

THE NONDIRECTIVE ATTITUDE^{1 2}

Nathaniel J. Raskin

**Professor Emeritus, Northwestern University
Chicago Counseling and Psychotherapy Center**

I. The Attitude

Nondirective therapists have for some time been aware of the fact that the attitude of the therapist is *the* important thing to consider in the evaluation of counselor participation in the therapeutic process. The "recognition of feeling" response, first described in Rogers' (1942) *Counseling and Psychotherapy*, is the primary technique of the nondirective counselor, and for many people, has become the symbol of nondirective therapy. Too often, however, the appreciation of this school of therapy has been dulled, and its philosophy distorted, by an uncritical evaluation of the "recognition of feeling" technique on a purely intellectual level, in strict separation from the counselor's attitude toward the client, which is the only thing that can give meaning to the technique.

One such uncritical evaluation has resulted in the belief that the nondirective counselor merely parrots the client's words back to him. Under this system, the following type of exchange would occur throughout the interview (we can be pretty certain that there would be no more than one):

CLIENT: What do you think I ought to do - jump off a bridge, or look for another job to lose?

COUNSELOR: You wonder what I think you ought to do - whether to jump off a bridge, or look for another job to lose?

A response more in keeping with the nondirective spirit would be:

COUNSELOR: It's a pretty hopeless situation, isn't it? Your choice seems to lie between giving up entirely or facing further failure.³

¹ This essay also appears, with permission of *The Person-Centered Journal in Embracing non-directivity: Reassessing person-centered theory and practice in the 21st century*, B. E. Levitt (Ed.), pp. 329-347. Ross-on-Wye, UK: PCCS Books, 2005.

² Carl Rogers wrote notes in longhand in the margins during 1947, referenced here as footnotes. He also attached a note to Nat Raskin, signed as C.R., which reads, "Raskin - I found this very stimulating. I disagree in spots and made some marginal notes. I think your idea of maladj. can be combined with mine into a definition better than either. I'd like this back, or a carbon, if I may. I also wish you would show it to Porter, Bowman & others at the C.C." (Rogers is referring here to the Counseling Center in Chicago).

³ Rogers' note: This doesn't quite catch cnslr's attitude.

Occasionally, the counselor may feel that the most adequate way to represent the client's feeling is to repeat his expression verbatim, but this occurs only rarely, and it is certainly not a standard type of response in the nondirective method.

The "parroting" criticism is made only on the basis of a highly superficial acquaintance with nondirective therapy, however, and need hardly concern us further.

There is another level of response which is more deserving of our attention because it represents the sincere efforts of many individuals who are trying to do nondirective counseling, and is one which can work with a certain degree of efficiency. This may be characterized as an attempt to catch the feelings expressed by the client, and in the main to give them back to him without going beyond them, but occasionally to comprehend relationships between attitudes expressed separately by the client, and to include these relationships in the counselor response, and at other times to go slightly beyond the client's expressed feeling so as to speed up the process of insight and therapy. This second level of response is based on an attitude which includes a high degree of respect for the client, while retaining the notion that because of the counselor's superior knowledge and experience, there are ways of subtly guiding the client to speedier and more satisfactory adjustment. This is a quite popular form of therapy and is used by many of the modern psychoanalysts.

A third level of nondirective counselor response may be distinguished, in which the therapist has given up the goals of guidance and diagnosis, and assumes the role of an observer of the client and his attitudes. At this level, counseling becomes pretty much of an intellectual exercise, in which the counselor tries to catch the attitude being expressed, and reflects it back to the client. The counselor here feels quite ill at ease whenever the question of counselor responsibility for therapy arises, he feels the need frequently to structure (explain intellectually) the nature of the counseling relationship to the client, he is pretty much aware of the needs which the client is expressing in his statements, and he responds with unexpressed (verbally, that is) emotion to the client's ideas, on the basis of his own needs and predilections.

There is a fourth level of nondirective counselor response which to us represents *the* nondirective attitude. In a sense, it is a goal rather than one which is actually practiced by counselors. But, in the experience of some, it is a highly attainable goal, which makes this level highly distinct from the third level attitude we have just described, and changes the nature of the counseling process in a radical way. At this level, counselor participation becomes an active experiencing with the client of the feelings to which he gives expression.⁴ The counselor makes a maximum effort to get under the skin of the person with whom he is communicating,⁵ he tries to get *within* and to live the attitudes expressed instead of observing them,⁶ to catch every nuance of their changing nature; in a word, to absorb himself completely in the attitudes of the other.⁷ And in struggling to do this, there is simply no room for any other type of counselor activity or attitude. If he is attempting to live the attitudes of the other, he cannot be diagnosing them, he cannot be worrying about their relationship to him, the therapist, he cannot be thinking of making the process

⁴ Rogers' note: ?

⁵ Rogers' note: yes

⁶ Rogers' note: ?

⁷ Rogers' note: yes

go faster. Because he is another, and not the client, the understanding is not spontaneous but must be acquired, and this through the most intense, continuous and active attention to the feelings of the other, to the exclusion of any other type of attention.

Otto Rank (1936, p. 5) was the first to stress the experiential as being the essential aspect of the therapeutic relationship. However, with him, the therapist was still largely an observer, making himself aware of the needs of the patient and responding to him on the basis of those needs.

