

**Continuing Professional Development Meetings
in Old Age Psychiatry
University Dept. of Psychiatry
The Warneford Hospital, Oxford**

**The Aesthetics Approach to
Dementia**

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Plan

- Introduction
- Aesthetics, Keats and negative capability
- Aesthetics, art and dementia
 - What can art tell us about dementia?
 - Therapeutics: aesthetic experience for people with dementia
- The Person with Dementia: an aesthetic being
- Conclusion

Aesthetics

Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles (6th Edition, 2007)

- 'The philosophy of the beautiful'
- Greek root: 'things perceptible by the senses'
- 'Pertaining to perception by the senses'

(1770-1799)

John Keats (1795-1821)



- 1815: Student at Guy's Hospital, London
- 1816: License to practise as an apothecary
- 1817: 'throwing up the apothecary profession'
- 1821; died in Rome from TB

Judgements pertaining to the senses

- 'O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts'

(Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22nd November 1817)

The sensual world of the imagination

'O, let me once more rest

My soul upon that dazzling breast!

Let once again these aching arms be plac'd,

The tender gaolers of thy waist! ...

Enough! Enough! It is enough for me
To dream of thee!

(Keats: *What can I do to drive away*)

‘Negative capability’

- ‘...when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason...’

Keats: Letter to his brother, December 1817

Ode on a Grecian Urn

‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’, - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to
know’.

Keats letter to George and Georgiana, Sept 1819

- 'The only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing - to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts'

Three essential aspects to negative capability

- 'In our life of uncertainties, where no one system or formula can explain everything... what is needed is an *imaginative openness of mind* and *heightened receptivity to reality* in its full and diverse concreteness. This, however, involves *negating one's own ego*.'

Jackson Bate, W. (1963). Keats's "negative capability" and the imagination. In *The Romantic Imagination: A Casebook* (edited by J.S. Hill, 1977), London: Macmillan; p. 208

Cornish, J. (2011). Negative capability and social work: insights from Keats, Bion and business. *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and Community*, 25, 135-148.

- 'However much we are driven by underpinning ethical and theoretical frameworks on the one hand and performance demands and targets on the other, daily practice is a series of individual encounters in the ever-shifting present. Within these, open-mindedness, receptivity and humility are entirely consistent with ethically-bound, person-centred work and come together in negative capability, a richly layered concept which defines a quality valuable for service users and workers alike...'

Hammer, R.R., Dingel, M.J., Ostergren, J.E., Nowakowski, K.E. and Koenig, B.A. (2012). The experience of addiction as told by the addicted: incorporating biological understandings into self-story. *Culture, Medicine & Psychiatry*, 36, 712-734

- 'What might be of use for those working directly with addiction patients, in light of the mysterious and often unpredictable nature of nature, is adapting a perspective of negative capability as offered by the practice of narrative medicine.'

von Pfahl, L. (2011). The ethics of negative capability.
Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal,
33, 451-466

- ‘The complete definition of negative capability... implies more than passivity; rather it is the ability to do something, i.e., to assume other characteristics as a chameleon does.’

Neuman, Y. (2010). Empathy: from mind reading to the reading of a distant text. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 44, 235-244

- ‘Bion describes this capability in more precise terms of tolerating “empty space”’
- Empathy: ‘the capability to experience the other through his existence, which is beyond our symbolic grasp.’

von Pfahl (2011)

- 'through negative capability we learn the validity of all points of view.' (p. 460)
- 'For Keats, the idea of poet as healer and poetry as a balm for the pain of the world was the logical next step in his creative development. Once the poet develops a sympathetic imagination, he is open to the pain of humanity – all of it; and because the poet experiences this pain first hand, to heal the pain of others is also to heal the self.... Through a poetry that both pleases and heals, aesthetics and ethics become one for Keats.' (p. 459)

Ethics and Aesthetics

La Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofía, Madrid



Letter to J.H. Reynolds, May 1818

- 'An extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people – it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery: a thing I begin to understand a little...'

Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

'... that blessed mood,
 In which the burthen of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world
 Is lightened: - that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things'

Aesthetics, art and dementia

What can art tell us about dementia?

Gombrich on Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

- ‘Whenever he came across a problem, he did not rely on authorities but tried an experiment to solve it. There was nothing in nature which did not arouse his curiosity and challenge his ingenuity.’

Gombrich, E.H. (1972). *The Story of Art* (12th edition). Oxford: Phaidon; p. 222.

Art and science

Art	Science
Emotions	Reason
Sensibility	Logic
Qualitative	Quantitative
Subjective	Objective
Body	Brain

Fiona Evans: *Geordie Sinatra*



- Kontos, P.C. and Naglie, G. (2006). Expressions of personhood in Alzheimer's: moving from ethnographic text to performing ethnography. *Qualitative Research*, **6**(3): 301-317. doi: 10.1177/1468794106065005
- Hughes, J.C. and McCormick, A. (2003). When to forget is to remember. *Journal of Dementia Care*, **11** ((3) May/June), 12.
- Hughes, J.C. and McCormick, A. (2014 forthcoming). The art and practice of memory and forgetting. In J.C. Hughes, *How we Think about Dementia*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley.

