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Quest for Freedom and Psychotherapy

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Introduction

Quest, as I understand it, is a continual search for Truth and forms of Truth. Quest, as a search for Truth, is open-minded and open-ended. An open mind, as Tart¹ observes, is curious and enjoys using its powers and testing its limits. It recognises its limits as current limits rather than absolutes. It cherishes and grows from its doubts. It always takes its beliefs as working tools, and not as absolutes. It believes that forms and representations of Truth evolve.

In this article I will discuss what is the 'Truth' or forms of Truth that the therapist, the client and the process called psychotherapy are or should be in continual search for and open-minded pursuit of. For that purpose I will try to look at the therapist, the client and the process of therapy from an integral framework and an evolutionary-developmental perspective. I will try to situate the quest or the search for Truth of psychotherapy in the evolutionary movement of developmental unfolding. I will discuss the specific functions of the therapist in terms of "facilitative accompaniment" of persons who are in the ongoing process of unfolding and becoming. In understanding the process of unfolding I will stay away from technicalities and time-schedules of any particular school (or culture) of develop-

mental theorisation. I will only highlight the dynamics of unfolding and the significant turning points in the development of the "compound" individual called the person. I will examine the developmental dynamics in terms of what is considered to be the fundamental evolutionary processes of identifying, differentiating and integrating. Consequently, I will describe the developmental unfolding in terms of the integration or failure of integration of the body, emotions, mind, needs, roles and rules, relationships, autonomy, and so on – the components of the "compound" individual.

I will then examine the role of psychotherapy in facilitating the freedom of the self in unfolding toward its farther reaches. In doing so, I will consider the basic functions and processes of psychotherapy – dealing with developmental failures and their after-effects – as prerequisites for facilitating the self's freedom for the life-long movement of evolutionary unfolding. Next, I will look at what I consider to be the fundamental processes and functions of psychotherapy underlying its various efforts in assisting the self in its unfolding – *understanding, validating, negating, and being around*. Finally I will examine the quest for freedom of psychotherapy within the context of the spectrum of development ranging from the pre-personal through the personal to-

ward the trans-personal realms. From that perspective, I will concern myself primarily with self's *freedom to* become, which, of course, presupposes the self's *freedom from* whatever holds the self back from the process of becoming.

I want to acknowledge that the flavour of my understanding of psychotherapy and the quest of therapy is influenced by the fact that I participate, at the deepest layers of my psyche, in the culture of my land. This culture sets the primary context-within-context from which my understanding and meaning making arise. I am becoming increasingly aware of a kind of psychic resonance that I experience with this primary context which seem to have survived the impact of the Western and Judaeo-Christian education and formation that I have had, especially since I joined religious life. That might partly account for my natural disposition toward a metaphysics and world-view that perceives Reality as a seamless unfolding of the One in and through the Play of the Many. I also wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to two authors in particular for the development of the ideas discussed in this article: Ken Wilber and Robert Kegan, references to whose works are given in the body of the article.

Differing Perspectives

There are literally dozens of approaches to psychotherapy ranging from classical psychoanalytic psychotherapy lasting four to five years with four to five sessions per week to a single-session brief therapy. The stated goals and

objectives of psychotherapy range from complete reconstruction of personality through protracted analysis to solving a specific emotional, behavioural, or situational problem of living through brief therapy. The transpersonal approach which is regarded as the fourth force in psychology (the other three being the psychoanalytic, behavioural and existential-humanistic), would consider the awakening in pure awareness to the Ultimate Consciousness as the goal of the therapeutic journey.

Similarly, there are concepts of the human being ranging from the deterministic-mechanistic to the open-ended transpersonal. On the one end of the continuum is the classical psychoanalytic view according to which the human being is essentially determined and conflict-ridden. The only hope of the person, within such a framework, consists in learning to manage the mostly unconscious conflicts (arising largely from the repression of emotional-sexual drives) so as to be able to live and work. Within the Jungian variation of the psychoanalytic perspective, human beings are in a process of individuation (becoming one's own unique person in relation to the larger context of life and reality). Individuation involves differentiating, strengthening, assimilating and integrating the various parts of the psyche like the conscious and the unconscious, the shadow (the repressed, unexamined, the undeveloped aspects), and the persona (the consciously developed and shown-outside aspects), and the anima (the feminine principle) and the animus (the masculine principle). On the other end of the continuum is the transpersonal view, which considers the human being

as a manifestation of Consciousness and internally impelled to evolve to finding its destiny by awakening in pure awareness to the realization that the individual is Consciousness or Spirit itself. In between, we have the Behaviourists who would consider humans as simply determined and conditioned and the task of growth as consisting in learning adaptive behaviours and unlearning the less adaptive behaviours so as to fit better into and function effectively in society. We have the existential-humanistic view of human beings as beings in the process of becoming with the innate potential for and the natural tendency toward actualising their highest potentials, if given the necessary and sufficient conditions for being and becoming.

In Search of an Integral Understanding

There is neither a commonly agreed upon definition of psychotherapy nor a consensually validated set of goals and objectives of psychotherapy from which one could extract or synthesise the underlying quest. The differences of views and divergences of perspectives need not be discouraging if we look at them as valid but partial contributions to the understanding of the whole. Wilber, in *the Eye of the Spirit*,² points out that reality is multi-dimensional and every inquiry should be aware that its “object” of inquiry consists of, at least, four distinct dimensions or faces, so to speak. They are the individual interior or the *intentional*, the collective interior or the *cultural*, the individual exterior or the *behavioural* and the collective exterior or the *social* dimensions. All these dimensions have been objects of quest and the discoveries and forms of truth from

all these pursuits, if honoured and incorporated, can help us to have a more integral understanding of reality.

The Intentional. A thing or a person has an individual interior (*intentional*) aspect, which may be described as consciousness, depth, interiority, the subjective aspect, the view from inside, the experience or “the feel” from within. This is true in the case of an atom as well as in the experience of a human individual. No matter how rudimentary, dense, and little self-conscious matter is, it is “conscious” and it has an individual subjective interior. When a new particle is introduced into the “context” of an atom, the subatomic particles behave as though they “know” (prehension) the new situation and both the new particle and the existing ones “respond”, make adjustments to each other’s “presence”. In the case of lower organisms, we speak of their “sensitivity” or “protoplasmic irritability” with which they “respond” to one another and the environment. We speak of more complex organisms (like a dog) as “knowing”, “recognising” and “responding with affection”. In the case of humans, we speak of awareness, subjective depth, interiority and consciousness, which cannot be reduced to an object. Joy or pain or a thought is a subjective experience, which can be correlated with but not reduced to “objective” observables like brain, components of brain, or physiology of brain.

