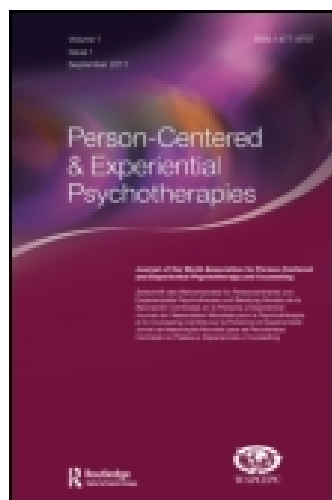


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Empowering the implicitly functioning relationship

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This paper discusses the significance of empowering the implicitly functioning relationship, in both its theoretical and practical dimensions. Seven assertions about the process of experiencing are made. Most of these assertions are the author's rendition of the philosophy of Eugene Gendlin. Giving examples from Experiential Collage Work and 'the weather inside', the implicitly functioning felt meaning, or implicit understanding is discussed as well as its explication process, where the implicit aspects of experiencing function together with explicit concepts. The role of reflective listening in the process of explication is discussed, where the author suggests that humans have a "reflective mode of consciousness," which makes reflective listening effective. The importance of reflective listening along with the listener's felt understanding is emphasized, with examples shown from the Greek myth of Narcissus and Echo and from the author's therapy transcripts.

Keywords: Felt meaning; experiencing; Focusing; Experiential Collage Work

Die implizit funktionierende Beziehung stärken

Dieser Artikel erörtert in theoretischer wie praktischer Hinsicht, wie bedeutsam es ist, die implizit funktionierende Beziehung zu stärken. Sieben Annahmen über den Prozess des Erlebens werden aufgestellt. Die meisten dieser Annahmen beruhen auf den Überlegungen zur Philosophie Gendlins. Mit Beispielen aus experienzieller Collage-Arbeit und der "inneren Wetterlage" diskutiert er den implizit funktionierenden "Felt Sense" oder das implizite Verstehen ebenso wie den Klärungsprozess, bei dem die impliziten Aspekte des Erfahrens mit expliziten Konzepten zusammenwirken. Die Rolle des reflektiven Zuhörens im Prozess der Klärung wird diskutiert, wobei der Autor argumentiert, dass Menschen einen "reflektiven Zustand des Bewusstseins" haben, der reflektives Zuhören wirksam sein lässt. Er betont die Wichtigkeit des reflektiven Zuhörens zusammen mit dem "gefühlten Verstehen" des Zuhörers anhand von Beispielen aus dem griechischen Mythos von Narziss und Echo und aus Therapie-Transkripten des Autors.

Dando Poder al Funcionamiento de la Relación Implícita

Este escrito discute la importancia de dar poder al funcionamiento implícito de la relación, tanto en sus dimensiones teóricas como prácticas. Hacemos siete afirmaciones acerca del proceso del experiencing. La mayoría de estas afirmaciones son interpretaciones del autor de la filosofía de Eugene Gendlin. Damos ejemplos del trabajo experiencial de collage y el "clima interior,"

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discutimos el funcionamiento implícito de la sensación sentida, o la comprensión implícita, así como también su proceso de explicación, en el cual los aspectos implícitos del experiencing funcionan junto con los conceptos explícitos. Se discute el papel de la escucha reflexiva en el proceso de explicación, y el autor sugiere que los seres humanos tienen un “modo reflexivo de conciencia” que hace que la escucha reflexiva sea efectiva. Enfatizamos la importancia de la escucha reflexiva junto con la comprensión sentida de la persona que escucha, presentamos ejemplos del mito griego de Narciso y Eco y de las transcripciones de terapia del autor.

Empowerment de la Relation Implicite

Cet article analyse l'impact de l'empowerment de l'implicite dans le fonctionnement d'une relation, à travers ses dimensions théorique et pratique. Il propose sept affirmations concernant le processus de l'experiencing, dont la plupart sont traduites de la philosophie d'Eugene Gendlin. A travers des exemples tirés du “travail expérientiel de collage” et du “climat intérieur,” la signification donnée par le sens corporel qui fonctionne implicitement (sans que nous en soyons conscients), ou la compréhension implicite, est examinée ainsi que son processus d'explication (ou d'expression et déroulement) par lequel les aspects implicites de l'experiencing fonctionnent en même temps que des concepts explicites. Le rôle de l'écoute réflexive dans le processus d'explication est l'objet d'une discussion et l'auteur suggère que les êtres humains ont un ‘mode de conscience réflexive’, qui fait que l'écoute réflexive est efficace. L'importance de l'écoute réflexive ainsi que la compréhension par le sens corporel de l'écouter est soulignée et des exemples sont tirés du mythe grec de Narcisse et Echo et des transcriptions du travail thérapeutique de l'auteur.