Jessie Taft (1933) came much closer to the writer's conception of the nondirective attitude in her description of her role in play therapy:

The contacts...were carried through, as far as I was humanly able, in terms of the child as she actually was at the moment, and my recognition of her immediate will, feeling or meaning. Everything centered in her, was oriented with regard to her. This does not mean that there were no checks but that even when my response was a prohibition, it was also a seeing of her, never a denial of the nature of her impulse or her right to have it. Where my own curiosity as to her behavior symptoms or my interest in bringing out certain material got the better of me, as it did occasionally, I abandoned it, as soon as I became conscious of my folly... Interpretation there was none, except a verbalization on my part of what the child seemed to be feeling and doing, a comparatively spontaneous response to her words or actions which should clarify or make more conscious the self of the moment whatever it might be. (p. 27-28)

The present writer (Raskin, 1948/2004) has shown, in "The Development of Nondirective Therapy," how Taft at times departed from the present feelings of the child as the focal point of her interest in the therapeutic hour.

Rogers (1946), in discussing the client-centered nature of the therapeutic relationship, has given definitive meaning to the nondirective attitude:

The third distinctive feature of this type of therapy is the character of the relationship between therapist and client. Unlike other therapies in which the skills of the therapist are to be exercised upon the client, in this approach the skills of the therapist are focused upon creating a psychological atmosphere in which the client can work. If the counselor can create a relationship permeated by warmth, understanding, safety from any type of attack, no matter how trivial, and basic acceptance of the person as he is, then the client will drop his natural defensiveness and use the situation. As we have puzzled over the characteristics of a successful therapeutic relationship, we have come to feel that the sense of communication is very important. If the client feels that he is actually communicating his present attitudes, superficial, confused, or conflicted as they may be, and that his communication is understood rather than evaluated in any way, then he is freed to communicate more deeply. A relationship in which the client thus feels that he is communicating is almost certain to be fruitful. All of this means a drastic reorganization in the counselor's thinking, particularly if he has previously utilized other approaches. He gradually learns that the statement that the time is to be "the client's hour" means just that, and that his

biggest task is to make it more and more deeply true. Perhaps something of the characteristics of the relationship may be suggested by excerpts from a paper written by a young minister who has spent several months learning client-centered counseling procedures.

"Because the client-centered, nondirective counseling approach has been rather carefully defined and clearly illustrated, it gives the "Illusion of Simplicity." The technique seems deceptively easy to master. Then you begin to practice. A word is wrong here and there. You don't quite reflect feeling, but reflect content instead. It is difficult to handle questions; you are tempted to interpret. Nothing seems so serious that further practice won't correct it. Perhaps you are having trouble playing two roles - that of minister and that of counselor. Bring up the question in class and the matter is solved again with a deceptive ease. But these apparently minor errors and a certain woodenness of response seem exceedingly persistent.

"Only gradually does it dawn that if the technique is true it demands a feeling of warmth. You begin to feel that the attitude is the thing. Every little word is not so important if you have the correct accepting and permissive attitude toward the client. So you bear down on the permissiveness and acceptance. You will permit⁸ and accept and reflect the client, if it kills him!

"But you still have those troublesome questions from the client. He simply doesn't know the next step. He asks you to give him a hint, some possibilities, after all you are expected to know something, else why is he here? As a minister, you ought to have some convictions about what people should believe, how they should act. As a counselor, you should know something about removing this obstacle - you ought to have the equivalent of the surgeon's knife and use it. Then you begin to wonder. The technique is good, but... does it go far enough? does it really work on clients? is it right to leave a person helpless, when you might show him the way out?

"Here it seems to me is the crucial point. "Narrow is the gate" and hard the path from here on. No one else can give satisfying answers and even the instructors seem frustrating because they appear not to be helpful in your specific case. For here is demanded of you what no other person can do or point out - and that is to rigorously scrutinize yourself and your attitudes towards others. Do you believe that all people truly have a creative potential in them? That each person is a unique individual and that he alone can work out his own individuality? Or do you really believe that some persons are of "negative value" and others are weak and must be led and taught by "wiser," "stronger" people?

"You begin to see that there is nothing compartmentalized about this method of counseling. It is not just counseling, because it demands the most exhaustive, penetrating, and comprehensive consistency. In other methods you can shape tools, pick

⁸ Raskin indicates that although the original reads as "permiss," Rogers intended to write the word "permit," accounting for the correction in this essay.

them up for use when you will. But when genuine acceptance and permissiveness are your tools it requires nothing less than the whole complete personality. And to grow oneself is the most demanding of all."

He goes on to discuss the notion that the counselor must be restrained and "self-denying." He concludes that this is a mistaken notion.

"Instead of demanding less of the counselor's personality in the situation, client-centered counseling in some ways demands more. It demands discipline, not restraint. It calls for the utmost in sensitivity, appreciative awareness, channeled and disciplined. It demands that the counselor put all he has of these precious qualities into the situation, but in a disciplined, refined manner. It is restraint only in the sense that the counselor does not express himself in certain areas that he may use himself in others.

"Even this is deceptive, however. It is not so much restraint in any area as it is a focusing, sensitizing one's energies and personality in the direction of an appreciative and understanding attitude."