The Behavioural. Every interior also has a physical or *behavioural* dimension. An interior event like a thought or a perception or subjective meaning is manifested materially, physically, bodily

and behaviourally. A depressing thought or a joyful disposition will be manifested most obviously in my body stance and actions and, in less obvious ways, in my blood chemistry, endocrine secretions, neuro-immunological changes, body temperature and in my brain-wave patterns. Even if all these manifestations are carefully observed, quantified, measured and interpreted, one will never get to know what they mean except through having access to my “subjective” interior space. One simply has to depend on my truthful communication of my subjective intentional world.

The Cultural. The individual interior dimension does not exist in a vacuum. It emerges, evolves, and functions within an inter-subjective context, described as the collective interior (*cultural* dimension). For us humans, this context is our culture, our world-view, our collective and shared meanings, our language and symbol systems. This cultural or collective interior dimension not only provides the context but also heavily influences and, in some instances, determines the scope and nature of the emergence and evolution of my individual interior, depth, consciousness, or subjective world. A single thought, for instance, cannot emerge in my interior awareness except within the context of my language and symbol system. This inter-subjective context is in fact context-within-context-within context. For example, the first intimate context I encounter in evolving my sense of self is my “mothering culture” which itself is set within the larger context of the family system, which in turn is placed within other larger contexts of clan, ethnic group, religious group, nationality and so on.

The Social. My culture and the intersubjective context, again, do not exist in a vacuum. They are correlated with developments in the evolutionary movement of society. That is the *social* dimension. In his book, *Up From Eden*³, Wilber gives a fascinating account (basing his research on actual cultural-anthropological evidence) of the evolution of the collective exterior. He describes the evolution of human societies from foraging to horticultural to agricultural to industrial-technological and their correlates in the evolution of their shared interiors (their world-views, their myths and rituals) and the unfolding of the individual interiors (the structures of consciousness).

Thus, the quality, depth, and developmental maturity of our individual interiors, where interpretations are made and meanings are constructed, will influence our inquiry and our quest for truth. Our inquiry and quest for truth will be set within the intimate “contexts-within-contexts” provided by our world-view, the shared meanings and symbol systems of our culture, which in turn is shaped by or set in the context of society and its structures. Therefore our quest and inquiry must respect and honour truths about all the aspects of reality. The focus of our inquiry may be any one of these aspects. But our perspectives should be set within a larger framework capable of honouring all the aspects of reality. In other words, our quest for truth must be as integral as possible.

Quest, as described earlier, is the open-minded and open-ended continual search for truth with the awareness that

Truth is eternal but the maps of Truth, the made-meanings of Truth, the “context-within-context- bound” interpretations and expressions of Truth evolve⁴. An integral quest for Truth will honour truths coming from the intentional, behavioural, cultural and social spheres. A map of Reality that is capable of providing directions to the maximum number of travellers from the maximum number of backgrounds to the maximum area of the Territory is definitely a better map for the explorer to use. That does not mean that we do not need some “close-ups” of particular territories (sections and sub-sections) showing the terrain in greater clarity and specificity of details. We use those close-ups as part of the larger map of the Territory and as part of the larger Journey or Quest for Truth.

The explorations of depth psychology of various flavours (psychoanalytic developmental psychology, object-relations theory, self psychology, etc.) are very useful sectional maps detailing terrain and contours of the individual interior. The objective scientific investigations of physiological psychology, neuropsychology and psychology of behaviour are excellent sectional close-ups of the individual exterior. Investigations of cultural anthropologists, sociologists and social psychologists of different persuasions are extremely valuable close-ups of the collective interior. And the contributions of sociological and political sciences provide us with valuable insights into the collective exterior.

The intuitive-empirical (empirical because the findings follow strict scientific criteria: instrumental injunction, di-

rect apprehension of data and communal validation or rejection)⁵ map of perennial philosophy apprehends Reality as a “great Chain of Being” and sees the terrain as a “play of the One and the Many”. It views this “play” as a “spectrum of consciousness”,⁶ and describes the master motion of Reality as development, unfolding, or evolution. The map of the seamless (not formless) unfolding of Being ranging from the least consciousness to the most consciousness, from matter to Spirit, from unconsciousness to superconsciousness can provide a larger map of Reality. In relation to this larger or more encompassing map (with the humbling awareness that map is not the territory) the detailed, sectional and sub-sectional maps of the four domains of Reality can make more sense.

The Unfolding Self

Both Psychotherapy and the quest of psychotherapy are about human persons. It is the person of the therapist who engages the person of the client in and through the intersubjective dialogue known as psychotherapy. Both the therapist and the client are “compound individuals” made up of various aspects and dimensions which are at different levels and degrees of unfolding and integration. The therapist brings into the process of therapy his or her own person and history of unfolding just as the client does. Ideally (but not necessarily factually) the therapist brings along a more evolved and integrated self, a wider and more encompassing worldview, a more universal and developed moral stance, and a deeper and more interior faith style than the client. For us to continue our discussion of the quest

of therapy, we need to take a look at the processes involved in the human unfolding. From among the various dimensions and levels of the human unfolding, we will examine the unfolding self, the changing world-views and the developing moral stance.

One of the meaningful ways of understanding the human unfolding is provided by Kegan in his well-acclaimed book, *The Evolving Self*.⁷ Human beings are meaning making organisms, says Kegan. Before an event, internal or external, is assimilated and responded to, it has to be made meaning of or made sense of. It is that sense or meaning which determines the nature, quality and intensity of one's inner and outer response. "The zone of mediation where meaning is made is variously called by personality psychologists the 'ego', the 'self', 'the person'."⁸ Person is, therefore, an ever-evolving motion or activity giving itself form through the meanings it makes of events after events from the moment of birth or even from the moment of conception. In other words, an individual or a person is a dynamic process or activity "constructing" herself or himself by giving form. There is thus no feeling, no experience, no thought, no perception independent of a meaning-making context (the individual interior) in which it *becomes* a feeling, an experience, a thought, because we are the meaning-making context. As we will discuss later, this meaning-making context is a context-within-context-within context.

