



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY GENTLY USED #2

1129

CARL R.
ROGERS

**ON
BECOMING
A PERSON**



A distinguished psychologist's guide to personal growth and creativity

On Becoming a Person



*A Therapist's
View of Psychotherapy*



CARL R. ROGERS

Introduction by
Peter D. Kramer, M.D.



Houghton Mifflin Company

Boston New York

PART III

THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A PERSON

I have observed the process by which an individual grows and changes in a therapeutic relationship.

Some of the Directions Evident in Therapy

In Part II, although there are some brief descriptions of the process of change in the client, the major focus was on the relationship which makes these changes possible. In this and the following chapter, the material deals in a much more specific way with the nature of the client's experience of change in himself.

I have a personal fondness for this chapter. It was written in 1951–52, at a time when I was making a real effort to let myself sense, and then express, the phenomena which seemed central to therapy. My book, Client-Centered Therapy, had just been published, but I was already dissatisfied with the chapter on the process of therapy, which had of course been written about two years previously. I wanted to find a more dynamic way of communicating what happens to the person.

So I took the case of one client whose therapy had had much significance for me, one which I was also studying from a research point of view, and using this as a basis, tried to express the tentative perceptions of the therapeutic process which were emerging in me. I felt very bold, and very unsure of myself, in pointing out that in successful therapy clients seem to come to have real affection for themselves. I felt even more uncertain in voicing the hypothesis that the core of man's nature is essentially positive. I could not then foresee that both of these points would receive increasing support from my experience.

THE PROCESS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY, as we have come to know it from a client-centered orientation, is a unique and dynamic experience, different for each individual, yet exhibiting a lawfulness and order which is astonishing in its generality.* As I have become increasingly impressed by the inevitability of many aspects of this process, I likewise grow increasingly annoyed at the type of questions which are so commonly raised in regard to it: "Will it cure a compulsion neurosis?" "Surely you don't claim that it will erase a basic psychotic condition?" "Is it suitable for dealing with marital problems?" "Does it apply to stutterers or homosexuals?" "Are the cures permanent?" These questions, and others like them, are understandable and legitimate just as it would be reasonable to inquire whether gamma rays would be an appropriate

cure for chilblains. They are however, it seems to me, the wrong questions to ask if we are trying to further a deep knowledge of what psychotherapy is, or what it may accomplish. In this chapter I should like to ask what appears to me a sounder question in regard to this fascinating and lawful process we term therapy, and to attempt a partial answer.

Let me introduce my question in this way. Whether by chance, by insightful understanding, by scientific knowledge, by artistry in human relationships, or by a combination of all of these elements, we have learned how to initiate a describable process which appears to have a core of sequential, orderly events, which tend to be similar from one client to another. We know at least something of the attitudinal conditions for getting this process under way. We know that if the therapist holds within himself attitudes of deep respect and full acceptance for this client as he is, and similar attitudes toward the client's potentialities for dealing with himself and his situations; if these attitudes are suffused with a sufficient warmth, which transforms them into the most profound type of liking or affection for the core of the person; and if a level of communication is reached so that the client can begin to perceive that the therapist understands the feelings he is experiencing and accepts him at the full depth of that understanding, then we may be sure that the process is already initiated. Then, instead of trying to insist that this process serve the ends we have in mind (no matter how laudable those goals may be), let us ask the only question by which science can genuinely be advanced. This question is: "What is the nature of this process, what seem to be its inherent characteristics, what direction or directions does it take, and what, if any, are the natural end-points of the process?" When Benjamin Franklin observed the spark coming from the key on his kite-string, he did not, fortunately, fall under the spell of its immediate and practical uses. Instead, he began to inquire into the basic process which made such a phenomenon possible. Though many of the answers which were put forward were full of specific errors, the search was fruitful, because the right question was being asked. Thus I am making a plea that we ask the same question of psychotherapy, and ask it with open mind—that we endeavor to describe, study, and understand the basic process which underlies therapy, rather than attempting to warp that process to fit our clinical needs, or our preconceived dogma, or the evidence from some other field. Let us patiently examine it for what it *is*, in *itself*.

I have recently made an attempt to begin such a description of client-centered therapy (3). I will not repeat this description here, except to say that from the clinical and research evidence there seem to emerge certain persistent characteristics in the process: the increase in insightful statements, in maturity of reported behavior, in positive attitudes, as therapy progresses; the changes in perception of, and acceptance of, the self; the incorporation of previously denied experience into the self-structure; the shift in the locus of evaluation from outside to inside the self; the changes in the therapeutic relationship; and characteristic changes in personality structure, in behavior, and in physiological condition. Faulty as some of these descriptions may prove to be, they are an attempt to understand the process of client-centered therapy in its own terms, as revealed in clinical experience, in electrically recorded verbatim cases, and in the forty or more research studies which have been completed in this area.

My purpose in this paper is to push out beyond this material and to formulate certain trends in therapy which have received less emphasis. I should like to describe some of the directions and end points which appear to be inherent in the therapeutic process, which we have only recently begun to discern with clarity, which seem to represent significant learnings, and on which research is, as yet, nonexistent. In an attempt to convey meanings more adequately I shall use illustrative material from recorded interviews from one case. I shall also limit my discussion to the process of client-centered therapy since I have reluctantly come to concede the possibility that the process, directions, and end points of therapy may differ in different therapeutic orientations.

THE EXPERIENCING OF THE POTENTIAL SELF

One aspect of the process of therapy which is evident in all cases, might be termed the awareness of experience, or even “the experiencing of experience.” I have here labelled it as the experiencing of the self, though this also falls short of being an accurate term. In the security of the relationship with a client-centered therapist, in the absence of any actual or implied threat to self, the client can let himself examine various aspects of his experience as they actually feel to him, as they are apprehended through his sensory and visceral equipment, without distorting them to fit the existing concept of self. Many of these prove to be in extreme contradiction to the concept of self, and could not ordinarily be experienced in their fullness, but in this safe relationship they can be permitted to seep through into awareness without distortion. Thus they often follow the schematic pattern, “I am thus and so, but I experience this feeling which is very inconsistent with what I am”; “I love my parents, but I experience some surprising bitterness toward them at times”; “I am really no good, but sometimes

I seem to feel that I'm better than everyone else." Thus at first the expression is that "I am a self which is different from a part of my experience." Later this changes to the tentative pattern, "Perhaps I am several quite different selves, or perhaps my self contains more contradictions than I had dreamed." Still later the pattern changes to some such pattern as this: "I was sure that I could not be my experience—it was too contradictory—but now I am beginning to believe that I can be *all* of my experience."

Perhaps something of the nature of this aspect of therapy may be conveyed from two excerpts from the case of Mrs. Oak. Mrs. Oak was a housewife in her late thirties, who was having difficulties in marital and family relationships when she came in for therapy. Unlike many clients, she had a keen and spontaneous interest in the processes which she felt going on within herself, and her recorded interviews contain much material, from her own frame of reference, as to her perception of what is occurring. She thus tends to put into words what seems to be implicit, but un verbalized, in many clients. For this reason, most of the excerpts in this chapter will be taken from this one case.

From an early portion of the fifth interview comes material which describes the awareness of experience which we have been discussing.

Client: It all comes pretty vague. But you know I keep, keep having the thought occur to me that this whole process for me is kind of like examining pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. It seems to me I, I'm in the process now of examining the individual pieces which really don't have too much meaning. Probably handling them, not even beginning to think of a pattern. That keeps coming to me. And it's interesting to me because I, I really don't like jig-saw puzzles. They've always irritated me. But that's my feeling. And I mean I pick up little pieces (*she gestures throughout this conversation to illustrate her statements*) with absolutely no meaning except I mean the, the feeling that you get from simply handling them without seeing them as a pattern, but just from the touch, I probably feel, well it is going to fit someplace here.

Therapist: And that at the moment that, that's the process, just getting the feel and the shape and the configuration of the different pieces with a little bit of background feeling of, yeah they'll probably fit somewhere, but most of the attention's focused right on, "What does this feel like? And what's its texture?"

C: That's right. There's almost something physical in it. A, a—

T: You can't quite describe it without using your hands. A real, almost a sensuous sense in—

C: That's right. Again it's, it's a feeling of being very objective, and yet I've never been quite so close to myself.

T: Almost at one and the same time standing off and looking at yourself and yet somehow being closer to yourself that way than—

C: M-hm. And yet for the first time in months I am not thinking about my problems. I'm not actually, I'm not working on them.

T: I get the impression you don't sort of sit down to work on "my problems." It isn't that feeling at all.

C: That's right. That's right. I suppose what I, I mean actually is that I'm not sitting down to put this puzzle together as, as something, I've got to see the picture. It, it may be that, it may be that I am actually enjoying this feeling process. Or I'm certainly learning something.

T: At least there's a sense of the immediate goal of getting that feel as being the thing, not that you're doing this in order to see a picture, but that it's a, a satisfaction of really getting acquainted with each piece. Is that—

C: That's it. That's it. And it still becomes that sort of sensuousness, that touching. It's quite interesting. Sometimes not entirely pleasant, I'm sure, but—

T: A rather different sort of experience.

C: Yes. Quite.

This excerpt indicates very clearly the letting of material come into awareness, without any attempt to own it as part of the self, or to relate it to other material held in consciousness. It is, to put it as accurately as possible, an awareness of a wide range of experiences, with, at the moment, no thought of their relation to self. Later it may be recognized that what was being experienced may all

become a part of self. Thus the heading of this section has been termed “The Experiencing of the Potential Self.”

The fact that this is a new and unusual form of experience is expressed in a verbally confused but emotionally clear portion of the sixth interview.

C: Uh, I caught myself thinking that during these sessions, uh, I’ve been sort of singing a song. Now that sounds vague and uh—not actually singing—sort of a song without any music. Probably a kind of poem coming out. And I like the idea, I mean it’s just sort of come to me without anything built out of, of anything. And in—following that, it came, it came this other kind of feeling. Well, I found myself sort of asking myself, is that the shape that cases take? Is it possible that I am just verbalizing and, at times kind of become intoxicated with my own verbalizations? And then uh, following this, came, well, am I just taking up your time? And then a doubt, a doubt. Then something else occurred to me. Uh, from whence it came, I don’t know, no actual logical kind of sequence to the thinking. The thought struck me: We’re doing bits, uh, we’re not overwhelmed or doubtful, or show concern or, or any great interest when, when blind people learn to read with their fingers, Braille. I don’t know—it may be just sort of, it’s all mixed up. It may be that’s something that I’m experiencing now.

T: Let’s see if I can get some of that, that sequence of feelings. First, sort of as though you’re, and I gather that first one is a fairly positive feeling, as though maybe you’re kind of creating a poem here—a song without music somehow but something that might be quite creative, and then the, the feeling of a lot of skepticism about that. “Maybe I’m just saying words, just being carried off by words that I, that I speak, and maybe it’s all a lot of baloney, really.” And then a feeling that perhaps you’re almost learning a new type of experiencing which would be just as radically new as for a blind person to try to make sense out of what he feels with his fingertips.

C: M-hm. M-hm. (*Pause*) . . . And I sometimes think to myself, well, maybe we could go into this particular incident or that particular incident. And then somehow when I come here, there is, that doesn’t hold true, it’s, it seems false. And then there just seems to be this flow of words which somehow aren’t forced and then occasionally this doubt creeps in. Well, it sort of takes form of a, maybe you’re just making music. . . . Perhaps that’s why I’m doubtful today of, of this whole thing, because it’s something

that's not forced. And really I'm feeling that what I should do is, is sort of systematize the thing. Oughta work harder and—

T: Sort of a deep questioning as to what am I doing with a self that isn't, isn't pushing to get things *done, solved?* (*Pause*)

C: And yet the fact that I, I really like this other kind of thing, this, I don't know, call it a poignant feeling, I mean—I felt things that I never felt before. I *like* that, too. Maybe that's the way to do it. I just don't know today.

Here is the shift which seems almost invariably to occur in therapy which has any depth. It may be represented schematically as the client's feeling that "I came here to solve problems, and now I find myself just experiencing myself." And as with this client this shift is usually accompanied by the intellectual formulation that it is wrong, and by an emotional appreciation of the fact that it "feels good."

We may conclude this section saying that one of the fundamental directions taken by the process of therapy is the free experiencing of the actual sensory and visceral reactions of the organism without too much of an attempt to relate these experiences to the self. This is usually accompanied by the conviction that this material does not belong to, and cannot be organized into, the self. The end point of this process is that the client discovers that he can *be* his experience, with all of its variety and surface contradiction; that he can formulate himself out of his experience, instead of trying to impose a formulation of self upon his experience, denying to awareness those elements which do not fit.

THE FULL EXPERIENCING OF AN AFFECTIONAL RELATIONSHIP

One of the elements in therapy of which we have more recently become aware is the extent to which therapy is a learning, on the part of the client, to accept fully and freely and without fear the positive feelings of another. This is not a phenomenon which clearly occurs in every case. It seems particularly true of our longer cases, but does not occur uniformly in these. Yet it is such a deep experience that we have begun to question whether it is not a highly significant direction in the therapeutic process, perhaps occurring at an un verbalized level to some degree in all successful cases. Before discussing this phenomenon, let us give it some body by citing the experience of Mrs. Oak. The experience struck her rather suddenly, between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth interview, and she

spends most of the latter interview discussing it. She opens the thirtieth hour in his way.

C: Well, I made a very remarkable discovery. I know it's—*(laughs)* I found out that you actually *care* how this thing goes. *(Both laugh)* It gave me the feeling, it's sort of well—"maybe I'll let you get in the act," sort of thing. It's—again you see, on an examination sheet, I would have had the correct answer, I mean—but it suddenly dawned on me that in the—client-counselor kind of thing, you *actually care* what happens to this thing. And it was a revelation, a—not that. That doesn't describe it. It was a—well, the closest I can come to it is a kind of relaxation, a—not a letting down, but a—*(pause)* more of a straightening out without tension if that means anything. I don't know.

T: Sounds as though it isn't as though this was a new idea, but it was a new *experience* of really *feeling* that I did care and if I get the rest of that, sort of a willingness on your part to let me care.

C: Yes.

This letting the counselor and his warm interest into her life was undoubtedly one of the deepest features of therapy in this case. In an interview following the conclusion of therapy she spontaneously mentions this experience as being the outstanding one. What does it mean?

The phenomenon is most certainly not one of transference and countertransference. Some experienced psychologists who had undergone psychoanalysis had the opportunity of observing the development of the relationship in another case than the one cited. They were the first to object to the use of the terms transference and countertransference to describe the phenomena. The gist of their remarks was that this is something which is mutual and appropriate, where transference or countertransference are phenomena which are characteristically one-way and inappropriate to the realities of the situation.

Certainly one reason why this phenomena is occurring more frequently in our experience is that as therapists we have become less afraid of our positive (or negative) feelings toward the client. As therapy goes on the therapist's feeling of acceptance and respect for the client tends to change to something approaching awe as he sees the valiant and deep struggle of the person to be himself. There is, I think, within the therapist, a profound experience of the underlying

commonality—should we say brotherhood—of man. As a result he feels toward the client a warm, positive, affectional reaction. This poses a problem for the client who often, as in this case, finds it difficult to accept the positive feeling of another. Yet once accepted the inevitable reaction on the part of the client is to relax, to let the warmth of liking by another person reduce the tension and fear involved in facing life.

But we are getting ahead of our client. Let us examine some of the other aspects of this experience as it occurred to her. In earlier interviews she had talked of the fact that she did *not* love humanity, and that in some vague and stubborn way she felt she was right, even though others would regard her as wrong. She mentions this again as she discusses the way this experience has clarified her attitudes toward others.

C: The next thing that occurred to me that I found myself thinking and still thinking, is somehow—and I'm not clear why—the same kind of a caring that I get when I say "I don't love humanity." Which has always sort of—I mean I was always convinced of it. So I mean, it doesn't—I knew that it was a good thing, see. And I think I clarified it within myself—what it has to do with this situation, I don't know. But I found out, no, I don't love, but I do *care* terribly.

T: M-hm. M-hm. I see. . . .

C: . . . It might be expressed better in saying I care terribly what happens. But the caring is a—takes form—its structure is in understanding and not wanting to be taken in, or to contribute to those things which I feel are false and—It seems to me that in—in loving, there's a kind of *final* factor. If you do that, you've sort of done *enough*. It's a—

T: That's *it*, sort of.

C: Yeah. It seems to me this other thing, this caring, which isn't a good term—I mean, probably we need something else to describe this kind of thing. To say it's an impersonal thing doesn't mean anything because it isn't impersonal. I mean I feel it's very much a part of a whole. But it's something that somehow doesn't stop. . . . It seems to me you could have this feeling of loving humanity, loving people, and at the same time—go on contributing to the factors that make people neurotic, make them ill—where, what I feel is a resistance to those things.