As time has gone by we have come to put increasing stress upon the 'client-centeredness' of the relationship, because it is more effective the more completely the counselor concentrates upon trying to understand the client *as the client seems to himself*. As I look back upon some of our earlier published cases - the case of Herbert Bryan in my book, or Snyder's case of Mr. M. - I realize that we have gradually dropped the vestiges of subtle directiveness which are all too evident in those cases. We have come to recognize that if we can provide understanding of the way the client seems to himself at this moment, he can do the rest. The therapist must lay aside his preoccupation with diagnosis and his diagnostic shrewdness, must discard his tendency to make professional evaluations, must cease his endeavors to formulate an accurate prognosis, must give up the temptation subtly to guide the individual, and must concentrate on one purpose only; that of providing deep understanding and acceptance of the attitudes consciously held at this moment by the client as he explores step by step into the dangerous areas which he has been denying to consciousness.

I trust it is evident from this description that this type of relationship can exist only if the counselor is deeply and genuinely able to adopt these attitudes. Client-centered counseling, if it is to be effective, cannot be a trick or a tool. It is not a subtle way of guiding the client while pretending to let him guide himself. To be effective, it must be genuine. It is this sensitive and sincere 'client-centeredness' in the therapeutic relationship that I regard as the third characteristic of nondirective therapy which sets it distinctively apart from other approaches. (Rogers, 1946, p. 419-421)

Robert D. Quinn was one of the earliest to stress the importance of this "experiencing" therapist within a Rogerian rather than Rankian frame of reference. In an unpublished paper in 1946, he wrote,

...it is important to differentiate experiencing from knowing...Knowing involves the acquisition of meanings and can be exclusively an intellectual process, that is, need not involve the whole individual as an acting, feeling, expressive self. Experiencing, in contrast, involves active interplay of affect with imagery - it is a dramatic living or reliving of the situation wherein the feelings expressed give the intellectual content its vitalizing substrata. Experiencing is always temporally in the immediate present since it postulates some form of interaction between the expressive self and the milieu. Knowing, on the other hand, occurs in a historical frame of reference, is oriented temporally to the past, and these new meanings need not involve reorganization of the acting self as it impinges upon the milieu.

In another cogent passage, Quinn wrote:

Here then, is the central issue for a constructive therapy: It must have at its point of origin the relationship between the client and the counselor, for this is the only social contact initially available, except that within the client's own self, which is inevitably in too chaotic a state to permit of much genuine experiencing. This relationship must be such that the client can will freely, can feel freely, and can eventually come to clarify his own self concept. Clearly, this must be a relationship in which the self organization of the therapist is consistently denied representation. His contribution must be solely a sympathetic largess, a rapt attention intent only upon understanding and reaffirming the experiences of the client as he sees and feels them, and always at the rate and to the depth that the client himself chooses to undergo them. Thus, the sessions are literally cleared of obstacles inhibiting the client's experiencing, so that, in Rank's terms, he may come to make himself what he is,...will it and do it himself without force or justification and without need to shift the responsibility for it.⁹

Bown has shown a profound appreciation for the importance of deep counselor participation in the client's expression of feelings. He has emphasized the

...*struggle* to understand the feelings which are being expressed. It is a struggle because the counselor is making his most sincere attempt to reflect feelings which are being expressed in confused and uncertain fashion, which are only at the periphery of consciousness.

...the literature would indicate that many counselors hesitate to reflect any feeling which has not been made obvious to them by the client. They are making every effort to be completely nondirective, but it seems to me that they are missing the most fruitful opportunities to offer real, deep understanding as well as to provide an area of concentration in which clarification and insight can be achieved most readily.

⁹ Rogers' note: Here it is the client who is experiencing & this I think is entirely right

If this kind of response is untainted with subtle directiveness, it conveys to the client the most complete acceptance; the counselor is not merely repeating what is already obvious to the client, but rather, he is showing his willingness to struggle with the client for the real meaning, the true attitudes... This is warmth and the most genuine interest. This is the kind of counselor effort which puts method so far in the background that it can no longer be noticed by either client or counselor... (Unpublished paper)

Through these quotations and through the writer's own description of the nondirective attitude, it is hoped that the reader has been given some feeling for what it is. The question now arises, "What is the justification, the rationale for the nondirective, attitude? Why use such a method, verging on the mystical,¹⁰ which is completely contrary to the traditional approach of science, of medicine? Where does the need for it arise?" In the succeeding sections of this paper, the writer will attempt to answer these questions, and to show the implications of the attitude, not only for psychotherapy, but for education and other areas of human relationships, and for the study of personality.

II. Integro¹¹ and the Self-Concept

Every bit of matter in the universe is a dynamic system, an organization of forces. Living matter is distinguished by a capacity within itself to reorganize its system in order to effect a better relationship with its environment; it is adaptive. Living animal matter has the additional capacity of a conscious¹² perception of its environment, on the basis of which, largely, it makes its adaptation to it. In the human being, we find in addition to all of these capacities, the perception of self as separate from the environment, the consciousness of self as the adaptive force in coping with the environment, and a resulting value which is placed on this self, based largely on the satisfaction obtained for the individual in its interaction with the environment. The self has the capacity to achieve a continuously better self and a continuously better relationship with its environment and it is conscious of this capacity. Hence when this capacity is not being well utilized, in other words, when an unsatisfying relationship with the environment exists, with a consequently low value placed on the self by the self, we have the condition of maladjustment.

The capacity of people to integrate their perceptions into insights which are creatively utilized towards the achievement of a more satisfying adjustment has been keenly recognized in the following statement of Rogers (1946) as a result of his experiences in psychotherapy. For purposes of convenience, we shall term this capacity, "integro." It is quite similar to Rank's "will."

