

Abstract

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***Beyond Rogers, beyond Gendlin: widening our understanding of the theory***

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*Over the many years of our professional lives as trainers and supervisors we have both re-visited the essentials of the person-centred and experiential approach many times. Each time we have learned more. Now that we have moved on from our respective institutions (in Switzerland and in the UK) we finally have more time to take our understanding to a new level. And we are especially aware of the contemporary social relevance of our thinking, which takes on particular urgency, as the world around us seems to be 'going mad'.*

*It is interesting to re-visit the origins of Rogers' ideas and consider how Gendlin's thinking has significantly expanded Rogers' theory. But, like all radical approaches that relate to living processes, these concepts cannot simply stay the same in our ever-changing situations. So, while we remain inspired, we are also critical. We want to look with new eyes and breathe some fresh air into well-known concepts.*

*Some assumptions of the approach we consider to be non-negotiable, but we have also found some 'gaps' in the theory - for example, there is a tendency to speak in generalisations (what would be helpful for **all** clients, what would be the source of **all** 'disturbances'...). Our contention is that a more refined understanding of individual differences and an examination of how our interactions and our thinking are coloured by them will enable us better to understand ourselves and learn more about our successful and our failed communications.*

*Our main concern and curiosity is with the phenomenon of a 'frozen' or 'structure-bound' manner of experiencing, which means that processes in a shared interactional space need to be differentiated. Moreover, we find that all theory-building - including that of Rogers and Gendlin - might in itself be 'structure-bound'!*

CHRISTIANE

### **General introduction**

It has been an interesting and inspiring experience to prepare this presentation together during the last weeks. It was not only an intellectual pleasure, but also surprisingly moving. For both of us it meant to revisit our past – in terms of long ago memories about our own beginnings as trainees and afterwards as assistants, as trainers, as psychotherapists and supervisors, as readers and writers, as members of associations and groups of colleagues– which meant re-visiting “the whole” of our professional identity.

Judy and I got to know each other rather late in our careers, and we immediately shared a deep understanding of our work and our values. We became friends, started to travel together, spent

time at each other's houses, discussed and exchanged a lot. After a while, we began to teach together.

When we - as preparation for this conference - began to tell each other in more detail where we came from and where we are now, it was a real eye opener to realise how differently we experienced and lived forward the person-centred and the Focusing-oriented approach.

In our presentation we will take you with us on this journey and will show you, where our revisiting process had led us.

JUDY

### The Haystacks



Back in February I went to Boston, US, and, on the last day of my visit, I spent several hours going round the Museum of Fine Art. By the end of the visit I was completely 'saturated' with amazing art works.

But, of all the wonderful paintings that I saw I kept being drawn back to two images of a haystack, hung side by side. One was painted in summer at sunset and the other 'snow effect'.

I loved the fact that Monet had re-visited these images in different seasons and given such attention to re-creating the colours of the sunset, the pinks and the oranges in 'sunset', the blues and yellow of 'snow effect'. One evokes warmth and the other cold. I found myself looking at them again and again- and I couldn't tear myself away from them.

## Rogers/ Gendlin

For me, this is similar to how I feel about the Person-Centred Approach. I am drawn over and over again to try to understand why it matters so much to me- why can't I let go of it? Having been 'classically trained' in the PCA where I simply knew Focusing as a taught procedure, I have spent the past 15 years or so reading Gendlin and coming to terms with how hugely significant his contribution to the PCA has been, something that is not fully appreciated in 'classical' Person-Centred circles in the UK.

Reading Gendlin has deepened my understanding of the PCA, which I feel I'm coming to understand more and more.

But the more I understand the more questions come to me.

So what is the 'edge' in all of this that makes this search so meaningful, even after 30 years?

As I look again at the Haystacks, I can realise that there is an 'edge' of 'wonder' of '*not* understanding' that makes this for me *deeper* than a purely 'intellectual' quest.

The approach brings us to the 'edge' of our understanding of what it means to be a human being. It also re-connects us with the 'idealism' of early Rogers and early Gendlin, which somehow feels even more vital today than it did back in the 1960s and 70s.

## PCA/ Focusing Background

In the mid-1980s I read Carl Rogers' *On Becoming a Person* which asked many of the 'who am I?' questions that seem to be my lifelong obsession. Something inspired me to change direction from my original academic field of English Literature- and I decided to train in the Person-Centred Approach (together with my friend and colleague, Campbell Purton) on the first professional training that was run by Brian Thorne and Dave Mearns.

