

PRACTICE REFLECTIONS

# Dwelling With Anxiety: A Heideggerian Case Study in Existential Therapy

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This paper presents a case study of anxiety within the framework of hermeneutic-existential-phenomenological therapy (HEPT), grounded in Martin Heidegger's early philosophy. Through the therapeutic journey of a young man caught in a self-perpetuating spiral of anxiety and control, the paper explores how, in Heideggerian terms, mood worlds the client and how the shift from reflexive management to existential description opens new possibilities for presence, freedom, and relational attunement. The paper offers therapists an alternative lens for engaging with anxiety—not as pathology but as a mooded disclosure of being. For practitioners, this case offers a reminder that the work of existential therapy lies in staying-with, rather than in solving. It invites practitioners to help clients find language not about moods but from within the moods—where a different kind of agency can begin to stir.

This therapeutic narrative unfolds within the framework of hermeneutic-existential-phenomenological therapy (HEPT)—a model rooted in the early philosophy of Martin Heidegger, particularly his magnum opus, *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927/1985). HEPT is not a method in the conventional sense. It is a philosophically grounded stance, a way of engaging with clients that takes seriously the ontological structures of existence as Heidegger described them. HEPT engages the human being not as an object in the world, but as *Dasein*—a being who always already finds itself *thrown* into a world, entangled in moods, and oriented by its understanding of possibilities.

In this view, anxiety is not a symptom to be eliminated. It is a *mooded disclosure of being*—a fundamental disturbance to the self that reveals the fragility, openness, and uncontrollability of existence. HEPT works not to resolve anxiety through technique, but to dwell with it, to describe it from within, and to open the possibility of a new stance *toward* it.

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This approach is deeply hermeneutic, recognising that clients come with inherited interpretations and pre-understandings of themselves and their world. HEPT is existential, engaging with anxiety and questions of a felt threat to identity and way of being. It is also phenomenological, focusing not on explanations or abstractions but on the *how* of experience—how the world shows up for the client and how they show up in the world.

The story of Brandon<sup>1</sup>, told below, exemplifies this process. It is the story of a young man overwhelmed by anxiety, caught in a spiral of self-surveillance, despair, and suicidal ideation. But it is also the story of a subtle shift—from entanglement to description, from control to presence, from a world of overcompensatory mastery to a world of meaning. It is a journey into what Heidegger (1927/1985) called *resoluteness*: the courage to face one's *thrownness*, to stand present with anxiety, and to respond with attunement rather than control.

### **Brandon's Spiral: A Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Descent Into Anxiety**

Brandon was sitting on the beach with his friends when, without warning, he was overcome by a wave of intense anxiety. The suddenness and sheer force of it caught him by surprise. In response, he instinctively tried to stop the anxiety, willing himself to calm down. But the more he tried, the more powerful the anxiety became—strengthened by the very effort to control it.

Simultaneously, Brandon began to wonder if anyone could see what was happening to him. He scanned the faces of his friends for signs of recognition, but their expressions gave no indication that they noticed anything unusual. This offered some relief, yet it also deepened his sense of estrangement. Because he was now preoccupied with managing his inner chaos, he was no longer present to the shared environment. The world around Brandon faded as he withdrew further into himself, caught in a recursive loop of self-monitoring—watching himself to see if others were watching him.

Over the coming weeks, Brandon was fearful of breaking down in front of others, and he became increasingly absorbed in preventing a visible collapse. But the effort to control this inner screaming sensation was wearing thin. A sense of despair and hopelessness began to take hold. He felt ashamed of himself for not being able to stop the spiral and guilty for being the cause of it—trapped in a logic where he over-identified as both victim and perpetrator.

Brandon's feelings of despair, hopelessness, and powerlessness converged into suicidal thoughts. This terrified him. Yet within the logic of his anxious mind, suicide began to appear as the most rational and pragmatic conclusion. He drew upon his scientific training, applying reason and evidence to assess

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<sup>1</sup> All identifying information, including the client's name, has been removed from this case study. Brandon gave written permission for his story to be published.

his condition. The verdict seemed clear: this downward spiral was terminal, and the facts pointed to one inevitable outcome. There was, he believed, nothing he could do about it.

