

The Ministry of Counseling

by
Carol R. Murphy



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Pendle Hill Publications
338 Plush Mill Road
Wallingford, PA 19086-6023
Email: publications@pendlehill.org

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Preface

This essay arises from an overmastering concern to bring together two parallel endeavors: a living religion of the Holy Spirit with a recent movement in therapeutic counseling which has arisen from a deep respect for the human spirit. What I know about religion I owe largely to the influence of Pendle Hill. What little I know of counseling I owe to two brief but profitable summers of study at Garrett Biblical Institute under Dr. Carroll A.

Wise, and at Syracuse University under Dr. Arthur W. Combs and his associates. My thoughts have grown and clarified in contact with my teachers and fellow students, and I have embodied many of their ideas in what follows. Nevertheless, the errors, inferences and conclusions are my own.

For further reading the following books are suggested: Snygg and Combs, *Individual Behavior*; Carl R. Rogers, *Client Centered Therapy*; C. A. Wise, *Pastoral Counseling*; and Earl Kelley, *Education for What is Real*.

C. R. M.

The Ministry of Counseling

Our labor is to bring all men to their own teacher in themselves.

George Fox, *Journal*

If I keep from preaching at people, they improve themselves,

If I keep from imposing on people, they become themselves.

Laotzu (Witter Bynner, trans.)

Perhaps one day you are having a talk with a young person who seems at once to be under some urgency and some constraint. He begins speaking of some minor problem. Finally, he turns anxious eyes to you. "Could I talk to you about myself?" he asks timidly. "I know you have a religious faith and maybe that's what I need . . . I, uh, well, I'm worried. I get so tense about little things. I guess I feel

inadequate; I wish I knew why. Maybe I'm losing my faith or my grip on life, or something." Or perhaps a grief-stricken friend of yours lifts an anguished face to cry out: "How can you go on prating about a good God, when life is so miserable? What have I done that this should happen to me? What have I left to live for?"

This inner unhappiness and reaching out for help may make you, as the one appealed to, feel equally helpless. As a religious believer, you will ask yourself whether religion does not have some office of mercy here. Does not salvation of the soul include release from anxiety and meaninglessness? Yet in the moment that you are confronted with need, you may grope in vain for a principle to guide your own response, or a means of carrying out your good intentions. You may have heard that giving advice is now considered old-fashioned and futile; or you may fear that giving your sympathy will embroil you in a wearisome entanglement with some pitifully unattractive neurotic. You may feel you have a Christian "duty" to help; but what does it mean to "help" someone? Does it mean giving him what he thinks he needs, or giving him what you think is good for him? Can one ever give another such intangibles as spiritual strength or renewed faith? Suppose you are dealing with a case of mental illness? Perhaps anything you say may be the wrong thing! You may conclude that this sort of help can only be given by experts—guidance counselors or psychiatrists, as the case may be. But the question of the relevance of religion will not down. Must the regeneration of human lives become so much the sole responsibility of scientific *expertise* that

religion must keep hands off its principal task? Does not religion have a responsibility to find means of making a real difference in human lives? And must psychotherapy not seek to relate itself to religion's ultimate concern? Let us see if religion and psychotherapy do not have important things to say to each other.

The results of such a conversation between psychotherapy and religion are of concern not only to would be psychotherapists or to the mentally distressed, but to the many religious workers who wish a clearer definition of what really helps people's minds and hearts, and to all who feel challenged by psychology to demonstrate that faith can make a difference in the everyday relationships of life. The following pages will not show the reader how to become a psychotherapist; they will only help him to see the possibility of a more delicate and thorough-going co-operation with divine love. As used in pastoral care, this co-operation is the ministry of counseling; but its basic principles can be embodied in various ways in the practice of every religious vocation. Each of us must determine for himself how he will use the spirit of counseling in his own work.

The Promise of Religion

The reader of the New Testament finds there great promises of the transformation of personality that was expected of Christians. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation ..." (II Cor. 5:17. All citations RSV.) "You must be born anew." (John 3:7) "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal

of your mind” (Rom. 12:2) Paul felt the new life within himself: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (Gal. 2:20) Christianity in its alivest periods did not conceive of the religious way as burdensome moralism but as joy and fulfillment, bringing the ability to be more than conqueror of any earthly circumstances. Those who read the writings of the greatest saints find there, even amid records of asceticism and suffering, the same note of newness of life and fresh perception of the beauty and omnipresence of the ultimate value, God.

Other religions besides Christianity have struck the note of fullness of life. “We live happily indeed, though we call nothing our own! We shall be like the bright gods, feeding on happiness!” exclaimed a Buddhist scripture. Laotzu wrote:

*Those who flow as life flows know
They need no other force;
They feel no wear, they feel no tear,
They need no mending, no repair.*

(Witter Bynner, trans.)

A Zen Buddhist expressed the wonder of the new life in these lines:

*How wondrously strange, and how miraculous this!
I draw water, I carry fuel.*

At its highest, religion has called on man to enter into a new dimension of being, and there are few of us in the drab world of every day consciousness who could not be allured

by a fuller vision of what living can mean for those who wholly live as wholly full of God. It is this holy joy which is the heart of living religion. This is the birthright of every human being, though ignored by many and rejected by those who prefer the comfortable discomfort of their neuroses.