Context

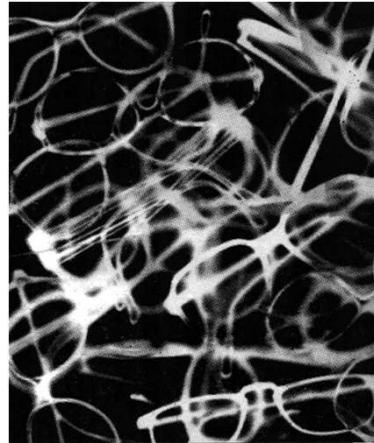


Content as Meaning

Concern or solicitude

Concepts

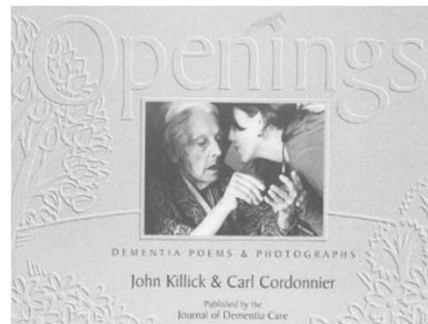
- Ashley McCormick:
no ifs, ands, or buts



Barthes, R. (2000). *Camera Lucida* (trans. R. Howard). London: Vintage.

- ‘...in Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past.’ (p. 76)
- ‘Why mightn’t there be, somehow, a new science for each object?’ (p. 8).
- ‘... was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, *the impossible science of the unique being*.’ (p. 71).

Killick, J. and Cordonnier, C. (2000). *Openings: Dementia Poems & Photographs*. London: *Journal of Dementia Care* and Hawker Publications.



Cathy Greenblat

ht out-

LOVE, LOSS, AND LAUGHTER
SEEING ALZHEIMER'S DIFFERENTLY



The breadman son and Alzheimer Mama



Tatsumi Orimoto



Tatsumi Orimoto and his mother



**Therapeutics: aesthetic experience for people
with dementia**

ART

Dementia, (2012); 11(5): 633-656

Article

Art therapies and dementia care: A systematic review

Renée L. Beard

College of the Holy Cross, USA

Dementia

11(5) 633-656

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Abstract

Despite steadfast interest in the use of arts therapies (ATs) with individuals who have dementia of the Alzheimer's type (DAT), a systematic review of the literature has not been conducted. This paper aims to critique this evidence base, including music, visual arts, drama, and dance/movement therapies between the years 1990 and 2010, and make suggestions on how it can be strengthened.

Beard (2012) contd.

- 'Models investigating subjective well-being, or 'enrichment,' rather than objectively measured biomedical approaches privileging the management of deficits, would expand the evidence base and help ensure that those with dementia receive the services they want, since strictly allopathic methodologies will continue to fall short of adequately evaluating what are deeply idiosyncratic psychosocial issues.' [From Abstract]

Music

- Vink AC, Bruinsma MS, Scholten RJPM. **Music therapy for people with dementia.** *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2003, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD003477. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD003477.pub2.
- 354 references related to music therapy and dementia, but only 100 were research studies; only 10 studies were considered in the end
- Conclusion: 'The methodological quality and the reporting of the included studies were too poor to draw any useful conclusions'.

Digital jewellery and personhood

- Wallace, J., Wright, P. C., McCarthy, J., Green, D. P., Thomas, J., & Olivier, P. (2013, April). A design-led inquiry into personhood in dementia. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 2617-2626). Association for Computing Machinery.
Available via:
<http://di.ncl.ac.uk/publicweb/publications/A-Design-Led-Inquiry-into-Personhood-in-Dementia.pdf>



The Person with Dementia: an aesthetic being

Personhood

- John Locke (1632-1704) on the person:
‘... a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and ... essential to it’

(Locke 1964, p. 211[II. xxvii. 9])

Implications of Locke for dementia

- ‘... as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person’

(Locke 1964, p. 212[II. xxvii. 9])

Parfit (1984)

Reasons and Persons (p 206)

- ‘*Psychological connectedness* is the holding of particular direct connections. *Psychological continuity* is the holding of overlapping chains of *strong* connectedness’

Stephen Post and “hypercognitivism”

- ‘Because memory is a form of power, we can sometimes find in those who have lost such power the opportunity to mock and ignore, sending the message that their very existence rests on a mistake’ (Post 2006, p. 224)

‘Esthetic well-being’

- ‘Efforts to enhance emotional, relational, and esthetic well-being would, under such a plan, be enhanced in ways that involve family members, providing them with a sense of meaning and purpose. Through music, movement therapy, relaxation and touch, such efforts support patients’ remaining capacities. Connections with nature through a beautiful and open environment fit under this rubric, as can spiritual support’ (Post 2000, p. 107).

The SEA View

- Situated
- Embodied
- Agent

(Hughes, JC, (2001) Views of the person with dementia.
Journal of Medical Ethics. 27: 86-91.)

The situated person

- Culture: traditions, norms, history
- Personal history: wishes, inclinations, concerns, memories
- Social context: neighbours, friends, family, geography, law
- Morals: virtues and values
- Spiritual values: religion, openness to other

Merleau-Ponty (1962)
Phenomenology of Perception

- 'The world is not what I think, but what I live through'

(*Preface*, p. xviii)

Berlin, I. (2000). *The Roots of Romanticism* (ed. H. Hardy). London: Pimlico.

- 'We owe to romanticism the notion of the freedom of the artist, and the fact that neither he nor human beings in general can be explained by over-simplified views such as were prevalent in the eighteenth century and such as are still enunciated by over-rational and over-scientific analysts either of human beings or groups. ... (Berlin 2000, p. 146).

Conclusion

- So an open-mindedness, a receptivity and degree of humility are required as we struggle to understand the world, the burden of the mystery, the life of the person with dementia, '... without any irritability reaching after fact & reason'.