T: You care enough to want to understand and to want to avoid contributing to anything that would make for more neuroticism, or more of that aspect in human life.

C: Yes. And it's—(pause). Yes, it's something along those lines. . . . Well, again, I have to go back to how I feel about this other thing. It's—I'm not really called upon to give of myself in a—sort of on the auction block. There's nothing final. . . . It sometimes bothered me when I—I would have to say to myself, "I don't love humanity," and yet, I always knew that there was something positive. That I was probably right. And—I may be all off the beam now, but it seems to me that, that is somehow tied up in the—this feeling that I—I have now, into how the therapeutic value can carry through. Now, I couldn't tie it up, I couldn't tie it in, but it's as close as I can come to explaining to myself, my—well, shall I say the learning process, the follow through on my realization that—yes, you *do care* in a given situation. It's just that simple. And I hadn't been aware of it before. I might have closed this door and walked out, and in discussing therapy, said, yes, the counselor must feel thus and so, but, I mean, I hadn't had the dynamic experience.

In this portion, though she is struggling to describe her own feeling, it would seem that what she is saying would be characteristic of the therapist's attitude toward the client as well. His attitude, at its best, is devoid of the *quid pro quo* aspect of most of the experiences we call love. It is the simple outgoing human feeling of one individual for another, a feeling, it seems to me which is even more basic than sexual or parental feeling. It is a caring enough about the person that you do not wish to interfere with his development, nor to use him for any self-aggrandizing goals of your own. Your satisfaction comes in having set him free to grow in his own fashion.

Our client goes on to discuss how hard it has been for her in the past to accept any help or positive feeling from others, and how this attitude is changing.

C: I have a feeling . . . that you have to do it pretty much yourself, but that somehow you ought to be able to do that with other people. (*She mentions that there have been "countless" times when she might have accepted personal warmth and kindness from others.*) I get the feeling that I just was afraid I would be devastated. (*She returns to talking about the counseling itself and her feeling toward it.*) I mean there's been this tearing

through the thing myself. Almost to—I mean, I felt it—I mean I tried to verbalize it on occasion—a kind of—at times almost not wanting you to restate, not wanting you to reflect, the thing is *mine*. Course all right, I can say it's resistance. But that doesn't mean a damn thing to me now. . . . The—I think in—in relationship to this particular thing, I mean, the—probably at times, the strongest feeling was, it's mine, it's *mine*. I've got to cut it down myself. See?

T: It's an experience that's awfully hard to put down accurately into words, and yet I get a sense of difference here in this relationship, that from the feeling that "this is mine," "I've got to do it," "I am doing it," and so on, to a somewhat different feeling that—"I could let you in."

C: Yeah. Now. I mean, that's—that it's—well, it's sort of, shall we say, volume two. It's—it's a—well, sort of, well. I'm still in the thing alone, but I'm *not*—see—I'm—

T: M-hm. Yes, that paradox sort of sums it up, doesn't it?

C: Yeah.

T: In all of this, there is a feeling, it's still—every aspect of my experience is mine and that's kind of inevitable and necessary and so on. And yet that isn't the whole picture either. Somehow it can be shared or another's interest can come in and in some ways it is new.

C: Yeah. And it's—it's as though, that's how it should be. I mean, that's how it—has to be. There's a—there's a feeling, "and this is good." I mean, it expresses, it clarifies it for me. There's a feeling—in this caring, as though—you were sort of standing back—standing off, and if I want to sort of cut through to the thing, it's a—a slashing of—oh, tall weeds, that I can do it, and you can—I mean you're not going to be disturbed by having to walk through it, too. I don't know. And it doesn't make sense. I mean—

T: Except there's a very real sense of rightness about this feeling that you have, hm?

C: M-hm.

May it not be that this excerpt portrays the heart of the process of socialization? To discover that it is *not* devastating to accept the positive feeling from another, that it does not necessarily end in hurt, that it actually “feels good” to have another person with you in your struggles to meet life—this may be one of the most profound learnings encountered by the individual whether in therapy or not.

Something of the newness, the non-verbal level of this experience is described by Mrs. Oak in the closing moments of this thirtieth interview.

C: I’m experiencing a new type, a—probably the only worthwhile kind of learning, a—I know I’ve—I’ve often said what I know doesn’t help me here. What I meant is, my acquired knowledge doesn’t help me. But it seems to me that the learning process here has been—so dynamic, I mean, so much a part of the—of everything, I mean, of me, that if I just get that out of it, it’s something, which, I mean—I’m wondering if I’ll ever be able to straighten out into a sort of acquired knowledge what I have experienced here.

T: In other words, the kind of learning that has gone on here has been something of quite a different sort and quite a different depth; very vital, very real. And quite worthwhile to you in and of itself, but the question you’re asking is: Will I ever have a clear intellectual picture of what has gone on at this somehow deeper kind of learning level?

C: M-hm. Something like that.

Those who would apply to therapy the so-called laws of learning derived from the memorization of nonsense syllables would do well to study this excerpt with care. Learning as it takes place in therapy is a total, organismic, frequently non-verbal type of thing which may or may not follow the same principles as the intellectual learning of trivial material which has little relevance to the self. This, however, is a digression.

Let us conclude this section by rephrasing its essence. It appears possible that one of the characteristics of deep or significant therapy is that the client discovers that it is not devastating to admit fully into his own experience the positive feeling which another, the therapist, holds toward him. Perhaps one of the reasons why this is so difficult is that essentially it involves the feeling that “I am worthy of being liked.” This we shall consider in the following section. For the present it may be pointed out that this aspect of therapy is a free and full

experiencing of an affectional relationship which may be put in generalized terms as follows: "I can permit someone to care about me, and can fully accept that caring within myself. This permits me to recognize that I care, and care deeply, for and about others."

THE LIKING OF ONE'S SELF

In various writings and researches that have been published regarding client-centered therapy there has been a stress upon the acceptance of self as one of the directions and outcomes of therapy. We have established the fact that in successful psychotherapy negative attitudes toward the self decrease and positive attitudes increase. We have measured the gradual increase in self-acceptance and have studied the correlated increase in acceptance of others. But as I examine these statements and compare them with our more recent cases, I feel they fall short of the truth. The client not only accepts himself—a phrase which may carry the connotation of a grudging and reluctant acceptance of the inevitable—he actually comes to *like* himself. This is not a bragging or self-assertive liking; it is rather a quiet pleasure in being one's self.

Mrs. Oak illustrates this trend rather nicely in her thirty-third interview. Is it significant that this follows by ten days the interview where she could for the first time admit to herself that the therapist cared? Whatever our speculations on this point, this fragment indicates very well the quiet joy in being one's self, together with the apologetic attitude which, in our culture, one feels it is necessary to take toward such an experience. In the last few minutes of the interview, knowing her time is nearly up she says:

C: One thing worries me—and I'll hurry because I can always go back to it—a feeling that occasionally I can't turn out. Feeling of being quite pleased with myself. Again the Q technique.* I walked out of here one time, and impulsively I threw my first card, "I am an attractive personality"; looked at it sort of aghast but left it there, I mean, because honestly, I mean, that is exactly how it felt—a—well, that bothered me and I catch that now. Every once in a while a sort of pleased feeling, nothing superior, but just—I don't know, sort of pleased. A neatly turned way. And it bothered me. And yet—I wonder—I rarely remember things I say here, I mean I wondered why it was that I was convinced, and something about what I've felt about being hurt that I suspected in—my feelings when I would hear someone say to a child, "Don't cry." I mean, I always felt, but it isn't right; I mean, if he's hurt, let him cry. Well, then, now this pleased feeling that I have. I've recently come to feel, it's—there's something almost the same there. It's—

We don't object when *children* feel pleased with themselves. It's—I mean, there really isn't anything vain. It's—maybe that's how people *should* feel.

T: You've been inclined almost to look askance at yourself for this feeling, and yet as you think about it more, maybe it comes close to the two sides of the picture, that if a child wants to cry, why shouldn't he cry? And if he wants to feel pleased with himself, doesn't he have a perfect right to feel pleased with himself? And that sort of ties in with this, what I would see as an appreciation of yourself that you've experienced every now and again.

C: Yes. Yes.

T: "I'm really a pretty rich and interesting person."

C: Something like that. And then I say to myself, "Our society pushes us around and we've lost it." And I keep going back to my feelings about children. Well, maybe they're richer than we are. Maybe we—it's something we've lost in the process of growing up.

T: Could be that they have a wisdom about that that we've lost.

C: That's right. My time's up.

Here she arrives, as do so many other clients, at the tentative, slightly apologetic realization that she has come to like, enjoy, appreciate herself. One gets the feeling of a spontaneous relaxed enjoyment, a primitive *joie de vivre*, perhaps analogous to the lamb frisking about the meadow or the porpoise gracefully leaping in and out of the waves. Mrs. Oak feels that it is something native to the organism. to the infant, something we have lost in the warping process of development.

Earlier in this case one sees something of a forerunner of this feeling, an incident which perhaps makes more clear its fundamental nature. In the ninth interview Mrs. Oak in a somewhat embarrassed fashion reveals something she has always kept to herself. That she brought it forth at some cost is indicated by the fact that it was preceded by a very long pause, of several minutes duration. Then she spoke.

C: You know this is kind of goofy, but I've never told anyone this (*nervous laugh*) and it'll probably do me good. For years, oh, probably from early youth, from seventeen probably on, I, I have had what I have come to call to myself, told myself were "flashes of sanity." I've never told anyone this, (*another embarrassed laugh*) wherein, in, really I feel sane. And, and pretty much aware of life. And always with a terrific kind of concern and sadness of how far away, how far astray that we have actually gone. It's just a feeling once in a while of finding myself a whole kind of person in a terribly chaotic kind of world.

T: It's been fleeting and it's been infrequent, but there have been times when it seems the whole you is functioning and feeling in the world, a very chaotic world to be sure—

C: That's right. And I mean, and knowing actually how far astray we, we've gone from, from being whole healthy people. And of course, one doesn't talk in those terms.

T: A feeling that it wouldn't be *safe* to talk about the singing you^{*}—

C: Where does that person live?

T: Almost as if there was no place for such a person to, to exist.

C: Of course, you know, that, that makes me—now wait a minute—that probably explains why I'm primarily concerned with feelings here. That's probably it.

T: Because that whole you does exist with all your feelings. Is that it, you're more aware of feelings?

C: That's right. It's not, it doesn't reject feelings and—that's *it*.

T: That whole you somehow lives feelings instead of somehow pushing them to one side.

C: That's right. (*Pause*) I suppose from the practical point of view it could be said that what I ought to be doing is solving some problems, day-to-day problems. And yet, I, I—what I'm trying to do is solve, solve something else that's a great, that is a great deal more important than little day-to-day problems. Maybe that sums up the whole thing.

T: I wonder if this will distort your meaning, that from a hardheaded point of view you ought to be spending time thinking through specific problems. But you wonder if perhaps maybe you aren't on a quest for this whole you and perhaps that's more important than a solution to the day-to-day problems.

C: I think that's it. I think that's it. That's probably what I mean.

If we may legitimately put together these two experiences, and if we are justified in regarding them as typical, then we may say that both in therapy and in some fleeting experiences throughout her previous life, she has experienced a healthy satisfying enjoyable appreciation of herself as a whole and functioning creature; and that this experience occurs when she does not reject her feelings but lives them.

Here it seems to me is an important and often overlooked truth about the therapeutic process. It works in the direction of permitting the person to experience fully, and in awareness, all of his reactions including his feelings and emotions. As this occurs, the individual feels a positive liking for himself, a genuine appreciation of himself as a total functioning unit, which is one of the important end points of therapy.

THE DISCOVERY THAT THE CORE OF PERSONALITY IS POSITIVE

One of the most revolutionary concepts to grow out of our clinical experience is the growing recognition that the innermost core of man's nature, the deepest layers of his personality, the base of his "animal nature," is positive in nature—is basically socialized, forward-moving, rational and realistic.

This point of view is so foreign to our present culture that I do not expect it to be accepted, and it is indeed so revolutionary in its implications that it should not be accepted without thorough-going inquiry. But even if it should stand these tests, it will be difficult to accept. Religion, especially the Protestant Christian tradition, has permeated our culture with the concept that man is basically sinful, and only by something approaching a miracle can his sinful nature be negated. In

psychology, Freud and his followers have presented convincing arguments that the id, man's basic and unconscious nature, is primarily made up of instincts which would, if permitted expression, result in incest, murder, and other crimes. The whole problem of therapy, as seen by this group, is how to hold these untamed forces in check in a wholesome and constructive manner, rather than in the costly fashion of the neurotic. But the fact that at heart man is irrational, unsocialized, destructive of others and self—this is a concept accepted almost without question. To be sure there are occasional voices of protest. Maslow (1) puts up a vigorous case for man's animal nature, pointing out that the anti-social emotions—hostility, jealousy, etc.—result from frustration of more basic impulses for love and security and belonging, which are in themselves desirable. And Montagu (2) likewise develops the thesis that cooperation, rather than struggle, is the basic law of human life. But these solitary voices are little heard. On the whole the viewpoint of the professional worker as well as the layman is that man as he is, in his basic nature, had best be kept under control or under cover or both.

As I look back over my years of clinical experience and research, it seems to me that I have been very slow to recognize the falseness of this popular and professional concept. The reason, I believe, lies in the fact that in therapy there are continually being uncovered hostile and anti-social feelings, so that it is easy to assume that this indicates the deeper and therefore the basic nature of man. Only slowly has it become evident that these untamed and unsocial feelings are neither the deepest nor the strongest, and that the inner core of man's personality is the organism itself, which is essentially both self-preserving and social.

To give more specific meaning to this argument, let me turn again to the case of Mrs. Oak. Since the point is an important one, I shall quote at some length from the recorded case to illustrate the type of experience on which I have based the foregoing statements. Perhaps the excerpts can illustrate the opening up of layer after layer of personality until we come to the deepest elements.

It is in the eighth interview that Mrs. Oak rolls back the first layer of defense, and discovers a bitterness and desire for revenge underneath.

C: You know over in this area of, of sexual disturbance, I have a feeling that I'm beginning to discover that it's pretty bad, pretty bad. I'm finding out that, that I'm bitter, really. Damn bitter. I—and I'm not turning it back in, into myself . . . I think what I probably feel is a certain element of "I've been cheated." (*Her voice is very tight and her throat chokes up.*) And I've covered up very nicely, to the point of consciously not caring. But I'm, I'm sort of amazed to find that in this practice of, what shall I call it, a kind of

sublimation that right under it—again words—there’s a, a kind of passive force that’s, it’s pas—it’s very passive, but at the same time it’s just kind of *murderous*.

T: So there’s the feeling, “I’ve really been cheated. I’ve covered that up and seem not to care and yet underneath that there’s a kind of a, a latent but very much present *bitterness* that is very, very strong.”

C: It’s very strong. I—that I know. It’s terribly powerful.

T: Almost a dominating kind of force.

C: Of which I am rarely conscious. Almost never . . . Well, the only way I can describe it, it’s a kind of murderous thing, but without violence. . . . It’s more like a feeling of wanting to get even. . . . And of course, I won’t pay back, but I’d like to. I really would like to.

Up to this point the usual explanation seems to fit perfectly. Mrs. Oak has been able to look beneath the socially controlled surface of her behavior, and finds underneath a murderous feeling of hatred and a desire to get even. This is as far as she goes in exploring this particular feeling until considerably later in therapy. She picks up the theme in the thirty-first interview. She has had a hard time getting under way, feels emotionally blocked, and cannot get at the feeling which is welling up in her.

C: I have the feeling it isn’t guilt. (*Pause. She weeps.*) Of course I mean, I can’t verbalize it yet. (*Then with a rush of emotion*) It’s just being *terribly hurt!*

T: M-hm. It isn’t guilt except in the sense of being very much wounded somehow.

C: (*Weeping*) It’s—you know, often I’ve been guilty of it myself but in later years when I’ve heard parents say to their children, “stop crying,” I’ve had a feeling, a hurt as though, well, why should they tell them to stop crying? They feel sorry for themselves, and who can feel more adequately sorry for himself than the child. Well, that is sort of what—I mean, as though I mean, I thought that they should let him cry. And—feel sorry for him too, maybe. In a rather objective kind of way. Well, that’s—that’s

something of the kind of thing I've been experiencing. I mean, now—just right now. And in—in—

T: That catches a little more the flavor of the feeling that it's almost as if you're really weeping for yourself.

C: Yeah. And again you see there's conflict. Our culture is such that—I mean, one doesn't indulge in self-pity. But this isn't—I mean, I feel it doesn't quite have that connotation. It may have.

T: Sort of think that there is a cultural objection to feeling sorry about yourself. And yet you feel the feeling you're experiencing isn't quite what the culture objected to either.