Glowing descriptions, however, do not transform personalities of themselves. Indeed, saintly characteristics are often erected into a moral law, an impossible commandment, a kingdom never to be of this world, rather than a life and power made available here and now. As a practical way of transformation Christian tradition has offered the individual growth through the loving community. The true Church of the saints is the “mystical body” of Christ and God’s instrument for salvation. In modern terms, this means that a personality can grow best in an atmosphere of mutual love. Salvation is not solitary. We are meant to be Christs to one another, mediating God’s love and understanding, increasing its power as it is reflected back and forth in the Beloved Community.

Have Christians given this love and understanding effectively? We must admit that there have been failures as well as successes. There has been both authoritarian terrorism and shiftless mediocrity in religion. Many religious people have encysted or buried deep psychological conflicts and crippling spiritual diseases which could have been healed by greater self-understanding than was available. It is also unhappily true that there is often ignorance of the meaning of *love*—a concept central in Christian theology. Partly this is because

the English language makes Christianity share an overworked word with many promiscuous meanings. But the use of the Greek *agape* is very little help to those who have not felt the reality of divine love and have nothing to go by save the wrangles of theologians. To discover the nature of love we must go to those who actually give love, and describe what they do and with what results. The many people within the churches who are mediating love are now being joined by psychotherapists who are learning to transform personalities in a consistent and systematic manner. If we believe that transformation is a work of God's love, we will expect to find in psychotherapy more evidence of the nature and power of love.

The Contribution of Psychotherapy

Many useful endeavors have been made to alleviate the world's distresses by altering this or that circumstance in the environment. Psychotherapy represents an approach to these distresses which is more in accord with the central effort of religion. Psychotherapists have found that they can best deal with a personal problem not by attacking it directly but by transforming the person who has the problem. The problem then either disappears or is itself transformed into a solvable form. Religion and therapy, then, attack the world's ills primarily, though not exclusively, by the inward route.

Psychotherapy, as a growing science, displays trends which are important but have not reached completion. Two trends are significant in the present connection. One is the change from the medical outlook on mental illness as an alien

disease treated by the knowledge of the physician, to an educational outlook. Therapy is a kind of learning, and learning is something that goes on primarily in the mind of the learner. What the therapist-teacher is expected to contribute varies with different theories of learning. He may offer coaching in a new set of conditioned responses, or he may believe in giving his “student” the greatest degree of freedom to reach his own insights and see himself and his behavior more clearly.

The other trend that deserves mention is the growing realization by psychologists that “adjustment” is an inadequate goal for therapy. Mental health is more than docility to folkways. Until now, psychology has studied mental health less than it has mental illness. However, one important study of the supremely sane has been made by Dr. A. H. Maslow. He finds such people to have the same qualities of lovingkindness and mystical consciousness that are found among the saints. They are also truly at ease with themselves, willing to be unconventional, able to tolerate the unknown without fear, and in possession of an ever-fresh appreciation of every-day life. He calls them “self-actualizing,” because they are motivated not by seeking for what they lack, but by an overflow of inward sufficiency. Therapists must raise their sights, therefore; but being wise psychologists they are not likely to make the moralist’s mistake of turning the fruits of the Spirit into a burden of guilt. Therapists are learning to trust the process of therapy to lead their patients into undiscovered wholeness of life, rather than to stop short at any specific goal.

When the psychotherapist confronts his patient, therefore, he brings with him a single-minded concentration on the inner springs of his patient's personality, and a faith that this personality can and will learn to live more effectively and happily if given a chance. This chance comes when the therapist offers a relationship of consistent understanding and acceptance. "Acceptance" is a term which requires a second look. It means, for one thing, an absence of either approval or disapproval. Most of us, and especially those in mental distress, have tried to live in conformity to the moral likes and dislikes of others, so that we have lost the ability to know and to live our own spontaneous selves. Since therapy requires the discovery of what one's self really is, the therapist must offer his patient an unwavering respect without threat of withdrawal or hope of favor. As one person phrased it to his counselor: "But you were always there, like a firm rock which I beat upon to no avail and which merely said, 'I love you.'" (Rogers, *Client Centered Therapy*, p. 169) Religious people will recognize here the astringent feel of true prayer—the feeling that one has received forgiveness, not favors.

Thus, through psychology's discovery of the therapeutic attitude, we have come to a closer definition and description of *agape*, the creative love of God—the Love which *is* God. Where *eros*-love seeks to satisfy emotional hunger, and *philia* can exist only in social like-mindedness, *agape* does not have to be deserved, and gives freedom to the loved one to become what he inwardly is. Here we find also the answer to the question: what is the place of God in counseling? If God is Love, he is present in this

relationship of therapeutic love as its very source and ground.

As long as we keep focused on the actual relationship and the working of love, the path of the religious person seems clear; but when we survey the many psychological theories it is easy to become bewildered and discouraged. So much psychoanalytical theorizing seems (like some theologies) to proceed from a contempt for men rather than love for them. Also, much of this thinking is underlaid by a second-hand materialistic philosophy. No wonder the religious man doubts that divine guidance could ever come from such a source. The religious man will look for a theory which proceeds from a reverence for the spirit of man and makes no unexamined and outworn assumptions about ultimate reality.