From the beginning of my training I worked as a Person-Centred counsellor at the University Counselling Service at the University of East Anglia, first as a trainee, then as a counsellor and eventually I succeeded Brian Thorne as Director of the Service in 1998. I didn't leave full-time employment at UEA until the end of 2013.

In the early 1990s I joined with Brian Thorne in launching the first professional training in the Person-Centred Approach at UEA. For most of the 1990s we delivered a one-year 'intensive' version of the training that I'd received myself, which is why I know 'classical' PCA like 'the back of my hand'.

In order to prepare for this presentation I re-read the first edition of ***Person-Centred Counselling in Action*** written by Brian and Dave during the period of our initial training and published in 1988. It re-created perfectly for me the 'atmosphere' and the thinking that underpinned our training- and I found myself very moved.

It was almost like reading an autobiography of a very significant part of my life. It actually felt like 'coming home' to an incredibly trustworthy base.

I stopped working on the training course when I became Director of the Counselling Service, but, having gone through basic the Person-Centred training material 7 or 8 times I was both 'indoctrinated' and increasingly frustrated. Things didn't quite add up- but, while I was teaching what I can now see as a rather 'limited' version of the Approach, it was difficult for me to conceptualise the discomfort I had increasingly begun to experience.

Basically, there were too many 'static' concepts. Why should 'empathy' be a 'process', but not 'congruence', for example?

Somewhere around 2000 Campbell Purton had trained in Focusing and introduced Focusing to UEA. The only way of us being able to launch this was for me also to undertake different Focusing trainings and join him on the training course.

Although my time and space were very limited- because by this time I was primarily 'a manager'- my reading of Gendlin- especially his 1964 Theory- began to broaden my understanding.

More recently, reading the early Gendlin papers in the Gendlin online library has made it clear to me that, had Gendlin and Rogers continued to work together, it is most likely that the theory of the PCA would have integrated (for example) Gendlin's 'process' view of congruence and would actually have made a lot more sense.

What Gendlin perceived and expressed very clearly back in 1959 was that 'the theory...is formulated in static terms while it *implies* a dynamic process. I call this dynamic process "experiencing"' (1959: 3)

As it is, Gendlin's thinking was only integrated into what became known as 'the Person-Centred Experiential' arm of the PCA in the US and the UK which adopts Focusing as a taught procedure as one of its 'techniques' to work directly with the client's experiencing process. My early memory of PCE conferences is of furious battles between 'classical' PCA practitioners and the 'experiential' camp whom we regarded as 'the enemy'.

The subtlety and depth of Gendlin's contribution to our understanding of Rogers' work I think has never been fully integrated into Person-Centred trainings in the UK, including our own at UEA. Although the concepts are less 'static' in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *PCCA*, I think the understanding of 'experiencing' remains limited in PCA circles in both the UK and the US.

CHRISTIANE

By contrast with Judy I belonged to the few people of my generation who learned the person-centred approach at the same time as the experiential point of view in *one* training. Only later did I realise the huge difference to those people who learned the PCA first and then "added" Focusing/FOT to it and integrated it – or, as others did, refused to do so and fought against the "technique", which they condemned not being "genuine client centred". When I look at my

professional situations, colleagues, who knew the experiential approach as well, had always inspired me. I echo Judy in her memories of the frustrating “battlefields” – and it is not over yet: I just left a situation at home where our institute has to prove whether it could be accepted as a “right” Person-Centred Training.... and immediately the old struggles began...

### **Personal remarks**

The therapeutic approach one chooses often has to do with a very personal predisposition, question or fascination.

I live in Switzerland now, but was born in Germany in the post-2<sup>nd</sup>-world-war-period. My father was a soldier in Russia; he was wounded and spent some years in a Russian prison camp. My mother worked as an employee of her company in Russia as well and spent the many months of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World war in her bombed hometown, in Essen. Her younger brother was a soldier too and never came back.

After the war, my parents met each other and married 1948. On the photos of this time they look thin and fragile and smile the cautious smile of people who escaped.

I was born a year later.

Why do I tell this?