O Empowering da Relação Implicitamente Funcionante

Este artigo debate o significado do *Empowering* da relação implicitamente funcionante, nas suas dimensões teórica e prática. Apresentam-se sete asserções acerca do processo experiencial, a maioria das quais representam a interpretação que o autor faz da filosofia de Eugene Gendlin. Através de exemplos de *Experiential Collage Work* (trabalhos de colagem experiencial) e do que “se passa no interior,” debate-se o significado sentido do funcionamento implícito ou compreensão implícita, bem como os processos explicativos, nos quais os aspectos implícitos da experiência funcionam em articulação com os conceitos explícitos. É debatido o papel da escuta reflexiva no processo de explicação, no qual o autor defende que os humanos têm um “modo reflexivo de consciência,” que torna a escuta reflexiva eficaz. Enfatiza-se a importância da escuta reflexiva, a par com a compreensão sentida pelo ouvinte, através de exemplos do mito Grego de Narciso e Eco e de transcrições de psicoterapias levadas a cabo pelo autor.

本論では理論と実践の両面から、暗在的に機能している関係をエンパワーすることの意義について論じる。体験過程について7つの命題を提示する。これらの命題の多くはユージン・ジェンドリンの哲学を筆者が再解釈したものである。体験過程流コラージュワークと「こころの天気」から例を示しながら、暗在的に機能している感じられた意味、あるいは暗在的理解とそれを言い表す過程を論じ、暗在的な体験の側面が明在的な概念とともに機能しているありさまを示す。このように言い表す過程におけるリフレクティブ・リスニングの役割を論じ、筆者は人間には「反射的意識の様式」があることを提唱し、それがリスニングを効果的にしていると主張する。リフレクティブ・リスニングとセラピストに感じられた理解の両者の重要性が強調され、筆者によるナルキソスとイホのギリシャ神話の再解釈、及び筆者自身のセラピー記録を提示して検証する。

Growing up speaking Japanese and English, I often find myself standing, as it were, “in between” two languages. The two languages not only feel different, they are very

different kinds of languages. The Japanese language does not belong to the Indo-European language family, which is the family of languages spoken in India, Iran, most of Central Asia and Europe. Linguists see the relationship between Japanese and some extinct languages that were spoken by people who are speculated to have lived in the southern parts of China, Korea and the Ryuku Islands (currently Okinawa, Japan). But exactly where the Japanese language comes from is not identified. Since the Japanese language is distinct from most other languages, the world as expressed in Japanese brings a different perspective to the world as spoken in Indo-European languages.

A case in point is the absence of the “singular/plural distinction” in Japanese. In English, it would be impossible to speak without making the singular/plural distinction. When I am asked to translate a sentence from Japanese to English I am sometimes in trouble. For example, when a Japanese speaker says, “I wrote *ronbun* (article/articles) on this subject”, I am in trouble, because I don’t know if the speaker means she wrote *one* article or *several articles* on this subject. “She has written . . .” In English, it would be impossible to continue this sentence without the singular/plural distinction.

Many people who speak in European languages may find it difficult to understand a situation without the singular/plural distinction. Certainly, there *is a MacBook* (singular) in front of me, and there *are many seats* over there. How could one speak without making the singular/plural distinction? And how could people understand each other without such a distinction?

In my most recent book published in Japanese (Ikemi, 2010a), I wrote about the famous haiku poem by Matsuo Basho, written in 1686:

furu ike ya/kawazu tobikomu/mizu no oto
ancient pond/frog(s) jump(s) in/sound(s) of water

In this famous poem, the archaic Japanese word *kawazu* meaning “frog” is not designated as singular or plural. Actually, since there is no singular/plural distinction, we do not even know if there are several ponds and repeated sounds (plural) of water. So, let me ask you, how many frogs are there in this poem? To make it a little simpler, let us just assume it is one ancient pond described in this poem. Let us feel the poem, once again. “Ancient pond/ a frog jumps in/ the sound of water”, or “Ancient pond/ frogs jump in/ the sounds of water.” How many frogs are here?

In one class in Japan, I asked the 30 Japanese students this question. The answer was unanimous: *one* frog. So there is no ambiguity about this, even without the singular/plural distinction.

But how do we *know* that it is *one* frog described in this poem? I believe that a person senses the whole, before constructing an image of the poem from constituent units. The *whole sense* here is that of the stillness of an ancient pond, untouched for hundreds of years, and how this stillness is disturbed momentarily by a *blip* sound of water as the frog jumps into the pond, and then stillness prevails again. The *felt meaning* conveyed in this poem is of stillness, hence only a single, momentary sound would fit the felt meaning. Loud splashes, or the sounds of a frog couple dancing in the water, or the rhythmic splashes from a group of frogs diving in turns do not fit the felt sense. We make out the single/plural distinction from the *felt*

meaning of the whole poem. It is the *implicitly functioning experiencing* that gives us this one frog.