As we examine and try to evaluate our clinical experience with client-centered therapy, the phenomenon of the reorganization of attitudes and the redirection of behavior by the individual assumes greater and greater importance. This

¹⁰ Here, Rogers underlined the word "mystical" and wrote, "vague, subtle, etc., but hardly mystical is it?"

¹¹ This is a term coined by Nat Raskin.

¹² Here Rogers underlined the word "conscious" and wrote, "not all animals are conscious"

phenomenon seems to find inadequate explanation in terms of the determinism which is the predominant philosophical background of most psychological work. The capacity of the individual to reorganize his attitudes and behavior in ways not determined by external factors nor by previous elements in his own experience, but determined by his own insight into those factors, is an impressive capacity. It involves a basic spontaneity which we have been loathe to admit into our scientific thinking.

The clinical experience could be summarized by saying that the behavior of the human organism may be determined by the influences to which it has been exposed, *but it may also be determined by the creative and integrative insight of the organism itself*. This ability of the person to discover new meaning in the forces which impinge upon him and in the past experiences which have been controlling him, and the ability to alter consciously his behavior in the light of this new meaning, has a profound significance for our thinking which has not been fully realized. We need to revise the philosophical basis of our work to a point where it can admit that forces exist within the individual which can exercise a spontaneous and significant influence upon behavior which is not predictable through knowledge of prior influences and conditionings. The forces released through a catalytic process of therapy are not adequately accounted for by a knowledge of the individual's previous conditionings, but only if we grant the presence of a spontaneous force within the organism which has the capacity of integration and redirection. This capacity for volitional control is a force which we must take into account in any psychological equation. (p. 421-422)

With these preliminary remarks serving as an orientation, the following propositions may be advanced:

- (1) The human organism, from the first, responds in an adaptive way to its environment.
- (2) Through the differential responses which it receives to different ways of behaving—because it is treated as an organism with the power of choice in its behavioral reactions, and because it learns that by exercising choice in its behavioral reactions, it can obtain desired responses from the environment—the organism gradually becomes conscious of its power to perceive and to react to its environment differentially, in order to, achieve satisfaction (*integro*). This is concomitant with the growing consciousness of the self. At the same time, through being evaluated by others and by learning itself to evaluate its *integro* capacity, a value is placed on the self.
- (3) This self-concept, which consists of the organism's evaluative impression of itself, becomes an important determining factor in its behavior, in that the organism wishes to achieve the maximum value for the self.
- (4) From the external frame of reference, the self tends to be viewed as the whole person—its physical appearance, personality characteristics, abilities, etc. From the internal frame of reference, the concept of self

consists of an evaluation of all these characteristics as they relate to helping the organism to cope with its environment. Thus, it may be said to consist of integro and the value which is placed on it. This is the self as perceived; the self as perceiver is also within the consciousness of the internal frame of reference, but this is a self which is not evaluated. It serves as a point of reference, as an identifying symbol. Thus, in the statement, "I just don't think much of myself," a common attitude among people seeking help, "I" is the reference point, the unevaluated self, the perceiver, while "myself" is the evaluated integro.

Philosophers through the centuries have bandied the concept of "self" about and never achieved much progress, chiefly because there was no common operational basis for their definitions. Verbatim recordings of treatment interviews provide a wealth of material on the self as viewed from an internal frame of reference (IFR). It is on the basis of such data and the consistent use of the IFR that it is hoped that some common principles about the self-concept may be attained.

III. Maladjustment¹³

A person cannot be said to be maladjusted simply on the basis of an observer's judgment of his efficiency in relating to his environment; this is a very relative matter. The writer's view is that maladjustment exists when the self-concept is viewed from the IFR as being unsatisfactory, i.e., the individual is not content with his own capacity to adjust to the environment in a manner which will give him satisfaction. It is necessary, if maladjustment is to exist, that this dissatisfaction be referred by the individual to his general capacity to adjust, to integro, to the self-concept. This becomes clear when it is considered that a well-adjusted individual may experience occasional frustrations without inferring that he is inferior in a general way.

It is also clear that in maladjustment, the self-concept will be the focus of the individual's attention and energies a considerable part of the time. We may say that in a condition of adjustment, the integro of the individual is focused on the outside world, while in maladjustment, it is focused on the self. This is the same as Rank's view that the neurotic is "ego-bound" and that to be cured, he must learn to will, to use his creative energies in the world about him.

If it was correct to say that from the IFR, the self-concept is largely identified with integro, the inference may now be made that in maladjustment, we have a condition where integro is focused on integro, inadequately regarded capacities are grappling with inadequately regarded capacities, an unacceptable self is attempting to deal with an unacceptable self. This creates a "going-around-in-circles" picture which corresponds with the feelings actually reported by maladjusted people. With the psychotic personality, it may be said that this struggle has been given up, the self is so hard to face that all of the individual's difficulties have been projected on the world.

¹³ Rogers is referring to this discussion of maladjustment in his note to Raskin, referenced in footnote number 2.

IV. Factors Involved in Readjustment

When we wish to change even an inanimate organization, we must take into account what its present system of forces is. Any dynamic system can be changed only on its own terms; we must start with what it is and any changes must be based on the capacities of that present organization.