For example, a compliment, a critical feedback, a failure, realization of an unpleasant aspect of me, can have dif-

ferent impact and produce different responses depending on the subjective zone of mediation, the dynamic process of meaning-making, the intimately personal context in which I make sense of the event. A compliment may affirm my self-esteem, a feedback can challenge me to move forward, a failure can provide me with an opportunity for further and deeper learning, and the unpleasant discovery about myself may lead me closer to authenticity and truthfulness. The impact they have on me and the responses they elicit from me can be quite the opposite. I may find the compliment not good enough, the feedback a put-down, the failure a catastrophe and the unpleasant discovery about myself a loss of face. The individual interior, the zone of mediation, the meaning making activity and its structures and components and their evolutionary or developmental "health" are going to make the difference.

If you want to understand another person, says Kegan, in some fundamental way you must know where the person is in his or her evolution. A lifelong process of evolution or adaptation is the master motion in personality⁹. The zone of mediation – the activity of meaning making, the context in which events become meanings and experiences, the process we call person – is developmental. If we want to understand the person in some intimate way, we need to understand this life-long motion or activity of meaning-making. We need to understand the dynamics and the structures and phases of this movement.

The Dynamics of Unfolding. Central to the understanding of development or unfolding, as pointed out by

Kegan, Wilber and the psychodynamically oriented developmental theories, are the concepts of *identification* (being embedded) with a given stage of development, *differentiation* (being contradicted and negated) within that stage, and *transcendence* (including the previous stage and integrating it in the new) to the next stage of unfolding. For example, the “mother-and-I-are-one” experience of the new-born infant is an undifferentiated fusion state from which the separate self-sense has to eventually emerge. It is absolutely important that the infant is fully and effectively identified with this “mother-and-I-are-one” or “the-me-and-the-world-is-one” state. The infant should be allowed and assisted to fully embed or immerse in that state before it can be helped to negate, challenge, and contradict that state of embeddedness in preparation for differentiating from it. What is equally important is that the infant is helped to differentiate without dissociating from its embeddedness or identification so that the newly emerging self-sense will be capable of transcending and including what is being transcended. Only then, will the infant be on the way to becoming not only an individual but also an “embeddual”¹⁰, and eventually construct not only a sense of autonomous self but also a sense of a self-in-relation.

The fundamental dynamics of unfolding, therefore, involves several things. The self needs to firmly identify with a given stage of developmental unfolding. It needs to clearly differentiate from, die to, negate and release the hold on the current stage with its securities and comforts. It has to transcend

to a higher developmental stage, including and integrating the previous structures in the newly emerging stage. It needs to have a context or culture to be embedded in and held by, to be contradicted and challenged by in a climate of safety and reliability. These are basic requirements not only for the emergence of the separate self-sense of the new-born but for all stages of human development and unfolding. From the developmental point of view, these are processes involved in the growth of self into wholesome “compound individuals” integrating body, emotions, mind, needs, relationships, rules and roles, autonomy, and capacity to move toward the farther ends of the evolutionary spectrum. Let us now take a look at how these dynamics operate in the significant structures and stages of the human unfolding.

Body. When, as an infant, I am identified with and embedded in my reflexes, sensing and moving, I need a mothering culture to hold me literally and figuratively and to acknowledge my dependence and merger with that culture. My mothering culture should “know” and affirm the truth of myself at that time: the truth that I cannot really make out the difference between my inside and outside, my own body and the body of the mothering one, my biting a thumb and biting the blanket. If I have to grow into a person eventually, my embeddedness needs to be challenged and negated by decreasing the holding and encouraging displays of independence. If I have to successfully negotiate this difficult task, my mothering culture should reliably be there and permit itself to become part of my growing

context and bigger culture, that is, my family. Then, and only then, will I successfully differentiate my physical self from the physical environment and construct a genuine sense of a distinct physical self or “identity”. If my culture of embeddedness fails, for some reason or other, to hold me, challenge me and be around, I may never successfully emerge as a distinct physical self. I may remain “stuck” in my prior undifferentiated or fusion state which may result in my life-long inability to distinguish my inside and my outside, to make out the difference between my thoughts and fantasies on the one hand and the reality on the other.

Emotions. Even when my physical self-sense has emerged and has been established, I am still confused between my feelings and the feelings of the other especially those of the mothering culture. As a result, I tend to imagine that “what I feel is what the world around feels,” “what I want is what the world around wants,” “what I see is what the world around sees,” and “my own perspective is the only perspective in existence”. My “emotional boundaries” are fluid and shifting, and I am not yet a separate emotional self. I gradually learn to differentiate my emotional-psychological life from that of others, particularly from that of the mother. If my culture of embeddedness fails to *hold, negate, and be around* as I negotiate this difficult task of establishing my emotional boundaries, I may remain, all my life, a person with very weak emotional boundaries and vulnerable to be flooded by the outside world resulting in excessive anxiety, depression and even thought disturbances. I may differentiate with-

out ever successfully reintegrating, in which case I may get lost and an over-differentiated, over-adult, “realopathic” quality may take over. Or I may never successfully differentiate, in which case an over-integrated, loose-boundaried, “pretend-adult” style may get its start.¹¹

Mind. Once my physical self and emotional self have emerged and established, I have to begin the difficult task of establishing a stable mental self, so to speak. That is an extremely important time for me when I will have gone beyond mere sensing, moving, reflexes and mere feeling. By then I will have learned not only to form images which are mere pictorial representations of what I sense, and form symbols which are non-pictorial representations of concrete objects, but also to form concepts which are non-pictorial representations capable of standing for not only concrete objects but a whole class of objects. By now, I am no more a bundle of sensations, impulses and emotions, but I possess a set of symbols and concepts using which I can control impulses and body-functions. I become capable of imagination and anticipation and, along with them, of anxiety and worry. I become capable of recalling the past and, as a result, experience remorse, guilt and regret. This is a very crucial time both for me and for my culture of embeddedness because in my new-found mental powers and freedom from body, impulses and feelings, I may go overboard and do several things that can hurt me in the future. While accomplishing the important task of differentiating my mind from its embeddedness in body, impulses and emotions, I may dissociate from them. While objectifying

my body, emotions, urges and impulses for the purpose of differentiating, integrating and internalising my newly emerging self-sense, I may make my body a mere object outside of and away from my new-found toy, that is, the mind. Instead of transcending and including my body and emotions into my mental-self, I may simply dissociate and repress them. If this repression is severe and prolonged, I will have to pay a price in and through neuroses in later life.