In truth, Brandon had become caught in a *hermeneutic-phenomenological spiral*—a lived, reflexive loop in which his efforts to escape anxiety only deepened it. The more he interpreted his anxiety as a problem to be solved or controlled, the more it intensified, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. His gaze turned inward but not in self-understanding—instead, in a panicked surveillance of the self as breakdown. The world withdrew. Others became unreal. Time stalled and meaning became saturated by despair.

### **Shifting the Relationship: From Anxiety as Fate to Anxiety as Encounter**

Brandon believed, with unwavering conviction, that the anxiety was happening *to* him. It arrived uninvited, overwhelming, and alien. In Brandon's view, he was a passive recipient, a victim of a force beyond his will or comprehension. His agency, he insisted, had nothing to do with it. The panic was itself the problem. The only possible stance was to fight it, suppress it or escape from it. Any other suggestion seemed absurd.

So when I, as his therapist, gently proposed that Brandon begin to shift his relationship to anxiety, he looked at me as if I had lost touch with reality. How could one have a “relationship” with a thing like this? It wasn't something he *had*—it was something that *had him*. The idea that his own striving to stop the anxiety might be part of the spiral, rather than the solution to it, was incomprehensible to Brandon at that time.

He shook his head and said again, “But it's like a sickness. It just happens to me.”

And yet, within this very framing—*it happens to me*—a subtle opening could be found. For there, embedded in the passivity, was also a hidden structure of interpretation. He was not simply in anxiety. He was already interpreting it as something external, pathological, and invasive. From that interpretation, a whole way of relating flowed: the attempt to control, the monitoring of self, the sense of powerlessness, the downward spiral.

What if anxiety was not an enemy to be suppressed nor a sickness to be cured but a phenomenon to be encountered? What if, instead of trying to master it, Brandon could begin to stay with it, even befriend it, not as a friend in the comforting sense, but as a call from within his own being?

This was not a cognitive reframe. It was not an insight to adopt as a belief. It was a shift in stance, an existential turn. Rather than running from the anxiety, I prompted Brandon to consider what it would mean to turn toward it, to listen to it—not as content but as a *mooded disclosure* of how he was in the world. Could he begin to see that his very effort to will away anxiety was part of the same anxious structure?

This suggestion did not land easily. It had to be felt before it could be understood. However, the very absurdity of it—befriending anxiety—began to unsettle something in the fixity of Brandon’s despair. For the first time, he began to wonder: if his way of relating to anxiety was part of the spiral, then perhaps a different way of relating might create new possibilities. Whilst not an escape nor a cure, this curiosity was the beginning of a different *being-with*.

### Recognising Complicity: Despair in the Face of Futility

As we worked together, Brandon slowly began to recognise the subtle but relentless ways he had been complicit in his own downward spiral. He could now see that he had not simply been *in* anxiety, but had been *doing* certain things in response to it—willing himself to stop it, trying to gain control over his mind and body, scanning the faces of his friends to see if they noticed, constructing a façade to hide his internal collapse. His whole posture had been one of control, concealment, and effort. But with this recognition did not come relief. Instead, a deeper despair emerged.

Brandon began to grasp that not only was his anxiety overwhelming—his very attempts to manage it had made it worse. This insight was devastating. He felt as if he had been betrayed by his own mind and his own instinct to take charge. His efforts, which he had once viewed as signs of rationality and responsibility, now appeared to him as sources of intensification and failure. His inner strategies were not solving the problem—they *were* the problem.

In that realisation, a terrible mood overtook him: a sense of futility, worthlessness, and shame. If even his most focused, intentional efforts led only to more chaos, what kind of person did that make him? The anxiety was bad enough. But now he was ashamed of being the kind of person who could not control himself. A person who only made things worse. A person who, despite all effort, failed.

This despair was not abstract; it was thick, embodied, and annihilating. Brandon began to speak of himself as someone who, beyond being in pain, was broken. His sense of self-worth plummeted. “There’s something wrong with me,” he said. “If I can’t even handle my own mind, then what am I good for?” The logic of anxiety had now turned in on the self. He did not just feel anxious—he felt a failure for being anxious.