C: And then of course, I've come to—to see and to feel that over this—see. I've covered it up. (*Weeps.*) But I've covered it up with so much *bitterness*, which in turn I had to cover up. (*Weeping*) *That's* what I want to get rid of! I almost don't *care* if I hurt.

T: (*Softly, and with an empathic tenderness toward the hurt she is experiencing*) You feel that here at the basis of it as you experience it is a feeling of real tears for yourself. But *that* you can't show, mustn't show, so that's been covered by bitterness that you don't like, that you'd like to be rid of. You almost feel you'd rather absorb the hurt than to—than to feel the bitterness. (*Pause*) And what you seem to be saying quite strongly is, I do *hurt*, and I've tried to cover it up.

C: I didn't *know* it.

T: M-hm. Like a new discovery really.

C: (*Speaking at the same time*) I never really did know. But it's—you know, it's almost a physical thing. It's—it's sort of as though I were looking within myself at all kinds of—nerve endings and bits of things that have been sort of mashed. (*Weeping*)

T: As though some of the most delicate aspects of you physically almost have been crushed or hurt.

C: Yes. And you know, I do get the feeling, “Oh, you poor thing.” *(Pause)*

T: Just can’t help but feel very deeply sorry for the person that is you.

C: I don’t think I feel sorry for the whole person; it’s a certain aspect of the thing.

T: Sorry to see that hurt.

C: Yeah.

T: M-hm. M-hm.

C: And then of course there’s this damn bitterness that I want to get rid of. It’s—it gets me into trouble. It’s because it’s a tricky thing. It tricks me. *(Pause)*

T: Feel as though that bitterness is something you’d like to be rid of because it doesn’t do right by you.

C: *(C weeps. Long pause)* I don’t know. It seems to me that I’m right in feeling, what in the world good would it do to term this thing guilt. To chase down things that would give me an interesting case history, shall we say. What *good* would it do? It seems to me that the—that the key, the real thing is in this feeling that I have.

T: You could track down some tag or other and could make quite a pursuit of that, but you feel as though the core of the whole thing is the kind of experience that you’re just having right here.

C: That’s right. I mean if—I don’t know what’ll happen to the feeling. Maybe nothing. I don’t know, but it seems to me that whatever understanding I’m to have is a part of this feeling of hurt, of—it doesn’t matter much what it’s called. *(Pause)* Then I—one can’t go—around with a hurt so openly exposed. I mean this seems to me that somehow the next process has to be a kind of healing.

T: Seems as though you couldn’t possibly expose yourself if part of yourself is so hurt, so you wonder if somehow the hurt mustn’t be healed

first. *(Pause)*

C: And yet, you know, it's—it's a funny thing *(pause)*. It sounds like a statement of complete confusion or the old saw that the neurotic doesn't want to give up his symptoms. But that isn't true. I mean, that isn't true here, but it's—I can just hope that this will impart what I feel. I somehow don't mind being hurt. I mean, it's just occurred to me that I don't mind terribly. It's a—I mind more the—the feeling of bitterness which is, I know, the cause of this frustration, I mean the—I somehow mind that more.

T: Would this get it? That, though you don't like the hurt, yet you feel you can accept that. That's bearable. Somehow it's the things that have covered up that hurt, like the bitterness, that you just—at this moment, can't stand.

C: Yeah. That's just about it. It's sort of as though, well, the first, I mean, as though, it's—well, it's something I can cope with. Now, the feeling of, well, I can still have a hell of a lot of fun, see. But that this other, I mean, this frustration—I mean, it comes out in so many ways, I'm beginning to realize, you see. I mean, just this sort of, this kind of thing.

T: And a hurt you can accept. It's a part of life within a lot of other parts of life, too. You can have lots of fun. But to have all of your life diffused by frustration and bitterness, that you don't like, you don't want, and are now more aware of.

C: Yeah. And there's somehow no dodging it now. You see, I'm much more aware of it. *(Pause)* I don't know. Right now, I don't know just what the next step is. I really don't know. *(Pause)* Fortunately, this is a kind of development, so that it—doesn't carry over too acutely into—I mean, I—what I'm trying to say, I think, is that I'm still functioning. I'm still enjoying myself and—

T: Just sort of want me to know that in lots of ways you carry on just as you always have.

C: That's it. *(Pause)* Oh, I think I've got to stop and go.

In this lengthy excerpt we get a clear picture of the fact that underlying the bitterness and hatred and the desire to get back at the world which has cheated

her, is a much less anti-social feeling, a deep experience of having been hurt. And it is equally clear that at this deeper level she has no desire to put her murderous feelings into action. She dislikes them and would like to be rid of them.

The next excerpt comes from the thirty-fourth interview. It is very incoherent material, as verbalizations often are when the individual is trying to express something deeply emotional. Here she is endeavoring to reach far down into herself. She states that it will be difficult to formulate.

C: I don't know whether I'll be able to talk about it yet or not. Might give it a try. Something—I mean, it's a feeling—that—sort of an urge to really get out. I know it isn't going to make sense. I think that maybe if I can get it out and get it a little, well, in a little more matter of fact way, that it'll be something that's more useful to me. And I don't know how to—I mean, it seems as though I want to say, I want to talk about my *self*. And that is of course as I see, what I've been doing for all these hours. But, no, this—it's my *self*. I've quite recently become aware of rejecting certain statements, because to me they sounded—not quite what I meant, I mean, a little bit too idealized. And I mean, I can remember always saying it's more selfish than that, more selfish than that. Until I—it sort of occurs to me, it dawns, yeah, that's exactly what I mean, but the selfishness I mean, has an entirely different connotation. I've been using a word "selfish." Then I have this feeling of—I—that I've never expressed it before, of selfish—which means nothing. A—I'm still going to talk about it. A kind of pulsation. And it's something aware all the time. And still it's there. And I'd like to be able to utilize it, too—as a kind of descending into this thing. You know, it's as though—I don't know, damn! I'd sort of acquired someplace, and picked up a kind of acquaintance with the structure. Almost as though I knew it brick for brick kind of thing. It's something that's an awareness. I mean, that—of a feeling of not being fooled, of not being drawn into the thing, and a critical sense of knowingness. But in a way—the reason, it's hidden and—can't be a part of everyday life. And there's something of—at times I feel almost a little bit terrible in the thing, but again terrible not as terrible. And why? I think I know. And it's—it also explains a lot to me. It's—it's something that is *totally* without hate. I mean, just *totally*. Not with love, but *totally without hate*. But it's—it's an exciting thing, too . . . I guess maybe I am the kind of person that likes to, I mean, probably even torment myself, or to chase things down, to try to find the whole. And I've told myself, now look, this is a pretty strong kind of feeling which you have. It

isn't constant. But you feel it sometimes, and as you let yourself feel it, you feel it yourself. You know, there are words for that kind of thing that one could find in abnormal psychology. Might almost be like the feeling that is occasionally, is attributed to things that you read about. I mean, there are some elements there—I mean, this pulsation, this excitement, this knowing. And I've said—I tracked down one thing, I mean, I was very, very brave, what shall we say—a sublimated sex drive. And I thought, well, *there* I've got it. I've really solved the thing. And that there is nothing more to it than that. And for awhile, I mean, I was quite pleased with myself. That was it. And then I had to admit, no, that wasn't it. 'Cause that's something that had been with me long before I became so terribly frustrated sexually. I mean, that wasn't—and, but in the thing, then I began to see a little, within this very core is an acceptance of sexual relationship, I mean, the only kind that I would think would be possible. It was in this thing. It's not something that's been—I mean, sex hasn't been sublimated or substituted there. No. Within this, within what I know there—I mean, it's a different kind of sexual feeling to be sure. I mean, it's one that is stripped of all the things that have happened to sex, if you know what I mean. There's no chase, no pursuit, no battle, no—well, no kind of hate, which I think, seems to me, has crept into such things. And yet, I mean, this feeling has been, oh, a little bit disturbing.

T: I'd like to see if I can capture a little of what that means to you. It is as you've gotten very deeply acquainted with yourself on kind of a brick-by-brick experiencing basis, and in that sense have become more selfish, and the notion of really,—in the discovering of what is the core of you as separate from all the other aspects, you come across the realization, which is a very deep and pretty thrilling realization, that the core of that self is not only without hate, but is really something more resembling a saint, something really very pure, is the word I would use. And that you can try to depreciate that. You can say, maybe it's a sublimation, maybe it's an abnormal manifestation, screwball and so on. But inside of yourself, you knew that it isn't. This contains the feelings which could contain rich sexual expression, but it sounds bigger than, and really deeper than that. And yet fully able to include all that could be a part of sex expression.

C: It's probably something like that. . . . It's kind of—I mean, it's a kind of descent. It's a going down where you might almost think it should be going up, but no, it's—I'm sure of it; it's kind of going down.

T: This is a going down and immersing yourself in your self almost.

C: Yeah. And I—I can't just throw it aside. I mean, it just seems, oh, it just is. I mean, it seems an awfully important thing that I just had to say.

T: I'd like to pick up one of those things too, to see if I understand it. That it sounds as though this sort of idea you're expressing is something you must be going up to capture, something that *isn't* quite. Actually though, the feeling is, this is a going down to capture something that's more deeply there.

C: It is. It really—there's something to that which is—I mean, this—I have a way, and of course sometime we're going to have to go into that, of rejecting almost violently, that which is righteous, rejection of the ideal, the—as—and that expressed it; I mean, that's sort of what I mean. One is a going up into I don't know. I mean, I just have a feeling, I can't follow. I mean, it's pretty thin stuff if you ever start knocking it down. This one went—I wondered why—I mean, has this awfully definite feeling of descending.

T: That this isn't a going up into the thin ideal. This is a going down into the astonishingly solid reality, that—

C: Yeah.

T:—is really more surprising than—

C: Yeah. I mean, a something that you don't knock down. That's there—I don't know—seems to me after you've abstracted the whole thing. That lasts. . . .

Since this is presented in such confused fashion, it might be worth while to draw from it the consecutive themes which she has expressed.

I'm going to talk about myself as *self-ish*, but with a new connotation to the word.

I've acquired an acquaintance with the structure of myself, know myself deeply.

As I descend into myself, I discover something exciting, a core that is totally without hate.

It can't be a part of everyday life—it may even be abnormal.

I thought first it was just a sublimated sex drive.

But no, this is more inclusive, deeper than sex.

One would expect this to be the kind of thing one would discover by going up into the thin realm of ideals.

But actually, I found it by going deep within myself.

It seems to be something that is the essence, that lasts.

Is this a mystic experience she is describing? It would seem that the counselor felt so, from the flavor of his responses. Can we attach any significance to such a Gertrude Stein kind of expression? The writer would simply point out that many clients have come to a somewhat similar conclusion about themselves, though not always expressed in such an emotional way. Even Mrs. Oak, in the following interview, the thirty-fifth, gives a clearer and more concise statement of her feeling, in a more down-to-earth way. She also explains why it was a difficult experience to face.

C: I think I'm awfully glad I found myself or brought myself or wanted to talk about self. I mean, it's a very personal, private kind of thing that you just don't talk about. I mean, I can understand my feeling of, oh, probably slight apprehension now. It's—well, sort of as though I was just rejecting, I mean, all of the things that western civilization stands for, you see. And wondering whether I was right, I mean, whether it was quite the right path, and still of course, feeling how right the thing was, you see. And so there's bound to be a conflict. And then this, and I mean, now I'm feeling, well, of course that's how I feel. I mean there's a—this thing that I term a kind of a lack of hate, I mean, is very real. It carried over into the things I do, I believe in. . . . I think it's all right. It's sort of maybe my saying to myself, well, you've been bashing me all over the head, I mean, sort of from the beginning, with superstitions and taboos and misinterpreted doctrines and laws and your science, your refrigerators, your atomic bombs. But I'm just not buying; you see, I'm just, you just haven't quite succeeded. I think what I'm saying is that, well, I mean, just not conforming, and it's—well, it's just that way.

T: Your feeling at the present time is that you have been very much aware of all the cultural pressures—not always very much aware, but “there have been so many of those in my life—and now I’m going down more deeply into myself to find out what I really feel” and it seems very much at the present time as though that somehow separates you a long ways from your culture, and that’s a little frightening, but feels basically good. Is that—

C: Yeah. Well, I have the feeling now that it’s okay, really. . . . Then there’s something else—a feeling that’s starting to grow; well, to be almost formed, as I say. This kind of conclusion, that I’m going to stop looking for something terribly wrong. Now I don’t know why. But I mean, just—it’s this kind of thing. I’m sort of saying to myself now, well, in view of what I know, what I’ve found—I’m pretty sure I’ve ruled out fear, and I’m positive I’m not afraid of shock—I mean, I sort of would have welcomed it. But—in view of the places I’ve been, what I learned there, then also kind of, well, taking into consideration what I don’t know, sort of, maybe this is one of the things that I’ll have to date, and say, well, now, I’ve just—I just can’t find it. See? And now without any—without, I should say, any sense of apology or covering up, just sort of simple statement that I can’t find what at this time, appears to be bad.

T: Does this catch it? That as you’ve gone more and more deeply into yourself, and as you think about the kind of things that you’ve discovered and learned and so on, the conviction grows very, very strong that no matter how far you go, the things that you’re going to find are not dire and awful. They have a very different character.

C: Yes, something like that.

Here, even as she recognizes that her feeling goes against the grain of her culture, she feels bound to say that the core of herself is not bad, nor terribly wrong, but something positive. Underneath the layer of controlled surface behavior, underneath the bitterness, underneath the hurt, is a self that is positive, and that is without hate. This I believe is the lesson which our clients have been facing us with for a long time, and which we have been slow to learn.

If hatelessness seems like a rather neutral or negative concept, perhaps we should let Mrs. Oak explain its meaning. In her thirty-ninth interview, as she feels her therapy drawing to a close, she returns to this topic.

C: I wonder if I ought to clarify—it's clear to me, and perhaps that's all that matters really, here, my strong feeling about a hate-free kind of approach. Now that we have brought it up on a rational kind of plane, I know—it sounds negative. And yet in my thinking, my—not really my thinking but my feeling, it—*and* my thinking, yes, my thinking, too—it's a far more positive thing than this—than a love—and it seems to me a far easier kind of a—it's less confining. But it—I realize that it must sort of sound and almost seem like a complete rejection of so many things, of so many creeds and maybe it is. I don't know. But it just to me seems more positive.

T: You can see how it might sound more negative to someone but as far as the meaning that it has for you is concerned, it doesn't seem as binding, as possessive I take it, as love. It seems as though it actually is more—more expandable, more usable, than—

C: Yeah.

T:—any of these narrower terms.

C: Really does to me. It's easier. Well, anyway, it's easier for me to feel that way. And I don't know. It seems to me to really be a way of—of not—of finding yourself in a place where you aren't forced to make rewards and you aren't forced to punish. It is—it means so much. It just seems to me to make for a kind of freedom.

T: M-hm. M-hm. Where one is rid of the need of either rewarding or punishing, then it just seems to you there is so much more freedom for all concerned.

C: That's right. (*Pause*) I'm prepared for some breakdowns along the way.

T: You don't expect it will be smooth sailing.

C: No.

This section is the story—greatly abbreviated—of one client's discovery that the deeper she dug within herself, the less she had to fear; that instead of finding something terribly wrong within herself, she gradually uncovered a core of self which wanted neither to reward nor punish others, a self without hate, a self

which was deeply socialized. Do we dare to generalize from this type of experience that if we cut through deeply enough to our organismic nature, that we find that man is a positive and social animal? This is the suggestion from our clinical experience.

BEING ONE'S ORGANISM, ONE'S EXPERIENCE

The thread which runs through much of the foregoing material of this chapter is that psychotherapy (at least client-centered therapy) is a process whereby man becomes his organism—without self-deception, without distortion. What does this mean?

We are talking here about something at an experiential level—a phenomenon which is not easily put into words, and which, if apprehended only at the verbal level, is by that very fact, already distorted. Perhaps if we use several sorts of descriptive formulation, it may ring some bell, however faint, in the reader's experience, and cause him to feel "Oh, now I know, from my own experience, something of what you are talking about."

Therapy seems to mean a getting back to basic sensory and visceral experience. Prior to therapy the person is prone to ask himself, often unwittingly, "What do others think I should do in this situation?" "What would my parents or my culture want me to do?" "What do I think *ought* to be done?" He is thus continually acting in terms of the form which should be imposed upon his behavior. This does not necessarily mean that he always acts in *accord* with the opinions of others. He may indeed endeavor to act so as to contradict the expectations of others. He is nevertheless acting *in terms of* the expectations (often introjected expectations) of others. During the process of therapy the individual comes to ask himself, in regard to ever-widening areas of his life-space, "How do *I* experience this?" "What does it mean to *me*?" "If I behave in a certain way how do I symbolize the meaning which it *will* have for me?" He comes to act on a basis of what may be termed realism—a realistic balancing of the satisfactions and dissatisfactions which any action will bring to himself.

