual to individual. The terms cover, presumably, discrete mental states - but we don't work with mental states. We work with existing human beings.

In general, when we speak about being-bored we think of a world in which everything is dimmed down - colorless, bland. Not black or white or colored, but full of tints that have all turned gray — a sort of twilight, like that period at the end of the day when the colors of the day begin to fade. You don't see the red of the brick anymore or the green of the tree; everything becomes gray. In a sense, it's a world like that - and this is what was being reported more and more often. But phenomenologically, this has to be described in great detail by the individual. One may talk of food not tasting good anymore, or "everything sounds the same" and so on.

To distinguish this from depression means to first ask: what is meant by *depression* by a given existing human being, and that always means at a certain time and in a certain situation? In each case, it means something different. The catch-all term then is not very helpful, because I don't know what a person means, in terms of his or her experience, when he says, *"I'm depressed."* I have to inquire — and I will find as many different meanings of depression - that is, being-depressed - as I will individuals who say they're depressed.

To give just a few examples: for some people, being depressed is being stuck — they sense they can't budge, can't make a step, can't move on. Others feel weighed down, heavier. For others, it's tinged with sadness and may be associated with mourning or loss — of vitality, health, or even interests. Here the slippage to talk about boredom should be evident. And so here the two — boredom and depression — approach each other in a certain sense and can be difficult to distinguish.

So, in this context of the "boredom syndrome" (let's call it that, with all its clinical category nonsense), we have a variety of ways in which "it" appears in individuals. And to Boss's point, this is now replacing the run-of-the-mill "psychological disorders," including personality disorders of all kinds with their sharp, quantitative diagnostic precision. Keep in mind we are in a realm where claims to such precision is disingenuous, as though anything human can be quantified and, so, measured!

It's interesting to think about boredom against the backdrop of what this meant, as you heard it discussed by Boss's friend Martin Heidegger — several places in which Heidegger talks about the phenomenology of boredom. It might be worth reading and looking at those more closely in connection with this monograph.

Heidegger claimed that in a deep experience of boredom - a full experience of boredom, that is, where *everything is of no interest or value*, has lost its color - one has, in fact, an opportunity to grasp *everything* in a certain way. In other words, this is not something negative for Heidegger. It is, in some sense, an opportunity - very much like hitting bottom in a swimming pool, where everything above and around you comes into clear perspective given the stance you have taken "rock bottom."

Now, I don't think this is what Boss explicitly says about boredom in the section you brought to our attention. But I think it's worth considering that**,** from a therapeutic point of view, this person's existence - being-bored - might be in an exceptionally good position for Dasein - and now I can revert to that image of coloration - to begin to see things as if a new day were approaching. In analysis, twilight is replaced by a beginning - the shine of things, things beginning to take on color.

So, two things we can conclude: by no means is the bored person necessarily *depressed* as generally defined - unhappy, sad, down, low, being stuck and not being able to move in a new direction, and so on.

The lesson from this passage, I think - and I hope this responds to your question - is that this kind of experience was becoming more and more common. And it became more common by the end of the 20th century and has become even more prevalent in the 21st century.

Now here, we can move away from ontological considerations of the kind just covered briefly and look to ontic considerations of boredom, which would also have been on the surface for someone seeking out Boss's partnership and analysis. That would be very much attributable to the experience of more and more individuals of being bombarded by so much stimulation and so much new information that they were effectively paralyzed from taking a stand, making a move, or being interested in anything. But our existence is limited in its capacity to move from thing to thing to thing. And yet people were asked to do just that.

Rafi: So, two things seem clear. First, the bored person is by no means necessarily depressed in the usual sense - not sad, not slowed down, not hopeless, not unable to move. Something quite different might be happening. And second, as Boss already saw, this kind of experience was becoming more common. By the late twentieth century, it was everywhere, and in the twenty-first century it has only intensified. This, I think, is where Boss's observations become prophetic. He sensed that boredom neurosis wasn't a private quirk or a clinical oddity, but something emerging from the structure of contemporary life itself.

Miles: The other day, I was having a conversation with an old friend, and we were talking about cell phone use - something that Boss, of course, knew nothing about, though there were precursors in radio and television. You go from channel to channel to channel on the radio; same thing with TV; and then ultimately cable TV - a thousand channels.