It was in this state that the smallest flicker of reflexivity began to emerge. In Brandon’s case, this self-reflection could only emerge through the despair. He was not able to skip over these feelings. The recognition that his efforts were futile did not immediately offer him agency. It stripped him bare, revealed the hollowness of the control he had clung to, and exposed him to the raw experience of helplessness. It was a dark, honest, and necessary descent.

Only months later, from within that depth, would another kind of awareness begin to take shape. Whilst this awareness did not provide an immediate solution, it was a different way of relating to the spiral itself.

### A Slight Moment of Hope: Seeing the Part he Played

It was only after falling fully into the despair of futility that Brandon became ready to see something he could not have tolerated earlier: that he had played a part in the very vortex that had overwhelmed him. Not intentionally, not maliciously, but reflexively, instinctively, and unknowingly. His efforts to will himself out of anxiety, to scan others for signs of judgement, to perform normality, to suppress the inner noise were not just reactions to anxiety. Now, for the first time, he could see this.

Brandon did not yet feel free. He did not yet feel better. But the recognition that he had somehow been part of the spiral allowed a new kind of meaning to enter the picture—not blame or failure but a kind of dim, quiet possibility. If he had played a role in making things worse, then perhaps he could also play a role—however small—in altering the spiral’s course.

This insight did not arrive with fireworks. It was almost imperceptible; a slight moment of hope. Although his anxiety had not lifted, he had glimpsed a shift in relation to it. This was not a new technique, but a new stance. Brandon had always believed that the anxiety was a foreign invader that rendered him powerless. But now, a different image arose—an image of entanglement, of being caught up in the storm rather than attacked by it. And in that entanglement, his own movements mattered.

This was not the end of the spiral. But it was the beginning of a different way of being within it.

### Introducing “Finding Oneself”: a Heideggerian Turn

At this point, I introduced Brandon to a word from Heidegger (1927/1985). I told him that, in a certain sense, he had *found* himself in anxiety. It is a phrase I often hear from clients caught in despair or suicidal thinking. “I just find myself having these thoughts,” they say. They do not choose them, nor do they want them, but these thoughts surface, unbidden, in the midst of life. There is no decision and no intention. Just the discovery: *here I am*, in this state.

I offered this to Brandon not as a philosophical idea, but as a naming of something already familiar. I invited him to consider the way one might walk along the beach, with no particular focus, and suddenly find that certain thoughts or feelings *arrive* in them—without their control or effort. The thoughts and feelings come, as Heidegger (1927/1985) would say, from the thrownness of existence. One does not summon them; one *finds oneself* in them.

For Brandon, suicidal thoughts had been a source of intense shame. He believed they meant something terrible about him—that he was weak, broken or failing. But now he began to consider that these thoughts did not define him. They were not decisions he made. They were not even truths to be believed or arguments to be refuted. They were moods and meanings that emerged in him. He found himself in them.

This did not solve the anxiety. It did not erase the despair. But it did something quieter and perhaps more important: it depersonalised the experience just enough to allow for gentleness. The thoughts were not a verdict. They were a mooded way of *being-in-the-world* that revealed how things currently were—not how they would always be and not who he essentially was.

Brandon was not the author of his despair. But he could begin to witness it and be with it, rather than be consumed by it. To find oneself in a state is not to be helpless. It is to begin with *what is given*—not as a failure of will, but as the place from which all understanding must start.

### **Toward Resoluteness: Breathing Anxiety In**

Now, something in Brandon's relationship to anxiety was beginning to change. It was not that the anxiety had lessened or that he had conquered it, but it no longer felt like something that simply happened to him. He began to sense that there was a space—subtle, but real—in which he could adopt an attitude toward the anxiety. Whilst he could not, at this stage, get rid of it nor overcome it, he could meet it differently.

I introduced him to a word that Heidegger (1927/1985) uses: resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*). Not in the modern sense of willpower or firmness but in a much deeper, existential sense. To be resolute is to stop fleeing, to stop pretending, to stop managing—and instead, to turn toward what is. It is a stance of openness in the face of the very thing one fears. Not passive, but clear-eyed. Not heroic, but truthful.

