

Review of
Psychotherapy and the Fully Functioning Person
By Julius Seeman

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For me as therapist and theorist, two things: first, and quite simply, to recognize the existence of ... variability in human capacities. That doesn't take much time, because for me the second action is the important part; and that is to recognize that the existence of variability in no way vitiates or even minimizes the positive end of the human spectrum, the positive potentialities of a fully functioning person.
(Seeman, 2008, p. 33)

When Julius “Jules” Seeman (1915 - 2010) finished his graduate education in Minnesota, he wrote a letter to Carl Rogers at the University of Chicago. It was 1947. Jules had read Rogers’ *Counseling and Psychotherapy* when it came out in 1942. He wanted to work with Rogers for two reasons. One, he liked the way Rogers practiced therapy. And, two, he was interested in doing research, and at that time, the University of Chicago Counseling Center was the only place to go for researching the psychotherapy process. Jules

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joined the staff at the Chicago Center in time to contribute to the *Parallel Studies* (Seeman, 1949).

These studies, he said, “demonstrate[d] the fact that inquiry into the process of psychotherapy could be based on a systematic conceptual framework and could document the existence of a lawful and predictable therapeutic process” (2008, p. 15). Howard Kirschenbaum (2007) described this stage of client-centered research as “descriptive and exploratory” (p. 199). With the Rockefeller Foundation grant that was subsequently received, Rogers, his students and the Center staff were able to proceed to a new research stage, one of defining the actual processes of therapy, its necessary and sufficient conditions, and its outcomes. At the outset of this huge new endeavor, in 1950, Jules volunteered to serve as Coordinator of Research: “The sigh of relief that pervaded the group was as close to a vote of confidence as I was going to get, so I considered the matter settled” (p. 18).

Inquiry into the outcome of the therapeutic process—that is the fully functioning person, engaged Jules for the remainder of his career. While this was not his only interest, it was rather obviously a major passion for him. It culminated in creation of his own “Human System Model” – that is, his biology-informed psychological model of the human organism. In this model, *organismic integration* is characterized by unimpeded connectedness and communication within and between the several subsystems of the biological/psychological human being and between the person and his or her environment. While a large part of the present volume relates historically, theoretically, descriptively and thematically to Jules’ model, readers who want to use it for research purposes might want to go straight to the more strenuously academic and soon to be republished book, *Personality Integration* (Seeman, 1982).

Psychotherapy and the Fully Functioning Person is Jules’ professional autobiography. It is a selected collection of his writings, some of which he revised and revamped for this book. The revision and reorganization of older, and, also, some new writings, results in a personal and cogent narrative that feels satisfying on several levels. This is partly due to Jules’ gentle and clear, first-person writing style, that to me, places him stylistically in the company of two other

authors from the early years of client-centered therapy, Carl Rogers and Nathaniel Raskin.

Jules' first-person phenomenological manner in combination with his thoughtful arrangement of chapters presents the reader with a unified and informative body of work that is personally engaging as well as very clear. The writings include revisions of articles he wrote in the early 1950s through 2002 and the book's meta-commentary and organization appear to have been conceptualized and written between 2002 and 2008. In its totality, the book is a rather artful expression of the wide scope and analytical keenness of an academic of long practice and experience. I found what David Cain (2012) tells us to be true: "[Jules] wrote with penetrating insight, always leaving the reader with ideas that would continue to evoke further reflection" (p. 11). The wisdom of such long perspective places him in the company of two other post-World War II client-centered psychologists who carved out successful solo niches within academia, John Shlien (2003) and C. H. Patterson (2000).

About half the book is about client centered-therapy, which Jules regards as seminal and at the forefront of the larger umbrella of humanistic approaches. Discussions of client-centered therapy approach the subject historically and analytically, in terms of process, phenomenology and action. Several chapters do an excellent job of placing client-centered therapy into perspective in the history of psychotherapy, in relation to very distant approaches, and, also, in relation to approaches (Gendlin, 1978; Rice, 1974; Wexler, 1974) that have evolved more directly from Rogers (For a more contemporary overview, see Sanders, 2004). Jules' own stance is strongly phenomenological and client-centered.

"Client-centered Therapy: A Brief History and an Illustration of Long-Term Psychotherapy Process" (Chapter 7) is a fine example of Jules using a wide lens while attending to analytical acuity. In client-centered literature, there are two clients named "Jim." "Jim Brown" was a client of Rogers' (1967) during the Wisconsin study. He is well known as "A silent young man" (pp. 401-416). The therapy of Jules' client, who stutters, was originally set forth in pamphlet form (Seeman, 1957). Here it is offered in transcript

excerpts that include footnote commentary reminiscent of Rogers with Herbert Bryan (1942). To me, Jules' commentary is more interesting than Rogers'; Jules' comments discuss the therapist's client-centered intentions in relation to the progress of the therapy; even though Rogers' comments do the same, they come from an early, pre-client-centered, stage in Rogers' development of both his theory and his practice; Rogers' remarks are not particularly relevant to the questions of contemporary client-centered practitioners (For discussion of Rogers with Bryan, see Brodley, 2011, pp. 317-320; Brodley & Kemp, 2004).