Anybody who wishes to change a maladjusted human being to a condition of adjustment must reckon with this factor. But in trying to change the attitudes of a human, an even more powerful force must be contended with. It derives from the fact that a person has within himself the capacity for change, for achieving a more satisfactory adjustment, he has his own integro. In other in words, the individual himself holds the key to any change in himself.

Now, even when the integro is weak, as is the case when a person is maladjusted, the person will seek jealously, so to speak, to utilize it— if only in a negative way— rather than accept the creative ideas of another in reference to himself. Thus, typically, a client will appear, asking for answers to his dilemmas. If answers are proposed, rather than accept them, he will utilize his creative energies in an effort to tear them down. This unwillingness to use another's integro is a fundamental fact which has too often been glossed over in the field of mental hygiene. “He doesn't know what he wants” is a popular way for the interviewer to respond to such a situation, but this is obviously a superficial and inadequate explanation which ignores the client's IFR. In the terms of this paper, the explanation is not hard to find. The maladjustment *is* the dissatisfaction with integro, it is not simply the frustrations of many unsolved problems, but the pinning of the responsibility for the frustrations on a central factor, the self. Obviously then, satisfaction will not come with solutions to specific problems, but only with a different way of looking at the self which will result in satisfaction for the individual. This may come through an actually strengthened integro where in therapy the client comes to perceive his difficulties, grapples with them, and acquires confidence in himself through their successful solution. Or it may come through a reevaluation of the self-concept, independent of the solution of any specific problem, in which the formerly unacceptable self becomes acceptable. But dissatisfaction with integro can never be converted to satisfaction through another's answers.

When the writer above cited the general fact of resistance to the use of another's integro, the question of the very dependent person will have occurred to many readers. It is true indeed that we can find people in this category who will not openly resist the solutions of another, but will actively seek and utilize them. But what of such a person's adjustment? Are we helping it any, or are we merely furthering his dependency, by providing him with answers. In the writer's terms, the dependent person is one with very weak integro, with such a weak concept of self that it will be very difficult for him to face it, but the only real help he can get *is* to face himself with his dependency and strive to overcome it, to strengthen his integro. We will find that dependent people can do this, with the integro they have, that their dependency has been accompanied all along by a deep hostility toward those who got in the way of their becoming people in their own right.

If integro, the growth force, or what have you, is such a widespread and powerful thing, it may be asked, why do we have clients coming in for help in the first place? Why

do we have very dependent people who will accept the solutions of others? The answer is that to use *integro*, especially when one is maladjusted, is a painful process. It is painful to examine an inadequate self, to reconstruct it, to try out a new one.

Where does environmental treatment fit into this formulation? Cannot the independent capacities of the self be strengthened through placing the individual in the right kind of environment? Will not a good job, a good home placement, strengthen the maladjusted person? On first impulse, the answer to such questions is a simple affirmative. But on looking closer at what is involved, complicating issues emerge.

For one thing, a good job, a good home, a good environment, are not "good" in the absolute sense. They are good as far as some of us are concerned, and good in ways which are different for each individual who lives in these environments. What we are getting at is that an individual who is dissatisfied with himself and consequently with the world, is going to be very difficult to please with an environment provided by somebody else. We all look at the world through our own special brand of glasses, and the person who feels maladjusted will not have his rose-colored. We go at the problem in a much more basic way when we give the self an opportunity to change; then, instead of introducing certain specific environmental changes, the effects on the individual of which are difficult to predict, we are providing an opportunity for a really sweeping environmental change, for the person who leaves therapy feeling satisfied with himself sees the whole world differently, and uses exactly the same (from the external frame of reference) conditions in a much more constructive way.

Another, perhaps less basic question connected with environmental treatment, is the question of where the counselor stops helping. Recently the writer actively helped a person he was counseling, a very dependent one, to get a job. During the next interview, the client wished help on such problems as whether or not to take his own lunch to work with him, what to do if his supervisor asked him to do something he didn't know how, etc. And didn't he really have a right to get such help from the counselor because the latter had gotten him into the work situation? If you try to explain to such a client why you can help him with certain problems and not with others, you cannot because you cannot give yourself a satisfactory answer to that question. The only answer for the writer to this problem is to let the person help himself from the very beginning, that to the extent that he is helped by your specific solutions, to that extent you are hurting his chances for self-actualization.

V. Object and Process

We are changing, developing organisms interacting with other changing, developing organisms in a changing, developing world. For some reason, through necessity or perhaps convenience, in interacting with different parts of this dynamic environment, we often tend to ignore their process aspects and treat them as static objects, we peg them, freeze them. The words we use are an example of our attempt to deal with our environment by "freezing" the various processes of which it consists. Practically all organizations we set up—factories, schools, schedules—are examples of the same tendency.

What is so bad about identifying and organizing processes in this way? Well, whenever we treat something in a way which ignores its real characteristics, we are making

an error, and sometimes the error is a very great one. It is not so bad when we call two things "apple" when one is a Washington Winesap and the other is a Delicious. It is a little more serious when we identify the man who cleans our office as "porter" and forget that he may have attitudes and a family and psychological needs just like ours. Or when we label a man "psychopath" or "paranoid schizophrenic" and forget that he has feelings which are just as real to him as ours are to us.