Nondirective Therapy

It will be helpful to describe and explain one method of therapy which, more than other systems, appears to rely on the process that goes on in therapy when the counselor does his utmost to provide freedom and acceptance. Nearly all schools of thought in psychotherapy agree upon the value of understanding and acceptance, and there is a growing tendency to rely on the patient's ability to reach his own insights when thus understood and accepted. But in the records of actual interviews one finds a greater or lesser measure of suggestion, interpretation, approval and warning, which often succeeds in making the patient feel inferior to the all-wise therapist and dependent upon him. While therapists of every kind become more and more at

one in their practice of understanding acceptance as they become more skilled, the various kinds of therapists differ in the amount of responsibility they assume for the direction of their patients. When one examines most human relationships, one is astonished at the amount of subtle pressure and threat unconsciously employed therein, and the extent to which one person's goals are made normative for another. There is usually less of this in therapy, but some is often present. The merit of the sort of psychotherapy now to be described is the sensitivity to these intangibles that it creates in its practitioners. The therapy is distinctive in its consistency of method, which avoids anything that leads or manipulates or takes responsibility for anyone else's behavior. From this quality is derived its name of "nondirective."

Consistency in this kind of therapeutic attitude is difficult to maintain. At every turn there are temptations to abandon the basic attitude for something seemingly more expedient. The therapeutic spirit, like a living pacifism, is not so much a blanket rule blindly applied, as it is a series of daily decisions in favor of love rather than any form of coercion. There is a growing awareness that at every turn of the road the power of *agape* continues to be relevant to the unfolding situation. Perhaps the greatest barrier to consistency in attitude is the tendency in the counselor to set a specific goal for the patient in therapy, toward which the patient is to be manipulated. Even the desire to "help" people may subtly involve a feeling of superiority over the one who is supposed to need help. When John Woolman visited the Indians, he was concerned to "feel and

understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them.” It is this attitude of humble willingness to be taught as well as to teach, to be guided rather than to guide, which is the foundation of a consistently loving therapy.

In practice, this steady aim toward an atmosphere of respect and freedom means that the nondirective counselor offers neither interpretations nor ambiguous silence. He tries to understand step by step along with his client, sensing what his client is feeling. And the therapist lets his client know that he is sensing these feelings by voicing them so that the client too becomes more and more aware of the flow of feeling within him. For example, this brief dialogue shows how a counseling interview might proceed:

CLIENT: I’ve thought it all over, and while I know it’s a pity to miss the rest of the term, I guess I’d really better go home. That’s more important now.

COUNSELOR: There’s something to be said on both sides, but there are more reasons for going home, is that it?

CLIENT: Yes. This has been moiling around in me for several days, and I just had to come to some decision.

COUNSELOR: You felt you had to take action one way or the other?

CLIENT: Yes. I certainly feel better now that I’ve settled what to do.

COUNSELOR: It's a relief to you?

CLIENT: Yes.

As he learns to look at his real feelings the client grows in self-knowledge. He becomes able to trust his own experience and take responsibility for revising his system of values. The therapist's task is to climb into his client's private world, as it were, and look through his client's eyes—an experience of sharing that for a sensitive therapist must surely become an experience almost of mystical union. And the client often shares something of the counselor's perceptions as well. One client reports both these experiences: “Perhaps if I were to get into your (the counselor's) perceptual field and look at myself through your eyes I would see something more? . . . I do remember something of what I saw: I saw a separate person—a person you saw and accepted as being distinct from yourself, with an organization all her own and a law of development peculiar to that organization (Later) No more feeling of going into your house. I'm at home in my own house now, and you're a very welcome guest. I'm very pleased to show you all over the house, even though it's rather untidy in some rooms.” (Quoted in Rogers, *Client Centered Therapy*, pp. 90, 114.)

Thus it is that a simple method of “reflecting” and clarifying a client's feelings can bridge the gap between one mind and another. A critical point is reached in such a flow of acceptance when the client, as often happens, appeals directly to the counselor to satisfy a need, or to give advice. A warm-hearted counselor may be tempted to give

the client what he wants, thus stepping out of his role to become a purveyor. A cold-hearted counselor may be tempted to tell the client it is not good for him to have that or to want that, thus stepping out of his role to become a judge. Both these ways of treating a client make him a child rather than an adult. Here the counselor must be very clear as to what his role in therapy is. If he conceives of therapy as a learning process, he will realize that he cannot further learning either by becoming a slave to his client or by doing his client's thinking for him. He will find it possible to accept and clarify a need without himself meeting it. He will be able to tell his client: "I wouldn't know how to advise you. You are a different person from me, with different needs." In the presence of a counselor who is neither placating nor hostile, the client will revise the nature of his own demands, and realize that the counselor's *agape* goes to the root of his deepest desire as a human being.