Until a few years ago I wouldn't have dreamt of connecting aspects of my biography to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Of course, there have been some stories told in my family again and again. Normally harmless ones, told incidentally. How my father promised my mother on the day of their marriage that she should never again suffer from cold and hunger. How it was to eat the first banana. How skilful my mother has been putting together clothes for us children from old rags. But between the lines of these light-hearted stories there were memories we only could sense from the atmosphere in the room. Asking for more details always provoked this specific gesture: my mother brushing non-existent crumbs from the tablecloth, murmuring “Oh, this is all long ago.... Let's look forward.” My father remained silent, hidden behind his newspaper.

It was only after my parents' death that I found pictures of my uncle. My mother never spoke a word about her brother with whom she lived together for 16 years. My grandparents, who lost their only son, had turned to stone; they never shared a word about him.

As a child I read books about ancient times and wanted to be an archaeologist, digging for buried things. When I visited Athens for the first time, I remember vividly the night when Pavlos Zarogiannis took me for a walk and showed me the acropolis by night. It had a quality that made me speechless. I visited the hill and the new museum at its feet the next day and was spellbound. Later on I went to another museum, and there I saw by chance a little video about an [archaeological excavation](#) on some of the little Greek islands. I was, to my astonishment, moved to tears. How carefully, how gently they treated each little broken fragment, cleaned it and laid it each to the other ones. And afterwards, they slowly connected them to the history of this little island, to long ago buildings, to the art ... so that these little fragments became meaningful and showed a part of the bigger picture.

Later on in my own therapy I found words, my own words, for the atmosphere I lived in, I found meaning and answers in myself, in my own experiencing, instead of waiting for a “truth” coming

from the outside.... And I realised that many things would forever stay unspoken, unprocessed, a shadow hanging over the next generations.

All this belongs to my personal history, to the MORE: to re-connect with something, which was lost, to make meaning. As long as I remember I have been obsessed with the issue of communication, with understanding and misunderstanding. I always wanted to find out about reality. I always wanted to support people to find their own voice. And I passionately spoke up (this would be another personal thread!) for diversity, for something I experienced over and over again in my life and in my work: that people think and feel and live differently, and that generalizations always miss out something crucial.

### **Professional background**

Later on, when I chose my psychotherapy training, it was clear that I would not be happy with a theory consisting of fixed and unchangeable assumptions. Living in a rather floating world myself, I felt no need for reifications and for fixed knowledge.

So I was at ease with the attitude of really being open, to live with the unknown and to trust in something unfolding in a process, unpredictably.

I was happy with Rogers, with the challenge of *empathy from moment to moment*, always listening to clients from *their* frame of reference, with trying to be true to myself and to my clients, with the craft and art to "*dip from the pool of implicit meanings just at the edge of the client's awareness.*" And I loved Gendlin for his experiential approach, his *body-in-situation*, the *not yet but more than* when we refer to our felt sensing, his *interaction first*, his *speaking from, not about*. I studied Gendlin's philosophy and recently translated his "A Process Model" together with Donata Schoeller into German.

After having completed my trainings and having worked as a therapist for some years, I founded together with my husband Ernst Juchli and some colleagues our own training institute, the GFK. We trained psychotherapists and counsellors in our own method, which was an integration of the person-centred and experiential approach and a person-centred body psychotherapy we developed. I do not lead the institute any more, but still work part time as supervisor and trainer.

JUDY

### **The Spiritual/ Mystical/ That, which is beyond words...**

My understanding of the PCA has always included the spiritual dimension of the person, right from the outset, and for this I am very much indebted to Brian Thorne, who is very open to his own mystical/ spiritual side and always highlighted Rogers' emphasis towards the end of his life on what he calls the quality of 'presence':

...when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness, then

whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then simply my *presence* is releasing and helpful to the other. (1980: 129; Rogers' italics)

We were encouraged as trainees to develop this kind of open-ness. I remember during one of our training weeks being in an outdoor encounter group. Suddenly, in the distance, I saw a clump of trees shift from one place to another. With it came a corresponding 'inner' movement. It felt very meaningful. I remember Brian responding to me with great attentiveness, really encouraging me to stay with something that was totally incomprehensible to me- and also his 'protecting' me by holding up his hand to ward off intrusive comments from other trainees (and, indeed, from the other facilitator) so that I could allow myself to simply be with the sense of 'wonder' that had come to me in that moment.