Perhaps it will assist those who, like myself, tend to think in concrete and clinical terms, if I put some of these ideas into schematized formulations of the process through which various clients go. For one client this may mean: "I have thought I must feel only love for my parents, but I find that I experience both love and bitter resentment. Perhaps I can be that person who freely experiences both love *and* resentment." For another client the learning may be: "I have thought I was only bad and worthless. Now I experience myself at times as one of much worth; at other times as one of little worth or usefulness. Perhaps I can be a person who experiences varying degrees of worth." For another: "I have

held the conception that no one could really love me for myself. Now I experience the affectional warmth of another for me. Perhaps I can be a person who is lovable by others—perhaps I *am* such a person.” For still another: “I have been brought up to feel that I must not appreciate myself—but I do. I can cry for myself, but I can enjoy myself, too. Perhaps I am a richly varied person whom I can enjoy and for whom I can feel sorry.” Or, to take the last example from Mrs. Oak, “I have thought that in some deep way I was bad, that the most basic elements in me must be dire and awful. I don’t experience that badness, but rather a positive desire to live and let live. Perhaps I can be that person who is, at heart, positive.”

What is it that makes possible anything but the first sentence of each of these formulations? It is the addition of awareness. In therapy the person adds to ordinary experience the full and undistorted awareness of his experiencing—of his sensory and visceral reactions. He ceases, or at least decreases, the distortions of experience in awareness. He can be aware of what he is actually experiencing, not simply what he can permit himself to experience after a thorough screening through a conceptual filter. In this sense the person becomes for the first time the full potential of the human organism, with the enriching element of awareness freely added to the basic aspect of sensory and visceral reaction. The person comes to *be* what he *is*, as clients so frequently say in therapy. What this seems to mean is that the individual comes to *be*—in awareness—what he *is*—in experience. He is, in other words, a complete and fully functioning human organism.

Already I can sense the reactions of some of my readers. “Do you mean that as a result of therapy, man becomes nothing but a human *organism*, a human *animal*? Who will control him? Who will socialize him? Will he then throw over all inhibitions? Have you merely released the beast, the id, in man?” To which the most adequate reply seems to be, “In therapy the individual has actually *become* a human organism, with all the richness which that implies. He is realistically able to control himself, and he is incorrigibly socialized in his desires. There is no beast in man. There is only man in man, and this we have been able to release.”

So the basic discovery of psychotherapy seems to me, if our observations have any validity, that we do not need to be afraid of being “merely” homo sapiens. It is the discovery that if we can add to the sensory and visceral experiencing which is characteristic of the whole animal kingdom, the gift of a free and undistorted awareness of which only the human animal seems fully capable, we have an organism which is beautifully and constructively realistic. We have then an organism which is as aware of the demands of the culture as it is of its own

physiological demands for food or sex—which is just as aware of its desire for friendly relationships as it is of its desire to aggrandize itself—which is just as aware of its delicate and sensitive tenderness toward others, as it is of its hostilities toward others. When man’s unique capacity of awareness is thus functioning freely and fully, we find that we have, not an animal whom we must fear, not a beast who must be controlled, but an organism able to achieve, through the remarkable integrative capacity of its central nervous system, a balanced, realistic, self-enhancing, other-enhancing behavior as a resultant of all these elements of awareness. To put it another way, when man is less than fully man—when he denies to awareness various aspects of his experience—then indeed we have all too often reason to fear him and his behavior, as the present world situation testifies. But when he is most fully man, when he is his complete organism, when awareness of experience, that peculiarly human attribute, is most fully operating, then he is to be trusted, then his behavior is constructive. It is not always conventional. It will not always be conforming. It will be individualized. But it will also be socialized.

A CONCLUDING COMMENT

I have stated the preceding section as strongly as I am able because it represents a deep conviction growing out of many years of experience. I am quite aware, however, of the difference between conviction and truth. I do not ask anyone to agree with my experience, but only to consider whether the formulation given here agrees with his own experience.

Nor do I apologize for the speculative character of this paper. There is a time for speculation, and a time for the sifting of evidence. It is to be hoped that gradually some of the speculations and opinions and clinical hunches of this paper may be put to operational and definitive test.

REFERENCES

1. Maslow, A. H. Our maligned animal nature. *Jour. of Psychol.*, 1949, 28, 273–278.
2. Montagu, A. *On Being Human*. New York: Henry Schuman, Inc., 1950.
3. Rogers, C. R., *Client-Centered Therapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951, Chapter IV, “The Process of Therapy.”

What It Means to Become a Person

This chapter was first given as a talk to a meeting at Oberlin College in 1954. I was trying to pull together in more completely organized form, some of the conceptions of therapy which had been growing in me. I have revised it slightly.

As is customary with me, I was trying to keep my thinking close to the grass roots of actual experience in therapeutic interviews, so I drew heavily upon recorded interviews as the source of the generalizations which I make.

IN MY WORK at the Counseling Center of the University of Chicago, I have the opportunity of working with people who present a wide variety of personal problems. There is the student concerned about failing in college; the housewife disturbed about her marriage; the individual who feels he is teetering on the edge of a complete breakdown or psychosis; the responsible professional man who spends much of his time in sexual fantasies and functions inefficiently in his work; the brilliant student, at the top of his class, who is paralyzed by the conviction that he is hopelessly and helplessly inadequate; the parent who is distressed by his child's behavior; the popular girl who finds herself unaccountably overtaken by sharp spells of black depression; the woman who fears that life and love are passing her by, and that her good graduate record is a poor recompense; the man who has become convinced that powerful or sinister forces are plotting against him;—I could go on and on with the many different and unique problems which people bring to us. They run the gamut of life's experiences. Yet there is no satisfaction in giving this type of catalog, for, as counselor, I know that the problem as stated in the first interview will not be the problem as seen in the second or third hour, and by the tenth interview it will be a still different problem or series of problems.

I have however come to believe that in spite of this bewildering horizontal multiplicity, and the layer upon layer of vertical complexity, there is perhaps only one problem. As I follow the experience of many clients in the therapeutic relationship which we endeavor to create for them, it seems to me that each one is raising the same question. Below the level of the problem situation about which the individual is complaining—behind the trouble with studies, or wife, or employer, or with his own uncontrollable or bizarre behavior, or with his frightening feelings, lies one central search. It seems to me that at bottom each

person is asking, “Who am I, *really*? How can I get in touch with this real self, underlying all my surface behavior? How can I become myself?”

The Process of Becoming

GETTING BEHIND THE MASK

Let me try to explain what I mean when I say that it appears that the goal the individual most wishes to achieve, the end which he knowingly and unknowingly pursues, is to become himself.

When a person comes to me, troubled by his unique combination of difficulties, I have found it most worth while to try to create a relationship with him in which he is safe and free. It is my purpose to understand the way he feels in his own inner world, to accept him as he is, to create an atmosphere of freedom in which he can move in his thinking and feeling and being, in any direction he desires. How does he use this freedom?

It is my experience that he uses it to become more and more himself. He begins to drop the false fronts, or the masks, or the roles, with which he has faced life. He appears to be trying to discover something more basic, something more truly himself. At first he lays aside masks which he is to some degree aware of using. One young woman student describes in a counseling interview one of the masks she has been using, and how uncertain she is whether underneath this appeasing, ingratiating front there is any real self with convictions.

I was thinking about this business of standards. I somehow developed a sort of knack, I guess, of—well—habit—of trying to make people feel at ease around me, or to make things go along smoothly. There always had to be some appeaser around, being sorta the oil that soothed the waters. At a small meeting, or a little party, or something—I could help things go along nicely and appear to be having a good time. And sometimes I’d surprise myself by arguing against what I really thought when I saw that the person in charge would be quite unhappy about it if I didn’t. In other words I just wasn’t ever—I mean, I didn’t find myself ever being set and definite about things. Now the reason why I did it probably was I’d been doing it around home so much. I just didn’t stand up for my own convictions, until I don’t know whether I have any convictions to stand up for. I haven’t been really honestly being myself, or actually knowing what my real self is, and I’ve

been just playing a sort of false role.

You can, in this excerpt, see her examining the mask she has been using, recognizing her dissatisfaction with it, and wondering how to get to the real self underneath, if such a self exists.

In this attempt to discover his own self, the client typically uses the relationship to explore, to examine the various aspects of his own experience, to recognize and face up to the deep contradictions which he often discovers. He learns how much of his behavior, even how much of the feeling he experiences, is not real, is not something which flows from the genuine reactions of his organism, but is a façade, a front, behind which he has been hiding. He discovers how much of his life is guided by what he thinks he *should* be, not by what he is. Often he discovers that he exists only in response to the demands of others, that he seems to have no self of his own, that he is only trying to think, and feel, and behave in the way that others believe he *ought* to think, and feel and behave.

In this connection I have been astonished to find how accurately the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, pictured the dilemma of the individual more than a century ago, with keen psychological insight. He points out that the most common despair is to be in despair at not choosing, or willing, to be oneself; but that the deepest form of despair is to choose “to be another than himself.” On the other hand “to will to be that self which one truly is, is indeed the opposite of despair,” and this choice is the deepest responsibility of man. As I read some of his writings I almost feel that he must have listened in on the statements made by our clients as they search and explore for the reality of self—often a painful and troubling search.

This exploration becomes even more disturbing when they find themselves involved in removing the false faces which they had not known were false faces. They begin to engage in the frightening task of exploring the turbulent and sometimes violent feelings within themselves. To remove a mask which you had thought was part of your real self can be a deeply disturbing experience, yet when there is freedom to think and feel and be, the individual moves toward such a goal. A few statements from a person who had completed a series of psychotherapeutic interviews, will illustrate this. She uses many metaphors as she tells how she struggled to get to the core of herself.

As I look at it now, I was peeling off layer after layer of defenses. I'd build them up, try them, and then discard them when you remained the same. I didn't know what was at the bottom and I was very much afraid to find out, but I *had* to keep on trying. At first I felt there was nothing within me—just

a great emptiness where I needed and wanted a solid core. Then I began to feel that I was facing a solid brick wall, too high to get over and too thick to go through. One day the wall became translucent, rather than solid. After this, the wall seemed to disappear but beyond it I discovered a dam holding back violent, churning waters. I felt as if I were holding back the force of these waters and if I opened even a tiny hole I and all about me would be destroyed in the ensuing torrent of feelings represented by the water. Finally I could stand the strain no longer and I let go. All I did, actually, was to succumb to complete and utter self pity, then hate, then love. After this experience, I felt as if I had leaped a brink and was safely on the other side, though still tottering a bit on the edge. I don't know what I was searching for or where I was going, but I felt then as I have always felt whenever I really lived, that I was moving forward.

I believe this represents rather well the feelings of many an individual that if the false front, the wall, the dam, is not maintained, then everything will be swept away in the violence of the feelings that he discovers pent-up in his private world. Yet it also illustrates the compelling necessity which the individual feels to search for and become himself. It also begins to indicate the way in which the individual determines the reality in himself—that when he fully experiences the feelings which at an organic level he *is*, as this client experienced her self-pity, hatred, and love, then he feels an assurance that he is being a part of his real self.

THE EXPERIENCING OF FEELING

I would like to say something more about this experiencing of feeling. It is really the discovery of unknown elements of self. The phenomenon I am trying to describe is something which I think is quite difficult to get across in any meaningful way. In our daily lives there are a thousand and one reasons for not letting ourselves experience our attitudes fully, reasons from our past and from the present, reasons that reside within the social situation. It seems too dangerous, too potentially damaging, to experience them freely and fully. But in the safety and freedom of the therapeutic relationship, they can be experienced fully, clear to the limit of what they are. They can be and are experienced in a fashion that I like to think of as a “pure culture,” so that for the moment the person *is* his fear, or he *is* his anger, or he *is* his tenderness, or whatever.

Perhaps again I can clarify this by giving an example from a client which will indicate and convey something of what I mean. A young man, a graduate student who is deep in therapy, has been puzzling over a vague feeling which he senses

in himself. He gradually identifies it as a frightened feeling of some kind, a fear of failing, a fear of not getting his Ph.D. Then comes a long pause. From this point on we will let the recorded interview speak for itself.

Client: I was kinda letting it seep through. But I also tied it in with you and with my relationship with you. And that's one thing I feel about it is kind of a fear of it going away; or that's another thing—it's so hard to get hold of—there's kind of two pulling feelings about it. Or two "me's" somehow. One is the scared one that wants to hold on to things, and that one I guess I can feel pretty clearly right now. You know, I kinda need things to hold on to—and I feel kinda scared.

Therapist: M-hm. That's something you can feel right this minute, and have been feeling and perhaps *are* feeling in regard to our relationship, too.

C: Won't you let me *have* this, because, you know, I kinda *need* it. I can be so lonely and scared without it.

T: M-hm, m-hm. Let me hang on to this because I'd be terribly scared if I didn't. Let me *hold* on to it. (*Pause*)

C: It's kinda the same thing—*Won't* you let me have my thesis or my Ph.D. so then . . . 'Cause I kinda *need* that little world. I mean. . . .

T: In both instances it's kind of a pleading thing too, isn't it? Let me *have* this because I need it *badly*. I'd be awfully frightened without it. (*Long pause.*)

C: I get a sense of . . . I can't somehow get much further . . . It's this kind of *pleading* little boy, somehow, even . . . What's this gesture of begging? (*Putting his hands together as if in prayer*) Isn't it funny? 'Cause that . . .

T: You put your hands in sort of a supplication.

C: Ya, that's right! Won't you *do* this for me, kinda . . . Oh, that's *terrible!* Who, me, *beg?*

Perhaps this excerpt will convey a bit of the thing I have been talking about, the experiencing of a feeling all the way to the limit. Here he is, for a moment,

experiencing himself as nothing but a pleading little boy, supplicating, begging, dependent. At that moment he is nothing but his pleadingness, all the way through. To be sure he almost immediately backs away from this experiencing by saying “Who, me, *beg?*” but it has left its mark. As he says a moment later, “It’s such a wondrous thing to have these new things come out of me. It amazes me so much each time, and then again there’s that same feeling, kind of feeling scared that I’ve so much of this that I’m keeping back or something.” He realizes that this has bubbled through, and that for the moment he *is* his dependency, in a way which astonishes him.

It is not only dependency that is experienced in this all-out kind of fashion. It may be hurt, or sorrow, or jealousy, or destructive anger, or deep desire, or confidence and pride, or sensitive tenderness, or outgoing love. It may be any of the emotions of which man is capable.

What I have gradually learned from experiences such as this, is that the individual in such a moment, is coming to *be* what he *is*. When a person has, throughout therapy, experienced in this fashion all the emotions which organismically arise in him, and has experienced them in this knowing and open manner, then he has experienced *himself*, in all the richness that exists within himself. He has become what he is.

THE DISCOVERY OF SELF IN EXPERIENCE

Let us pursue a bit further this question of what it means to become one’s self. It is a most perplexing question and again I will try to take from a statement by a client, written between interviews, a suggestion of an answer. She tells how the various façades by which she has been living have somehow crumpled and collapsed, bringing a feeling of confusion, but also a feeling of relief. She continues:

You know, it seems as if all the energy that went into holding the arbitrary pattern together was quite unnecessary—a waste. You think you have to make the pattern yourself; but there are so many pieces, and it’s so hard to see where they fit. Sometimes you put them in the wrong place, and the more pieces mis-fitted, the more effort it takes to hold them in place, until at last you are so tired that even that awful confusion is better than holding on any longer. Then you discover that left to themselves the jumbled pieces fall quite naturally into their own places, and a living pattern emerges without any effort at all on your part. Your job is just to discover it, and in the course of that, you will find yourself and your own place. You must

even let your own experience tell you its own meaning; the minute *you* tell it what it means, you are at war with yourself.

Let me see if I can take her poetic expression and translate it into the meaning it has for me. I believe she is saying that to be herself means to find the pattern, the underlying order, which exists in the ceaselessly changing flow of her experience. Rather than to try to hold her experience into the form of a mask, or to make it be a form or structure that it is not, being herself means to discover the unity and harmony which exists in her own actual feelings and reactions. It means that the real self is something which is comfortably discovered in one's experiences, not something imposed upon it.

Through giving excerpts from the statements of these clients, I have been trying to suggest what happens in the warmth and understanding of a facilitating relationship with a therapist. It seems that gradually, painfully, the individual explores what is behind the masks he presents to the world, and even behind the masks with which he has been deceiving himself. Deeply and often vividly he experiences the various elements of himself which have been hidden within. Thus to an increasing degree he becomes himself—not a façade of conformity to others, not a cynical denial of all feeling, nor a front of intellectual rationality, but a living, breathing, feeling, fluctuating process—in short, he becomes a person.