Assertion I:

The felt meaning is always already functioning implicitly in experiencing

Let us take another example. How would we understand this statement of the client: “My mood started *sinking* after I talked to Joe”

What does “sinking” mean here? Dictionary.com (<http://dictionary.reference.com/>) gave 17 definitions for “to sink” as a verb, for instance “to displace part of the volume of a supporting substance or object and become totally or partially submerged or enveloped; fall or descend into or below the surface or to the bottom.” It gave the following example. “The battleship *sank* within two hours.” We know, of course, that the client is not a battleship, nor are her moods. So how would it be possible for her to *sink*? And yet, we understand this statement. Why? It is because we have a felt meaning of *sinking* in the context of her situation with Joe. We need the implicitly functioning felt meaning to understand the other, more so than the dictionary. And of course, for this client, there are multitudes of implicitly functioning meanings that surround her statement.

So let us first empower the implicitly functioning felt meaning, by acknowledging its existence. The felt meaning is always already functioning for us.

Assertion II:

The felt meaning is (has) an understanding that implies a way of relating-to and living-in situations (the world)

Gendlin wrote: “Dilthey says that experiencing *is* inherently always also an understanding already and also an expression. Each is a case of the other two” (1997b, p. 41). So if you are sitting in your seat nodding as you read this, your nodding is your experiencing and also your expression and also your understanding and my understanding of your understanding.

Let me break this up for a moment, and say first that experiencing is an implicit understanding (Gendlin, 2009). What you are experiencing right now already understands the situation. If you are experiencing feeling hot in the room now, this experience understands that you need to take off your jacket, but not your pants. Suppose that 90% of my students fall asleep during my lecture, I will have an uncomfortable experience as I continue the lecture. The uncomfortable experiencing is also my understanding that I need to change my topic, or the way I present this topic. Our experiencing is an understanding, which implies what is needed in this situation.

The Person-Centered Approach values the understanding that is the felt experiencing. I believe this is the core of Rogers’ and Gendlin’s Person-Centered Approach. If we do not empower the understanding in felt experiencing, how can we be person-centered? If there is no understanding in experiencing, then someone must teach or interpret or analyze or impose meaning onto experiencing. The Person-Centered Approach can be person-centered because we believe in the understanding that felt experiencing is. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Carl Rogers said: “experience is, for me, the highest authority” (1961, p. 23). The “highest authority”

is not Carl Rogers, Eugene Gendlin, nor some theory, nor evidence. The highest authority is the implicitly functioning understanding in us. Since we value this, we can be “Person-Centered.”

This has been, and it still is, a serious issue in psychotherapy theories. In many theories of psychotherapy, understanding is not attributed to felt experiencing (see Gendlin’s critique of Freud and Heidegger in Gendlin, 1990, pp. 208–209, for example). In many theories, humans are not capable of creating meaning. Therefore, meaning must be “interpreted” from theory and then imposed on the client’s experiencing.

Here is a case in point. I have written about what we call, “Experiential Collage Work” (ECW) (Ikemi, Yano, Miyake, & Matsuoka, 2007). Focusing people in Japan, including myself, have been using collage in Focusing workshops for almost 20 years. So with my colleagues, I decided to write a journal article about what we do. Collage is made by cutting out clippings of pictures or words from magazines and by pasting these clippings on to drawing paper. ECW consists of two stages, each about an hour to an hour and a half. The first stage is making the collage. The second stage is about listening to the collage-maker, who is trying to make sense of the collage that he/she has just produced.

There is a “Collage Therapy” developed in Japan, and so when we reviewed the literature in a notable Japanese journal of psychotherapy, we found that there were 11 previous articles on collage in this particular journal. However, not one of these 11 articles directly took up the explication of the collage-makers’ own sense of meaning from the collage. Meaning was interpreted by the therapist, or the collages were used as some form of psychological assessment where statistical analyses were conducted. In short, there were no articles on collage therapy from a person-centered viewpoint. The ability of the person to explicate his/her own understanding of the collage was neglected. For these articles, the “highest authority” was their theories or the statistical tendencies they found. This is why we wrote from an experiential or person-centered viewpoint in this Japanese journal.

Now let us look at some collages.¹ I am now moving on to the expressions or explications of the implicit understanding in our experiencing. I am using collage to show you this, because with the visual arts, it would be easier to *see* this than by reading verbal transcripts.