As experience with therapy progresses, it is becoming more evident that all the labels suggested for this sort of counseling are inadequate in some measure. "Nondirective" is too negative a word to suggest the active role of the counselor in centering upon the client's feelings and providing a distinctive therapeutic climate. "Client-centered" does not sufficiently convey the element of relationship which is vital to therapy. "Self-directive" has been suggested, but will seem to religious people to ignore the more-than-self which is involved. The religious, in turn, might suggest the terms "Spirit-centered," or "Light-centered," but at the risk of being misunderstood by the

non-religious. The familiar term “nondirective” is the word in most common use and is used here for convenience.

“Seeing is Behaving”

While nondirective counseling has been an outgrowth of study of the actual course and outcome of counseling interviews, it is not without a theory of personality, a conceptual frame within which to interpret the experimental evidence. It is the possession of consistent convictions which distinguishes nondirective counseling from the collection of various techniques used by many therapists and guidance counselors. These “eclectic” methods include a “shotgun” technique of trying many expedients from shock therapy to reassurance, and at the other extreme a “wonder drug” approach of applying a favorite panacea to all. The underlying element of this eclecticism is the anxious rush into planless action, the lack of any hypothesis about what creates a healing situation. In its early days, when it appeared to be merely a negation of flexibility in technique, nondirective therapy was widely accused of the “wonder drug” fallacy. In reality, researchers in this field have been working toward a basic hypothesis to which techniques must be relevant, leading to a whole-hearted attitude in therapy which techniques spontaneously express.

Perhaps the best way to understand the new school of thought associated with nondirective counseling is to consider it the opposite of behaviorism. Behaviorism is the attempt to reduce psychology completely to objective terms—those that can be observed externally with no

reference to consciousness. In this it is the child of the great dream of nineteenth century science, the search for pure, unemotional, absolute objectivity. This dream began to fade when Einstein and his followers made measurement of motion relative to the point of observation, and abolished the *a priori* Absolute from scientific thought. More strictly speaking, the new science did not so much introduce some sort of relativism as restore some neglected factors to its calculations. A scientific law does not only generalize that "All things do thus-and-so"; it specifies that "*This* thing under *these* conditions will do thus-and-so." The older science forgot certain of these factors: the presence of the observer, the time and the place relative to other events or objects in the universe. The presence of the observer is of prime importance to psychology. Part of any man's situation is himself. Where it used to be thought that individual experience was unreal and only atoms and electrons were real, now scientists have realized that the world of their theories is a hypothetical construct whose value lies in its ability to provide a common background to the individual experiences which alone seem real to each of us. The new thinking in psychology which incorporates these thoughts is called by the formidable name of "phenomenological theory." The theory is really simpler than its name, however. Where behaviorism ignores consciousness and concentrates on the "outside" world, the new theory concentrates on the individual consciousness as perceiver, and makes no claims concerning the nature of "reality."

The theory is experimentally based on studies of perception; studies designed to show the ways in which people make their eyes see only what their past experience has taught them is reasonable to see. The human organism is one which must maintain and protect itself by means of snap judgments concerning the meaning of reality. We meet circumstances already “tuned,” so to speak, to certain expectancies; we are driven to “make sense” of ambiguous clues, and to organize what we see in a stable spatial framework. When psychologists introduce a subject into a room with subtly distorted proportions, he may “see” such weird things as a ball rolling up-hill, or a face twice life-size at the window, because he orients himself by his naive trust in the room’s rectangularity and makes his perceptions fit accordingly. Our cultural heritage also affects perception. As linguists have pointed out, we cut up and reassemble the continuity of experience in ways taught us by our mother tongue. The Eskimo, for example, who has a dozen names for the varieties of snow and ice sees his landscape more discriminatingly than we can. While “perception” refers primarily to sight, the term can be extended to cover the way we “see” a situation or a problem. The sense of hearing can be included: when we hear a series of meaningless vowels, our minds structure them into some sort of sense according to our expectations. This peculiarity of perception (in the broader sense) is not only human or cultural, but also individual. Perception varies with the individual’s mental “set.” As you are, so you see, says this theory. You bring the context of yourself to all that you see; and as you see, so you act, for this personal perspective, ordered by your needs and values, is

in turn the determinant of your behavior. The theory does not neglect behavior as an index to what people are feeling and thinking, but it has no tendency to judge this behavior by another's perspective. A person's actions must be understood by the way he sees things. Within its own terms, a person's behavior is understandable; in another's terms it is seen to be irrational or "sick"; "judge not that ye be not judged." If we would really understand the meaning of someone's behavior we must humbly ask ourselves: "How must he feel in order to act as he does? How would I have to be feeling if I were to behave like that?" And when we undertake to change behavior it is the perception of self and situation that must be changed. But here we must be cautious about changing another's perception in some desired direction. What is my frame of reference that it should be superior to yours? Why should my wishes control your experience? The only test of a field of perception is its adequacy in the experience of its possessor. If you find your world, as you see it, inadequate, you should be free to improve it by learning to perceive more adequately. Learning, it should be said, is in these terms a process of increasing the adequacy and clarity of perception. This means being better able to make differentiations, just as one studying trees is first able to tell an oak from a maple, then a black oak from a white oak, and then a red oak from a black oak. If he is interested and in need of these better perceptions, the learner does not need to be prodded to learn.