It is a convenient thing to set up plane schedules so that we can know at what time we can take off for Los Angeles, but it's not quite the same thing when we organize course schedules and decide that at 9 o'clock every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Professor Smith will lecture on Abnormal Psychology to the class in Psychology 111. The error there is that on many of these mornings, there will be many a student who will not be the least bit interested in hearing about Abnormal Psychology from Professor Smith or from anyone else perhaps, and the learning which is supposed to take place will not occur. And it may be well to recognize that though it is very efficient to set up factories so that each of us who can afford it may have a smooth-running six-cylinder automobile, the hundreds of thousands of fellows who are making the automobiles by doing the same job over and over again, year after year, are not developing their creative capacities.

In other words, our culture is shot through with examples of how we treat the people in it as objects, while in fact they are dynamic organisms with changing attitudes and with potentially improving abilities. The meaning of this for psychology and psychotherapy is obvious. If we are in the business of helping maladjusted people to become adjusted, let us not pigeonhole, peg, freeze, make objects out of them. We above all should be aware of the human being's feeling, changing, dynamic, adaptive, creative capacities.

This is not a straw man which the writer is setting up. This is no imagined danger. The standard way of treating human beings in mental hygiene practice today is as objects. He sits across the desk from us and we think, "What has he got? What is his trouble? How did he get this way? Didn't that sound schizy? I feel sorry for his kids. There he goes, using me as a father figure," etc. It is not our fault that we examine people in this way. We have been trained in the method of finding out what people are like in order that we may then help them. How can we treat intelligently unless we first diagnose? We have to find out what their symptoms are, what their needs are, what personality formation they have, how their present condition developed. But do we?

VI. The Need for the Nondirective Attitude in Psychotherapy

When we take a diagnosing attitude toward our mental hygiene patients—when, in other words, we treat them as objects—we are doing more than misjudging what we are dealing with, we are doing more than making an object out of a dynamic process.

The effect we have is to change the nature of that process. When we look at a person as an object, we in fact help to make an object out of him. For when a person becomes aware that he is being examined, he ceases to develop his own attitudes, but immediately takes a defending attitude. He strives to maintain what he is now. And so he tends actually to become an object.

This is even more true when in therapy, we try to change the client in some way. If he does not submit, he resists, he maintains and defends his present system of attitudes.

If he does change with the will of the therapist, his adjustment capacity and self-respect are weakened.

Thus, the effect of taking the diagnosing and changing attitudes towards our clients is to discredit their own capacities for change. For when we diagnose, we imply that we are going to do the changing and when we try to do the changing, we are not giving the client a chance to do it.

In terms of the *integro* concept which was developed earlier in this paper, *integro* is stifled when the diagnosing or object attitude is adopted, and it ceases to operate in a positive way when the attempt is made to change the client, to influence him according to another's will. And if *integro* is not given an opportunity to operate in a positive way, if the client does not get a chance to perceive and act on his concept of self in an atmosphere free of threat, this concept of self is not going to change very much, and the individual will continue in a maladjusted state.

If we cannot diagnose, if we cannot advise our clients, what is there left for us to do? We return now to Quinn's distinction between knowing and experiencing which was quoted in the first section of this paper. The alternative to trying to know our client, which is equivalent to treating him as object, is to experience with him, to try to understand what it is that he is feeling at the moment, and to communicate that understanding to him. The alternative is to become part of the dynamic process which our client represents and so to accept that process for whatever it is at the present time—weak, poor, inadequate, doubtful, confused, or whatever it happens to be.¹⁴ And somehow¹⁵, the vicious circle of weak *integro* working on weak *integro*, of poorly regarded and unacceptable self grappling with poorly regarded and unacceptable self, is thus broken. The process, having been-accepted in the unsatisfactory state, moves towards a more stable, comfortable condition in a manner which might be termed homeostatic.

To relate what has been said here with our description of the nondirective attitude is now a simple task. The nondirective attitude is *the* method of experiencing with the client, which allows no opportunity for trying to *know* him. Thus, *integro* is given the maximum opportunity to function and the self-concept is given the best chance of becoming a satisfactory part of an adjusted individual. The three levels of nondirection discussed in our introduction to the nondirective attitude represent various degrees of the “knowing” approach, and so constitute various degrees of impediment to the integrative and creative capacities of the client in the reconstruction of his concept of self.

VII. Psychotherapy and General Medicine

The nondirective attitude constitutes for psychotherapy an approach quite at variance with that of the physician, whose standard method of procedure is to diagnose and then treat. Why should a psychotherapeutic approach be different?

The difference lies in the fact that in general medicine we deal with conditions of the human body which are subject to volitional control only in a very indirect way, while

¹⁴ Rogers' note: Very good

¹⁵ Rogers' note: how? And because we become temporarily a part of his process, from within, and accept his weakness, he too can bear to look at and accept it.

in psychotherapy we have to do with behavior and with attitudes, both of which are highly subject to the will. The hypothesis may be ventured that in any aspect of living which is governed by the will, the most efficient method of achieving a comfortable state is to accept the will or attitudes of the individual concerned, while in those areas which are relatively independent of volitional control, another's creative capacities may be utilized without difficulty.

Conditions formerly thought to be purely of a physical nature are coming more and more to be recognized as connected with psychological forces. The origins of these psychosomatic disturbances may well prove to be connected with disturbances of the concept of self. If this is true, the treatment of psychosomatic conditions should rely heavily on the nondirective attitude. At the same time, it would seem to be necessary, in the case of any suggested organic disturbance that a diagnostic study be made to evaluate the physical basis of the complaint. If a physical basis is established, the study will have justified itself. If a physical basis is not found, and the inference is made that the condition is of a psychological origin, the study, with its total neglect of the patient's integro, with its implication that "doctor will take care of things," will have had a detrimental effect on further treatment, but in our present state of knowledge, this would appear to be a cost which must be borne.