Before that, I will briefly introduce what is called “the weather inside,” articulated by Shoji Tsuchie, who is a Buddhist monk, psychologist and a Focusing Professional. He has written a book in Japanese entitled *Feel the Weather Inside* (Tsuchie, 2008). He found it easy to explain about the felt sense by asking people, “How is your weather inside today?” There are different kinds of cloudiness, different intensities of sunshine, or different kinds of rain or storm. Asking for the “weather inside” results in the same process as asking for the felt sense. Many clients find it easier when asked this question, than when asked to describe the felt sense. One of my clients said, “Oh, I love this question! I went to several clinics, but nobody asked me such a question” (Ikemi, 2010b). In “the weather inside” the felt sense is expressed or explicated in two ways, first by visual imagery or by graphically sketching the weather inside, and then also verbally by putting a title on it.

Here is my own first example. It is a sketch of a yellow sun in the upper left and a green tree in the lower right. I drew this sketch of the weather inside in July 2007. I

entitled it “nourished despite the sunshine.” It reminded me of a sketch of the weather inside that I had drawn about a year previously. That one was entitled “a sunshine too strong.” The day after sketching “nourished despite the sunshine”, I made a collage. This collage felt somewhat unusual for me. There were lots of watery images, several waterfalls and a swimming pool at sunset, dark and damp looking exterior and interior of a Japanese inn at nightfall, bottles of organic cosmetics and a small car with the advertisement caption saying “some little things are magic.” There is little sunshine in this collage, except for a small photograph of a shop in the desert, pasted near the center of the collage. At the time, I wasn’t feeling very well, so two days after I made this collage, I visited, for the first time, a medical doctor who specializes in Chinese herbal medicine. She examined me carefully, took my pulse, looked at the color of my tongue and when I asked her for a diagnoses from the perspective of Chinese herbal medicine, she said, “there is too much *yang* (sunshine, dryness, light . . .) and too little *yin* (shadow, wetness, dampness . . .) so your body cannot be nourished.” I was amazed when I heard this. It *clicked* in me. “A Yang (sunshine) too strong” is exactly what my weather inside has been telling me – “a sunshine too strong”, “nourished despite the sunshine” – and this collage was also showing me images of dampness and wetness that my body needed. What this doctor said literally *made sense*, it made it possible for me to understand both the weather inside and the unusual collage I had just made.

Now, I don’t know anything about Chinese medicine. So how could I have made a collage and sketches of *yin-yang*? So here is the third assertion.

Assertion III:

The felt meaning, which is (an) implicit understanding, is pre-theoretical

By this, I mean that our experiencing is not “made to fit” a certain theory. I am reminded of what Gendlin (1986, p. 141) wrote in his book on dreams. He wrote: “many people think everything is ‘based on’ theory. If that were so, what would theory be based on?”

I think this has important implications for therapy. To be person-centered, or to say that *the highest authority* is experiencing, does not mean we go about *rejecting* all existing theories. It would be silly for me to say, for example, that because I am person-centered, I believe in person-centered theory and nothing else, not in Chinese medicine or anything else. Because our experiencing is pre-theoretical, the person-centered practitioner *does not reject any theory*, but *does not impose any theory* either. In a sense, experiencing *has* more theory than theory has.

Assertion IV:

The implicit understanding can be referred to as a felt sense and explicated so that meanings become

I want to emphasize the capacity that we have to explicate the understanding that is already functioning in experiencing. In the process of explication, meanings “become.” In symbolizations, meaning does not pre-exist explication, it is not already formed and hiding, nor is it given arbitrarily by some theory. We will now see some explications from another collage.

This is a collage that I made while I was teaching at the Focusing Institute Summer School in New York for the first time. There was a picture of a sea lion

underwater in the center of the collage. At the lower left corner was a black car, a Honda Civic Hybrid, an African-looking mask overlapping on the roof of the car, and an old red gasoline pump over the roof of the car. These images were surrounded by images of water, for instance, a school of rays swimming in the water, a winding river with an evening city in the background, a cave with water flowing inside, antelope horns submerged in river water.

The whole collage gave me a distinct sense, it was a sense of “that,” but I could not come up with words to describe this sense. It was a sense of “...”. To use Gendlin’s terminology (Gendlin 1962/1997a), I could make *direct reference* to “that,” which I was feeling. But I could not say what “that” was. “Sadness,” not exactly, “melancholy,” no, not right. I could refer to some sense of meaning that was there but the words failed to come. Or, to be more precise, my felt sense rejected these words as they were not precise enough. Consequently, I could not explicate well from this collage. So, I want to say that even if we cannot find words to say how we feel, it doesn’t mean that there is nothing there, or that whatever is there has no meaning. An implicit felt understanding *is* there.