Now there are a million or more "channels" to go to on a smart phone. My friend and I were talking about what he had observed in one famous university town — Princeton, New Jersey — and I had also seen here in New York, which is surrounded by many universities. There are lots of students (and lots of others, too, with the same habits), but we remarked how, in interactions, young individuals' gazes darted from one person to another, and just as frequently a young person's gaze darted back to the phone. Soon after making eye contact with you or somebody else, he moved quickly from this to this to this to this on his phone, frantically scrolling, shifting from app to app, social media platform to social media platform, messaging or texting or email. Well, of course, the learning curve of getting used to life on the cell phone is to do precisely that without pause. I've observed this with a parent and her toddler in a stroller, darting gaze moving from infant to phone. The examples we were sharing were interesting because they were both recent and common — but observations we had been making for a period of time, saying, *"Have you noticed this?" to others*. What I'm leading to in this little anecdote is that perhaps - no, I will say, for sure, this frantic movement from stimulus to stimulus - and the inability to stay with one "contact," to have a long conversation with someone such as we're having right now - becomes increasingly impossible for individuals.

What we're seeing is the source of boredom as Boss described, to a sense that *nothing is meaningful because I can't stay with anything long enough for it to become meaningful.* Now, it has become a way of life for more and more, perhaps most. For him, it was on the horizon and becoming more intrusive and more a part of life in the '60s and '70s. But had he lived to 2015–2025, I think he might have said: *What you see in these individuals are people who are bored. They are bored because they are overwhelmed, like the deer staring into the headlights of an approaching vehicle.*

The appearance these people give is one of unfocused bewilderment. Perhaps I might use that as a way of characterizing boredom.

Now, are they going to come and talk to us about this? Well, here Heidegger comes to mind. An individual tends not to see these kinds of things because they're so close to the individual. He is so taken up in them that he doesn't see them; they don't have time to step back and reflect on what they're doing. The massive neural capacity of the brain is taken to the limit of what it can do. Perhaps this is why we have inevitably tried to build a better brain than the human brain in AI, precisely to allow for this excess. But it is nothing that an existing human being can carry out.

By contrast, reflection, conversation was common even in my generation - in which we took a lot of time to reflect, and conversations were intense and lasted hours into the night. Think of the earlier 20th century and everything before that — the 19th century, say, where we read of artists (Wagner in his autobiography, for example) writing: *"Well, we started talking at eight and finished at three in the morning."*

The idea that individuals could become so focused and engaged, so interested in a topic that it would take up that much time in their life, seems increasingly less possible. Boss put his finger on it, and I think we've seen an efflorescence and widening in everyday experience of this essentially — ironically — *boring* world, boring precisely because everything is hitting you in the face at the same time. A cloud (thinking of the i-cloud) envelopes people, a dense fog or haze. They can't make out clearly what is a few feet away from them. And so one goes at a great clip, groping for something A, B, C, D, its grasp eluding the person.

This would then hearken back to Heidegger's observation: boredom brings, in a sense, *everything* into view. Well, *everything* is too much to deal with. I can only deal with you, or the cat, or my glass, or something to drink, one after the other. I can, as an organism, an existing human being, only deal with one thing at a time. One last comment, and then I'll see what your response is. There was an interesting term that started to appear in the last 15–20 years: *multitasking*. Individuals are very proud to say, *"I can multitask."* Now, this is not the same as whistling while tossing a ball up and down and catching it. The claim is that I can meaningfully carry out two tasks at the same time — like having a conversation with you here and watching a television program on a nearby screen. No — I can't do both. I can jump from one to the other, but I can't do two things that involve my existence at the same time. Conversing or listening to music requires my full involvement. I attend many webinars now and note how so many are pretending to be listening to the speaker, meanwhile searching the net for something or looking at God knows what. They cannot even look at the camera as a good actor can.

Here we're talking about involvement. To be involved in two tasks meaningfully at the same time is impossible - and yet there has been so much talk about it. So, as a footnote to the broader phenomenon of boredom: multitasking.

Rafi: Thank you, Miles. I'm struck by something that touches guilt - Schuld - in a paradoxical way.

I know it's not exactly what Boss means, but I find myself wanting to defend contemporary people a little. This frantic multitasking, this attempt to be everywhere at once… it feels like a struggle against our own limits, almost an effort to be omnipotent for a moment, and to escape the sense of indebtedness that comes with being finite.

But of course, that can't succeed.

So perhaps we could turn now to guilt and Schuld more directly — how we might accept our indebtedness without collapsing into self-accusation, and without trying to become omnipotent in order to avoid it.

Miles: Even the fastest runner in the world can only run so fast, right? Yes, records have been set increasingly over the years — in weightlifting, the high bar — but there will be a limit beyond which one cannot go. The gold-medal swimmer won't be able to swim more than X kilometers per minute, even on steroids or amphetamines. There are essential physical limitations. Just so, in terms of individuals' possibilities, we can think of an existing human being's possibilities as finite.