The attitudes of patients are important even in straight medical practices. Rogers (1946) has cited the changes made by one medical practitioner in recognition of the importance of the patient's point of view.

The viewpoint appears to have implications for medicine. It has fascinated me to observe that when a prominent allergist began to use client-centered therapy for the treatment of non-specific allergies, he found not only very good therapeutic results, but the experience began to affect his whole medical practice. It has gradually meant the reorganization of his office procedure. He has given his nurses a new type of training in understanding the patient. He has decided to have all medical histories taken by a nonmedical person trained in nondirective techniques, in order to get a true picture of the client's feelings and attitudes toward himself and his health, uncluttered by the bias and diagnostic evaluation which is almost inevitable when a medical person takes the history and unintentionally distorts the material by his premature judgments. He has found these histories much more helpful to the physicians than those taken by physicians. (p.422)

VIII. The Nondirective Attitude and Education

Psychological practices were introduced into education by Pestalozzi, Herbert, and others with the aim of making more efficient the task of teaching facts to individuals. Of more recent origin, the idea of educating people to become well-adjusted citizens who can function efficiently as individuals and as members of the community, as opposed to the notion of making them storehouses of facts, has been stressed by Dewey, Rugg, Prescott, and others. The nondirective attitude, with its stress on individuality, and the ability of people to organize their perceptions in ways which are best for them fits in well

with this more modern aim, while it may, at the same time perhaps, have implications for efficiency in the teaching of facts.

Tentatively, it might be said that therapy is largely a matter of learning about oneself. Education, on the other hand, at least by the way it is generally organized today, deals with learning about the world. This distinction accounts for the fact that a large amount of material is learned under the prevailing system of education, despite the fact that most of this material originates with the teacher. A psychotherapist who tried to use the equivalent approach to teach a client about himself would not get as far.

Does the fact that information which is not closely related to the concept of self can be absorbed without too much resistance mean that the present educational approach is satisfactory, even though it is at variance with our therapeutic philosophy? Before answering this question, let us examine the relation between the two fields of education and psychotherapy more closely.

In both cases we are dealing with a dynamic, creative, adaptive system engaged in an activity of acquiring new concepts. Can we not make the generalization that to be absorbed, any new concepts must have meaning for the system as it exists at present and must not be at variance with the creative and adaptive tendencies of the system? To learn Freud, for example, the student must be able to relate Freudian concepts to his present system of knowledge, and these concepts must not be too opposed to his present system of values, upon which is based his manner of behaving and the direction in which he is developing. Students of nondirective therapy who have extensive backgrounds in diagnostic techniques and in a diagnostic approach to treatment commonly experience difficulty in acquiring the nondirective method. Similarly, those who believe deeply in the nondirective philosophy sometimes find that learning new diagnostic methods such as the Rorschach test is no easy matter.

This fact—that in order for learning to take place, the new knowledge must be in accordance with the content and direction of the present dynamic system, which the learner represents—means that a good curriculum cannot be good in itself, but must be evaluated in relation to each individual learner.

A further fact of considerable importance is that learning takes place not simply over a period of time, but at a particular moment, which means that the learning system must jibe with the concepts to be acquired at the moment of impact.

If these principles are correct, it follows that present educational practice is highly inefficient. For in general, the matching of student knowledge and attitudes with curriculum takes place at a distance very far removed from the actual moment of learning. In general elementary school practice, the attitudinal aspects are practically ignored, and a crude system of grade levels and of curricula which are based on a logical development of ideas, supposedly of general application, are the methods of matching present pupil knowledge with new ideas to be learned. In high school, the attitudinal aspects are dealt with largely by having the student choose the area of specialization and by allowing him a small number of elective courses. This system is continued and expanded at the college and university levels. But even the elective course, as it is usually taught, is still far removed in its organization from the conditions which have been described as necessary for learning. The typical moment in a typical hour will see the instructor trying to get across an idea which *he* may regard as important, an idea related to a course organization which *he* may have constructed, a course organization which may have real meaning for

him in *his* scheme of living, or may be a relatively separate construct, divorced from his behavior goals. In this type of instruction, the number of students who will relate the concept being presented to *their* life activity, in any way other than to memorize it for an examination which they must pass, is going to be very small indeed.

Fact absorption under the present educational system, which emphasizes *teaching* rather than *learning*, which devotes more energy to building curricula than to studying the learning process, has been proved by follow-up studies, by public opinion polls, and by everyday observation of others and of ourselves, to be notoriously inefficient. The writer hopes that he has been able partially to account for this inefficiency.

But fact absorption is no longer the key goal of education, at least among the more advanced thinkers in the field. How may we evaluate the present system insofar as it produces independent, well-adjusted, useful, public-minded citizens? The answer becomes clear and the question farcical even as it is being stated. Most citizens do not meet this description very well. But why should they, having been brought up in an educational system in which they were taught to spend all of their time and energy doing homework *for* a teacher; in which a high value was placed on conformity to this pattern, in which individual creative thinking and the development of their individual system of attitudes and knowledge was given no encouragement but had to be subordinated to assigned work, to learning someone else's system of knowledge, in which their individual problems of learning and of general adjustment were buried in the mass process of outward conformity, in which as a result, they were forced to stew unproductively in their own juice and to utilize much of their energies in an unconstructive opposition to the patterns being imposed on them, which left little inclination, time, or energy for them to become active, interested members of the social groups of which they were a part?