This does indeed seem a standardless, subjective sort of theory! But if we reject it in these terms, we will have

failed to understand it properly. The new conception of the world to which modern thought is moving no longer uses the terms “object” and “subject.” There is no “object” or “subject”; there is one patterned *field* of which both are interdependent poles—a field both “objective” and “subjective” at once. In short, “mind” and “world” are creative of each other, and are no more to be separated from each other than the circumference from the area of a circle. We are not, therefore, dealing with a number of islanded and irrational psyches, but with fields open to and intersecting with the dynamic whole. For psychology the meaning is simply this: the personality cannot be understood apart from the situation it is in, nor can the situation be the same without the personality that perceives it.

The Relevance to Religion

This revolution in thought has important bearings on the relevance of psychological thinking to religious wisdom. In the first place, it closes the supposed gap between “objective” science and the religious attitude of commitment. Both become existential, in both the observer participates to create the world he sees—and to be created by it. There is no such thing as a purely external, dispassionate observer. In particular, religion has long denied the complete competence of science to understand personality from an objective viewpoint. Rather it is believed that we can only understand another person by relating ourselves to him. Now, surprisingly, the phenomenological theory supports this objection to the purely external evaluation of another, and calls for

knowledge of the person through participation in his own internal frame of reference. In short, one can know another only through *agape*. It must be added that the weight of the older “objective” psychology is so strong that many psychologists are unable to free themselves from it completely to explore the full philosophical implications of the new way of thought. Psychologists are afraid, with some reason, of the word “love” as applied to therapy; a number are also unaware, and with less reason, of the deep insights of religious experience.

The field concept provides for religion a consistent and credible way of conceiving the immanence of God in the human spirit. The statement “I live, yet not I . . .” makes sense in a field theory. God and man are not exclusive entities. God and man are not one, and they are also not two. The false antithesis—“God is most where man is least” is replaced by the truer and more incarnational teaching that God is most where true man is most. The ability of such a theory to provide an intelligible way of understanding St. Paul’s supreme experience offers hope that practice based on the theory may be able to show us a practical means of attaining fuller religious living for ourselves. Certainly it can offer the only sure answer to the prevalent but obsolescent humanism of today. Here as elsewhere we shall find that the newer trend in scientific thinking can build a strong philosophical foundation for the insights that religious seers have never been able adequately to justify in the terms of older, more traditional ways of thinking, whether Greek or Hebrew. In philosophy as in psychology the way to solve a problem is to see it

differently, to restate it in solvable terms. Of course, in time, still wider and more adequate philosophical frames of reference will have to be constructed in order to encompass the further growth of truth.

Moral Standards

Are standards of moral or mental health abolished by such an apparently relativistic theory? This is not at all necessary, although drastic revision is called for in definition and practice, both in religion and in psychology. The counselor must give up his search for an “objective” interpretation of his client by case-history and diagnosis, nor can he judge mental “sickness” by the degree of difference between his client’s views and his own opinion of what “reality” is. The counselor can only clear the path for the autonomous process of reorganization that takes place in therapy. A personality is at all times seeking for growth and its enhancement through learning, unless growth is blocked by fear. In therapy, when threat is removed, growth and learning spontaneously replace rigid defensiveness. Similarly, the religious man must replace faith in his own opinions or in authoritarian doctrine with faith in a process—the working of the Holy Spirit toward a divine end that lies beyond our cultural horizons. We can avoid the false idolatry of cultural standards of truth and goodness by defining truth as the action of the learning process in a free situation, and by defining goodness as the process of spiritual regeneration in an atmosphere of *agape* love. For, to the religious man, the urge to personal growth is the power of God working in us. In this way we again return to the deep truth underlying such statements in the

New Testament as: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” and “He that doeth the Truth cometh to the light.” In short, standards must be thought of as dynamic rather than as static, as transcending human opinion, not identified with any opinion, and uniting mankind not by conformity but by free reconciliation.

It is highly significant that those who enter into the spirit of nondirective therapy become increasingly sensitive ethically. They may never think of themselves as having tender consciences, and certainly they are increasingly free of the sort of guilt-ridden fear which moralism produces; but they possess the best kind of conscience—the growing edge of an inner consistency which separates them more and more from the petty authoritarian practices so often taken for granted in our society. Nondirective therapists already share with the sincere seeker of the Kingdom of Heaven the problem of how to be in the “world” yet not of it, in brotherhood with all people without conforming to majority ways.

The debate between free will and determinism, which has been of importance in religious philosophy, can also be seen in a new light. It can no longer be maintained that a man is determined by the environment, or by his past conditioning. He is affected only by what the environment means *to him*, and by his own interpretation of his memories. Consciousness is no longer thought to be a useless byproduct of a biological mechanism, it is restored as an active agent of behavior. Psychologists still maintain that they are “determinists,” but surely they are so only with a difference. For if what we see determines what we

are, it is equally true that what we are determines what we see. The process is obviously circular. We determine ourselves by means of our experience. In Alfred Adler's words: "We are self-determined by the meaning we give to our own experiences." It is not always easy to tell what thinkers mean by "free-will"; but surely self-determination is the only philosophically reasonable meaning we can give to this phrase, and here we have a scientific basis for finding it at work in personality.