The next day, as I was working on this collage with someone who was relating to me in reflective listening, I noticed that the sea lion in the center gave me a particular felt sense. “Oh” I said to myself. As I was looking at this animal, the words “shy and timid” came. The animal is looking into the camera, curious to know about the photographer but is ready to turn around and flee. Now I was able to *explicate* with the words “shy” and “timid,” as these words *carried forward* my experiencing. Then, I became aware that this was a *metaphor* of myself. I realized that I am like this sea lion. A metaphor, according to Gendlin’s theory, gives a new meaning which changes the old meaning (Gendlin 1962/1997a). In this example, I was changed by the new meaning that this metaphor gave me. Now, I realized that I was feeling shy and timid in this summer school.

After the sea lion, the car came to my attention. I *recognized* this car as a Honda car that runs smoothly and efficiently. This symbol gave me the felt meaning of “smooth and efficient.” But I felt something was wrong with this car, like it was about to stop running, as if it were out of gasoline. The old gasoline pump above it was not reassuring. Then these words came to me, as I explicated this part of the collage. “Yes, I was performing smoothly and efficiently like this Honda car at the Focusing Summer School, but I am beginning to feel like I am running out of gasoline or energy.” As I said these words, I suddenly noticed the mask, indeed, a *persona*. At that moment, Jung’s (1954/1959) concepts of *persona* and *shadow* clicked in me. I now comprehended what this collage was telling me. I realized that although I was performing smoothly like the Honda car, this aspect of me was running out of power, and there was a shy and timid side of myself that I needed to be with. The symbol and the word *persona* carried forward my experiencing. I had experienced a felt shift.

Now the understanding started to unfold even further. The shy and timid side of me needed to do more experiential work in the summer school, rather than speaking and demonstrating smoothly in front of a lot of people. There seemed to be “a lot going on underwater,” both in the collage and in the summer school. The school of rays swimming underwater, the antelope horns underwater, the large winding river, gave me a sense that there were activities going on underwater. Consequently, I decided to alter my teaching schedule to do more experiential work.

This further understanding can be seen as an instance of Gendlin's "law of the reconstitution of the experiencing process." Gendlin (1964, p. 131) describes this as follows: "When certain implicitly functioning aspects of experiencing are carried forward by symbols or events, the resulting experience always involve other sometimes newly reconstituted aspects which thereby come to be in process and function implicitly in experiencing." Once the images of the sea lion and the Honda car carried forward my sense of being in the summer school, then the meaning of "underwater" began to function in my experiencing. The "underwater" was now *reconstituted* in my experiencing.

Let us note several points from the collage explication. First of all, the implicit understanding is grounded in situations (in-the-world), so it is not only about me, but my relating to others and about others relating to me. The understanding is an implicitly functioning relationship. In other words, we might say that *understanding is interactional*. Secondly, Jung's (1954/1959) archetypal concepts of *persona* and *shadow* helped to carry forward my experience of this collage. So, as I mentioned earlier, as person-centered therapists, we will not reject any theory, but we will not impose any theory either.

Assertion V:

Implicit understanding is carried forward in explication

This assertion can be included in the previous one and in Assertion II, or derived from them, but I want to emphasize Gendlin's (1962/1997a, 1964) concept of *carrying forward* so I have made it a separate assertion. I think it is a very important concept in psychotherapy. We are accustomed to think of experiences as if they were things. So when we experience some feeling, for example, hunger, we either try to analyze the cause of it, or the structure of it. For example, what caused my hunger? Or what happens to the blood glucose level or to my whole body system or structure when I am hungry? These questions can be addressed in great detail, but they do not change my hunger.

Gendlin's thinking (1962/1997a, 1964) opens a new dimension in psychotherapy theory because he found that our experience always implies further. So, my hunger *implies* something, a pizza margherita, for example. And when this pizza margherita appears in front of me, and when I have this pizza, the hunger is no longer there. The pizza margherita carries forward my hunger, and my experience is changed. Of course, this example is somewhat oversimplified. Around the hunger there is also a wondering of who to go to lunch with, and where to go to, and a host of details on how and with what and with whom I want to have the pizza margherita.

In Japanese, I wrote a paperback book called *Listening to the Heart's Message* (Ikemi, 1995). The book came out in 1995 and it is still selling, currently at its 19th printing. What we feel is an implying. It is the heart's message. And we can carry forward our lives by listening to the heart's message.

Life is like a river that flows on and on. Sometimes the flow gets stuck, and muddy pools form. It is like feeling anxiety. Some people drink a lot and take tranquilizers and go to sleep to forget the anxiety. But then, they lose the heart's message. So the next morning, they wake up to the same situation with the same anxiety, and find themselves in the same muddy pool. The anxiety, however, is sending us a heart's message, like water in the muddy pool, which is always seeking to rejoin the flow.