The family triangle and the parenting culture form the major culture of embeddedness as I struggle through the emergence of my emotional and mental self. The culture of embeddedness should hold me and affirm me in my exercises of fantasy, intense attachments and rivalries. It should, at the same time, recognise and promote my emergence from egocentric fantasy and impulse. It should promote my ability to control my impulses and fantasies, hold me responsible for my feelings, set limits for me where limits are required. While the culture of embeddedness recognises and promotes my new-found self-sufficiency, it should also assert, at the same time, the other-sufficiency of the world around me. Then I am more likely to learn to differentiate rather than dissociate, integrate rather than fragment, transcend and include rather than repress my body and emotions, sexuality and aggression.

Having achieved a remarkable sense of self-sufficiency and autonomy, having learned to “take charge” of my body and its impulses, having learned to control my feelings and fantasies, and

having developed my language further, I become equipped with the fundamentals necessary for further unfolding. That I have negotiated the psychoanalytically most fundamental of the turning points in my development (the emergence of the physical self, the emotional self, and the mental self), does not mean that the unfolding of my self is over. On the contrary, I am now “psychologically born,” so to say, to continue my unfolding or development.

Roles and Rules. I recognise as growing in me enduring dispositions, needs, interests, and wishes. I also begin, for the first time, to have the ability to take mental roles and form mental rules, to take the role of the other and follow rules laid down by institutions of authority like my parents, school, and even peer group. My family, school and peer group should, on the one hand, hold and affirm me in my new-found self-sufficiency and its displays, affirm both my competence and competitiveness and my needs, interests and wishes. The important issues for me, at this moment, are self-esteem, competence, self-display, and personal enhancement. Therefore, I need to be confirmed in the truth of me at this point, even in the midst of my mercantile morality, my advertisement for myself, my scratching to be scratched. On the other hand, I need to be challenged to recognise and take into consideration the needs, interests and wishes of others. I should be called upon to compete without losing my ability to compromise. I should be challenged to step into the skin of the other and see the world from the other’s perspectives. I should be helped to understand and affirm the different rules and roles that

are constitutive of life, and to hold my end of mutuality and relationships with increasing trustworthiness. Otherwise, I may be tempted to get egocentrically embedded and stuck in my “self-sufficiency”, my needs, wishes and interests without being able to genuinely take into consideration the perspectives, needs, wishes or interests of other human beings. Then, I may see the world as an extension of myself and a stage for me to perform on, and others as being there to take care of my needs, wishes and interests.

Membership and Scripts. Along with my needs, interests and wishes I also experience a strong desire to fit in, to belong and to find my place or role among other roles. I strongly feel the need to understand the rules with a correlative fear of losing face, losing role, and breaking the rules. As a result, I may over-differentiate from my needs, wishes, and interests and begin to live scripts others have written for me. I may surrender my “self-sufficiency” to the other, the authority structures and the group to which I belong. I may become embedded in a particular society’s rules, injunctions, prohibitions, myths and dogmas, with no way to transcend that membership hunger, and thus destined to play out the roles and rules of a particular and isolated society. That society may be my family, my tribe or clan, my linguistic-ethnic group, my religious affiliation, and so on. In the process I may begin to tell myself lies: lies about who I am, what I feel, what I need, what I can do and become, and what I should believe about the other and myself. These lies when repeated hundreds of

times become pseudo-truths for me, they become my belief system. I reach a point when I cannot really distinguish between real truths and the pseudo-truths about me, when I cannot distinguish between the real me and the pseudo-me.

Relationships. With the developing ability for mutuality, role-taking and rule-forming, I begin to enter into and nourish the experience of interpersonal life, individual and collective. I begin to enjoy the culture of mutuality and interpersonal concordance. I feel thrilled to share, in intimate contexts, my inner world of feelings, moods, desires, interests and expectations with a similar other who is willing to reciprocate in mutuality. In some sense I become my interpersonal relationships. I need to be affirmed in my capacity for self-sacrifice and collaboration, in my ability to share my subjective world with another, and in the intensity and authenticity of my feelings. But I need help to gradually move out of my embeddedness in interpersonalism and hearken to the inner voice saying “you are responsible for your life and you are on your own”. I need to be challenged to recognise that relationship is not fusing of personal boundaries and that I have to assume responsibility for my initiatives, preferences and independence. I need the challenge but not violent pushes because the letting go of my “interpersonal identity” can be painful, life-disordering. I may experience the threat of the loss of my most important relationships as abandonment and refusal of care in the process of unfolding into an autonomous person.

Mature Ego. Growing out of my interpersonalism and becoming responsible for my life, I develop a greater sense of autonomy within myself. On the cognitive plane, I begin to enjoy the power of mind to think about thinking, to think about possibilities, to think about future, to think and dream with passion about possibilities and ideals. I become a mature ego with my own ego-boundaries and a self-sense distinct and separate from those I am in relationship with, whether individuals or groups. I learn to take my own initiatives, make my own decisions, and become my own person, so to say. With my increasing capacity for self-reflection, I can evaluate and norm the norms given to me. I can think in “as if” and “what if” terms. I begin to critique the injunctions, prohibitions, rules, roles, myths and dogmas. Then, ideally speaking, I choose to be who I want to be, I choose my career or vocation, I follow my dreams, I trust my reason, I become independent, I choose to have my relationships (I am not my relationships), I actualise my potentials, and so on.