Hence we may admit a measure of personal responsibility, but without pointing the hostile finger of blame. A troubled person does not readily perceive his responsibility in an atmosphere of moral reproach. The concept of "sin" (as also of "virtue") in its emotional aspect, does not proceed from *agape*, but from the approval-disapproval attitude of moralism which *agape* supersedes. It must also be remembered that an action follows necessarily from the perception which precedes it. It is the perception, not the act, with which the therapist must deal. We have no direct "control" over our actual behavior, but we do have a chance to "control" our perceptions by yielding ourselves to the controlling process of Truth. As long as *agape* is at hand to reorganize perception, redemption is possible. The fact behind the word "sin" is that redemption is necessary. The only irreparable condition into which man could fall would be, as the Gospels suggest, the inability to alter one's perceptions.

When Jesus, accused of being possessed by a devil, said that mistaking the Spirit of God for a devil was the unforgivable sin, he implied the possibility that one might

have such a rigid perceptual structure as to be incapable of seeing new and greater values. Now the entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven meant for Jesus just such a radical reformulation of one's way of perceiving as the conventional adult finds almost impossible. Hence the relevance of being born again. "Behold, I make all things new" —new because seen anew.

The Process of Therapy

This reorganization of self and perception takes place in various degrees in the course of therapy. From this point of view therapy may be thought of as the provision of an experience that makes it possible for a client to clarify his perceptions and become a more adequate personality. Psychologists are approaching a theory of what happens in therapy by applying the theory of perception to an individual's perception of his self. One derives this concept of the self partly from the opinions of others and partly from experience of one's own needs and capabilities. The primary experience of self is soon overlaid by what others teach one about oneself. "Oh, Mary, you can't do that—wait for Mother"; "You're too young to know what to do—let me advise you"; "You're so clumsy, dear"; "Father expects you to succeed—don't let him down": so the chorus goes throughout the years.

Many cases of reading difficulties in children are caused by the belief induced in children that they cannot read. They need the faith of others and experience of genuine success in reading in order to improve. Similarly, an important part of the experience of therapy is learning from the attitude of

the therapist that one is capable of becoming adequate to life. Might we not speculate further to ask whether the outcome even of physical illness is often determined by what the patient is taught about his ability to cope with the illness? The practice of faith-healing might be redeemed from the realm of superstition by being reformulated as learning to experience and trust unexpected capacities of the total psycho-physical organism and of the Spirit immanent within it. Such faith must, of course, be based on experience, not the wishful reliance on capacities that are not there. Workable faith is based on insight, not on blindness.

The genuine experience of self is also affected by the need to be acceptable to others by conforming to their standards of what the self should be, and becoming blind to whatever in oneself is not acceptable to them. When one tries to meet the terms of a conditional love one thus becomes estranged from one's own experience. Yet not to meet these terms is to run the risk of estrangement from other people. The experiences of self which are denied to awareness nevertheless strongly influence emotions and behavior, and loom upon the mental horizon as things fearful and shameful because they threaten the inadequate idea of the self to which one clings. This unacknowledged part of the self is fearful because it is feared; shameful because it is condemned, and irrational because it is not admitted to reason. Yet these fearsome energies are the material for a wider and truer vision of the self—a self-image where all is known and all is reconciled.

In the relatively secure atmosphere of therapy, the process of insight clarifies and enlarges the idea of the self along with all other perceptions. This process usually follows a typical course. The client comes to therapy with a felt need for more adequacy in handling his life—a need which others cannot suggest to him. Either covertly or openly he dislikes himself and feels on the defensive. In the freedom of therapy he comes to a better estimate of his strengths and weaknesses; he can bear to see himself more completely. After voicing his discouragement and self-dislike, he begins to voice his growing self-respect and respect for others. He also becomes able to live by his own first-hand values. The insight which brings about this redefinition of the self is more than merely intellectual understanding—the sort of knowledge that usually outruns behavior. True insight unites perception with the springs of action, and is one with what the religious man calls the power of faith. The therapist helps the work of self-reconciliation by showing that he himself is reconciled to all aspects of the client's self. The religious man would add that this attitude is a mediation of the forgiveness of God. The unconditional love of God in Christ must repair the damage created by the conditional “love” of this world, and reconcile knowledge of self and relationship with others.

In urging us to know and to rejoice in all aspects of the self, psychology points to self-development rather than self-denial as the way of spiritual growth. Does this mean that psychology gainsays the teaching of religion that man must “forget” and “lose” his “self”? The answer depends on the meaning of this ambiguous word “self.” The self we are to

develop is the self of our potentialities, the self God would have us to be, and which his love helps us to become. As St. John says, “It does not yet appear what we shall be”; therefore we cannot identify this self with the “self” we think we are, or the “self” the world expects us to be. Such a “self” is usually a limited and unrealistic idea; it is often a borrowed garment or it has been threatened into rigidity, when its need for defense thrusts into the background any sense of community with other selves. This latter is the “self” we must be willing to lose or deny in order that we may reach true fulfillment. We cannot set the limit at which we stop growing; we must always be open to further growth in directions that may surprise us. “Self”-denial must not be self-suppression—hypocrisy lies in that direction. “Self”-denial must be part of true self-fulfillment: “He that loseth his life shall preserve it.” It must also be remembered that the self is no exclusive thing, but a field which interpenetrates all perceived reality and which, by the process of identification, can be consciously extended to include other selves or all humanity. It is perhaps ultimately only a matter of emphasis whether we speak of a developing self that influences the universe, or of the universe developing through its various perceiving aspects.