Assertion VI:

In explication, the implicitly functioning aspects of experiencing are not replaced by the explicit. The implicit dimension continues to function

Often people assume that when we express something, we replace the implicit with the explicit. For example, it is popularly assumed that the implicit fills us up and we need to empty what is inside us, by expressing it outside. But in fact, we do not replace the implicit with the explicit. Concepts can be dug out of experiencing, but the implicit remains. There is a “remainder” after the concepts are dug out and also, the concepts give us a new implicitly functioning felt experiencing. For example, we can now have a felt meaning of the “smooth and efficient” Honda car, which begins to function implicitly.

Concepts cut out of experiencing do not function alone, but only with the ongoing aspects of experiencing. For example, we can say that the sea lion is my *shadow*, to use Jung’s (1954/1959) concept, but only in the context of this collage. Taken outside this context, it is just a sea lion and so it is not me. Also, the Honda car is my *persona*, only in the context of this collage. In other words these explicit concepts function *with* the implicit aspects of experiencing.

If we abstract these concepts and build from them, we can continue to build connections. For example, we might say that the Honda car is made in Japan, just like Ikemi is. Moreover, it is actually a Honda Civic Hybrid; it has both a gasoline engine and an electrical motor to power it. And Ikemi speaks English and Japanese and so he is powered by both of these languages. Therefore, you might reason, the persona must be the bilingual aspect of Ikemi. This interpretation may seem “correct” in that it is factual and also logical, but it is estranged from the rest of the collage and does not resonate with experiencing. We might say that it would become an *over-interpretation* when the interpretations do not function with the implicit.

We might also say that the “correctness” of an interpretation depends on the experiential resonance an interpretation has. If the sea lion is my *shadow*, and the Honda car my *persona*, then *what happens in my experiencing?* Rather than argue for the correctness or the wrongness of the interpretation in itself, or in light of some theory, we would see how these concepts carry forward or reconstitute aspects of experiencing.

Assertion VII:

In reflective listening, the verbal symbols used to explicate experiencing are fed back to the person, eliciting a reflecting mode of consciousness, where direct reference to experiencing occurs continuously

In the example of my collage, the explication was done in the presence of a listener who listened to me with reflective listening. Reflective listening is vital for explication. When we speak from felt experiencing, we are using verbal symbols to carry our experiencing. Some verbal symbols don’t seem to carry the felt meaning accurately. When I first worked with this collage, I said that there is some “sad” quality about this collage. But just as the word “sad” was leaving my mouth, I knew that this verbal symbol did not carry the felt meaning accurately. When the listener reflected back the word “sad” to me, I was sure that “sad” was discrepant with the felt meaning. There is a double feedback here. My own speech as I speak is checked

with the felt sense, which is the first feedback. Then, the voice of the listener provides another feedback. Finding that “sad” did not carry the meaning properly, I changed the expression to “melancholic” but again, this was not exactly what I wanted to say. This feedback enabled me to directly refer to the felt sense and to check if the word (conceptualization, symbolization) carries forward the meaning.

Although the experiential effects of listening or of therapeutic responses are discussed in detail in Gendlin (1968), I would like to add another observation about it. I have always been fascinated by the power of reflective listening. It seems to me that humans have a capacity to go inside and check with the felt sense when the reflection is provided. It could be the nature of human consciousness to become reflective when how one is, is reflected back. I say this because no other animals on earth use mirrors. Even a very smart dog does not groom in front of a mirror. But humans use mirrors. Humans have been using mirrors from very ancient times. I found a bronze mirror used around 500 BC in the National Archeological Museum in Athens. Perceiving a tree and perceiving a reflection of yourself in the mirror have different experiential effects. They are not the same.

When I look into the mirror, I see my own face, and immediately, the reflecting mode of consciousness is initiated. Am I tired? I check with my body’s physical sense. No. Then I look at the mirror image again. Then, I must have had too much wine lastnight, I say to myself. I check again with my body if I feel like I have a hangover. No. Then what is it? I look into the mirror again. Maybe the beard is giving the tired impression. I decide to shave, just a little. Does shaving have an effect? I must look again into the mirror. This kind of reflecting mode of consciousness is initialized when the reflected image provides feedback.

Carl Rogers cites comments from Sylvia Slack’s impressions of his listening, done in front of a group. Interestingly, Slack also uses the imagery of the mirror to express the listening process. She wrote:

It was like Dr. Rogers was a magical mirror. The process involved my sending rays towards that mirror. I looked into the mirror to get a glimpse of the reality that I am . . . Although I was aware of sending rays, their nature was not truly discernible until they were reflected and clarified by the mirror. There was a curiosity about the rays and what they revealed to me. (Rogers, 1989, p. 127)

It seems to me that reflective listening fits the nature of human consciousness, in that it initiates a *reflecting mode of consciousness*.