Beyond the Ego. The processes described above form the typical, though idealised, itinerary of an evolving self proposed by developmental psychology. According to this scheme, the arrival of the mature rational ego is the end-point of developmental unfolding. Robert Kegan proposes a further point of unfolding characterized by the self’s differentiation from its embeddedness in autonomy toward becoming an inter-individual¹² capable of self-surrender, interdependence, and true intimacy. According to Wilber¹³, the average mode of consciousness of modern humanity

is “egoic-rational” though there are signs of evolution manifested by the “growing tip” or the “farther ends” of humanity. Maslow¹⁴ proposed a stage beyond self-actualisation called it the self-transcending stage. For Perennial Philosophy, the birth of egoic-rational consciousness marks just the end of the pre-personal and personal realms beyond which lies the entire spectrum of transpersonal realms. Wilber, in *The Spectrum of Consciousness* and several other subsequent books, attempts to pool together the insights from modern developmental psychology and the major contemplative traditions to present a spectrum model of development ranging from pre-personal, through personal to transpersonal domains. For the purpose of our discussion, we merely note that mystics, sages and contemplative practitioners of all major religious traditions have reported states of consciousness beyond the egoic-rational. Psychology has begun to acknowledge with a certain amount of reluctance that these reported states of trans-personal consciousness are more than mere regressive states as understood by psychoanalysis.

It is interesting to note that similar to, though not necessarily along with, the developmental unfolding of my self outlined above, my world-view,¹⁵ my moral stance,¹⁶ and even my faith experience¹⁷ and expressions undergo evolution from developmentally less evolved to more evolved phases. The therapist, the clients and the persons constituting the contexts-within-contexts, search for truth and meaning within each one’s specific world-view, moral stance and faith experience.

Unfolding World-Views

When I began emerging from my embeddedness in the world around me, when I began to experience myself as a distinct being capable of sensing, moving, and making images, I discovered that I could make the world go dark by merely closing my eyes and make it bright again merely by opening them. That was the beginning of discovering my “magical” powers. As I continued to grow and make pictures of concrete objects around me, I could not initially tell the real difference between the pictures I made and the reality outside. I used to confuse the two often. I even thought that I could manipulate the objects outside by manipulating the images of them. I thought that the world of objects knew my intentions, obeyed my commands and even existed for my sake. I thought the moon followed me when I moved up and down and it did so because it knew my intentions and wished to respond to my intentions. That was already full-blown magic. And that was already the magical world-view. That is, the world was populated with objects and persons which shared my intentions, obeyed my commands, and did all that because of me. You may call that magic, animism, and anthropocentrism. Well, that was the truth of the world I was able to construct at that time, given the development of my consciousness.

Then came the time when I realised the world existed more or less independently of me, and I really did not have the magical power to make it obey me and follow my egocentric wishes. I discovered that I did not possess those

magical powers. Hence, I began looking for those who could do what I was not capable of doing. I knew that my big daddy could do what I could not do. If not my real daddy, some other daddies could do. Mythical daddies, heroes and gods began populating my inner space. Magical manipulation was replaced by “mythical rites”, that is, correct performance of actions and words which would ensure that the mythical powers would ensure that my egocentric desires and wishes would be addressed. If I attended church worship for a specified period of time or a specified number of times in a specified manner without fail, my wishes and intentions would be granted by those capable of doing so. If I planted signs of the cross on four corners of my bed, my guardian angels would ensure that no devils come in with scary dreams. Again, that was the truth of the world I was able to construct at that time, given the development of my consciousness.

With the arrival of fully developed mind and the ability for introspection, interpretation and meaning making shifted – away from magical relation with the outside world and forces of nature, from reliance on the mythical “gods”, and from the membership communities and their myths and dogmas – toward the inner space of reason, possibilities and vision. As a result, my magical mythical beliefs began to give way to rational understanding and “scientific explanations”. That does not mean that the magical and mythic layers of consciousness were entirely replaced by rationality. Those layers continue to remain within me to surface under certain conditions and circumstances. For

example, the most rational me can slip into religious, ethnic or national fundamentalism constituting new mythic communities, enforcing new mythic membership claims, new mythic injunctions, dogmas and prohibitions.

Evolving Moral Stance

My sense of right and wrong began within a “reward and punishment” framework. What was wrong consisted in what would bring punishment. What was good then was obedience to rules and the resulting avoidance of punishment. It was an egocentric point of view in which interests of others did not figure much. From this moral stance, I would not steal because I was afraid of being punished and I would not commit a sin because I was afraid of going to eternal hell.

Then as I began to recognise the interests and needs of others and even as I continued to be self-centred in my general orientation, my moral stance shifted from mere obedience in order to avoid punishment toward an individualistic stance which, in some ways, was a kind of “mercantile morality”. That is, a moral stance based on a “fair” mutual agreement, a “deal”, and an “equal exchange” between my needs and the other’s needs, my interests and the other’s interests. It was an individualistic perspective. From this moral perspective, I will not steal your pencil and you should not steal my pen because we are friends. We may steal the neighbour’s fruits and we can even do so together.

As I learned rules and roles as son, brother, friend, etc., my moral stance also

shifted from individualism of mutual agreement to interpersonal conformity. What was right consisted in living up to what was expected of me as son, brother, friend and so on. “Being good” through keeping mutual relationships like trust, loyalty, respect and gratitude became important to me. That was the perspective of the individual in relationship with other individuals. A further step from here was when I could differentiate my interests and needs as well as the interpersonal agreement and motives from the societal point of view. What was right was also what contributed to the society or system as a whole and hence the obligation to fulfil the actual duties I had agreed to. Functioning from this moral space, I feel obliged to keep my street clean, obey traffic rules and pay taxes because I owe it to my society to do so. If I do not keep my end of the obligations, society cannot function effectively and I am the loser in the ultimate bargain.

Then I begin to recognise that there is a plurality of values and opinions which are strictly speaking relative to my group. I recognise that there is a “social contract” that I am part of and I should uphold these relative values, opinions and rights of individuals for the smooth functioning of the society except in cases where non-relative values like life and justice are at stake. These non-relative values should always be upheld regardless of majority opinion. From this moral perspective, I am willing to comply with the beliefs, dogmas and rituals of my “people” even when I do not find them rationally convincing or inter-culturally applicable because such compliance is important for the overall smooth

functioning of my society. But I will protest and even defy the authority if basic principles of life are violated.