Before leaving the topic of therapy a word might be said about why nondirective therapy says little about the Unconscious, or the interpretation of dreams and other unconscious symbols. Religious people whose introduction to psychology has been through Jungian theories of the Unconscious and its symbols will especially miss a certain note of depth and mystery. It is not so much that

nondirective theory leaves such things out as that it prefers different concepts and emphases. Where other theories speak of “conscious” and “unconscious” as if they were two rooms of a house, this theory prefers to speak of experience being in “figure” or “ground,” admitted to, or denied, awareness, openly or distortedly symbolized, differentiated or undifferentiated. A personality has one focus of attention, acting selectively to maintain self-consistency. This newer theory would agree with Freud and Jung that what is denied must be brought to awareness, and it would agree with Jung that a person’s total experience of himself and his world has a more than individual outreach and a self-organizing capacity which is not furthered by conscious calculation and manipulation. When it comes to bringing into awareness more of this experience, the nondirective method prefers to leave each person to the growing awareness of the meaning of his own symbols.

Denied experience speaks to us in disguise, and this disguise is mercifully only removed when the conscious self is able to bear the revelation. It is dangerous to force or to probe, and therapists are coming more and more to let the growing self find its own acceptable time for new insights. A dream has a message for the dreamer; but an outside interpreter is more than likely to project his own covert preoccupations into these ambiguous messages. Indeed, the projective tests, like the Rorschach ink-blot, are deliberately designed to catch the self-revelations made in just such interpretations. Psychoanalysts are, of course, aware of this danger; yet the modern psychologist has a suspicion that the different canons of dream interpretation

reveal as much of the personalities of Freud or Jung or Erich Fromm as they do of the personalities of the dreamers.

The nondirective counselor has otherwise no criticism of these methods of analysis, for they arise from another mode of thought. He himself prefers the function of providing the atmosphere favorable for self-made analysis of symbols. There is no reason why therapy through creative expression in the arts, so well developed by Jungians, should not broaden and deepen the more strictly verbal course of nondirective therapy. Nondirective play therapy for children is a beginning along such lines. One might add also the therapeutic values of worship, either liturgical or silent worship. Indeed, it is interesting to note that some nondirective interviews have been almost completely silent, the counselor's acceptance being able to make itself known without words.

Education for Therapy

It may be asked what sort of training is appropriate for learning the therapeutic attitude and its practice. Training in a skill is usually thought of as studying an intellectual theory and acquiring a professional technique. But in nondirective counseling we have to shift our focus to the basic attitude from which both overt convictions and outward behavior arise. The counselor must not only think that people's perceptions and feelings are important, they must be important *to him*. We always bring an attitude or attitudes to our dealings with people, which we naturally tend to carry out in word and deed. Training in counseling

properly consists in finding out what attitudes the student actually has, and helping him to define more adequately his perception of the nature of therapy and the role he plays in it. The expression of his basic convictions will be clarified together with these convictions themselves. A student may never resolve at any one time to eschew “directive” techniques. He will rather find himself learning to trust his clients ever further as he increasingly sees them to be trustworthy. But he who is not willing to venture this will use his techniques unconsciously to provide subtle suggestion and so “prove” to himself that clients have to be led.

Thus it can be seen that this learning to accept and respect many kinds of people is moral rebirth at the deepest level, and that the purely academic requirements usually set for professionals in the field are, in a sense, quite irrelevant to this concept of therapy. It is not what a person knows but what he is that matters most. Training programs must usually conform to certain external requirements, but the heart of nondirective training lies in free discussion of the deepest issues of therapy, and in actual experience of counseling. Among nondirective training programs, that of the University of Chicago is most ambitious. Other places offering such courses include Columbia University, Syracuse University, and Pennsylvania State College. Many theological seminaries offer pastoral counseling courses, some of them nondirectively oriented. Seward Hiltner and Carroll Wise are among the leaders in this field. Even a little of this sort of training is better than none, and more is better still. Anyone who takes religion seriously

will benefit from some study in this field, if he is attracted to it.

The nondirective counselor must judge of his own readiness for his task, for two reasons. One is that he does not believe in external evaluation of a person's capabilities. The other reason is that there is no common agreement as yet among schools of psychotherapy upon just what the nature of psychotherapy is. This makes it impossible to set up any acceptable public qualifications for those who intend to put their training to professional use. In any case, the nondirective counselor does not assume responsibility for others as does the physician or the administrator; and while this brings criticism down upon him, it saves him from ever being the sort of amateur who is dangerous. His function is not to cure or to correct, but to provide *agape*. If he feels clear in his convictions, if he feels warm acceptance for the client before him, if he is at ease in the counseling situation and feels that his methods express rather than confine his spontaneity, then he is qualified for that case.