Several chapters are about child therapy. In depth discussions of various issues that commonly arise for client-centered child therapists roused my determination to re-tackle some practice questions of my own. Chapter 5 contains a transcript of what we have come to think of as filial therapy. Two research-summarizing chapters that ostensibly are about personality integration and psychotherapy are based on child subjects and therefore also relate, with optimism, to child therapy. In these chapters, Jules brought home to me the value of child therapy as a worthy means for contending with human suffering through intervention at germinal stages of life.

A chapter on brief therapy successfully describes "The Power of the Brief Encounter." Jules relates brief therapy to Jessie Taft's (1933) historic essay about the concept of time in therapy. Taft's essay seems to have influenced Jules as well as Axline, Rogers, Raskin (and myself).

In his descriptions of the process and practice of therapy, I find Jules' work to be client-centered in approach. At the same time, his discussion of the therapeutic process accommodates both the affective-experiential and the phenomenological-cognitive dimensions of experiencing (pp. 20-29). While I would not use *Psychotherapy and the Fully Functioning Person* as my primary text for student therapists, I do consider it to be good reading for anyone interested in self-development as a client-centered practitioner as well as for those who enjoy thinking about and discussing the therapeutic process.

"On the Supervision of Research" is about Jules' career-long experience in working with graduate students. His discussion is

compelling. Also it is applicable to therapy supervision and consultation relationships. It relates to the person-centered dilemma raised by Raskin (2007) – should supervision be empathic or didactic? Jules' solution to the dilemmas of supervision clarifies issues in practical terms that are informed by his career-long perspective.

Nearly every chapter in the book connects in some large or small way to Jules' career as a researcher. They all held my interest. There are various descriptions of the phenomenology of the research process and the historical development of research methodologies, as well as interesting discussions of studies and findings that relate to personality attributes and integration, the process of therapy, psychotherapy outcome, and decades of studies springing from the author's early interest in the *fully functioning person* (Rogers, 1953/1958, 1957/1961) that culminated in the Human Systems Model. These chapters depict the curiosity, questions and intentions of the researcher, and this made a potentially dry subject interesting. In this regard, I imagine students might find Jules' history, which is very personal, to be engaging and enticing of further study.

Overall, this book is informative and thought provoking. I recommend it to anyone interested in the history of client-centered therapy, other Rogerian derived practices, details about the research process, and intriguing discussion of humanistic, particularly person-centered, views of the human person. It includes thorough and in-depth information and discussion about child therapy (even for beginners), therapy transcript examples, historical and phenomenological discussions of research methodology, examination of the Rogerian concept of the fully functioning person, and an autobiographical material centered upon a successful career in academic research.

However, I do have a, to-me, significant criticism. Jules' wonderful, phenomenological writing style pulled me into his world. Based on this book, I feel that I really like and feel fondly toward this author. However, I am not so delighted by the central destination of this professional autobiography, Jules' Human Systems Model. On the one hand, I am very appreciative of learning about this model. It relates to the complexity of being a human organism. It integrates mind and body conceptions. It connects with

my developing prejudice that we are indeed what we eat. Frankly, in its correspondences with Rogers' (1959) theories of both therapy and personality, it is a resounding defense for client-centered therapy. However, at the end of the book, reading the chapters that are dedicated more specifically to *the fully functioning person* and *the human systems model*, I landed with an emotional thud.

I suppose my experience reading the book could be likened to a client being cajoled by a therapist's empathic reception into believing the therapy session is a place for opening up into personal and deep self-exploration; in the end, a trusting client might feel surprised or even betrayed by the imposition of an assessing statement or a covert manipulation by the therapist. I hit a wall when faced with the empirically-derived descriptions and comparisons of more and less fully functioning, more and less well-connected or fluidly flowing, human ways of being. Even though Jules' empirical-mindedness does not appear to contaminate his client-centeredness in practice, even though his model resonates with my sense of what it means to be a human organism, even though I think it informs my empathic understanding in practice, and even though I believe my criticism could be leveled at Carl Rogers, certainly with reference to Rogers and Dymond (1954) and Rogers' (1953/1958, 1957/1961) interest in the fully functioning person, I believe that, ultimately, it objectifies the person through diagnostic, reductionist thinking. For me this is problematic in much the same way that I find various Rogerian-derived approaches problematic (For an overview see Sanders, 2004). I find research that explores the intentions and experiences of therapists and clients (Barrineau & Bozarth, 1989; Bohart & Tallman, 1999; Bozarth, 2006; Brodley, 2011; Glaser & Bozarth, 2001; Rennie, 2010) to be more interesting to me than is research about therapy outcome or the criteria of personality theories.

That being said, I hope my strongly positive evaluation of *Psychotherapy and the Fully Functioning Person* is clearly received. Thanks to Jules Seeman's clarity, long experience, and interesting personal ways of formulating complex questions with perspective and serenity, thinking about this book brings out a warm smile from me.

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