Again, it must be asked, what is the alternative to present procedures? The answer would seem to lie in the direction of greater recognition of the creative, self-directive capacities of students, by revising classroom method and structure in a way which will provide an opportunity for individual students to express and develop their own attitudes and to clear up questions regarding factual material. We may proceed on the principle that both education and psychotherapy are processes of self-development which will function most efficiently when the present state of development, as viewed by the subject, is understood and accepted by the teacher or therapist. The nondirective attitude will, therefore, by implication, belong in the classroom as well as in the therapeutic situation. It will not take exactly the same form in the educational environment because of the group situation, because the attitudes expressed will not be so consistently related to the individual's concept of self and will, therefore, not be as intense or deep, and because of the limits imposed by the institution in which the learning is taking place. Despite these conditions, the attitude is definitely practicable in the educational field, with Cantor (1943), Rogers (1946, p. 421), Blocksma and Porter (1947) and Shedlin (1947) all having utilized it to a very great extent, on the higher education level.

IX. Implications of the Nondirective Attitude for the Study of Personality

Rogers (1947) has pointed out the implications which experiences in nondirective therapy have for the study of personality. His main thesis is that behavior will be better

understood and predicted if the point of reference used in our investigations is the subject's IFR.

The nondirective attitude is related to this point of view in the following ways:

- (1) Interviews in which the nondirective attitude is employed by the therapist yield material rich in depth and meaning for the client. Interviews of this nature have a minimum of counselor-originated ideas and counselor-influenced client concepts.
- (2) Nondirective interviews, because of the freedom provided for the positive operation of client integro, provide an unusual opportunity to observe the dynamic, adaptive, creative qualities of human personality, as the client is seen to deal with the self, and with problems which have the utmost of meaning for him.
- (3) If the assumption is granted that psychological reality for any individual consists of his feelings about, his perceptions of the world (including himself) at any given moment, the nondirective attitude provides the closest possible approach of another to psychological reality.

A corollary of this hypothesis would be that the most valid generalizations of a psychological nature would be those made on the basis of material obtained by employing the nondirective attitude with large numbers of people. If, further, it is granted that phenotypical data consisting of a subject's feelings and perceptions of the world at any given moment provide all the necessary data needed to predict his behavior at that moment, then it follows that data collected through the use of a nondirective attitude furnishes the best means of predicting behavior.

In terms of general semantics, data provided by the nondirective attitude are at a low-order level of abstraction, close to reality, in contrast with high-order level of abstractions such as Rorschach "C", "M", "affect," "experience balance," "shading shock," etc. It stands also in favorable contrast to the high-order level of abstractions provide by genotypical attempts to explain human behavior and personality, as, for example, the Freudian type of explanation.

X. The Non-Intellectual Nature of the Nondirective Attitude

Intellectually, the nondirective attitude can be explained in a matter of a few sentences. On the surface, it appears that nondirective therapy would be a very simple technique to learn. This is not the way it works out, even given very intelligent people who are well-adjusted, eager to learn, and with fine backgrounds in psychological theory and in human relations experience. It has become clear that learning nondirective therapy is not a matter of acquiring technique, but of gradually gaining the conviction that people do not have to be guided into adjustment, but can do it themselves when accepted as they are. Blocksma and Porter (1947) have outlined some of the stages that counselors in training in the nondirective method can be observed to go through. These phases are similar to those observed in clients who are treated in nondirective therapy.

It is not surprising that learning this method and philosophy is a slow process. For acceptance is one principle of human relationships which does not run very deep in our culture. From the time we are born, others begin to determine our needs for us, and

as we have seen, this continues through the school years, and many of us have the type of employment which sees the same pattern at work. In terms of other concepts that have been employed in this paper, it may be said that we have been taught to know, use, or be used by other people, rather than experience with and accept them. This long-standing pattern of behavior, this deeply ingrained attitude, is not going to easily absorb a new idea which means new ways of behaving and looking at things.

References

- Blockson, D. D., & Porter, E. H., Jr. (1947). A short-term training program in client-centered counseling. *Journal of Consulting Psychology, 11*(2), 55-60.
- Bown, O. H. Unpublished paper.
- Cantor, N. (1946). *The Dynamics of Learning*. Buffalo, NY: Foster and Stewart.
- Quinn, R. D. (1946). Unpublished paper.
- Rank, O. (1936). *Will Therapy*. New York: Knopf.
- Raskin, N. J. (1948/2004). The development of nondirective therapy. *Journal of Consulting Psychology, 12*, 92-110. Reprinted in NJ Raskin (2004), *Contributions to Client-Centered Therapy and the Person-Centered Approach*. Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.
- Rogers, C. R. (1942). *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Newer concepts in practice*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rogers, C. R. (1946). Significant aspects of Client-Centered Therapy. *American Psychologist, 1*, 415-22.
- Rogers, C. R. (1947). Some observations on the organization of personality. *American Psychologist, 2*, 357-368.
- Shedlin, A. J. (1947). A student-centered class. *Personal Counselor, 2* (2), 116-131.
- Taft, J. (1933) *The Dynamics of Therapy*. New York: Macmillan.