The Person Who Emerges

I imagine that some of you are asking, “But what *kind of* a person does he become? It isn't enough to say that he drops the façades. What kind of person lies underneath?” Since one of the most obvious facts is that each individual tends to become a separate and distinct and unique person, the answer is not easy. However I would like to point out some of the characteristic trends which I see. No one person would fully exemplify these characteristics, no one person fully achieves the description I will give, but I do see certain generalizations which can be drawn, based upon living a therapeutic relationship with many clients.

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE

First of all I would say that in this process the individual becomes more open to his experience. This is a phrase which has come to have a great deal of

meaning to me. It is the opposite of defensiveness. Psychological research has shown that if the evidence of our senses runs contrary to our picture of self, then that evidence is distorted. In other words we cannot see all that our senses report, but only the things which fit the picture we have.

Now in a safe relationship of the sort I have described, this defensiveness or rigidity, tends to be replaced by an increasing openness to experience. The individual becomes more openly aware of his own feelings and attitudes as they exist in him at an organic level, in the way I tried to describe. He also becomes more aware of reality as it exists outside of himself, instead of perceiving it in preconceived categories. He sees that not all trees are green, not all men are stern fathers, not all women are rejecting, not all failure experiences prove that he is no good, and the like. He is able to take in the evidence in a new situation, *as it is*, rather than distorting it to fit a pattern which he already holds. As you might expect, this increasing ability to be open to experience makes him far more realistic in dealing with new people, new situations, new problems. It means that his beliefs are not rigid, that he can tolerate ambiguity. He can receive much conflicting evidence without forcing closure upon the situation. This openness of awareness to what exists at *this moment* in *oneself* and in *the situation* is, I believe, an important element in the description of the person who emerges from therapy.

Perhaps I can give this concept a more vivid meaning if I illustrate it from a recorded interview. A young professional man reports in the 48th interview the way in which he has become more open to some of his bodily sensations, as well as other feelings.

C: It doesn't seem to me that it would be possible for anybody to relate all the changes that you feel. But I certainly have felt recently that I have more respect for, more objectivity toward my physical makeup. I mean I don't expect too much of myself. This is how it works out: It feels to me that in the past I used to fight a certain tiredness that I felt after supper. Well, now I feel pretty sure that I really *am tired*—that I am not making myself tired—that I am just physiologically lower. It seemed that I was just constantly criticizing my tiredness.

T: So you can let yourself *be* tired, instead of feeling along with it a kind of criticism of it.

C: Yes, that I shouldn't be tired or something. And it seems in a way to be pretty profound that I can just not fight this tiredness, and along with it goes

a real feeling of *I've* got to slow down, too, so that being tired isn't such an awful thing. I think I can also kind of pick up a thread here of why I should be that way in the way my father is and the way he looks at some of these things. For instance, say that I was sick, and I would report this, and it would seem that overtly he would want to do something about it but he would also communicate, "Oh, my gosh, more trouble." You know, something like that.

T: As though there were something quite annoying really about being physically ill.

C: Yeah, I'm sure that my father has the same disrespect for his own physiology that I have had. Now last summer I twisted my back, I wrenched it, I heard it snap and everything. There was real pain there all the time at first, real sharp. And I had the doctor look at it and he said it wasn't serious, it should heal by itself as long as I didn't bend too much. Well this was months ago—and I have been noticing recently that—hell, this is a real pain and it's still there—and it's not my fault.

T: It doesn't prove something bad about you—

C: No—and one of the reasons I seem to get more tired than I should maybe is because of this constant strain, and so—I have already made an appointment with one of the doctors at the hospital that he would look at it and take an X ray or something. In a way I guess you could say that I am just more accurately sensitive—or objectively sensitive to this kind of thing. . . . And this is really a profound change as I say, and of course my relationship with my wife and the two children is—well, you just wouldn't recognize it if you could see me inside—as you have—I mean—there just doesn't seem to be anything more wonderful than really and genuinely—really *feeling* love for your own children and at the same time receiving it. I don't know how to put this. We have such an increased respect—both of us—for Judy and we've noticed just—as we participated in this—we have noticed such a tremendous change in her—it seems to be a pretty deep kind of thing.

T: It seems to me you are saying that you can listen more accurately to yourself. If your body says it's tired, you listen to it and believe it, instead of criticizing it; if it's in pain, you can listen to that; if the feeling is really

loving your wife or children, you can *feel* that, and it seems to show up in the differences in them too.

Here, in a relatively minor but symbolically important excerpt, can be seen much of what I have been trying to say about openness to experience. Formerly he could not freely feel pain or illness, because being ill meant being unacceptable. Neither could he feel tenderness and love for his child, because such feelings meant being weak, and he had to maintain his façade of being strong. But now he can be genuinely open to the experiences of his organism—he can be tired when he is tired, he can feel pain when his organism is in pain, he can freely experience the love he feels for his daughter, and he can also feel and express annoyance toward her, as he goes on to say in the next portion of the interview. He can fully live the experiences of his total organism, rather than shutting them out of awareness.

TRUST IN ONE'S ORGANISM

A second characteristic of the persons who emerge from therapy is difficult to describe. It seems that the person increasingly discovers that his own organism is trustworthy, that it is a suitable instrument for discovering the most satisfying behavior in each immediate situation.

If this seems strange, let me try to state it more fully. Perhaps it will help to understand my description if you think of the individual as faced with some existential choice: “Shall I go home to my family during vacation, or strike out on my own?” “Shall I drink this third cocktail which is being offered?” “Is this the person whom I would like to have as my partner in love and in life?” Thinking of such situations, what seems to be true of the person who emerges from the therapeutic process? To the extent that this person is open to all of his experience, he has access to all of the available data in the situation, on which to base his behavior. He has knowledge of his own feelings and impulses, which are often complex and contradictory. He is freely able to sense the social demands, from the relatively rigid social “laws” to the desires of friends and family. He has access to his memories of similar situations, and the consequences of different behaviors in those situations. He has a relatively accurate perception of this external situation in all of its complexity. He is better able to permit his total organism, his conscious thought participating, to consider, weigh and balance each stimulus, need, and demand, and its relative weight and intensity. Out of this complex weighing and balancing he is able to discover that course of action which seems to come closest to satisfying all his needs in the situation, long-range as well as immediate needs.

In such a weighing and balancing of all of the components of a given life choice, his organism would not by any means be infallible. Mistaken choices might be made. But because he tends to be open to his experience, there is a greater and more immediate awareness of unsatisfying consequences, a quicker correction of choices which are in error.

It may help to realize that in most of us the defects which interfere with this weighing and balancing are that we include things that are not a part of our experience, and exclude elements which are. Thus an individual may persist in the concept that "I can handle liquor," when openness to his past experience would indicate that this is scarcely correct. Or a young woman may see only the good qualities of her prospective mate, where an openness to experience would indicate that he possesses faults as well.

In general then, it appears to be true that when a client is open to his experience, he comes to find his organism more trustworthy. He feels less fear of the emotional reactions which he has. There is a gradual growth of trust in, and even affection for the complex, rich, varied assortment of feelings and tendencies which exist in him at the organic level. Consciousness, instead of being the watchman over a dangerous and unpredictable lot of impulses, of which few can be permitted to see the light of day, becomes the comfortable inhabitant of a society of impulses and feelings and thoughts, which are discovered to be very satisfactorily self-governing when not fearfully guarded.

AN INTERNAL LOCUS OF EVALUATION

Another trend which is evident in this process of becoming a person relates to the source or locus of choices and decisions, or evaluative judgments. The individual increasingly comes to feel that this locus of evaluation lies within himself. Less and less does he look to others for approval or disapproval; for standards to live by; for decisions and choices. He recognizes that it rests within himself to choose; that the only question which matters is, "Am I living in a way which is deeply satisfying to me, and which truly expresses me?" This I think is perhaps *the* most important question for the creative individual.

Perhaps it will help if I give an illustration. I would like to give a brief portion of a recorded interview with a young woman, a graduate student, who had come for counseling help. She was initially very much disturbed about many problems, and had been contemplating suicide. During the interview one of the feelings she discovered was her great desire to be dependent, just to let someone else take over the direction of her life. She was very critical of those who had not given her enough guidance. She talked about one after another of her professors, feeling bitterly that none of them had taught her anything with deep meaning.

Gradually she began to realize that part of the difficulty was the fact that she had taken no initiative in *participating* in these classes. Then comes the portion I wish to quote.

I think you will find that this excerpt gives you some indication of what it means in experience to accept the locus of evaluation as being within oneself. Here then is the quotation from one of the later interviews with this young woman as she has begun to realize that perhaps she is partly responsible for the deficiencies in her own education.

C: Well now, I wonder if I've been going around doing that, getting smatterings of things, and not getting hold, not really getting down to things.

T: Maybe you've been getting just spoonfuls here and there rather than really digging in somewhere rather deeply.

C: M-hm. That's why I say—(*slowly and very thoughtfully*) well, with that sort of a foundation, well, it's really up to *me*. I mean, it seems to be really apparent to me that I *can't depend on someone else* to give me an education. (*Very softly*) I'll really have to get it myself.

T: It really begins to come home—there's only one person that can educate you—a realization that perhaps nobody else *can give* you an education.

C: M-hm. (*Long pause—while she sits thinking*) I have all the symptoms of fright. (*Laughs softly*)

T: Fright? That this is a scary thing, is that what you mean?

C: M-hm. (*Very long pause—obviously struggling with feelings in herself*).

T: Do you want to say any more about what you mean by that? That it really does give you the symptoms of fright?

C: (*Laughs*) I, uh—I don't know whether I quite know. I mean—well it really seems like I'm cut loose (*pause*), and it seems that I'm very—I don't know—in a vulnerable position, but I, uh, I brought this up and it, uh, somehow it almost came out without my saying it. It seems to be—it's something I let out.

T: Hardly a part of you.

C: Well, I felt surprised.

T: As though, “Well for goodness sake, did I say that?” (*Both chuckle.*)

C: Really, I don’t think I’ve had that feeling before. I’ve—uh, well, this really feels like I’m saying something that, uh, *is* a part of me really. (*Pause*) Or, uh, (*quite perplexed*) it feels like I sort of have, uh, I don’t know. I have a feeling of *strength*, and yet, I have a feeling of—realizing it’s so sort of fearful, of fright.

T: That is, do you mean that saying something of that sort gives you at the same time a feeling of, of strength in saying it, and yet at the same time a frightened feeling of *what* you have said, is that it?

C: M-hm. I am feeling that. For instance, I’m feeling it internally now—a sort of surging up, or force or outlet. As if that’s something really big and strong. And yet, uh, well at first it was almost a physical feeling of just being out alone, and sort of cut off from a—a support I had been carrying around.

T: You feel that it’s something deep and strong, and surging forth, and at the same time, you just feel as though you’d cut yourself loose from any support when you say it.

C: M-hm. Maybe that’s—I don’t know—it’s a disturbance of a kind of pattern I’ve been carrying around, I think.

T: It sort of shakes a rather significant pattern, jars it loose.

C: M-hm. (*Pause, then cautiously, but with conviction*) I, I think—I don’t know, but I have the feeling that then I am going to begin to *do* more things that I know I should do. . . . There are so many things that I need to do. It seems in so many avenues of my living I have to work out new ways of behavior, but—maybe—I can see myself doing a little better in some things.

I hope that this illustration gives some sense of the strength which is experienced in being a unique person, responsible for oneself, and also the uneasiness that accompanies this assumption of responsibility. To recognize that “I am the one who chooses” and “I am the one who determines the value of an experience for me” is both an invigorating and a frightening realization.

WILLINGNESS TO BE A PROCESS

I should like to point out one final characteristic of these individuals as they strive to discover and become themselves. It is that the individual seems to become more content to be a *process* rather than a *product*. When he enters the therapeutic relationship, the client is likely to wish to achieve some fixed state: he wants to reach the point where his problems are solved, or where he is effective in his work, or where his marriage is satisfactory. He tends, in the freedom of the therapeutic relationship to drop such fixed goals, and to accept a more satisfying realization that he is not a fixed entity, but a process of becoming.

One client, at the conclusion of therapy, says in rather puzzled fashion, “I haven’t finished the job of integrating and reorganizing myself, but that’s only confusing, not discouraging, now that I realize this is a continuing process. . . . It’s exciting, sometimes upsetting, but deeply encouraging to feel yourself in action, apparently knowing where you are going even though you don’t always consciously know where that is.” One can see here both the expression of trust in the organism, which I have mentioned, and also the realization of self as a process. Here is a personal description of what it seems like to accept oneself as a stream of becoming, not a finished product. It means that a person is a fluid process, not a fixed and static entity; a flowing river of change, not a block of solid material; a continually changing constellation of potentialities, not a fixed quantity of traits.

Here is another statement of this same element of fluidity or existential living, “This whole train of experiencing, and the meanings that I have thus far discovered in it, seem to have launched me on a process which is both fascinating and at times a little frightening. It seems to mean letting my experiences carry me on, in a direction which appears to be forward, towards goals that I can but dimly define, as I try to understand at least the current meaning of that experience. The sensation is that of floating with a complex stream of experience, with the fascinating possibility of trying to comprehend its ever-changing complexity.”

Conclusion

I have tried to tell you what has seemed to occur in the lives of people with whom I have had the privilege of being in a relationship as they struggled toward becoming themselves. I have endeavored to describe, as accurately as I can, the meanings which seem to be involved in this process of becoming a person. I am sure that this process is *not* one that occurs only in therapy. I am sure that I do not see it clearly or completely, since I keep changing my comprehension and understanding of it. I hope you will accept it as a current and tentative picture, not as something final.

One reason for stressing the tentative nature of what I have said is that I wish to make it clear that I am *not* saying, "This is what you should become; here is the goal for you." Rather, I am saying that these are some of the meanings I see in the experiences that my clients and I have shared. Perhaps this picture of the experience of others may illuminate or give more meaning to some of your own experience.

I have pointed out that each individual appears to be asking a double question: "Who am I?" and "How may I become myself?" I have stated that in a favorable psychological climate a process of becoming takes place; that here the individual drops one after another of the defensive masks with which he has faced life; that he experiences fully the hidden aspects of himself; that he discovers in these experiences the stranger who has been living behind these masks, the stranger who is himself. I have tried to give my picture of the characteristic attributes of the person who emerges; a person who is more open to all of the elements of his organic experience; a person who is developing a trust in his own organism as an instrument of sensitive living; a person who accepts the locus of evaluation as residing within himself; a person who is learning to live in his life as a participant in a fluid, ongoing process, in which he is continually discovering new aspects of himself in the flow of his experience. These are some of the elements which seem to me to be involved in becoming a person.

A Process Conception of Psychotherapy

In the autumn of 1956 I was greatly honored by the American Psychological Association, which bestowed upon me one of its first three Distinguished Scientific Contribution Awards. There was however a penalty attached to the award, which was that one year later, each recipient was to present a paper to the Association. It did not appeal to me to review work which we had done in the past. I decided rather to devote the year to a fresh attempt to understand the process by which personality changes. I did this, but as the next autumn approached, I realized that the ideas I had formed were still unclear, tentative, hardly in shape for presentation. Nevertheless I tried to set down the jumbled sensings which had been important to me, out of which was emerging a concept of process different from anything I had clearly perceived before. When I had finished I found I had a paper much too long to deliver, so I cut it down to an abbreviated form for presentation on September 2, 1957 to the American Psychological Convention in New York. The present chapter is neither as long as the initial form, nor as abbreviated as the second form.

It will be discovered that though the two preceding chapters view the process of therapy almost entirely from a phenomenological point of view, from within the client's frame of reference, this formulation endeavors to capture those qualities of expression which may be observed by another, and hence views it more from an external frame of reference.

Out of the observations recorded in this paper a "Scale of Process in Psychotherapy" has been developed which can be applied operationally to excerpts from recorded interviews. It is still in process of revision and improvement. Even in its present form it has reasonable inter-judge reliability, and gives meaningful results. Cases which by other criteria are known to be more successful, show greater movement on the Process Scale than less successful cases. Also, to our surprise it has been found that successful cases begin at a higher level on the Process Scale than do unsuccessful cases. Evidently we do not yet know, with any satisfactory degree of assurance, how to be of therapeutic help to individuals whose behavior when they come to us is typical of stages one and two as described in this chapter. Thus the ideas of this paper, poorly formed and incomplete as they seemed to me at the time, are already opening up new and challenging areas for thought and investigation.

The Puzzle of Process

I WOULD LIKE to take you with me on a journey of exploration. The object of the trip, the goal of the search, is to try to learn something of the *process* of psychotherapy, or the *process* by which personality change takes place. I would warn you that the goal has not yet been achieved, and that it seems as though the expedition has advanced only a few short miles into the jungle. Yet perhaps if I can take you with me, you will be tempted to discover new and profitable avenues of further advance.