Such acknowledgement of the 'mysterious', the 'incomprehensible', that which cannot be expressed in words, has always been a part of my experience and understanding of the PCA so that my trust in what is going on 'inside' me- even when it makes no immediate sense- has always been very strong and grows stronger now that I don't have to protect myself as carefully as I did when I was at the university.

Probably the most meaningful statement to me in the whole of Rogers is this:

Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me.

Neither the Bible nor the prophets- neither Freud nor research- neither the revelations of God nor man- can take precedence over my own direct experience.

(Rogers, 1961:23-24)

Were I to replace the more static term 'experience' with the more fluid '*experiencing*' and add to the list of authorities then it becomes even more meaningful:

*Experiencing* is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own *experiencing*. No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my *experiencing*. It is to *experiencing* that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me.

Neither the Bible nor the prophets- neither Freud nor research- neither the revelations of God nor man- not Rogers not Gendlin- can take precedence over my own direct *experiencing*.

The concept of '*experiencing*' allows us to know ourselves as 'process', not as a sequence of separate 'experiences', but as a continuous 'inner flow'. As for the 'authority', while I know that I have learnt vast amounts from different teachers and writers and colleagues, I can only really deepen my

understanding if I can accept the truth of my own experiencing as I know it in my own body. Authorities simply point the way.

But being with a sense of 'inner flow' is extremely hard to achieve because we keep coming up against our 'selves' in different shapes and forms that block the 'flow' - at any moment something happens that upsets us: we might feel hurt or angry and we need either to let it go or take time to process it. There are simply not enough hours in the day to process all that goes on in us.

Underneath it all there is a flow of pure experiencing which takes us beyond the narrowed confines of our separate selves.

But, as the Buddhist saying goes, 'to lose the self you first have to find the self'.

The process of how to move from 'finding the self' (through the pain of our existence and how we deal with it) to 'losing the self' is actually made explicit in the work of Edwin McMahon, co-founder of the Bio-Spiritual (Focusing) Institute, and one of the few people to have been taught in person by both Rogers and Gendlin.

McMahon puts forward the view that each time we are able to stay with the truth of our experiencing by giving attention to it in a Focusing way we not only release meaning, but also can experience the '*movement*' that comes as a result of the interaction between 'symbol and felt meaning':

The emphasis in this experiencing is not upon *information* but on *forward movement* in the body's knowing. Felt-meaning (or felt-sensing) represents an organismic step not simply toward some new 'content' of knowledge but into an actual experiencing of *the 'process' of wholeness itself*. (McMahon, 1993: 238; McMahon's emphasis)

McMahon, as a theologian and a former Jesuit priest, regarded this living out of a 'bodily felt process of congruence', whereby we come to know ourselves more and more deeply through genuinely staying with and allowing some of the many manifestations of our individual 'stuckness' to dissolve, as expressing 'what we have heretofore called "Spirit"' (1993: 241).

**This, for me, is a hugely important revelation and challenges me to live in a new way.**

A part of this new understanding is accepting the limits of 'words'. Words hold us back.

One of the ways in which we might move 'beyond' to new understanding is perhaps to acknowledge and develop ourselves to listen more and more to that which is beyond or beneath articulation - beyond words. Just as poetry can access deeper truths by 'circling' a symbol or a referent, so staying with the felt sense of an image or a situation without striving for it to yield particular meaning leaves things open for the possibility that further 'truths' may be revealed, resisting their articulation as part of a fixed and linear narrative.

It was after discussion with one of my PhD students about how poetry works that I realised that when I was in Boston I had in fact been 'circling' Monet's haystacks in this way, waiting for



'something more' to come that may never come, but there is nevertheless something very 'alive' and compelling and meaningful in the 'circling', in the 'waiting' in itself.

And over these past few weeks I have been consciously trying to 'open' myself to felt senses that have been incomprehensible to me, where any 'shift' seems simply to have led to a stronger sense of what's there already rather than a 'resolution' or a 'dissolving'.

It feels like something more is opening up in me as a result of this- and this is one of my own particular 'edges' that feels very meaningful.

I'd like to conclude this section by quoting again from Rogers, who, despite never accepting a process view of congruence, completely understood the potential of this way of living:

Life, at its best, is a flowing, changing process in which nothing is fixed...When I am thus able to be in process, it is clear that there can be no closed system of beliefs, no unchanging set of principles which I hold. Life is guided by a changing understanding of and interpretation of my experience. It is always in process of becoming.