Kierkegaard (1844/1980) wrote that one must welcome anxiety because, whilst it feels uncomfortable, it is the very condition of becoming a self. Anxiety reveals that human beings are not fixed entities. It opens one to the dizzying freedom of being human. The task is not to extinguish it but to breathe it in—to let it move through the self and let it speak.

This was what I invited Brandon into: not a technique, not a fix, but a new way of being-with. I suggested that he become an existential-phenomenological describer of his own anxiety. That he begin to notice, from within rather than from the outside, how anxiety showed up in him. How it moved, how it surged, how it whispered. I encouraged him not to fight it nor even to name it right away. Just to attend to it as it was. To become a witness to the spiral, not its prisoner. To describe, moment by moment, the world that anxiety disclosed.

This was a new form of agency—not control, but contact. Not mastery, but attunement. Slowly, Brandon began to see that, while he could not choose whether anxiety came, he could begin to choose how to meet it. Not in panic. Not in resistance. But in the quiet courage of being resolute.

It was the beginning of a practice.

## Describing the Mood From Within the Mood

The next step was perhaps the most difficult, and also the most transformative. I invited Brandon to begin the practice of existential-phenomenological description—to describe his anxiety as it was lived. I bid him to express his anxiety as a state of being in which he found himself, rather than in abstract terms or as diagnosis or content.

This was not a cognitive exercise. It was not about gaining insight or reappraising thoughts. It was the far more delicate task of giving voice to the mood itself—of staying with it just enough to speak it, not from outside but from within. And that is no small task.

As Brandon and I both knew, when anxiety takes hold in its most desperate form, the capacity to describe anything at all can vanish. The body is tight, the breathing shallow, the world unfamiliar, one's own self fragmented. In those moments, desperation spreads through the body like a fire. There is no calm observer, no reflective stance. There is only the storm.

And so we did not begin *there*. We began in the therapy session, which was not altogether free of anxiety—Brandon was still in its orbit—but the intensity was not at its peak. He could still feel its presence and hear its echo, but he was not drowning in it.

From this position—close enough to feel, far enough to speak—I invited him to describe the state of being he found himself in. Rather than asking, “What are you thinking?” or “Why are you anxious?”, I asked questions like, “What does it feel like to be you right now, in this mood? What does the world look like from here? What does your body know? How do others appear to you? What possibilities close down?”

At first, Brandon's words were slow to come, and when they did, they often bore the marks of everyday discourse—generalities, explanations, attempts to make the anxiety intelligible from the outside. In Heidegger's (1927/1985) terms, these were not yet genuine disclosures but subtle forms of flight—not fleeing from anxiety, but fleeing back into it. They were efforts to control the mood by explaining it away, to reassert a sense of mastery through premature interpretation. This, too, is part of the structure of anxiety: it tempts one to respond with strategies of control, which, in turn, intensify the mood.

Brandon said things like:

“It's like everything is slightly out of reach, but I'm supposed to act like it's normal.”

“My chest is tight, but I'm also afraid of being seen to be tight.”

“I feel like I'm failing at being a person. Like everyone else has the manual, and I missed the class.”

“It's like the world's too loud, but I'm the only one hearing the noise.”

At first, these seemed like brave disclosures. However, through HEPT, Brandon discovered that these were not simply neutral descriptions of anxiety—they were his anxious ways of speaking, shaped by the very mood he was trying to describe. Each phrase was structured by social norms, comparison, and avoidance—“supposed to”, “everyone else”, “being seen”, “the only one”. These were not insights into anxiety so much as anxiety’s own language, operating through him. They were part of the reflexive or hermeneutic circle of anxiety.

Slowly, Brandon began to recognise this. He began to see that his descriptions were not separate from the anxiety—they were part of its logic. The mood was not only being described, it was also shaping how it could be described. His early attempts were not outside the mood but complicit with it—co-conspiratorial in the effort to make anxiety manageable, distant, and contained.