My own reason for engaging in such a search seems simple to me. Just as many psychologists have been interested in the invariant aspects of personality—the unchanging aspects of intelligence, temperament, personality structure—so I have long been interested in the invariant aspects of *change* in personality. Do personality and behavior change? What commonalities exist in such changes? What commonalities exist in the conditions which precede change? Most important of all, what is the process by which such change occurs?

Until recently we have for the most part tried to learn something of this process by studying outcomes. We have many facts, for example, regarding the changes which take place in self-perception, or in perception of others. We have not only measured these changes over the whole course of therapy, but at intervals during therapy. Yet even this last gives us little clue as to the *process* involved. Studies of segmented outcomes are still measures of outcome, giving little knowledge of the way in which the change takes place.

Puzzling over this problem of getting at the process has led me to realize how little objective research deals with process in any field. Objective research slices through the frozen moment to provide us with an exact picture of the inter-relationships which exist at that moment. But our understanding of the ongoing movement—whether it be the process of fermentation, or the circulation of the blood, or the process of atomic fission—is generally provided by a theoretical formulation, often supplemented, where feasible, with a clinical observation of the process. I have thus come to realize that perhaps I am hoping for too much to expect that research procedures can shed light directly upon the process of personality change. Perhaps only theory can do that.

A REJECTED METHOD

When I determined, more than a year ago, to make a fresh attempt to understand the way in which such change takes place, I first considered various ways in which the experience of therapy might be described in terms of some other theoretical framework. There was much that was appealing in the field of communication theory, with its concepts of feedback, input and output signals, and the like. There was the possibility of describing the process of therapy in terms of learning theory, or in terms of general systems theory. As I studied these avenues of understanding I became convinced that it would be possible to translate the process of psychotherapy into any one of these theoretical frameworks. It would, I believe, have certain advantages to do so. But I also became convinced that in a field so new, this is not what is most needed.

I came to a conclusion which others have reached before, that in a new field perhaps what is needed first is to steep oneself in the *events*, to approach the phenomena with as few preconceptions as possible, to take a naturalist's observational, descriptive approach to these events, and to draw forth those low-level inferences which seem most native to the material itself.

THE MODE OF APPROACH

So, for the past year, I have used the method which so many of us use for generating hypotheses, a method which psychologists in this country seem so reluctant to expose or comment on. I used myself as a tool.

As a tool, I have qualities both good and bad. For many years I have experienced therapy as a therapist. I have experienced it on the other side of the desk as a client. I have thought about therapy, carried on research in this field, been intimately acquainted with the research of others. But I have also formed biases, have come to have a particular slant on therapy, have tried to develop theoretical abstractions regarding therapy. These views and theories would tend to make me less sensitive to the events themselves. Could I open myself to the phenomena of therapy freshly, naively? Could I let the totality of my experience be as effective a tool as it might potentially be, or would my biases prevent me from seeing what was there? I could only go ahead and make the attempt.

So, during this past year I have spent many hours listening to recorded therapeutic interviews—trying to listen as naively as possible. I have endeavored to soak up all the clues I could capture as to the process, as to what elements are significant in change. Then I have tried to abstract from that sensing the simplest abstractions which would describe them. Here I have been much stimulated and helped by the thinking of many of my colleagues, but I would like to mention my special indebtedness to Eugene Gendlin, William Kirtner and Fred Zimring,

whose demonstrated ability to think in new ways about these matters has been particularly helpful, and from whom I have borrowed heavily.

The next step has been to take these observations and low-level abstractions and formulate them in such a way that testable hypotheses can readily be drawn from them. This is the point I have reached. I make no apology for the fact that I am reporting no empirical investigations of these formulations. If past experience is any guide, then I may rest assured that, if the formulations I am about to present check in any way with the subjective experience of other therapists, then a great deal of research will be stimulated, and in a few years there will be ample evidence of the degree of truth and falsity in the statements which follow.

THE DIFFICULTIES AND EXCITEMENT OF THE SEARCH

It may seem strange to you that I tell you so much of the personal process I went through in seeking for some simple—and I am sure, inadequate—formulations. It is because I feel that nine-tenths of research is always submerged, and that only the iciest portion is ever seen, a very misleading segment. Only occasionally does someone like Mooney (6, 7) describe the whole of the research method as it exists in the individual. I too should like to reveal something of the whole of this study as it went on in me, not simply the impersonal portion.

Indeed I wish I might share with you much more fully some of the excitement and discouragement of this effort to understand process. I would like to tell you of my fresh discovery of the way feelings “hit” clients—a word they frequently use. The client is talking about something of importance, when wham! he is hit by a feeling—not something named or labelled but an experiencing of an unknown something which has to be cautiously explored before it can be named at all. As one client says, “It’s a feeling that I’m caught with. I can’t even know what it connects with.” The frequency of this event was striking to me.

Another matter of interest was the variety of ways in which clients do come closer to their feelings. Feelings “bubble up through,” they “seep through.” The client also lets himself “down into” his feeling, often with caution and fear. “I want to get down into this feeling. You can kinda see how hard it is to get really close to it.”

Still another of these naturalistic observations has to do with the importance which the client comes to attach to *exactness* of symbolization. He wants just the precise word which for him describes the feeling he has experienced. An approximation will not do. And this is certainly for clearer communication

within himself, since any one of several words would convey the meaning equally well to another.

I came also to appreciate what I think of as “moments of movement”—moments when it appears that change actually occurs. These moments, with their rather obvious physiological concomitants, I will try to describe later.

I would also like to mention the profound sense of despair I sometimes felt, wandering naively in the incredible complexity of the therapeutic relationship. Small wonder that we prefer to approach therapy with many rigid preconceptions. We feel we must bring order *to* it. We can scarcely dare to hope that we can discover order *in* it.

These are a few of the personal discoveries, puzzlements, and discouragements which I encountered in working on this problem. Out of these came the more formal ideas which I would now like to present.

A BASIC CONDITION

If we were studying the process of growth in plants, we would assume certain constant conditions of temperature, moisture and sunlight, in forming our conceptualization of the process. Likewise in conceptualizing the process of personality change in psychotherapy, I shall assume a constant and optimal set of conditions for facilitating this change. I have recently tried to spell out these conditions in some detail (8). For our present purpose I believe I can state this assumed condition in one word. Throughout the discussion which follows, I shall assume that the client experiences himself as being fully *received*. By this I mean that whatever his feelings—fear, despair, insecurity, anger, whatever his mode of expression—silence, gestures, tears, or words; whatever he finds himself being in this moment, he senses that he is psychologically *received*, just as he is, by the therapist. There is implied in this term the concept of being understood, empathically, and the concept of acceptance. It is also well to point out that it is the client’s experience of this condition which makes it optimal, not merely the fact of its existence in the therapist.

In all that I shall say, then, about the process of change, I shall assume as a constant an optimal and maximum condition of being received.

THE EMERGING CONTINUUM

In trying to grasp and conceptualize the process of change, I was initially looking for elements which would mark or characterize change itself. I was thinking of change as an entity, and searching for its specific attributes. What gradually emerged in my understanding as I exposed myself to the raw material of change was a continuum of a different sort than I had conceptualized before.

Individuals move, I began to see, not from a fixity or homeostasis through change to a new fixity, though such a process is indeed possible. But much the more significant continuum is from fixity to changingness, from rigid structure to flow, from stasis to process. I formed the tentative hypothesis that perhaps the qualities of the client's expression at any one point might indicate his position on this continuum, might indicate where he stood in the process of change.

I gradually developed this concept of a process, discriminating seven stages in it, though I would stress that it is a continuum, and that whether one discriminated three stages or fifty, there would still be all the intermediate points.

I came to feel that a given client, taken as a whole, usually exhibits behaviors which cluster about a relatively narrow range on this continuum. That is, it is unlikely that in one area of his life the client would exhibit complete fixity, and in another area complete changingness. He would tend, as a whole, to be at some stage in this process. However, the process I wish to describe applies more exactly, I believe, to given areas of personal meanings, where I hypothesize that the client would, in such an area, be quite definitely at one stage, and would not exhibit characteristics of various stages.

Seven Stages of Process

Let me then try to portray the way in which I see the successive stages of the process by which the individual changes from fixity to flowingness, from a point nearer the rigid end of the continuum to a point nearer the "in-motion" end of the continuum. If I am correct in my observations then it is possible that by dipping in and sampling the qualities of experiencing and expressing in a given individual, in a climate where he feels himself to be completely received, we may be able to determine where he is in this continuum of personality change.

FIRST STAGE

The individual in this stage of fixity and remoteness of experiencing is not likely to come voluntarily for therapy. However I can to some degree illustrate the characteristics of this stage.

There is an unwillingness to communicate self. Communication is only about externals.

Example: “Well, I’ll tell you, it always seems a little bit nonsensical to talk about one’s self except in times of dire necessity.”*

Feelings and personal meanings are neither recognized nor owned. Personal constructs (to borrow Kelly’s helpful term (3)) are extremely rigid.

Close and communicative relationship are construed as dangerous.

No problems are recognized or perceived at this stage.

There is no desire to change.

Example: “I think I’m practically healthy.”

There is much blockage of internal communication.

Perhaps these brief statements and examples will convey something of the psychological fixity of this end of the continuum. The individual has little or no recognition of the ebb and flow of the feeling life within him. The ways in which he construes experience have been set by his past, and are rigidly unaffected by the actualities of the present. He is (to use the term of Gendlin and Zimring) structure-bound in his manner of experiencing. That is, he reacts “to the situation of now by finding it to be like a past experience and then reacting to that past, feeling it” (2). Differentiation of personal meanings in experience is crude or global, experience being seen largely in black and white terms. He does not communicate *himself*, but only communicates about externals. He tends to see himself as having no problems, or the problems he recognizes are perceived as entirely external to himself. There is much blockage of internal communication between self and experience. The individual at this stage is represented by such terms as stasis, fixity, the opposite of flow or change.

Second Stage of Process

When the person in the first stage can experience himself as fully received then the second stage follows. We seem to know very little about how to provide the experience of being received for the person in the first stage, but it is occasionally achieved in play or group therapy where the person can be exposed to a receiving climate, without himself having to take any initiative, for a long

enough time to experience himself *as received*. In any event, where he does experience this, then a slight loosening and flowing of symbolic expression occurs, which tends to be characterized by the following.

Expression begins to flow in regard to nonself topics.

Example: “I guess that I suspect my father has often felt very insecure in his business relations.”

Problems are perceived as external to self.

Example: “Disorganization keeps cropping up in my life.”

There is no sense of personal responsibility in problems.

Example: This is illustrated in the above excerpt.

Feelings are described as unowned, or sometimes as past objects.

Example: Counselor: “If you want to tell me something of what brought you here. . . .” Client: “The symptom was—it was—just being very depressed.” This is an excellent example of the way in which internal problems can be perceived and communicated about as entirely external. She is not saying “I am depressed” or even “I was depressed.” Her feeling is handled as a remote, unowned object, entirely external to self.

Feelings may be exhibited, but are not recognized as such or owned.

Experiencing is bound by the structure of the past.

Example: “I suppose the compensation I always make is, rather than trying to communicate with people or have the right relationship with them, to compensate by, well, shall we say, being on an intellectual level.” Here the client is beginning to recognize the way in which her experiencing is bound by the past. Her statement also illustrates the remoteness of experiencing at this level. It is as though she were holding her experience at arm’s length.

Personal constructs are rigid, and unrecognized as being constructs, but are thought of as facts.

Example: “I can’t ever do anything right—can’t ever finish it.”

Differentiation of personal meanings and feelings is very limited and global.

Example: The preceding example is a good illustration. “I can’t *ever*” is one instance of a black and white differentiation, as is also the use of “right” in this absolute sense.

Contradictions may be expressed, but with little recognition of them as contradictions.

Example: “I want to know things, but I look at the same page for an hour.”

As a comment on this second stage of the process of change, it might be said that a number of clients who voluntarily come for help are in this stage, but we (and probably therapists in general) have a very modest degree of success in working with them. This seems at least, to be a reasonable conclusion from Kirtner’s study (5), though his conceptual framework was somewhat different. We seem to know too little about the ways in which a person at this stage may come to experience himself as “received.”

STAGE THREE

If the slight loosening and flowing in the second stage is not blocked, but the client feels himself in these respects to be fully received as he is, then there is a still further loosening and flowing of symbolic expression. Here are some of the characteristics which seem to belong together at approximately this point on the continuum.

There is a freer flow of expression about the self as an object.

Example: “I try hard to be perfect with her—cheerful, friendly, intelligent, talkative—because I want her to love me.”

There is also expression about self-related experiences as objects.

Example: “And yet there is the matter of, well, how much do you leave yourself open to marriage, and if your professional vocation is important, and that’s the thing that’s really yourself at this point, it does place a limitation on your contacts.” In this excerpt her self is such a remote object that this would probably best be classified as being between stages two and three.

There is also expression about the self as a reflected object, existing primarily in others.

Example: “I can feel myself smiling sweetly the way my mother does, or being gruff and important the way my father does sometimes—slipping into everyone else’s personalities but mine.”

There is much expression about or description of feelings and personal meanings not now present.

Usually, of course, these are communications about past feelings.

Example: There were “so many things I couldn’t tell people—nasty things I did. I felt so sneaky and bad.”

Example: “And this feeling that came into me was just the feeling that I remember as a kid.”

There is very little acceptance of feelings. For the most part feelings are revealed as something shameful, bad, or abnormal, or unacceptable in other ways.

Feelings are exhibited, and then sometimes recognized as feelings. Experiencing is described as in the past, or as somewhat remote from the self.

The preceding examples illustrate this.

Personal constructs are rigid, but may be recognized as constructs, not external facts.

Example: “I felt guilty for so much of my young life that I expect I felt I deserved to be punished most of the time anyway. If I didn’t feel I deserved it for one thing, I felt I deserved it for another.” Obviously he sees this as the way he has construed experience rather than as a settled fact.

Example: “I’m so much afraid wherever affection is involved it just means submission. And this I hate, but I seem to equate the two, that if I am going to get affection, then it means that I must give in to what the other person wants to do.”

Differentiation of feelings and meanings is slightly sharper, less global, than in previous stages.

Example: “I mean, I was saying it before, but this time I really felt it. And is it any wonder that I felt so darn lousy when this was the way it was, that . . . they did me a dirty deal plenty of times. And conversely, I was no angel about it; I realize that.”

There is a recognition of contradictions in experience.

Example: Client explains that on the one hand he has expectations of doing something great; on the other hand he feels he may easily end up as a bum.

Personal choices are often seen as ineffective.

The client “chooses” to do something, but finds that his behaviors do not fall in line with this choice.

I believe it will be evident that many people who seek psychological help are at approximately the point of stage three. They may stay at roughly this point for a considerable time describing non-present feelings and exploring the self as an object, before being ready to move to the next stage.

STAGE FOUR

When the client feels understood, welcomed, received as he is in the various aspects of his experience at the stage three level then there is a gradual loosening of constructs, a freer flow of feelings which are characteristic of movement up the continuum. We may try to capture a number of the characteristics of this loosening, and term them the fourth phase of the process.

The client describes more intense feelings of the “not-now-present” variety.

Example: “Well, I was really—it hit me down *deep*.”

Feelings are described as objects in the present.

Example: “It discourages me to feel dependent because it means I’m kind of hopeless about myself.”

Occasionally feelings are expressed as in the present, sometimes breaking through almost against the client’s wishes.

Example: A client, after discussing a dream including a bystander, dangerous because of having observed his “crimes,” says to the therapist, “Oh, all right, I *don’t* trust you.”

There is a tendency toward experiencing feelings in the immediate present, and there is distrust and fear of this possibility.

Example: “I feel bound—by something or other. It must be me! There’s nothing else that seems to be doing it. I can’t blame it on anything else. There’s this *knot*—somewhere inside of me. . . . It makes me want to get mad—and cry—and run away!”

There is little open acceptance of feelings, though some acceptance is exhibited.

The two preceding examples indicate that the client exhibits sufficient acceptance of his experience to approach some frightening feelings. But there is

little conscious acceptance of them.

Experiencing is less bound by the structure of the past, is less remote, and may occasionally occur with little postponement.

Again the two preceding examples illustrate very well this less tightly bound manner of experiencing.

There is a loosening of the way experience is construed. There are some discoveries of personal constructs; there is the definite recognition of these as constructs; and there is a beginning questioning of their validity.

Example: “It amuses me. Why? Oh, because it’s a little stupid of me—and I feel a little tense about it, or a little embarrassed,—and a little helpless. (*His voice softens and he looks sad.*) Humor has been my bulwark all my life; maybe it’s a little out of place in trying to really look at myself. A curtain to pull down . . . I feel sort of at a loss right now. Where was I? What was I saying? I lost my grip on something—that I’ve been holding myself up with.” Here there seems illustrated the jolting, shaking consequences of questioning a basic construct, in this case his use of humor as a defense.