CHRISTIANE

**Beyond:**

I will tell you something about one of the further developments in our work during the last 35 years, starting with one of my favourite quotes by Rogers, written down in 1980:

*"It appears to me that the way of the future must be to base our lives and our education on the assumption that there are as many realities as there are persons, and that our highest priority is to accept that hypothesis and proceed from there".*

(Rogers 1980, A Way of Being)

I am always delighted when I revisit these few lines. The ways in which people live their life differently has been a never-ending source of wonder and fascination in my life and my professional contexts.

But when I look back at the approaches I was socialized in during my trainings I realise that I had learnt a lot of **general assumptions** about helpful conditions, which enable people to grow. But the interesting question for me is: **All people? And all people in the same way?**

So the sentence "as many realities as there are people" remains rather vague. There is no attempt in the PCA, not even tentatively, to systematize the very different realities of people and our very different resonances and responses to them - maybe out of fear of "diagnosing" them?

We tried to stay near our wonder and our fascination by gathering experiences: for example the different ways people "did" focusing. Our amazingly different responses to so called "difficult"

clients. The discovering of recurring, persisting and often astonishingly change-resistant patterns in us, our clients, and our therapeutic relationship.

We tried to “collect” these experiences in a person-centred and experiential way by asking our trainees and supervisees precisely about their inner world. We listened respectfully, because to open up about these often rather difficult parts of their persons needed trust and courage. We offered our honest response. We learned from each other and felt deeply grateful. For our trainees it was a revelation and a big surprise to detect how different the worlds are we live in. They were puzzled: Oh really, this is not the way all people think? Or: Oh, there are others who react like I do? They began to look closer and found out personal patterns: Are they always the ones who immediately feel afraid? Or get angry? Is it typical for them to think of difficulties first? Do they search for intensity in their lives? Is there a tendency to immediately have a plan, a strategy? Or do they struggle with questions of worth and values (which not all people do!)?

We found out that all of us have special aspects and ways of relating that are one-sided. We called them “sensitivities”. They are always both: talents and limitations, strengths and weaknesses. And we realised that all of us, especially we as professionals, need to be aware of these parts, because they influence how we feel and think and act in our situations.

We found names for these patterns; we tried to do some theory building around our experiences that was compatible with our approach – which was not at all easy.

Gendlin didn't seem to be interested in exploring the various kinds of patterns, he wrote in his 1964 article “No one is greatly changed by responses and analyses of how he does not function.” I am not so sure!

Rogers' model about the development of “disturbances” out of the “conditions of worth” did not match our experiences with all our clients and was far too one-sided.

Body therapists at that time worked within a psychoanalytical framework.

And we were dedicated to not using medical or psychiatric terms and thinking.

So- what to do?

But then we re-visited the early Gendlin articles, mainly the one written in 1964 - and we were fascinated by his way of describing process-blocking or process-skipping patterns.

He writes in “A Theory of Personality Change”:

*We often speak of contents or “experiences” as if they were set, shaped units with their own set structure. But this is the case only to the extent that my experience is structure bound in its manner.... Insofar as my experiencing is structure bound, it does not implicitly function. It is not “seamlessly” felt by me with its thousands of implicit aspects functioning. ...Rather, in this regard, my experience is a “frozen whole” and will not give up its structure. .... (it) is not modified by the present. Hence, it remains the same; it repeats itself in many situations without ever changing. So long as the manner of experience remains structure bound, the structures themselves are not modifiable by present occurrences...structure-bound aspects are not in process.*

We immediately liked the term “structure bound”, which Gendlin used from the beginning of working together with Rogers. It was a neutral one; it said nothing about illness or disorder, but about one-sidedness, about frozenness; about not being in process.

When we find ourselves in a stuck state, a “frozen whole”, parts of us do not answer to fresh and new inputs, we meet life with stereotypical reactions, turning around in never-ending circles, there is no ability any more to respond from that inner experiencing place from where new meaning could arise.

If these patterns are strong and the narrowing is almost complete, you may have experienced that even the first movement of a focusing process is almost impossible.

And above all such a well known “always the same”-structure is more than a “part”, it has become a lifestyle, a habit, a way of being.