This realisation marked a shift. In addition to describing anxiety, the work now became to unpack the ways in which Brandon helped to perpetuate it—to see that his flights were not escape routes but circuits. That was the beginning of reflexivity: not just speaking from within the mood, but seeing how the mood speaks through him. A hermeneutic turn had begun.

### **Describing the Referential Whole: Anxiety as a Relational Nexus**

It is important to emphasise that what we were doing in the therapy session was not simply describing a feeling. We were not tracking “symptoms” or even focusing on emotional labels. What Brandon and I were attending to was far more existentially textured. We were describing what Heidegger (1927/1985) would call a *referential whole*—a relational nexus of meaning that reveals itself when one is *being-in-anxiety*.

Anxiety is not an isolated sensation. It is a mood that reorganises the world. It discloses a particular structure of relatedness—to the self, to others, to possibilities. When Brandon entered the vortex of anxiety, it was not just that he felt bad. He found himself inhabiting a world in which control became paramount, mastery was pursued with desperation, and failure led to a sense of worthlessness so complete that suicide appeared not as a distortion but as the most logical conclusion.

What we were doing, then, was not merely exploring how Brandon felt, but tracing what showed up in that mooded world. We questioned what became important; what became invisible; what kinds of thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, and impulses arose as he entered this world. We slowed our process and asked:

“What emerges for you as you go down this slippery slope?”

“What comes up for you in that reflexive vortex—when anxiety turns back on itself and becomes about your failure to handle anxiety?”

“What kind of world are you in when you are there?”

“What do you believe about yourself, about others, about what’s possible?”

Brandon began to describe a structure:

First, the rising sense of *not being okay*.

Then, the *urgent attempt* to fix it.

The feeling that *others can see it*—even if they cannot.

The reflex to *hide*, while also *monitoring* himself being seen.

The belief that *he must not feel this way*; that he is *defective*.

The loss of any sense of *how to act*.

The sinking realisation: “*I’ve lost control*.”

Then, despair. Shame. Suicidality. The final move: “*I will never come out of this*.”

Each of these stages was not a thought about the world, but a way the world was disclosed to him in anxiety. It was a full relational field—a referential whole—that revealed who he was allowed to be, what counted as failure, and how others appeared in their silence.

What was most striking, and painful, was that suicide appeared to be a rational end point within this world. This was not the product of a single thought, rather the culmination of a system of self-relatedness: from control to collapse, from mastery to worthlessness, from effort to despair.

However, as he described his process, a different understanding began to develop. The very act of describing his anxious cycle began to weaken its effect upon him. Because in giving words to the structure of the spiral, Brandon was no longer fully inside it. He was not escaping it, but he was beginning to witness it. The mood was still there. But it was now part of a world that could be spoken, not just suffered.

This was the work: not analysis, not intervention, but description—as a path to understanding the way anxiety worlds him. Through that process, the possibility developed that another way of being might one day open.

### **From Control to Spontaneity: Awakenings of the Zorba Within**

As Brandon deepened his practice of existential-phenomenological description, something began to shift—not only in how he experienced anxiety, but in the way he related to life itself. Through describing the spiral from within, Brandon had slowly begun to see how tightly bound he had been to a taken-for-granted world of control, mastery, and perfection. This world was not merely conceptual—it was lived. It shaped his body, his posture, his expectations of himself, and his responses to difficulty. It told him that being human meant managing everything, suppressing weakness, and appearing competent at all costs. This was the world that had made anxiety unbearable. Because within that structure, to feel anxiety was already to have failed. To fail was to collapse. And to collapse was to disappear.

But now, in giving voice to that structure—naming it, describing it, *dwelling with it*—Brandon no longer had to live inside it as if it were the only possible world. He began to notice it forming. He began to play with it. Gradually, he began to question it: What if control was not the only form of agency? What if being human also involved uncertainty, looseness, and surrender? What if spontaneity was not recklessness, but a deeper kind of wisdom?

It was here that I introduced him to a very different image: Zorba—Kazantzakis's (1946/1952) earthy, exuberant, dancing figure. Zorba, who lives through the body. Zorba, who laughs, cries, and sings without shame. Zorba, who does not seek to control life but to join it.