There is an increased differentiation of feelings, constructs, personal meanings, with some tendency toward seeking exactness of symbolization.

Example: This quality is adequately illustrated in each of the examples in this stage.

There is a realization of concern about contradictions and incongruences between experience and self.

Example: “I’m not living up to what I am. I really should be doing more than I am. How many hours I spent on the job in this position with Mother saying, ‘Don’t come out ’till you’ve done something.’ Produce! . . . That happened with lots of things.”

This is both an example of concern about contradictions and a questioning of the way in which experience has been construed.

There are feelings of self responsibility in problems, though such feelings vacillate.

Though a close relationship still seems dangerous, the client risks himself, relating to some small extent on a feeling basis.

Several of the above examples illustrate this, notably the one in which the client says, “Oh, all right, I *don't* trust you.”

There is no doubt that this stage and the following one constitute much of psychotherapy as we know it. These behaviors are very common in any form of therapy.

It may be well to remind ourselves again that a person is never wholly at one or another stage of the process. Listening to interviews and examining typescripts causes me to believe that a given client's expressions in a given interview may be made up, for example, of expressions and behaviors mostly characteristic of stage three, with frequent instances of rigidity characteristic of stage two or the greater loosening of stage four. It does not seem likely that one will find examples of stage six in such an interview.

The foregoing refers to the variability in the general stage of the process in which the client finds himself. If we limit ourselves to some defined area of related personal meanings in the client, then I would hypothesize much more regularity; that stage three would rarely be found before stage two; that stage four would rarely follow stage two without stage three intervening. It is this kind of tentative hypothesis which can, of course, be put to empirical test.

THE FIFTH STAGE

As we go on up the continuum we can again try to mark a point by calling it stage five. If the client feels himself received in his expressions, behaviors, and experiences at the fourth stage then this sets in motion still further loosening, and the freedom of organismic flow is increased. Here I believe we can again delineate crudely the qualities of this phase of the process.*

Feelings are expressed freely as in the present.

Example: “I expected kinda to get a severe rejection—this I expect all the time . . . somehow I guess I even feel it with you. . . . It's hard to talk about because I want to be the best I can possibly be with you.” Here feelings regarding the therapist and the client in relationship to the therapist, emotions often most difficult to reveal, are expressed openly.

Feelings are very close to being fully experienced. They “bubble up,” “seep through,” in spite of the fear and distrust which the client feels at experiencing them with fullness and immediacy.

Example: “That kinda came out and I just don’t understand it. (*Long pause*) I’m trying to get hold of what that terror is.”

Example: Client is talking about an external event. Suddenly she gets a pained, stricken look.

Therapist: “What—what’s hitting you now?”

Client: “I don’t know. (*She cries*) . . . I must have been getting a little too close to something I didn’t want to talk about, or something.” Here the feeling has almost seeped through into awareness in spite of her.

Example: “I feel stopped right now. Why is my mind blank right now? I feel as if I’m hanging onto something, and I’ve been letting go of other things; and something in me is saying, ‘What more do I have to give up?’”

There is a beginning tendency to realize that experiencing a feeling involves a direct referent.

The three examples just cited illustrate this. In each case the client knows he has experienced something, knows he is not clear as to what he has experienced. But there is also the dawning realization that the referent of these vague cognitions lies within him, in an organismic event against which he can check his symbolization and his cognitive formulations. This is often shown by expressions that indicate the closeness or distance he feels from this referent.

Example: “I really don’t have my finger on it. I’m just kinda describing it.”

There is surprise and fright, rarely pleasure, at the feelings which “bubble through.”

Example: Client, talking about past home relationships, “That’s not important any more. Hmm. (*Pause*) That was somehow very meaningful—but I don’t have the slightest idea why. . . . Yes, that’s it! I can forget about it now and—why, it *isn’t* that important. *Wow!* All that miserableness and stuff!”

Example: Client has been expressing his hopelessness. “I’m still *amazed* at the strength of this. It seems to be so much the way I feel.”

There is an increasing ownership of self feelings, and a desire to be these, to be the “real me.”

Example: “The real truth of the matter is that I’m not the sweet, forbearing guy that I try to make out that I am. I get irritated at things. I feel like snapping at people, and I feel like being selfish at times; and I don’t know why I should pretend I’m *not* that way.”

This is a clear instance of the greater degree of acceptance of all feelings.

Experiencing is loosened, no longer remote, and frequently occurs with little postponement.

There is little delay between the organismic event and the full subjective living of it. A beautifully precise account of this is given by a client.

Example: “I’m still having a little trouble trying to figure out what this sadness—and the weepiness—means. I just know I feel it when I get close to a certain kind of feeling—and usually when I do get weepy, it helps me to kinda break through a wall I’ve set up because of things that have happened. I feel hurt about something and then automatically this kind of shields things up and then I feel like I can’t really touch or feel anything very much . . . and if I’d be able to feel, or could let myself feel the instantaneous feeling when I’m hurt, I’d immediately start being weepy right then, but I can’t.”

Here we see him regarding his feeling as an inner referent to which he can turn for greater clarity. As he senses his weepiness he realizes that it is a delayed and partial experiencing of being hurt. He also recognizes that his defenses are such that he cannot, at this point, experience the event of hurt when it occurs.

The ways in which experience is construed are much loosened. There are many fresh discoveries of personal constructs as constructs, and a critical examination and questioning of these.

Example: A man says, “This idea of needing to please—of *having* to do it—that’s really been kind of a basic assumption of my life (*he weeps quietly*). It’s kind of, you know, just one of the very unquestioned axioms that I *have* to please. I have no choice. I just *have* to.” Here he is clear that this assumption has been a construct, and it is evident that its unquestioned status is at an end.

There is a strong and evident tendency toward exactness in differentiation of feelings and meanings.

Example: “. . . some tension that grows in me, or some hopelessness, or some kind of incompleteness—and my life actually is very incomplete right now. . . . I just don’t know. Seems to be, the closest thing it gets to, is *hopelessness*.” Obviously, he is trying to capture the exact term which for him symbolizes his experience.

There is an increasingly clear facing of contradictions and incongruences in experience.

Example: “My conscious mind tells me I’m worthy. But some place inside I don’t believe it. I think I’m a rat—a no-good. I’ve no faith in my ability to do anything.”

There is an increasing quality of acceptance of self-responsibility for the problems being faced, and a concern as to how he has contributed. There are increasingly freer dialogues within the self, an improvement in and reduced blockage of internal communication.

Sometimes these dialogues are verbalized.

Example: “Something in me is saying, ‘What more do I have to give up? You’ve taken so much from me already.’ This is *me* talking to *me*—the *me* way back in there who talks to the *me* who runs the show. It’s complaining now, saying, ‘You’re getting too close! Go away!’”

Example: Frequently these dialogues are in the form of listening to oneself, to check cognitive formulations against the direct referent of experiencing. Thus a client says, “Isn’t that funny? I never really looked at it that way. I’m just trying to check it. It always seemed to me that the tension was much more externally caused than this—that it wasn’t something *I used* in this way. But it’s true—it’s really true.”

I trust that the examples I have given of this fifth phase of becoming a process will make several points clear. In the first place this phase is several hundred psychological miles from the first stage described. Here many aspects of the client are in flow, as against the rigidity of the first stage. He is very much closer to his organic being, which is always in process. He is much closer to being in the flow of his feelings. His constructions of experience are decidedly loosened and repeatedly being tested against referents and evidence within and without. Experience is much more highly differentiated, and thus internal communication, already flowing, can be much more exact.

EXAMPLES OF PROCESS IN ONE AREA

Since I have tended to speak as though the client as a whole is at one stage or another, let me stress again, before going on to describe the next stage, that in given areas of personal meaning, the process may drop below the client’s general level because of experiences which are so sharply at variance with the concept of self. Perhaps I can illustrate, from a single area in the feelings of one client, something of the way the process I am describing operates in one narrow segment of experiencing.

In a case reported rather fully by Shlien (5) the quality of the self-expression in the interviews has been at approximately points three and four on our continuum of process. Then when she turns to the area of sexual problems, the process takes up at a lower level on the continuum.

In the sixth interview she feels that there are things it would be impossible to tell the therapist—then “After long pause, mentions almost inaudibly, an itching sensation in the area of the rectum, for which a physician could find no cause.” Here a problem is viewed as completely external to self, the quality of experiencing is very remote. It would appear to be characteristic of the second stage of process as we have described it.

In the tenth interview, the itching has moved to her fingers. Then with great embarrassment, describes undressing games and other sex activities in childhood. Here too the quality is that of telling of nonself activities, with feelings described as past objects, though it is clearly somewhat further on the continuum of process. She concludes “because I’m just bad, dirty, that’s all.” Here is an expression about the self and an undifferentiated, rigid personal construct. The quality of this is that of stage three in our process, as is also the following statement about self, showing more differentiation of personal meanings. “I think inside I’m oversexed, and outside not sexy enough to attract the response I want. . . . I’d like to be the same inside and out.” This last phrase has a stage four quality in its faint questioning of a personal construct.

In the twelfth interview she carries this questioning further, deciding she was not just *born* to be promiscuous. This has clearly a fourth stage quality, definitely challenging this deep-seated way of construing her experience. Also in this interview she acquires the courage to say to the therapist; “You’re a man, a good looking man, and my whole problem is men like you. It would be easier if you were elderly—easier, but not better, in the long run.” She is upset and embarrassed having said this and feels “it’s like being naked, I’m so revealed to you.” Here an immediate feeling is expressed, with reluctance and fear to be sure, but expressed, not described. Experiencing is much less remote or structure bound, and occurs with little postponement, but with much lack of acceptance. The sharper differentiation of meanings is clearly evident in the phrase “easier but not better.” All of this is fully characteristic of our stage four of process.

In the fifteenth interview she describes many past experiences and feelings regarding sex, these having the quality of both the third and fourth stage as we have presented them. At some point she says, “I wanted to hurt myself, so I started going with men who would hurt me—with their penises. I enjoyed it, and was being hurt, so I had the satisfaction of being punished for my enjoyment at the same time.” Here is a way of construing experience which is perceived as just that, not as an external fact. It is also quite clearly being questioned, though this questioning is implicit. There is recognition of and some concern regarding the contradictory elements in experiencing enjoyment, yet feeling she should be punished. These qualities are all fully characteristic of the fourth stage or even

slightly beyond.

A bit later she describes her intense past feelings of shame at her enjoyment of sex. Her two sisters, the “neat, respected daughters” could not have orgasms, “so again I was the bad one.” Up to this point this again illustrates the fourth stage. Then suddenly she asks “Or am I really lucky?” In the quality of present expression of a feeling of puzzlement, in the “bubbling through” quality, in the immediate experiencing of this wonderment, in the frank and definite questioning of her previous personal construct, this has clearly the qualities of stage five, which we have just described. She has moved forward in this process, in a climate of acceptance, a very considerable distance from stage two.

I hope this example indicates the way in which an individual, in a given area of personal meanings, becomes more and more loosened, more and more in motion, in process, as she is received. Perhaps, too, it will illustrate what I believe to be the case, that this process of increased flow is not one which happens in minutes or hours, but in weeks, or months. It is an irregularly advancing process, sometimes retreating a bit, sometimes seeming not to advance as it broadens out to cover more territory, but finally proceeding in its further flow.

THE SIXTH STAGE

If I have been able to communicate some feeling for the scope and quality of increased loosening of feeling, experiencing and construing at each stage, then we are ready to look at the next stage which appears, from observation, to be a very crucial one. Let me see if I can convey what I perceive to be its characteristic qualities.

Assuming that the client continues to be fully received in the therapeutic relationship then the characteristics of stage five tend to be followed by a very distinctive and often dramatic phase. It is characterized as follows.

A feeling which has previously been “stuck,” has been inhibited in its process quality, is experienced with immediacy now.

A feeling flows to its full result.

A present feeling is directly experienced with immediacy and richness.

This immediacy of experiencing, and the feeling which constitutes its content, are accepted. This is something which is, not something to be denied, feared, struggled against.

All the preceding sentences attempt to describe slightly different facets of what is, when it occurs, a clear and definite phenomenon. It would take recorded examples to communicate its full quality, but I shall try to give an illustration without benefit of recording. A somewhat extended excerpt from the 80th interview with a young man may communicate the way in which a client comes into stage six.

Example: “I could even conceive of it as a possibility that I could have a kind of tender concern for me. . . . Still, how could *I* be tender, be concerned for *myself*, when they’re one and the same thing? But yet I can *feel* it so clearly. . . . You know, like taking care of a child. You want to give it this and give it that. . . . I can kind of clearly see the purposes for somebody else . . . but I can never see them for . . . myself, that I could do this for me, you know. Is it possible that I can really want to take care of myself, and make that a major purpose of my life? That means I’d have to deal with the whole world as if I were guardian of the most cherished and most wanted possession, that this *I* was between this precious *me* that I wanted to take care of and the whole world. . . . It’s almost as if I *loved* myself—you know—that’s strange—but it’s true.”

Therapist: It seems such a strange concept to realize. Why it would mean “I would face the world as though a part of my primary responsibility was taking care of this precious individual who is me—whom I love.”

Client: Whom I care for—whom I feel so *close* to. Woof! That’s another *strange* one.

Therapist: It just seems *weird*.

Client: Yeah. It hits rather close somehow. The idea of my loving me and the taking care of me. (*His eyes grow moist.*) That’s a very nice one—very nice.”

The recording would help to convey the fact that here is a feeling which has never been able to flow in him, which is experienced with immediacy, in this moment. It is a feeling which flows to its full result, without inhibition. It is experienced acceptantly, with no attempt to push it to one side, or to deny it.

There is a quality of living subjectively in the experience, not feeling about it.

The client, in his *words*, may withdraw enough from the experience to feel *about* it, as in the above example, yet the recording makes it clear that his words are peripheral to the experiencing which is going on within him, and in which he is living. The best communication of this in his words is “Woof! That’s another strange one.”

Self as an object tends to disappear.

The self, at this moment, *is* this feeling. This is a being in the moment, with little self-conscious awareness, but with primarily a reflexive awareness, as Sartre terms it. The self *is*, subjectively, in the existential moment. It is not something one perceives.

Experiencing, at this stage, takes on a real process quality.

Example: One client, a man who is approaching this stage, says that he has a frightened feeling about the source of a lot of secret thoughts in himself. He goes on; “The butterflies are the thoughts closest to the surface. Underneath there’s a deeper flow. I feel very removed from it all. The deeper flow is like a great school of fish moving under the surface. I see the ones that break through the surface of the water—sitting with my fishing line in one hand, with a bent pin on the end of it—trying to find a better tackle—or better yet, a way of diving in. That’s the scary thing. The image I get is that *I* want to be one of the fish myself.”

Therapist: “You want to be down there flowing along, too.”

Though this client is not yet fully experiencing in a process manner, and hence does not fully exemplify this sixth point of the continuum, he foresees it so clearly that his description gives a real sense of its meaning.

Another characteristic of this stage of process is the physiological loosening which accompanies it.

Moistness in the eyes, tears, sighs, muscular relaxation, are frequently evident. Often there are other physiological concomitants. I would hypothesize that in these moments, had we the measure for it, we would discover improved circulation, improved conductivity of nervous impulses. An example of the “primitive” nature of some of these sensations may be indicated in the following excerpt.

Example: The client, a young man, has expressed the wish his parents would die or disappear. “It’s kind of like wanting to wish them away, and wishing they had never been . . . And I’m so ashamed of myself because then they call me, and off I go—swish! They’re somehow still so strong. I don’t know. There’s some umbilical—I can almost feel it inside me—swish (*and he gestures, plucking himself away by grasping at his navel.*)”

Therapist: “They really do have a hold on your umbilical cord.”

Client: “It’s funny how real it feels . . . It’s like a burning sensation, kind of, and when they say something which makes me anxious I can feel it right here (*pointing*). I never thought of it quite that way.”

Therapist: “As though if there’s a disturbance in the relationship between you, then you do just feel it as though it was a strain on your umbilicus.”

Client: “Yeah, kind of like in my gut here. It’s so hard to define the feeling that I feel there.”

Here he is living subjectively in the feeling of dependence on his parents. Yet it would be most inaccurate to say that he is perceiving it. He is *in* it, experiencing it as a strain on his umbilical cord. *In this stage, internal communication is free and relatively unblocked.*

I believe this is quite adequately illustrated in the examples given. Indeed the phrase, “internal communication” is no longer quite correct, for as each of these examples illustrates, the crucial moment is a moment of integration, in which communication between different internal foci is no longer necessary, because they become *one*.

The incongruence between experience and awareness is vividly experienced as it disappears into congruence.

