

## ... AND WOULD I DARE TO DANCE? AN AESTHETIC RESPONSE

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Do I dare  
Disturb the universe? . . .  
For I have known them all already, known them all –  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
I knew the voices dying with a dying fall  
Beneath the music from a farther room.  
So how should I presume? . . .

Do I dare  
Disturb the Universe?  
And I have known the eyes already, known them all –  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
And how should I presume?

(T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," pp. 655-657, as cited in *Adventures in American Literature*, 1980)

Upon reading Bohart and Rosenbaum's article "The Dance of Empathy: Empathy, Diversity, and Technical Eclecticism," I was reminded of T. S. Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." This poem depicts the plight of man meandering in a world characterized by spiritual void, empty of faith and meaningful love, and paralyzed by anxiety and boredom. This reaction is related to a question with which I have often wrestled when writing papers and attending professional conferences and workshops – "How would we as clients react to our "formulated

phrases," . . . "when pinned and wriggling on the wall, " "how should (we) begin to spit out all the butt-ends of (our) days and ways? And how should (we) presume?"

### SUMMARY OF PROPOSED INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF THERAPY

It is from this viewpoint, first person, that I would like to take poetic license and give a voice to the client in responding to this article. The basis of my responses will be focused on several points proposed in the paper. A summary of these points are as follows:

(1) The authors propose an integrative model of therapy in which relationship is primary and technique is secondary. Empathy, as an aesthetic form, therefore, becomes fundamental with the offering of technology proposed as a "form of relating."

(2) The "model of psychopathology" rests on a focus on the whole person striving toward orchestration and composition of his or her life. The individual struggles for a coherent integrated self through interaction. This view necessitates a major therapeutic interaction of the therapist of appreciating the client's world view by sensing and relating to his or her struggle toward organization. Appreciation, a fundamental "intervention" in this model, indicates a pro-active holistic creative view of the person struggling toward personal orchestration in contrast to the predominant therapeutic pathological view of the individual as "broken, needing repair or dysfunctional." Appreciation, therefore, is the fundamental way of the therapist to relate to the "good form," the client's efforts toward a positive goal of organization. Additionally, appreciation offers to the client a context for growth toward "the good form." The "good form" relates to the client's maintaining "good form" over time, not achievement of a static form.

(3) Therapy, therefore, is represented as a context for providing a "working space" for the client. Empathic appreciation is the fundamental mode of creating this space. In this context of empathic appreciation, the "therapist as consultant" may offer techniques and interventions in a dialogic form.

(4) The aesthetic nature of therapy is pre-eminent in empathy. Empathy is resonance, a "vibrating together" with the client, "tuning oneself to the same wave length," fundamentally nonverbal, dependent on the rhythms between two people. Therefore an empathic appreciation response of the therapist, in which techniques or interventions may be collaboratively offered, is in resonance with the client's experiencing. As a result, "all therapy interventions become ways of being with a client." This model is dependent upon the therapist's resonance and aesthetic appreciation with the whole person of the client. In the authors' words, "It is the process of dancing with from one point to another during which the client learns to step more accurately into the future."

(5) The therapist and the client are both responding in a dialogue from within themselves, sharing experiences in a joint product of "carrying forward" rather than representing another's experience. The dialogic form of the therapist's offering interventions or techniques is based on the assumption that in order for a real relationship to occur with the client the therapist may offer technology, but only in resonance with the client's concerns.

### AND WOULD I DANCE?

After reading Bohart and Rosenbaum's article, I am inquisitively encouraged and tantalized to enter into the dance of empathy with the authors. But what would this dance be like? If I am empathically resonating and therefore experiencing aesthetic appreciation with my partners, I can imagine my experiencing of the dance would have several steps.

(1) *The First Step: Contact.* The dance of empathy in therapy beginning with contact or connection will be with my total, whole person – not a part of me that has been focused upon

by the theory or technique of my partners. However, I wonder how much of my self-rhythm in times of disorganization of the dance will be heard or will I have to adjust my rhythm to the "lead" of the therapists (authors) with the relationship? The space that is created or "given" by the therapist I know will be helpful. But I wonder how would this "working space" be different if it were of my own creation with you as a companion instead of a consultant or collaborator. In our dance, you identify my struggle toward orchestration and composition of my own music. But I sense there is a value on an organized whole self, "the good form." What if inner healing comes from the process or struggle of moving between disorganization and organization and not the final valued outcome of organization, "the good form"? What if my own internal music is one of discordant harmony, a cacophony? What if I have no rhythm? What if I am a bad dancer, or have "bad form"? Will you allow me enough space to struggle through a seemingly disharmonious, disorganized orchestration. Will you be able to hear my creative music with the open ear of time or will the goal of therapy as achieving a more functional coherent form inherently through interaction become a barrier to my own tendency toward disorganization? Will you allow me to be a free improvisational dancer or must I dance to music collaboratively emergent through the interaction of your leading with relationship? As Thoreau (1980) so aptly stated, "Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away" (pp. 207-208). Will I have the space and freedom to step to the music I hear, "However measured or far away"? Or what influence might the authors' model of psychopathology and therapy have towards keeping me "formulated, sprawling on a pin . . . pinned and wriggling on the wall?"