If I keep growing I may reach a moral stance within which right and wrong are decided not on the basis of egocentric needs, not on a merely individualistic perspective, and not even on the basis of conformity to expectations of my group or society at large but on universal moral principles to which I feel internally and irresistibly committed. Universal moral principles take me beyond my ethnocentric boundaries and commitments, including those of my culture and religion. From this moral stance, I will respect you and defend, at any cost, your right to be. I will do so not simply to earn a reward or escape punishment. I will not do so merely because you are my friend or just because you are part of my people. I will not do so primarily for your love and esteem or merely for the sake of peace and harmony in the community. Rather, I will defend your right to be, principally because you deserve to be, because you are a sentient being, a human being, and a spark of the Divine.

Summary. The point of it all is not to establish that there is any conclusively proven developmental scheme valid for all cultures, genders and individuals. Neither is it implied that developmental unfolding would proceed through neat stages following neat schedules. It is not implied either that all structures and phases of development are equally basic or significant.

However, from the foregoing discussion, one thing becomes clear. Evolution or developmental unfolding is a

master motion of life and this master movement is evident in all spheres of existence – the individual interior, the collective interior, the individual exterior and the collective exterior. Evolutionary unfolding is also evident within the different lines of development of the individual interior – cognitive structures, world-views, moral stance, faith styles, etc. Evolutionary unfolding is developmentally hierarchical (not dominator hierarchies) moving from less complex to more complex, less unified to more unified, less deep to more deep, less encompassing to more encompassing and so on. This unfolding takes place within intimate context-within-contexts-within contexts. Each unfolding unit is relatively whole, autonomous and self-sufficient and, at the same time, is merely a part in relation to an emergent larger whole. It is perfectly normal and healthy to affirm and be affirmed in the relative autonomy at any stage of unfolding. Yet, at the service of the master movement of life, the relative autonomy, the identification with and the embeddedness in a given relatively autonomous stage should be surrendered and released so that the newer and higher whole may emerge. Or stated differently, it is absolutely essential to honour both the stage-specific wholeness as well as partness of any given evolutionary unit. The evolutionary balance consists in robust identification with the given, courageous dying to the current, and transcending to (and including in case of basic units of evolution) and consolidating the emergent.

Accidents can occur along the way – over-identification, over-differentiation, dissociation and repression – and

they may leave behind developmental lesions and evolutionary scars that can affect the entire “developmental curriculum” with their “faulty syllabi”, “faulty maps” and “faulty” if not dishonest “scripts”. Conventional psychotherapy, by and large, is designed to attend to these accidents that may have occurred along the way and their after-effects, so that the individuals can function more effectively and more productively. Psychotherapy, in my opinion, is called upon to do more than just that. When viewed from an integral-developmental perspective, psychotherapy has a twofold function. On the one hand, psychotherapy is meant to deal with the *individual* as and where he or she developmentally is (including the developmental accidents and their after-effects) and, on the other, it has an obligation to facilitate the unfolding of the *person* along the continuum toward its farther ends.

Functions and Processes of Therapy

From an integral (honouring truths from all quarters and all levels) developmental (recognising developmental unfolding as the master motion of life) framework, I would define or, rather, describe the function and process of psychotherapy (in its twofold function) as follows. Psychotherapy, as I have come to understand it today, is both the art and science of “facilitative-accompaniment” offered to persons in their journey of evolution, unfolding, and development in all spheres and at all levels of development. Facilitative accompaniment would consist of the following tasks, which are similar to those assigned by Kegan to the culture of embeddedness¹⁸:

- (1) *understanding* of both the partness and the wholeness of persons;
- (2) *validating* the existential integrity of the developmental or evolutionary space in which a person is;
- (3) *challenging*, negating or contradicting developmental validity of the current evolutionary balance; and
- (4) *“being around”* as the persons negotiate the earlier deficits and/or the current turning points of their developmental unfolding.

Understanding of both the Partness and the Wholeness of Person. A person, a thing or a structure of unfolding is a “whole”, in one sense, and a mere “part”, in another sense. That is, everything is simultaneously a whole in its own right and a part in respect to a larger whole. The wholeness aspect of a thing or person manifests itself in the relative autonomy, the right to self preservation, the tendency for self-enhancement, the propensity for self-assertion, and the demand for independence. On the other hand, the partness aspect shows itself in the ability to let go, the capacity for dying to itself, the tendency to accommodate and communicate, the ability for self-adaptation and the propensity for interconnectedness.

As a therapist, I need to understand and honour in my clients both the wholeness (the relative autonomy) aspect and the partness (being part of a larger emergent whole) aspect of their current self-sense, personal rights, needs and preferences, world-views, religious meaning-making and moral choices. How I interpret (more in the hermeneuti-

cal than the psychoanalytic sense) these aspects will be influenced by the map of the whole that I have at my disposal. As mentioned earlier, a map of Truth that is capable of providing directions to the maximum number of travellers from the maximum number of backgrounds to the maximum area of the Territory is definitely a better map to be guided by. The map of the whole I have come to tentatively adopt is *the spectrum model of development* within which the person is an evolutionary process of becoming from the pre-personal through the personal toward the transpersonal-spiritual realms.

I should also keep in mind that a person, a thing or a structure of unfolding also manifests the capacity for further evolution, development, transcendence, transformation as well as for dissolution and breakdown. For example, I, as an individual person, enjoy relative autonomy, have basic rights, have an inclination to enhance myself, and so on. At the same time, I have the ability to self-adapt in relation to what is larger than me, to let go some of my autonomy and personal rights, and die to myself in different ways for the good of the larger whole of which I am a part. I can release my hold on my present "relative wholeness," "die to myself," "let go" of my present self-preservation and self-assertion and transcend to a higher mode of "relative wholeness". I can as well, under the weight of stagnating self-perseveration in the present "relative autonomy", breakdown to lower modes of "relative wholeness". I can, in my developmental unfolding, either become more universal, more pluralistic, more unifying, more integrated, more appre-

ciative of paradoxes and uncertainties and more compassionate. I can also become more parochial, more fundamentalist, more divisive and exclusive, more fragmented and compartmentalised, more rigid, more self-righteous, more narcissistic and so on.