The relevant personal construct is dissolved in this experiencing moment, and the client feels cut loose from his previously stabilized framework.

I trust these two characteristics may acquire more meaning from the following example. A young man has been having difficulty getting close to a certain unknown feeling. “That’s almost exactly what the feeling is, too—it was that I was living so much of my life, and seeing so much of my life in terms of being scared of something.” He tells how his professional activities are just to give him a little safety and “a little world where I’ll be secure, you know. And for the same reason. *(Pause)* I was kind of letting it seep through. But I also tied it in with you and with my relationship with you, and one thing I feel about it is fear of its going away. *(His tone changes to role-play more accurately his feeling.)* Won’t you *let* me have this? I kind of *need* it. I can be so lonely and scared without it.”

Therapist: “M-hm, m-hm. ‘Let me hang on to it because I’d be terribly scared if I didn’t!’ . . . It’s a kind of pleading thing too, isn’t it?”

Client: “I get a sense of—it’s this kind of pleading little boy. It’s this gesture of begging. *(Putting his hands up as if in prayer.)*

Therapist: “You put your hands in kind of a supplication.”

Client: “Yeah, that’s right. ‘Won’t you do this for me?’ kind of. Oh, that’s terrible! Who, Me? Beg? . . . That’s an emotion I’ve never felt clearly at all—something I’ve never been . . . *(Pause)*. . . I’ve got such a confusing feeling. One is, it’s such a wondrous feeling to have these new things come out of me. It amazes me so much each time, and there’s that same feeling, being scared that

I've so much of this. (*Tears*) . . . I just don't know myself. Here's suddenly something I never realized, hadn't any inkling of—that it was some *thing* or *way* I wanted to be.”

Here we see a complete experiencing of his pleadingness, and a vivid recognition of the discrepancy between this experiencing and his concept of himself. Yet this experiencing of discrepancy exists in the moment of its disappearance. From now on he *is* a person who feels *pleading*, as well as many other feelings. As this moment dissolves the way he has construed himself he feels cut loose from his previous world—a sensation which is both wondrous and frightening.

The moment of full experiencing becomes a clear and definite referent.

The examples given should indicate that the client is often not too clearly aware of what has “hit him” in these moments. Yet this does not seem too important because the event is an entity, a referent, which can be returned to, again and again, if necessary, to discover more about it. The pleadingness, the feeling of “loving myself” which are present in these examples, may not prove to be exactly as described. They are, however, solid points of reference to which the client can return until he has satisfied himself as to what they are. It is, perhaps, that they constitute a clear-cut physiological event, a substratum of the conscious life, which the client can return to for investigatory purposes. Gendlin has called my attention to this significant quality of experiencing as a referent. He is endeavoring to build an extension of psychological theory on this basis. (1)

Differentiation of experiencing is sharp and basic.

Because each of these moments is a referent, a specific entity, it does not become confused with anything else. The process of sharp differentiation builds on it and about it.

In this stage, there are no longer “problems,” external or internal. The client is living, subjectively, a phase of his problem. It is not an object.

I trust it is evident that in any of these examples, it would be grossly inaccurate to say that the client perceives his problem as internal, or is dealing with it as an internal problem. We need some way of indicating that he is further than this, and of course enormously far in the process sense from perceiving his problem as external. The best description seems to be that he neither perceives his problem nor deals with it. He is simply living some portion of it knowingly and acceptingly.

I have dwelt so long on this sixth definable point on the process continuum because I see it as a highly crucial one. My observation is that these moments of immediate, full, accepted experiencing are in some sense almost irreversible. To put this in terms of the examples, it is my observation and hypothesis that with these clients, whenever a future experiencing of the same quality and characteristics occurs, it will necessarily be recognized in awareness for what it is: a tender caring for self, an umbilical bond which makes him a part of his parents, or a pleading small-boy dependence, as the case may be. And, it might be remarked in passing, once an experience is fully in awareness, fully accepted, then it can be coped with effectively, like any other clear reality.

THE SEVENTH STAGE

In those areas in which the sixth stage has been reached, it is no longer so necessary that the client be fully received by the therapist, though this still seems helpful. However, because of the tendency for the sixth stage to be irreversible, the client often seems to go on into the seventh and final stage without much need of the therapist's help. This stage occurs as much outside of the therapeutic relationship as in it, and is often reported, rather than experienced in the therapeutic hour. I shall try to describe some of its characteristics as I feel I have observed them.

New feelings are experienced with immediacy and richness of detail, both in the therapeutic relationship and outside.

The experiencing of such feelings is used as a clear referent.

The client quite consciously endeavors to use these referents in order to know in a clearer and more differentiated way who he is, what he wants, and what his attitudes are. This is true even when the feelings are unpleasant or frightening.

There is a growing and continuing sense of acceptant ownership of these changing feelings, a basic trust in his own process.

This trust is not primarily in the conscious processes which go on, but rather in the total organismic process. One client describes the way in which experience characteristic of the sixth stage looks to him, describing it in terms characteristic of the seventh stage.

“In therapy here, what has counted is sitting down and saying, ‘this is what’s bothering me,’ and play around with it for awhile until something gets squeezed out through some emotional crescendo, and the thing is over with—looks different. Even then, I can’t tell just exactly what’s happened. It’s just that I exposed something, shook it up and turned it around; and when I put it back it

felt better. It's a little frustrating because I'd like to know exactly what's going on. . . . This is a funny thing because it feels as if I'm not doing anything at all about it—the only *active* part I take is to—to be alert and grab a thought as it's going by . . . And there's sort of a feeling, 'Well now, what will I do with it, now that I've seen it right?' There's no handles on it you can adjust or anything. Just talk about it awhile, and let it go. And apparently that's all there is to it. Leaves me with a somewhat unsatisfied feeling though—a feeling that I haven't accomplished anything. It's been accomplished without my knowledge or consent. . . . The point is I'm not sure of the quality of the readjustment because I didn't get to see it, to check on it. . . . All I can do is observe the facts—that I look at things a little differently and am less anxious, by a long shot, and a lot more active. Things are looking up in general. I'm very happy with the way things have gone. But I feel sort of like a spectator." A few moments later, following this rather grudging acceptance of the process going on in him, he adds, "I seem to work best when my conscious mind is only concerned with facts and letting the analysis of them go on by itself without paying any attention to it."

Experiencing has lost almost completely its structure-bound aspects and becomes process experiencing—that is, the situation is experienced and interpreted in its newness, not as the past.

The example given in stage six suggests the quality I am trying to describe. Another example in a very specific area is given by a client in a follow-up interview as he explains the different quality that has come about in his creative work. It used to be that he tried to be orderly. "You begin at the beginning and you progress regularly through to the end." Now he is aware that the process in himself is different. "When I'm working on an idea, the whole idea develops like the latent image coming out when you develop a photograph. It doesn't start at one edge and fill in over to the other. It comes in *all over*. At first all you see is the hazy outline, and you wonder what it's going to be; and then gradually something fits here and something fits there, and pretty soon it all comes clear—all at once." It is obvious that he has not only come to trust this process, but that he is experiencing it as it *is*, not in terms of some past.

The self becomes increasingly simply the subjective and reflexive awareness of experiencing. The self is much less frequently a perceived object, and much more frequently something confidently felt in process.

An example may be taken from the same follow-up interview with the client quoted above. In this interview, because he is reporting his experience since

therapy, he again becomes aware of himself as an object, but it is clear that this has not been the quality of his day-by-day experience. After reporting many changes, he says, “I hadn’t really thought of any of these things in connection with therapy until tonight. . . . (*Jokingly*) Gee! maybe something *did* happen. Because my life since has been different. My productivity has gone up. My confidence has gone up. I’ve become brash in situations I would have avoided before. And also, I’ve become much less brash in situations where I would have become very obnoxious before.” It is clear that only afterward does he realize what his self has been.

Personal constructs are tentatively reformulated, to be validated against further experience, but even then, to be held loosely.

A client describes the way in which such a construct changed, between interviews, toward the end of therapy.

“I don’t know what (changed), but I definitely feel different about looking back at my childhood, and some of the hostility about my mother and father has evaporated. I substituted for a feeling of resentment about them a sort of acceptance of the fact that they did a number of things that were undesirable with me. But I substituted a sort of feeling of interested excitement that—gee—now that I’m finding out what was wrong, I can do something about it—correct their mistakes.” Here the way in which he construes his experience with his parents has been sharply altered.

Another example may be taken from an interview with a client who has always felt that he had to please people. “I can see . . . what it would be like—that it doesn’t matter if I don’t please you—that pleasing you or not pleasing you is not the thing that is important to me. If I could just kinda say that to people—you know? . . . the idea of just spontaneously saying something—and it not mattering whether it pleases or not—Oh God! you could say almost *anything*: But that’s true, you know.” And a little later he asks himself, with incredulity, “You mean if I’d really be what I *feel* like being, that that would be all right?” He is struggling toward a reconstruing of some very basic aspects of his experience.

Internal communication is clear, with feelings and symbols well matched, and fresh terms for new feelings.

There is the experiencing of effective choice of new ways of being.

Because all the elements of experience are available to awareness, choice becomes real and effective. Here a client is just coming to this realization. “I’m trying to encompass a way of talking that is a way out of being scared of talking.

Perhaps just kind of thinking out loud is the way to do that. But I've got so *many* thoughts I could only do it a little bit. But maybe I could let my talk be an expression of my real thoughts, instead of just trying to make the proper noises in each situation." Here he is sensing the possibility of effective choice.

Another client comes in telling of an argument he had with his wife. "I wasn't so angry with myself. I didn't hate myself so much. I realized 'I'm acting childishly' and somehow I chose to do that."

It is not easy to find examples by which to illustrate this seventh stage, because relatively few clients fully achieve this point. Let me try to summarize briefly the qualities of this end point of the continuum.

When the individual has, in his process of change, reached the seventh stage, we find ourselves involved in a new dimension. The client has now incorporated the quality of motion, of flow, of changingness, into every aspect of his psychological life, and this becomes its outstanding characteristic. He lives in his feelings, knowingly and with basic trust in them and acceptance of them. The ways in which he construes experience are continually changing as his personal constructs are modified by each new living event. His experiencing is process in nature, feeling the new in each situation and interpreting it anew, interpreting in terms of the past only to the extent that the now is identical with the past. He experiences with a quality of immediacy, knowing at the same time *that* he experiences. He values exactness in differentiation of his feelings and of the personal meanings of his experience. His internal communication between various aspects of himself is free and unblocked. He communicates himself freely in relationships with others, and these relationships are not stereotyped, but person to person. He is aware of himself, but not as an object. Rather it is a reflexive awareness, a subjective living in himself in motion. He perceives himself as responsibly related to his problems. Indeed, he feels a fully responsible relationship to his life in all its fluid aspects. He lives fully in himself as a constantly changing flow of process.

SOME QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS PROCESS CONTINUUM

Let me try to anticipate certain questions which may be raised about the process I have tried to describe.

Is this *the* process by which personality changes or one of many kinds of change? This I do not know. Perhaps there are several types of process by which personality changes. I would only specify that this seems to be the process which is set in motion when the individual experiences himself as being fully received.

Does it apply in all psychotherapies, or is this the process which occurs in one psychotherapeutic orientation only? Until we have more recordings of therapy

from other orientations, this question cannot be answered. However, I would hazard a guess that perhaps therapeutic approaches which place great stress on the cognitive and little on the emotional aspects of experience may set in motion an entirely different process of change.

Would everyone agree that this is a desirable process of change, that it moves in valued directions? I believe not. I believe some people do not value fluidity. This will be one of the social value judgments which individuals and cultures will have to make. Such a process of change can easily be avoided, by reducing or avoiding those relationships in which the individual is fully received as he is.

Is change on this continuum rapid? My observation is quite the contrary. My interpretation of Kirtner's study (4), which may be slightly different from his, is that a client might start therapy at about stage two and end at about stage four with both client and therapist being quite legitimately satisfied that substantial progress had been made. It would occur very rarely, if ever, that a client who fully exemplified stage one would move to a point where he fully exemplified stage seven. If this did occur, it would involve a matter of years.

Are the descriptive items properly grouped at each stage? I feel sure that there are many errors in the way I have grouped my observations. I also wonder what important elements have been omitted. I wonder also if the different elements of this continuum might not be more parsimoniously described. All such questions, however, may be given an empirical answer, if the hypothesis I am setting forth has merit in the eyes of various research workers.

SUMMARY

I have tried to sketch, in a crude and preliminary manner, the flow of a process of change which occurs when a client experiences himself as being received, welcomed, understood as he is. This process involves several threads, separable at first, becoming more of a unity as the process continues.

This process involves a loosening of feelings. At the lower end of the continuum they are described as remote, unowned, and not now present. They are then described as present objects with some sense of ownership by the individual. Next they are expressed as owned feelings in terms closer to their immediate experiencing. Still further up the scale they are experienced and expressed in the immediate present with a decreasing fear of this process. Also, at this point, even those feelings which have been previously denied to awareness bubble through into awareness, are experienced, and increasingly owned. At the upper end of the continuum living in the process of experiencing a continually changing flow of feelings becomes characteristic of the individual.

The process involves a change in the manner of experiencing. The continuum begins with a fixity in which the individual is very remote from his experiencing and unable to draw upon or symbolize its implicit meaning. Experiencing must be safely in the past before a meaning can be drawn from it and the present is interpreted in terms of these past meanings. From this remoteness in relation to his experiencing, the individual moves toward the recognition of experiencing as a troubling process going on within him. Experiencing gradually becomes a more accepted inner referent to which he can turn for increasingly accurate meanings. Finally he becomes able to live freely and acceptantly in a fluid process of experiencing, using it comfortably as a major reference for his behavior.

The process involves a shift from incongruence to congruence. The continuum runs from a maximum of incongruence which is quite unknown to the individual through stages where there is an increasingly sharp recognition of the contradictions and discrepancies existing within himself to the experiencing of incongruence in the immediate present in a way which dissolves this. At the upper end of the continuum, there would never be more than temporary incongruence between experiencing and awareness since the individual would not need to defend himself against the threatening aspects of his experience.

The process involves a change in the manner in which, and the extent to which the individual is able and willing to communicate himself in a receptive climate. The continuum runs from a complete unwillingness to communicate self to the self as a rich and changing awareness of internal experiencing which is readily communicated when the individual desires to do so.

The process involves a loosening of the cognitive maps of experience. From construing experience in rigid ways which are perceived as external facts, the client moves toward developing changing, loosely held constrictings of meaning in experience, constructions which are modifiable by each new experience.

There is a change in the individual's relationship to his problems. At one end of the continuum problems are unrecognized and there is no desire to change. Gradually there is a recognition that problems exist. At a further stage, there is recognition that the individual has contributed to these problems, that they have not arisen entirely from external sources. Increasingly, there is a sense of self-responsibility for the problems. Further up the continuum there is a living or experiencing of some aspect of the problems. The person lives his problems subjectively, feeling responsible for the contribution he has made in the development of his problems.

There is change in the individual's manner of relating. At one end of the continuum the individual avoids close relationships, which are perceived as

being dangerous. At the other end of the continuum, he lives openly and freely in relation to the therapist and to others, guiding his behavior in the relationship on the basis of his immediate experiencing.

In general, the process moves from a point of fixity, where all the elements and threads described above are separately discernible and separately understandable, to the flowing peak moments of therapy in which all these threads become inseparably woven together. In the new experiencing with immediacy which occurs at such moments, feeling and cognition interpenetrate, self is subjectively present in the experience, volition is simply the subjective following of a harmonious balance of organismic direction. Thus, as the process reaches this point the person becomes a unity of flow, of motion. He has changed, but what seems most significant, he has become an integrated process of changingness.

REFERENCES

1. Gendlin, E. *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning* (tentative title). Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press. (In Press) (Especially Chap. 7)
2. Gendlin, E., and F. Zimring. The qualities or dimensions of experiencing and their change. *Counseling Center Discussion Papers 1, #3*, Oct. 1955. University of Chicago Counseling Center.
3. Kelly, G. A. *The psychology of personal constructs*. Vol. 1. New York: Norton, 1955.
4. Kirtner, W. L., and D. S. Cartwright. Success and failure in client-centered therapy as a function of initial in-therapy behavior. *J. Consult. Psychol.*, 1958, 22, 329–333.
5. Lewis, M. K., C. R. Rogers, and John M. Shlien. Two cases of time-limited client-centered psychotherapy. In Burton, A. (Ed.), *Case Studies of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1959, 309–352.
6. Mooney, R. L. The researcher himself. In *Research for curriculum improvement*. Nat'l Educ. Ass'n., 1957, Chap. 7.
7. Mooney, R. L. Problems in the development of research men. *Educ. Research Bull.*, 30, 1951, 141–150.
8. Rogers, C. R. The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *J. Consult. Psychol.*, 1957, 21, 95–103.