But counseling is not only reflective listening. We might do well to remember the haiku poem by Matsuo Basho. How did we know that there was only one frog in this poem? We needed our implicitly functioning felt meaning to know this. In therapy, as in a conversation, we use our implicitly functioning felt meaning to understand what the other is saying. Gendlin says this about Dilthey:

Dilthey said that we can understand the authors only if we understand them better than they understood themselves, and this happens only if we carry their experiencing forward with our further understanding, when the author’s experiencing is reconstituted in our experiencing – accurately but enriched by ours, as ours is enriched by theirs. Or, as I would say it: these cross so that each becomes implicit in the other. (Gendlin, 1997b, p. 41)

Rogers (1957) also placed great emphasis on congruence or genuineness towards his own experiencing, as well as on acceptance and empathy towards the other. The

person-centered encounter is actually a *crossing* of the implicitly functioning relationship between one and the other. I will now turn to Greek myths and therapy transcripts to further elaborate on this.

Revisiting the Greek myth of Narcissus and Echo

Let me take up the Greek myth of Narcissus (*Narkissos*) and Echo, which I know you know so well. We all know that Sigmund Freud (1910/1957) took up one angle on this myth and elaborated on it with regard to narcissism. But I think the myth also says something very different.

Liriope, the mother of Narcissus, was concerned about her infant son's future, so Liriope consulted the seer *Teiresias*. Teiresias told Liriope that Narcissus would "live to a ripe old age, so long as he never knew himself" (Ovid, 2004, 3: 345–348). Narcissus died when he knew himself, looking into the reflection of himself on the surface of a pond. So, from his birth to his death, we can see that this myth had to do with *knowing oneself*. Narcissus showed that "to know oneself," one needs to see a reflection of oneself, or in my words, the *reflecting mode of consciousness* needed to be initialized. It is very much like counseling and psychotherapy, where to know what one is feeling, or to know "the reality that one is" (Sylvia Slack), we need a reflection of ourselves.

Back to the myth; there was a nymph by the name of *Echo*, who fell in love with Narcissus. Interestingly, Narcissus had beautiful looks, and Echo had a beautiful voice. But Echo had undergone such a tragedy. Since she had a beautiful voice, *Jupiter* (Zeus) commanded her to keep talking to his wife *Juno* (Hera), while Jupiter enjoyed his romances with other women. Upon discovering this, the angry Juno took away the voice of Echo. Thus, Echo could not speak for herself, but could only repeat what was said to her. In fact, Echo could only do reflective listening.

Echo fell in love with Narcissus, but she could not say so. All she could do was to say back what Narcissus said.

[Narcissus says] ... "This way, we must come together."

Echo with rapturous joy responds, "We must come together!"

To prove her words, she burst out in excitement out of the forest, arms outstretched to fling them around the shoulders she yearned for.

Shrinking in horror, he [Narcissus] yelled, "Hands off! May I die before you enjoy my body." Her only reply was "... enjoy my body."

(Ovid, 2004, 3: 385–391)

Rejected by Narcissus, the heartbroken and embarrassed Echo fled to the forest and cried until her body turned into bones and stones. Only her voice, the echo, is left today.

Meanwhile, Narcissus discovered a pond untouched by shepherds, cattle or goats. Its reflection was very clear. Narcissus reflected himself on the surface of the pond and saw the person that he was.

I smile at you and you smile back at me

I weep and your tears flow fast

You nod when I show my approval

When I read those exquisite lips, I can watch them gently repeating my words, but I can never *hear* them!

I know you now and I know myself

(Ovid, 2004, 3: 460–464)

So, as it turned out, Narcissus used visual reflection to know himself, but could not use auditory reflection to know himself. (It was not me who emphasized the word “hear,” it was Ovid.) Ironically, Echo provided auditory reflection, but he rejected Echo. Why? I think it is because under Juno’s spell, Echo could only echo and could not speak for herself. Yes, she knew that she loved Narcissus, but she could not express herself. The title of this section in Book 3 of *Metamorphoses* is “Narcissus and Echo” and I think that the tragedy of Narcissus and Echo lies in the impossibility of a genuine encounter of the two.

We are reminded by this myth that being person-centered means utilizing and explicating the felt meaning that functions in the listener, without which our reflective listening will turn out to be only an echo. The implicitly functioning experiencing of *both* the client and therapist are needed in the genuine encounter of the two.

Some notes from a focusing session

Now, I would like to show some interaction between a workshop client and myself. The client has studied some psychotherapy. I had known her before this session, but we have never had a session before this one. I have translated the interactions into English from Japanese.

CL: I am puzzled, undecided. I thought I put all this away some time ago, but it is filling me up to here now, and it feels hard to handle.

TH: I wonder how you are feeling in there . . . somehow the word “undecided” doesn’t fit with me, like “undecided” seems to be about making one choice or another, but there is something there, that is filling you up.