Validating the existential integrity. When I engage my client in a genuine intersubjective dialogue, when I begin to listen to what my client articulates and fails to articulate, and when I try to "interpret", make sense of, and make meaning of that communication, I am likely to realise more accurately how my client is in a process of becoming and unfolding. With the help of my overall map and as well as sectional and sub-sectional maps, I may help the client to recognise the developmental "lesions" that may have occurred during his or her tenuous journey of development. We may together recognise instances of overidentification that may have occurred resulting in fixations and developmental arrests (like confusion between self and environment), over-differentiation that may have resulted in dissociation (like between body and mind), failed integration resulting in repression (like repression of sexuality and aggression). We may discover that while the cognitive development was on schedule, the emotional development lagged behind, the development of moral sense failed to evolve beyond the reward and punishment stage, or the maturation of self-needs failed to get beyond those of security and safety. Similarly, we may recognise that the world-view of the client and his or her corresponding map about self, the other and the

Ultimate are still contaminated by magical and mythic hangovers and concrete literal meaning-making.

It is important to realise, in the context of the intersubjective dialogue which constitutes psychotherapy, that the therapist, in some ways, provides a temporary culture of embeddedness to the client. It is my function, then, to “hold” the client, affirm and validate the existential integrity of his or her evolutionary or developmental state. Rogers¹⁹ emphasised, along with genuineness and congruence, the need for unconditional positive regard on the part of the therapist. Unconditional positive regard is my ability to affirm and validate the client exactly where he or she is at a given moment in the process of becoming, unfolding, developing, evolving, with implicit trust in the evolutionary unfolding. It is the ability of the therapist to non-judgementally “hold” the client exactly where he or she developmentally is so that he or she can “identify” with and make robust contact with the truth of the present. Robust identification and contact with a given stage of developmental unfolding is a prerequisite for differentiation from and negation of the current stage with its securities and comforts, in favour of a higher developmental state. I cannot let go what I have not adequately “held.” I cannot die to an aspect (or developmental phase) of the self that I have not yet “found” with any stability. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, for me to become “nobody” before I have become “somebody” to begin with²⁰.

Challenging, negating, contradicting developmental validity. There

are several questions I am confronted with as a therapist, as I engage myself in the inter-subjective dialogue with my clients. Am I interested in just the *individual* or am I interested in the *person* who is in the process of becoming, evolving and unfolding? While I *hold* with unconditional positive regard the existential integrity of the individual as he or she is at the moment, what do I do with the developmental validity of his or her current individuality, partness-wholeness balance, autonomy-communion balance, identification-release balance, and so on? As implied by Kegan in his discussion of the role of cultures of embeddedness, the therapist’s commitment must be not just to the individual but primarily to the person who is in the process of becoming and, therefore, to the master-motion of evolution. As the temporary culture of embeddedness, the therapist has to exercise the function of contradicting, that is, challenging the developmental validity of the present evolutionary balances of the client. The therapist has to facilitate disidentification (of course, identification in some cases), differentiation and transcendence. The therapist has to do so both as the temporary culture of embeddedness and as a facilitator of the unfolding of consciousness. The therapist has to be at the service of the “omega pull”,²¹ inviting the person to keep unfolding to the farthest reaches of the spectrum of development.

The initial identification with a particular structure of unfolding is normal, necessary and phase-appropriate. This identification is the honouring of the wholeness aspect, the relative autonomy, and the right to self-assertion

and self-enhancement of the evolutionary stage or unit. How do I relate to the partness aspect, the relative aspect of the autonomy? Does the therapist, as an agent of facilitative accompaniment in the journey of developmental unfolding, have an obligation to hold a mirror before the partness aspect of the client or client's current evolutionary phase? Am I there, as a therapist, only to repair the "failed metabolism," the "developmental lesions," and the "subject-object imbalances" of the earlier years? Do I have an obligation to my clients beyond modifying maladaptive behaviours, helping the ego negotiate the battle between the id and the superego? They all form part of my task as a therapist. But my fundamental commitment goes beyond them to the person in the process of becoming, the self in the process of evolving, and the "omega pull" beckoning the unfolding self to its farther reaches. We speak of people getting "stuck", "lost", "left behind", and so on. If the self were not going somewhere (the omega pull), concludes Wilber²², it would not experience getting stuck, lost or left behind. I have an obligation toward the "going somewhere" of the self, the unfolding of the self toward its farther reaches.

The pattern that seems to connect the unfolding across aspects and dimensions of self is a movement toward diminishing egocentrism, divisiveness, fragmentation, alienation, dissociation and repression, toward greater compassion, unitiveness, integration and communion, depth, interiority, and simplicity. My fundamental commitment as a therapist is to that movement though I may have to do lots of repairs, fixing,

structure-building, uncovering, interpreting, and so on.

Being around. Despite the poetic and symbolic expressions about growth such as "turn around gracefully and embrace the truth of yourself," "come home to who you are, and where you belong," and "unfold yourself to what you can become," development is a painful and, in some sense, frightening affair. Kegan refers to it as developmental "earth quakes". Erikson²³ speaks of developmental *crisis* points which he describes as moments of heightened potential and increased vulnerability. Both for the infant and for the growing adult, dis-identification with a given state or balance of development in favour of what has not yet emerged and consolidated is like being thrown into a no man's land and left alone and helpless. That is the time both an infant and a growing adult would need a secure culture of embeddedness, which will not only challenge, contradict, or negate the current self-sense and securities but also will genuinely and convincingly stand by as the self negotiates the next stage of evolution. A reliable and supporting culture would make a real difference to the self as it differentiates and integrates, develops a new view of reality, experiments with a new sense of self, constructs new moral stances, tries out new faith expressions and spirituality, and so on. This is all the more important when the individual, who is actually an "embeddual" (individual embedded in a context within context), has to swim against the current of his or her own larger culture of embeddedness. The therapist who is the temporary culture of embeddedness for the evolving per-

son in therapy must appreciate how hard the process of negating, contradicting and releasing is and “be around” with authenticity, genuineness and truthfulness.