Brandon was taken aback at first. The idea of dancing, of giving in to life's rhythm, seemed absurd from the place he had once occupied. But something in him recognised the truth of it—not as a rejection of anxiety but as a transformation of his stance toward it. In moments where the early sensations of anxiety returned, he began not to brace, but to *notice*. He could say, "Ah, here it comes. The spiral is inviting me again." And sometimes, just sometimes, he could choose to step aside or even laugh softly at the invitation.

He began to let go of the constant scanning, the performance, the rigid rules. He started to explore what it might be like to be with others without protecting himself from being seen. He experimented with allowing silence, with not knowing what to say, with responding in the moment rather than calculating in advance. He began, in small ways, to dance. This was not in celebration of mastery but in freedom from it.

This was not a linear transformation. The spiral remained. But now there was another rhythm running alongside it—less rigid, more alive. A rhythm that could hold anxiety without collapsing under it. In this rhythm, Brandon was developing a new quality: the courage to live with vulnerability. This did not indicate the absence of despair but a willingness to walk through it with eyes open. He did not experience the elimination of anxiety but a deeper hospitality toward the fullness of being human.

Zorba, who can dance, had begun to stir.

### **The Fragility of Existence: Letting Go of Control**

As Brandon began to inhabit a new stance toward anxiety—a stance of contact rather than conquest—he also began to glimpse something deeper. Beneath the spiral, beneath even his strategies of control and despair, lay a more fundamental truth. A truth not about anxiety alone, but about being human.

He began to discover what I call the fragility of existence. This was not a cognitive realisation but a lived one. It arrived slowly, through the cracks in his previous worldview. In relinquishing the demand to master anxiety, Brandon began to feel the broader impossibility of mastering life itself. He started to see that the world is not something that can be fully secured. That moods rise, bodies fail, others misunderstand, futures remain uncertain.

Existence is not stable ground—it is a precarious unfolding. What Brandon had previously experienced as personal failure—his inability to stay in control—now revealed itself as part of a larger condition. He had not failed to do what others were doing. He had simply collided, honestly and painfully, with what others often avoid: the uncontrollability of life.

Here, paradoxically, was another soft moment of hope. Because once control was released, what emerged was not chaos, but truth. A sobering, steadying truth: that fragility is not a flaw in the structure of being—it *is* the structure of being. In seeing this, Brandon could stop waging war against it. He no longer had to treat every moment of anxiety as a betrayal of how things were meant to be. He began to understand that anxiety was not an interruption of life. It was part of the texture of life.

Thus, Brandon's Zorba-like stance began to deepen—not into endless exuberance, but into a more grounded responsiveness. He developed a capacity to let the dance be informed by fragility, not shut down by it. He began to experiment with living without guarantees, with acting even when the outcome was unknown. There was grief and humility in this. But there was also freedom. This was not the freedom to choose whatever he liked, but the freedom to stop pretending that life could be secured through willpower alone.

This, too, was part of what Heidegger (1927/1985) called resoluteness: standing open to the truth of one's thrownness, one's mortality, one's vulnerability, and choosing to respond from within it, rather than seeking to escape it.

Brandon had not escaped anxiety. But he had begun to walk alongside it—not as an enemy, but as a companion in the strange and unmasterable journey of being human.

### **Living With Fragility: A New Way of Being-in-the-World**

The shift in Brandon was not dramatic or sudden. It did not come with revelation or release. It showed itself quietly in how he moved through the world. The anxiety still came. He still had moments of uncertainty, of self-monitoring, of the old spiral's familiar pull. But something had changed in his relationship to those moments. He no longer greeted them as signs of failure but as reminders of fragility—his own, and that of the human condition.

He began to say things like:

“I noticed the anxiety coming, and I didn't fight it straight away.”

“I let it be there while I stayed in the meeting.”

“I didn't feel great but I wasn't disappearing into it either.”

“I reminded myself: this is just part of my experience.”

Brandon was no longer trying to control every encounter. In social situations, he let himself be more spontaneous, even if that meant being awkward. He found himself speaking without over-preparing and even laughing when things did not go smoothly. He described a new kind of relational freedom: the freedom to be seen—not as perfect, but as present.