Using this term, we were able to talk about “normality”, not about pathology. It is a process-specificity, which - as Gendlin says 2008 in a letter to his Japanese colleague Suetake -

*.... may require interaction to stop structure-bound repetition.*

What we realised over time is that there is **an active part** in ourselves that stabilizes this structure bound feeling and thinking anew every day. It does not feel like it, but try this little exercise:

Tomorrow morning, you can observe how you usually start the day: What precisely do you do first after waking up? What do you think? What do you feel? Listen to your inner sentences; look at your inner pictures. What comes up? Do you recognize a pattern? Something that you always do or think or feel? It is like tuning your instrument for the day – it is very interesting to find out how you do it. Do you create a narrow world with one or two themes that is your well-known music for the day? Or do you open up to the richness of life?

Try the same thing in the evening before you go to sleep: how do you “remember” your day? Of all the hundreds of events and issues that happened: which ones do you **choose** to be with you again, to colour your memory?

When I use the word “choose” you may notice that I prefer not to think that it is only the environment, which causes pain or limitations and that I only have to free myself from these biographical or cultural restrictions. It is an important part of therapy to learn to step back and recognize my own activity, which sustains a habit, and to be aware how my specific way of being influences my inner world and has an impact on the world around me.

JUDY

### **A World Gone Mad**

The PCA and Focusing as a taught procedure grew up during a time of great idealism. Both Rogers and Gendlin may be seen as part of the Human Potential Movement, which flourished in the 1960s

and 70s. The Human Potential Movement made explicit links between human development- such as can be achieved through therapy, participation in groups, self-help, etc.- and the world becoming a better place. These are the words of Abraham Maslow, one of the major influences on the Human Potential Movement:

The empirical fact is that self-actualizing people, our best experiencers, are also our most compassionate, our great improvers and reformers of society, our most effective fighters against injustice, inequality, slavery, cruelty, exploitation (and our best fighters for excellence, effectiveness, competence). (Maslow 1964; 1970, p. 86)

Gendlin and Rogers wrote their own separate 'visions' of what the world might come to look like if the values of humanistic psychology could prevail.

In a rather strange and combative paper, entitled 'A Short Summary and Some Long Predictions', published in 1970, Gendlin presents some wonderful ideas about how to change society:

The troubled person is all one; he doesn't have one set of psychological and another set of situational problems, especially if he is poor... The masses of troubled people need help with their total situation, not just with some separate psychological part. Furthermore, while they remain in an institution they cannot get fully well, and when they go home to the original sick making situation which hasn't changed, they get sick again, and return. A few years ago, if we arrived at this realization, we would say "to get this one patient well you'd have to change the whole system" and we meant, sadly, that of course you couldn't. But now we are setting about to do just that. (1970:7)

Gendlin proposed that Focusing (which was then being developed as a taught procedure) be taught in hospitals, in schools, in different social environments- something that can be carried out by ordinary people for ordinary people.

What I find very moving about this article is Gendlin's recognition that each individual needs another individual to take time to be with them, to listen to them- and that everyone needs a group where they can be with themselves and each other at depth. He writes:

The day is fast waning when one must plead "sick" to get a sensitive and impartial listener and willing interactor. Consider how foolish it has really been, that we have given this only to people who were under sufficient pressure to plead "sick" and incapable of helping themselves... In fact, there is plenty of evidence that everyone needs someone, that humans are interaction processes in their very nature. (1970:9)

Reading this nearly 50 years on, it seems, from my own very direct experience in the world of mental health, as if something of this thinking *was* taken on board- certainly in the UK. In the 1990s our University Counselling Service was sufficiently well-resourced to offer unlimited counselling to all students.

But today at the University counselling is valued less and less as a 'preventive' intervention, the number of counselling sessions on offer is now very limited and students are indeed driven to label

themselves as 'sick' in order to 'make the case' for some kind of therapeutic help. There has been a complete reversal.

In terms of the broader picture of how society will work, Gendlin argues that individuals need to proceed in their living not through what is socially pre-defined, but 'from our own implicitly meaningful experiencing, which we always have as we say or do anything' (p.12).