I have seen countless number of times in individual and group therapy contexts, how very difficult it is for an “over-agentic” individual (who holds on to and defends his or her absolutised autonomy) to recognise and integrate the partness aspect or the need for being in communion. A person who over-differentiated from and repressed the body has to struggle hard to reclaim the body with its sexual-emotional energies. A typical woman in India (and, to a large extent, women in general who are culturally programmed and, perhaps, even genetically predisposed) who is over-identified with the communion aspect would find it very hard to reclaim her “agency” and differentiate her relative autonomy. An individual with an over-developed persona is going to find it hard to recognise and integrate the shadow aspects of his or her self. Similarly, great is the struggle of a need-embedded individual who has over-identified with his or her likes and interests, in taking the perspective of the other. An “over-scripted” individual who has come to live the injunctions, attributions and dogmas of his or her group will have a painful struggle in discovering his or her own true identity. An over-identified interpersonal self who has become his or her relationships (rather than having relationships) is going to find it hard to become a person in his or her own right.

Similarly moving from a developmentally limiting world-view to a more

freeing one is hard for individuals. World-views can be said to operate like one-way mirrors arranged in concentric circles with the least evolved world-view at the centre and the more developed ones around it arranged in a developmentally hierarchical manner.²⁴ As a result, persons operating in the most developed world-view like, let us say, the mystical world-view can understand and relate to reality as constructed by prior world-views like the rational, the mythical and the magical. Unfortunately the opposite is not possible. That is, from within the space of a less developed world-view like the magical-mythical world-view, one cannot recognise and relate to reality accessible to trans-rational and mystic world-views. If my world-view is centred around a central religious or ethnic myth and its doctrines and dogmas, it would be very hard for me to make sense of the mystic Truth forms and expressions lying beyond my world-view. I will then find it difficult to relate to genuine paradoxes, authentic pluralism, and the seamless manifestation of Reality as the Play of the One and the Many. For example, it will be sincerely hard for me as a fundamentalist adherent of any institutionalised religion who is literally entrenched in the dogmas, doctrines, and myths of my “people” to make sense of genuinely pluralistic Truth forms and Truth expressions contained in other world religions. Imagine embracing them without feeling guilty!

For an individual operating from an egocentric and need-embedded moral stance, stepping into the shoes of the other, seeing reality from the other person’s point of view and making moral

choices from that interpersonal space is very hard. For someone functioning from within the individualistic-interpersonal moral stance of mutuality based on mere self-interest, making moral choices on the basis of the "greatest good of the largest number of people" is almost beyond reach. Similarly for someone deeply entrenched in an ethnocentric-conformist moral stance, critiquing the myths and dogmas of his or her own cultural group and making moral choices based on universal-spiritual principles is almost impossible. For instance, it will be difficult for an average citizen of a country entrenched in his or her ethnocentric-conformist moral stance to norm the norms of his group. It will be very difficult for him or her even to consider that the death of innocent children in another country due to lack of food and medicine caused by my country's economic choices might be unethical (from the universal spiritual ethical stance).

What is important for the therapist to realise in those instances is that "reality" (including that of self) is actually constructed by the individual, that the world not only appears to be such and such but is actually constructed thus from the specific evolutionary space. Hence the identification with a particular developmental phase, a particular world-view, a particular self-sense, a particular moral stance and a particular self-need is actual and "genuine". As a result, negating any of those identifications is real terror-inducing "death". Hence, the crucial significance of providing that temporary culture of embeddedness characterised by the ability to "be around".

Conclusion: The Quest of Psychotherapy

The quest of psychotherapy, when viewed within an integral-developmental framework, is an open-minded and open-ended search for freedom to unfold. A freedom, first of all, from what has made the self get "stuck," "lost," or "left behind" in its journey of unfolding. A "freedom from" (the developmental "lesions" and evolutionary "scars") that is necessary for the individual to function effectively and productively from where he or she developmentally is at a given moment. This "freedom from" is at the service of a larger "freedom for" the further unfolding of the self towards its farther reaches. The facilitation of the "freedom from" could be described as the immediate task of psychotherapy and that of the "freedom for" as its ultimate quest.

The quest of psychotherapy, therefore, is the freedom for the unfolding of consciousness toward its farthest ends facilitated through a genuine intersubjective dialogue between the therapist and the client. A facilitation characterised and influenced, on the one hand, by the therapist's genuine gentleness of holding, congruent firmness of contradicting and truthfulness and authenticity of being around. The quality of this facilitation is determined, on the other hand, by the client's truthfulness in self-understanding as she or he negotiates the old "lesions" or the current "fulcrums" (turning points) of developmental unfolding with their accompanying pains of dying, fears of letting go, and anxieties of the unknown. This intersubjective dialogue should be essen-

tially open-minded and open-ended with a willingness to surrender with a sense of mystery to the “omega pull” guiding the self through the prepersonal through the personal toward the transpersonal-spiritual realms.

Though a professional therapist may devote himself or herself mostly to facilitating of the unfolding of consciousness in the prepersonal and personal realms, he or she can, if he or she so wishes, remain open to the emergence of transpersonal-spiritual structures and stages in the intersubjective dialogue. He or she may have neither the experience nor the required “maps” to effectively accompany the person into the transpersonal realms and, therefore, should make appropriate referrals. But he or she can remain genuinely and respectfully open and open-ended. That will require a genuine spirit of willingness, which, as pointed out by May,²⁵ implies a surrendering of one’s self-separateness, and an entering into and an immersion in the deepest processes of life itself. It also implies a realisation that one already is a part of some ultimate cosmic process and a commitment to participation in that process. Willingness is saying yes to the mystery of that

process. Willingness implies letting the Ultimate unfold relaxing my “wilfulness” (the opposite of willingness) and drive to mastery. Therapists, spiritual directors and educators, by their inner call, should be at the service of this Ultimate process, this Ultimate Unfolding with an attitude that is open and open-ended. Everything else is at the service of the Spirit unfolding and Truth evolving: everything else including our favourite theories, theologies, dogmas, forms of spirituality, forms of religion and methods of therapy. In this context, Wilber²⁶ makes sense to me when he says that the Ultimate psychology is the psychology of the Ultimate. Ultimate freedom, could we say, is the freedom in the Ultimate? Ultimate quest of therapy, then, is the freedom for the unfolding of the Ultimate in the developmental journey of men and women, therapists and clients, spiritual directors and spiritual seekers, teachers and students. Psychotherapy lays the foundation for this Ultimate Process by attending to the “freedom from” (developmental accidents, evolutionary scars and their after-effects) aspects and remains at the service of this Process by facilitating the “freedom for” (unfolding towards further ends) dimension of the evolving self.

Notes

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