And, of course**, given that when I choose to do one thing I choose *not* to do many other things, this accretion of indebtedness in terms of unrealized possibilities increases — and it's inevitable.** This is the sense of *Schuld* in Heidegger as we know. So, these two inevitabilities might bring us comfort: omnipotence - an attribute we've heard about in connection with God — is happily something that will never be ours. We may imagine a being that is omnipotent, but we can rest assured and breathe a sigh of relief that we can never be omnipotent. If one does that, one is relieved of worry and disappointment regarding not realizing those possibilities. We have our limits. I can try to take many more breaths than normal in a minute, but my body will make me pass out at a certain point for challenging inherent limitations. Or I may try to hold my breath. Something similar happens and I can't go to wherever I had thought this excess would lead me: to be more

powerful than my mortal care allows. Perhaps some reported symptoms or behaviors — edging toward the limits — are flirtations with omnipotence. Fortunately, the body puts a stop to our egoism, our quest for omnipotence.

I would say, in the same respect, that like our bodies, our existence has built-in limits. With this should come some consolation, too - not *"Oh, damn, I wish there were no limitations."* This should come as comfort. Maybe this is a topic that eventually must become focal in analysis, as people come to terms with their desire to be perfect, to do it all, to be all. On the other hand, the culture - at least in the States — is doing something terribly harmful to kids, especially high-school and college students. It tells them, it floats the belief that *you can be anything and do anything you want*. A trivial example - on a typical college campus today, everyone is supposed to excel and be an "A" student. And everyone has to be a musician in the extracurriculars if that is desired by the student; or everyone has to be an athlete in one of the sports on campus. Everyone is given an opportunity to do these things and as a result the impression is felt: *Well, I'm an athlete and a musician and a scholar. On campus I can be and do everything*. I know of such an undergraduate. She wants to be a musician - and so, yes, she plays in the college orchestra, but she plays the triangle, one of the percussion instruments. She does that five times. She stands there for the whole hour of the concert, attends every rehearsal and performance, and plays five times. *"Well, I'm a musician — moreover, I'm a percussionist, a specialist." What is not mentioned is that an orchestral percussion musician plays all of the "kitchen sink" instruments, from timpani to triangle, xylophone to bass drum. She is not a percussionist, she is not a musician, but on paper and to her proud parents, she "is in the orchestra" and she is a musician. Eventually, she will realize how fooled she has been*.

The same with sports. Everyone has to be a winner, the best. So, we find ways of making it appear that people have accomplished things; we give awards not for merit, but for the craving to be among the athletes of the world and but for the effort — *"You put in a good effort; here's a blue ribbon."*

Perhaps these are silly examples — maybe not. Extend that *"I should be able to do everything"* to everyday life and other life circumstances: *I should be able to parent children, to have a satisfying relationship, to rise to the top of my job hierarchy, to become a leader in every company I work for.* The young contemporary is said he or she can do all of this. Again, eventually, the deception hits home and the person is shocked and maybe that is what he or she comes to see one of us.

These examples point to the myth of omnipotence that's promulgated. I think there is a reaction against it underway. I see it in people in their 20s and 30s. I'd like to think it's not so prevalent in Europe, but you'd have to tell me. It's pretty much *"you can have what you want if you try hard enough,"* and I think it's very harmful. But that's simply not true. There are inherent limitations to what one can realize since the possibilities are inherently limited for each of us.

Rafi: What you're saying, Miles, makes something in me resonate - and also wince a little. I recognize this myth of omnipotence very clearly. Let me share a small example from home.

I once told Jasmine, on a playground trail she was afraid to walk, that *if she could be as focused as a laser* - really concentrated - *she would be able to do what she wanted*. And of course, what she remembered was the last part: *"I can do what I want."*

Now, she's young, and we're close, so I hope I can add some nuance in the years ahead — perhaps not limitations, but a sense of proportion, of care, of realism. But your point stands: the culture feeds children and adults alike the fantasy that everything is possible, that every path is open, that effort alone dissolves limits.

And when real life does not comply, the result is rarely trauma — far more often, it is disappointment.

Not: "Something was done to me that ruined my life." But rather: "So much was promised, and so little was met."

In the contemporary West - the digitized, technologically framed West Heidegger warned about - this disappointment seems everywhere. When I look at people on the street, I don't see much joy; I see a kind of quiet letdown, something flat, faded, almost like boredom's cousin. Perhaps the two are closely related.

So let me use this as a bridge to what might be our final topic today.

Boss himself was deeply disappointed with psychotherapy — and in the critique section of the monograph he says plainly that therapy has not fulfilled its promises, including the promise to eliminate anxiety. Does he also claim that love and trust can dissolve anxiety? If I understand him correctly, this moves us toward the notion of therapeutic Eros. Could you explain how Boss understood this — and how love, trust, and Eros relate to the liberation he envisioned?

Miles: Bringing this up is critical at this point.

I don't think it's quite right to say that, faced with individuals increasingly claiming to be bored and disappointed - and his own disappointment with psychotherapy and psychiatry as practiced, that Boss only simply proposed another approach to the standard psychotherapeutic relationship he had learned in the hospital and private practice setting.