(2) *The Second Step: Incongruence, Anxiety, Vulnerability.* The second step in the dance will be the therapist "leading with relationship." I can easily follow your lead as I, too, am a part of the relationship, sharing and creating. However, I can imagine an awkward stumbling during those first few moments. How will you "carry me forward," with more accurate steps into the future in the relationship? These dragging, stumbling steps will be my perplexity at the assumption that the relationship is primary. The therapist's leading with the relationship as primary and technique secondary confounds me since I thought that, finally, research has overwhelming credited me, the client, with the major variance in effective psychotherapy. After all these years, client "pre-existing factors" are recognized as the fundamental, primary variable in the dance. Why then have you again focused on the relationship as primary and technique secondary? It seems as if you have continued to subjugate my being and self-healing presence in favor of elevating a shared being or relationship, albeit I am a part of the relationship. I guess I am fumbling in our dance with the relationship between us as being primary and techniques of the therapist as being secondary. Yes, I can follow your lead; yes, I can blend with your steps as you "carry me forward" by "leading with the relationship." But I ask with an age-old sigh, "Do I dare disturb the universe? . . . So how should I presume?" When, oh, when will I be primary in our dance? When will you trust my inherent constructive tendency and you follow my lead?

(3) *The Third Step: Therapist's Congruence in the Relationship.* It is from the relationship, "a positive real relationship, that the healing dance will emerge." When you offer me your "technology," your repertoire of specific steps and specific interventions based on specific problems that you have collected from your own former experiences with dancing with other persons, colleagues, writings, and research, I sense that is your more natural way of relating, your way of being congruent in the relationship. Must I dance a similar dance in similar fashion as previous partners? Is the same pace expected of me? I know that I may trip over your interventions or techniques and in doing so blend with them, create my own steps, reject the steps or interventions you add, or reluctantly follow your lead. But what would this dance be like if I freely danced without expending energy or thought to blend, to reject, or reluctantly to follow

your empathic appreciation offer of your techniques? I am perplexed with the idea that your offering of techniques is in resonance with my experiencing? Wouldn't your techniques be more in resonance with your own experiencing? How will you "carry me forward" with your resonance of offering your technology? Which direction will you go? Are your interventions, your repertoire of technology, emergent vibrations from the dance or an armamentarium of inventions of therapists for therapists?

(4) *The Fourth Step: Empathy and Appreciation.* I am excited and eagerly wait that time in our dance when resonance occurs, when we "vibrate together," attuned to the same wave length, creating our own rhythm in the dance. However, I wonder about this ever actually occurring. My stumbling step attempting to follow aesthetic empathy results from a seemingly therapist-driven and directional dialogic mode of appreciation, the major empathic vehicle of relating, collaborating or consulting. Again, I am intrigued and enter into this step with you, but with some ambivalence. The addition of interventions into our music seems to shift the focus from me as a person to "the problem." Will you be reverberating with my wholeness as a person or will the intermingling of your techniques indicate resonance with only a part of me? I might imagine myself following you in this step, rather than following my own internal rhythms, or perhaps changing or blending my steps to match your steps more accurately, not necessarily resonating with our rhythms. Why is this appreciation tainted with direction toward more "accurate" steps into the future? Again, I am inherently desiring unconditional acceptance and appreciation of my experiencing unenamored with results or direction, more of a synchronous vibration. To what extent are your appreciation responses and offerings of expertise motivated by your own internal appreciation of your experiencing, past and present, in other relationships with other clients, colleagues, and with your own profession? To what extent are my rhythmic patterns and vibrations represented in your empathic appreciation responses even though you state that these offerings of techniques are in tandem with my experiencing? How will we become synchronized or attuned with expertise between us? How will you determine that your appreciation of my world view involves your offering of your expertise in the form of techniques and interventions? Will these interventions interfere with the pure or optimum resonance of my internal rhythmic pattern? Will our creative resonance be an original creation of empathic vibration or a by-product of technological expertise? What would this step be like, this dance, if you stayed within the reverberations of my music?

#### SUMMARY

In conclusion, I will eagerly enter into the dance of empathy with the authors. The view of the person as an aesthetic experiencer, the aesthetic portrayal of empathy, and therapy as an art form entices me toward continuing in the dance. However, questions arise from my ambivalence resulting from a feeling of lack of "appreciation" of the client in therapy and his or her contribution to the "art form." The authors state two factors accounting for the majority of variance in therapy efficacy: first, active, problem-solving capacity of the client and second, a good therapeutic relationship. Therapeutic approach and use of techniques play a minor role. However, the authors then proceed to develop theory by relegating the primary force of the client by elevating the relationship to the primary force. My capacity as a partner in this art form is intermingled in all aspects of the model, for example in empathy and appreciation as a major modality of relating my experiencing. However, again the major focus in this model of therapy as art and aesthetic empathy is on the therapist and his or her contribution to therapy. Secondly, the concept of the relationship and empathy, while recognizing the client's internal experiencing, implies a specifying of a means and a direction that I should follow in order to reach a certain goal. Third, in this aesthetic description of empathy, I question the extent to which the influence of the therapist is present in offering techniques and interventions even if in congruence with my experiencing.

Rogers (1957) stated that "techniques of various therapies are relatively unimportant except to the extent that they serve as channels for fulfilling one of the conditions. . ." (p. 103). As an integrative statement, I then wonder about the statement of the authors that techniques are offered as a way of reverberating with my concerns and experiencing. I suspect it may serve as a vehicle for congruence of the therapist in the "working space" of therapy. It is not the occurrence of techniques within the relationship that I wonder about, nor the implication that they are offered in resonance with me, but the assumption that these techniques have direction and purpose in my relationship with you seems to ignore the uniqueness and dynamic vibrance of our relationship in each moment. I also wonder about the interference in the musical reverberations of empathy between us that might occur in the artistic therapeutic form as a result of technological interventions.

I have an inner craving about what an artistic creation would look like, or even what would it be like to be aesthetically creating this art form without interference of pre-existing ideas and experiences, but open to the emergent nature of our creation. In other words what would I be like if I were not "pinned and wriggling on the wall"? If I had the experience of not having "known the eyes already, known them all – The eyes that fix (me) in a formulated phrase"? Could I, would I, then "dare to disturb the universe," presume to know how I should begin "to spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?"

#### REFERENCES

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