Ten years later, in 1980, Rogers makes his own statement about 'The World of Tomorrow, and the Person of Tomorrow' in the final chapter of *A Way of Being*. His vision does not contain Gendlin's very *practical* steps for making the world a better place, but he, like Gendlin believed that we are on the edge of a 'paradigm shift' which will be brought about by a 'critical mass' of individuals who have an openness, a longing for authenticity, who feel a closeness to nature, have a sense of inner authority and a yearning for the spiritual as their key characteristics. He concludes:

The striking thing is that persons with these characteristics will be at home in a world that consists only of vibrating energy, a world with no solid base, a world of process and change, a world in which the mind, in its larger sense, is both aware of, and creates, the new reality. They will be able to make the paradigm shift. (Rogers, 1980: 352)

Rogers follows this statement with a section on 'Can the Person of Tomorrow Survive?'- and many of the things that he predicts have actually happened over the past forty years- the rise of the conservative right, a trend towards greater fundamentalism, a general 'hardening' of attitudes, etc.

But there is something in the vision that is put forward by Rogers and Gendlin that remains radical and very inspiring- very much in keeping with what Mia put forward in her lecture yesterday. How can we look more attentively at what prevents us from being at home in 'a world that consists only of vibrating energy' so that we can allow ourselves to be the critical mass that can create 'the new reality'?

CHRISTIANE

### **Society/Politics**

I want to outline two "crossings", as Gendlin would call it, where our "thinking beyond" might be fruitful:

1. The area of structure-boundness and theory building,
  2. The impact of structure-boundness on the field of professional collegiality.
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1. It has been a fascinating part of our research to study creative processes including theory building from this point of view. Looking at concepts and models, I am convinced that *all* of them have partly structure-bound aspects. This is completely "normal". We all think in the framework of our culture, our time, of our own development and history- and we all are

influenced by the assumptions we foreground in our individual way of being. But the important point is to not mistake our findings for “the truth” and as something, which should be valid for **all** people.

As an example you may try to read Rogers and Gendlin again– the specific “sound”, the undertone, the HOW, the most used terms and subjects, - where is the passion, the energetic “charge” in these texts?

Just in a nutshell: Rogers always tended to put into the foreground questions of worth, of value, of judgement (*see “On Becoming a Person”*) – whereas Gendlin always was protesting against authorities and rules and passionately spoke up for freedom (*see his “instructions for not following instructions” in his dream book and his 1970 article*). It is more than an intellectually amusing hobby to study patterns in concepts. Each theory is shaped by the person who created it, and we have to look at it with critical eyes to not take it for granted as something which should be true for all persons.

Of course our own models have a structure bound aspect as well!

2. Rogers and Gendlin were very much in favour of not limiting the approach to psychotherapy, but to all our relationships and living processes – and I want to point to that part of our professional lives where we interact with colleagues. So often we seem to lose all the qualities of interaction and communication we are trained in and become structure-bound as soon as we sit in circles where themes like power, ethics, money or the “rightness” of a theory come up. After years and years of frustrating meetings I want to make a plea for using a disciplined version of our professional skills in these contexts as well.

Our approach has all the instruments we need: Listening to each other, trying to understand someone from his/her frame of reference, accepting (which, as we know, does not mean to agreeing!), sensing our own resonances inside and making them available in an authentic way for the sake of our relationship. Realising my own structure bound patterns in these situations. Pausing even in hot-tempered discussions and asking ourselves: What is all this about? What comes up in my “situational body”? Is there “more”?

I know that in contexts of collegiality in the political area (which means: how we talk and write about each other in public- how we discuss - how we work together in an association....) being together like this is not at all familiar – it would be an irritation of old patterns, but on the other hand would encourage a new organisation of complexity. I am deeply convinced that it really would make a difference.

I hope that the new generation of person-centred and experiential therapists, our young colleagues, will not lose so much energy in collegial struggles as some of us did in the past and are still doing it.

Maybe this is the umpteenth version of “making the world a better place” people of my generation are committed to.

But perhaps this kind of communication could be of use for the on-going problems and challenges in our world as well?

JUDY

## Conclusion

Where did our revisiting process lead us?

It led us to reach these conclusions:

We have the potential to:

- Recognise that we are all different/ unique
- Understand that it is possible to stay with a 'wordless' flow of experiencing and feel more at ease in a 'world that consists only of vibrating energy'
- Become part of a 'paradigm shift' that can create a 'new reality' (which also has social implications)
- Get to know our own structure-bound patterns and how to get back to 'process'
- Take care that communication in our collegial groups embraces the essence of our approach

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