[The verbal symbol “undecided” did not carry my (TH) felt experiencing. Instead of reflection, I pointed to, or I asked her to directly refer to something that was filling her up.]

CL: Oh, that’s right. It’s not undecided, (pause) it’s anxiety.

TH: There is some sense of anxiety there.

CL: Oh, it’s like pain here in the gut. Pain . . . pain is a little too strong a word . . . it’s like being pushed.

[Now the client is checking to see if the new verbal symbol, “pain” carries her experiencing. In such an instance, I respond with straightforward reflection, so that she can check her experience with the verbal symbol that I feed back to her.]

TH: Some sense there of being pushed in the gut.

CL: Yes . . . like something that I put away is back and is about to run around (violently).

TH: Oh, let’s welcome that. Like, it might be, wanting to be noticed.

[The Japanese phrase translated as “run around,” has a somewhat violent connotation. In English, it might be “make noise,” or “become unruly.” This way of symbolizing the felt sense discloses how the client is unwelcoming, or unempathic, unaccepting of this. I decided to empower the implicitly functioning experiencing by asking her to welcome it and see if it is wanting to be noticed.]

CL: It wants to be noticed? (silence) I never thought of it that way, but this here (she points to her chest) is resonating with those words (silence). It wants to be noticed, yes ... now it's become lighter. Somehow (she laughs) like it's not affected by gravity, and the color has become lighter too, like beige color, it was like a dark rock a while ago ... (omission) ... it still feels like being pushed here in the chest.

TH: Let's see ... if that “being pushed” sense is telling you something, what might it be saying to you.

CL: Hmm ... never thought like that ... oh, it's telling me that “I don't need to think too hard about it.”

TH: You don't need to think so hard about it. I sense also that it might be saying, the situation is not so serious.

[Reflection plus the verbal symbols that carry my felt sense.]

CL: The situation is not so serious? (silence) ... Yes, that's right! It's not as serious as I think it is, and besides, there's nothing I can do about it. As I say that, I am feeling ... light ... expansive. (laughing) The pushed feeling is gone, I feel expansive. (Her posture changes)

TH: OK, I think it's a good time to end this session; can you be with the expansiveness for a little while, and when you're ready, we can end the session.

CL: (silence) ... (frowns) ... I feel like a little dizzy, like seasick. Maybe it all came so fast, I've been working on this for some years ...

TH: Tell me, did you do something to yourself between the expansive feeling and what you just told me?

[I knew for sure that she did something to herself. The client had experience in psychoanalysis so it seemed to me that she “rationalized” the dizzy feeling, by thinking that the session brought to her an interpretation too early. What I wanted to know was not the rationalization or the reason why she got dizzy, but what she was doing to her own experiencing.]

CL: Yes, (smiling) how did you know? I tried to put away (contain, keep) the expansiveness in me.

TH: (smiling) How can expansiveness be contained? That's a tough thing you're doing to yourself.

CL: (bursts out laughing) That's right. It was an impossible thing I was trying to do ... [omission]

TH: (laughing) Yes, why don't you live with expansiveness. It feels to me that you always put things away.

[I remembered what she said earlier in this session. She said: “I thought I put all this away some time ago ...” My response came from my felt sense of her, it is an instance of how the therapist is explicating his own sense of the relationship, which Schmid and Means (2006) might call “dialogical or personal resonance.”]

CL: (looks startled) How did you know that? Yes, I always put things away . . . I can live with expansiveness? (silence) I'm thinking of many situations where I put things away, but I could live with expansiveness (laughing and crying at the same time). (This continues for about 3 minutes) I can live with the expansiveness? . . . [omission] . . . *I feel like my life is changing!*

Conclusion

I hope the excerpt above gives you a sense of how I am in therapy sessions. My responses point to the client's experiencing, so that the client can directly refer to her implicitly felt experiencing and explicate from there. Accurate reflections are used to resonate the explicated symbols with the client's implicitly felt understanding. Verbal symbols that are fed back to the client points the client back to her implicit understanding, which sets on a process of continued explication. Such a process of explication not only changes the content of what is articulated, but also alters the way of being, or *existence*, that the client is (Ikemi, 2010b). As much as to the client's explications, attention is also directed to the therapist's own felt understanding of the client. The client's explication is checked to see whether it also carries the therapist's understanding. Alternative verbal symbols and conceptualizations are suggested by the therapist if they seem to be more capable of carrying forward the client's and the therapist's implicit understanding. In this way, the experiencing of the client and therapist "cross," and "each becomes implicit in the other" (Gendlin, 1997b, p. 41). In this crossing, a genuine encounter happens.

A genuine encounter happens when each person empowers the implicitly functioning relationship.

Note

1. Slides and artwork referred to in this paper can be viewed at <http://www.akiraikemi.com/ai/Memo.html>.

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