More important is the way he understood the therapeutic *partnership* and relationship between analyst and analysand, namely, that it is a *real relationship unto itself.* This is where he differed strongly from Freud - and took a lot of heat and criticism - because the tradition held that a therapeutic relationship of the psychoanalytic sort was the repetition of an earlier one. My being the analyst in partnership with an analysand meant for Boss that this was a new relationship and quite *real.* For Freud, the analyst was a reincarnation - a *revenant,* a return image of, say, the analysand's *father.* In a "really good" psychoanalysis, moreover, even though I was a male, I would also "return" as the person's mother in the transference - I would be seen and thought of in terms of her experiences with her mother. Boss says, however, that the relationship is *sui generis.* It has its own source and reality. It is not a repetition of something else.

So, how do you think about that partnership - and given the unusual nature of the therapeutic situation - when Boss invokes Eros, the *therapeutic Eros*? He says that taking a person seriously and invoking in them trust - by trusting them (and I think this hasn't been said enough in our conversations - *by trusting them as much as they trust us*) - all of this is ultimately mediated by what he called that one-directional love of the Dasein of the other, the therapeutic eros.

So, if you speak of love in the context of Boss and his Daseinanalysis, remember we're talking about real *Liebe* - love - or better, as the term chosen has it, *Eros* in its original sense and significance in history (and as it came into the Spanish-speaking world through his Peruvian friend): this unidirectional love of the Dasein of the other by the analyst is therapeutic - fundamentally therapeutic. I'm not saying *I love Ms. X or Mr. X.*

I'm saying - and I believe Boss is saying — that as an analyst, I am in love with the *Dasein of the other,* and this is what I wish to communicate to that person.

Now, this is me as a particular person - Miles Groth - as this particular analyst. Of course. But the love extended, gifted is not directed at Miss X or Mr Y. This is what makes the daseinanalytic situation so unusual and "exotic." In this way, I am who I am as a person, but there is the more basic Dasein-to-Dasein bridge, let's call it, over which this love travels. Across this bridge, coming from the Dasein of its ontic actualization - me, Miles Groth - to the Dasein of the analysand (whoever it might be), passes this love. That's why it's not surprising that this happens without any expectation of anything in return - because it's not going to the *person* of the analysand - it's going to the *Dasein* of the analysand.

The other day there was a discussion at a forum - which you also attended - about strong feelings of a friendly or even romantic, sexual kind. What wasn't sufficiently clarified was the nature of what passes over this bridge and the two components as I've tried to describe. You need two sides to have a bridge. On one side is the ontic

actualization of Rafi or Miles as the analyst; on the other side is the Dasein of the analysand, whoever it might be.

That's why it doesn't make any difference to me when I'm working as a daseinsanalyst who is stretched out comfortably on the couch behind me. What I'm interested in is the realization - the recovery of possibilities - of that *Dasein, not the well-being of Ms X or Mr Y.* It shouldn't make any difference whether this is a man or woman, young or old, a wealthy financier or a great artist, a clerk or an airplane pilot. Their status should not make a difference.

And I must be careful not to allow my *own* status to show up strongly — to become an authority, advice-giver, educator. I have to constantly monitor this, so that I never become that, but instead listen to the Dasein of the other. That is the hard work of doing analysis. Remember: this is *analysis of Dasein*. It is not an analysis, for example, of Rafi or Miles. This distinction is hard to communicate and even harder to keep in mind when working. And it is never entirely realized. But that does prevent the daseinanalyst from trying to the arrangement, the point of the situation, in mind.

Rafi: Okay. So… love and trust, therapeutic Eros — it doesn't dissolve anxiety; it doesn't remove it like a symptom.

Miles: I think it makes its meaning for a Dasein clear. There is this fundamental apprehension — anxiousness — about what is down the road, don't forget and it is not, as the tradition sometimes says, simply "garden-variety" anxiety, nervousness, agitation. No, it doesn't dissolve anxiety; it puts it into its proper ontological context. It makes it acceptable to realize that *we are never not anxious in existing*. That's part of us — just as our being-with is part of us; just as being always in debt and increasingly in debt (guilty, as the language goes), is part of us — and so on for other existentials, including language, which must be part of the structure of our Dasein, or we couldn't be doing what we're doing right now.

Rafi: Thank you, Miles. That clarifies it beautifully.

Therapeutic Eros does not abolish anxiety - it lets us understand it, stand with it, and recognize it as a basic feature of our existence rather than an intruder to be expelled.

And I think this is a fitting place to end our long conversation about Boss's monograph.

My hope is that we've encouraged our listeners and readers to take this text - even the digital version or printed out - and step away from their desks, out to a meadow, a beach, a forest, anywhere they can breathe and linger with it for a few hours.

Miles: I'm glad. It's good. Thank you very much.