This shift also began to affect his relationships. Where he had once been distant or overly guarded, he now allowed moments of vulnerability to show. He would say, “I’m feeling a bit off today”, or, “I get anxious in situations like this”. He often found others responding with recognition, even warmth. He was learning that connection does not come through polish, but through presence.

Even his relationship to his own body changed. Where once he saw the signs of anxiety—tight chest, shallow breath, heat rising—as threats to be extinguished, he began to relate to them as *signals*, not enemies. He could place a hand on his chest and say, “It’s okay, I feel you”. He was learning, in Heidegger’s (1927/1985) terms, to *stay-with*, rather than *escape-from*.

The most important change was not that anxiety disappeared—it did not. It was that Brandon had discovered he could live with it. He found that life, real life, was not the absence of fragility but the willingness to meet it with presence, curiosity, and even—at times—playfulness. This was not a return to the old self. It was a movement toward a new kind of selfhood: one not built on control, but on *response-ability*—a self who knew that anxiety was part of the price of being alive, and that fragility was not a defect but a condition of depth.

Zorba’s spirit was not a fantasy. It was a practice, a dance on uncertain ground. And Brandon, at last, had begun to dance, not in defiance of anxiety, but *with* it.

### **Closing Reflection: HEPT, Resoluteness, and the Mooded Disclosures of Being**

Brandon’s journey was not one of recovery in the conventional sense. It did not culminate in the elimination of anxiety or the establishment of control. Rather, it marked a shift in *how* he stood in relation to his anxiety, his world, and his own being.

Throughout this process, the framework of HEPT provided the basis for Brandon’s transformation. HEPT is not goal-oriented in a behavioural or cognitive sense. It is grounded in Heidegger’s (1927/1985) early ontology, particularly the view that human beings—*Dasein*—are always already beings-in-the-world, attuned by mood, and structured by the ways in which the world discloses itself through those moods.

Brandon began his journey deeply immersed in what Heidegger (1927/1985) calls *Verfallen*—a state of falling into the everydayness of anxious self-monitoring and reflexive self-judgement. He was entangled in a mood of anxiety that disclosed a world structured entirely by the imperative to control

and the terror of collapse. Within this referential whole, others appeared as threats, the self appeared as defective, and suicide appeared to be the most “rational” resolution.

Through our work together, Brandon began to describe the content of his experience but also its structure. This is what Heidegger (1927/1985) terms *Befindlichkeit*—the way in which human beings find themselves in a mooded world before they reflect, think or choose. In describing this mood from within, Brandon began to loosen its hold. He was no longer fully inside the spiral. He could speak from it, within it—naming its movement, its logic, and its reach.

This opened a space for what Heidegger (1927/1985) calls *Entschlossenheit* or resoluteness: the willingness to face the truth of one’s thrownness—not as something to be conquered, but as the ground from which authentic responsiveness can arise. Brandon did not become fearless or cured. Rather, he became capable of staying-with—of breathing anxiety in, as Kierkegaard (1844/1980) suggests, and letting it inform, rather than deform, his being.

In this stance, Brandon encountered something else: what I have called the fragility of existence. The realisation that life cannot be secured, that mastery is an illusion, and that the human condition is one of openness, risk, and contingency. From within this fragility, he discovered not collapse, but freedom—the freedom to move, to speak, to relate, and even, at times, to dance.

Here, the figure of Zorba became a living metaphor: not a rejection of despair, but a refusal to be paralysed by it. Zorba, who can laugh, cry, and sing without needing certainty. Zorba, who moves with the rhythm of being, not against it.

Brandon’s story is the story of a movement—not from anxiety to peace, but from being-overwhelmed to being-with, from reflexive collapse to existential attunement, from the silence of shame to the voice of description.

This is the work of HEPT. It is not a path out of anguish but a way into it. So that, in facing what one fears most, one may find a new capacity for presence, openness, and response. One may develop a way of *dwelling*, even in uncertainty—a way of *becoming*, even in anxiety. One may discover a way of *being human*.

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