If he is wise, he will refrain from trying to counsel someone who is so near to him emotionally as to be involved in his life. A friend or family member is engaged with the counselor in the mutual meeting of certain emotional needs. The counseling relationship, on the other hand, is a one-way flow of *agape*, where two people concentrate on exploring the needs of one. Probably no one is qualified for every possible counseling situation. The average counselor may feel quite anxious when confronted with psychotic persons. If so, he should of course refer them elsewhere;

but it is debatable whether a counselor should watch his clients anxiously beforehand for “dangerous” symptoms. The wise therapist will come to know the point at which his personal adequacy ceases, and he may not need to call his client frightening names in order to recognize his own anxiety and deal with his own limitations.

These more bizarre forms of behavior that we label “psychoses” are, just as much as is more “normal” behavior, attempts of the human psyche to cope with a perceived threat to the idea of self. It has been truly said that “psychotics are like the rest of us, only more so.” The more threatened such people feel, the harder it is to make contact with them and help them to feel secure, and hence the greater skill and sensitivity of the therapist who deals with them. There will be other occasions when the counselor may find he has reached the limit of his ability to accept. Here, paradoxically, the counselor must be able to accept his own lack of acceptance, so that he can remain free from anxiety and guilt. He who cannot accept himself cannot accept others. The nondirective therapist, it should be added, is not a person who is afraid to have a point of view. He is a person who is frank enough to admit that his perceptions are a point of view, to be respected and perhaps reorganized just as are others’ points of view. He values sincerity above a false “objectivity.” He knows that he not only listens, he draws conclusions. Wise is the counselor who by awareness of his own viewpoint is able to remain inwardly free from it.

Applications

Nondirective psychotherapy can receive from religion an adequate cosmic context, a faith that renders the counselor's work more meaningful to him. In return, this psychotherapy can give to religion the tools by which transforming love can be applied, as well as powerful restatement of religious truths. Therapeutic counseling is desperately needed by the confused, inadequate, seeking selves whom the churches wish to help to greater fullness of life. The growing interest in pastoral counseling shows that awareness of this responsibility is increasing. But the spirit of therapy has a wider outreach. Although not every human relationship can or should be made a counseling relationship, there are no bounds to the relevance of an inner attitude of acceptance and understanding which by one means or another is communicated to one's fellows. The loving community or *koinonia* that the church was meant to be can again become a reality if we learn to live in the therapeutic spirit. Such a fellowship could become the seedbed of "self-actualizing" personalities. It is doubtful whether individual therapy alone, without the background of a transformed society, can raise men to the fullest degree of actuality beyond the more limited degrees of transformation that we are content with today. Further progress in the individual depends upon giving therapeutic love to others as well as receiving it. The development of group therapy is one step in this direction. Small cells of transformation can be formed. Here the churches can do a great work of research in heightening the transforming power of therapy through the deepening of the relationship of *agape*.

As part of this research, the practice of nonviolence can also receive reinforcement and refinement from the wisdom concerning coercion and aggression that psychology is beginning to acquire. Spiritual coercion is increasingly seen as more destructive than merely physical force, for it kills the soul, not only the body, and uses men's deepest motives to bend them to an alien will. Such coercion can take the form of: "I trust you to do what I think is right"; or: "I will kill myself if you do that" —often heard in the milder form: "You wouldn't want to hurt my feelings, would you?" Sensitivity to this kind of coercion can help religious people themselves to forgo any methods that are tainted by this pressure.

Psychology can also help us to see the aggressive person as being in need of expression and acceptance of his hostility, but also in need of protection from his own destructiveness, which he fears because of his inarticulate desire for redemption by the human community. There are limits to "permissiveness" or freedom of action where there need be none to understanding and acceptance. It must be re-emphasized that the therapeutic spirit accepts needs and desires but does not feel that they all should be equally met. The need for acceptance is the need behind other needs. The churches are becoming increasingly uneasy in conscience at the thought of participation in war; yet many religious people still hesitate to commit themselves to nonviolent methods. Perhaps the use of psychotherapeutic wisdom in pacifism would give the doubters a convincing demonstration of the practicability of applying *agape* to dangerous situations.

Again, psychotherapy has a bearing on methods of religious education. The roots of a transforming religion go down deep to where *agape* dwells. It is not a branch of intellectual study; yet our rationalistic age has drained the heart out of religion by making it a thing of the head only. Instead of providing meaningfulness in life, this “heady” religion offers intellectual explanation; instead of rebirth, it offers moral discipline. Just as the therapist offers his client not verbal labels but an experience of real acceptance in a personal relationship, so the religious teacher must offer not labels spelled “God” or “Christ” but actual experience of *agape*. This alone will give the labels meaning.

Dr. Carl Rogers has noted the feeling of some counseling students that they are not as client-centered as they “should” be, and remarks that if their education had been better handled, such a statement would become unnecessary and meaningless. True education nurtures the insights that unite knowledge with behavior and ability with desire, changing one’s life, not merely one’s ideas. What, then, shall we say of religious education in the light of the common plaint that “I am not as good a Christian as I should be”? But if psychotherapy calls for criticism of religious education, it also permits us to see how such education can be expanded. While the nondirective attitude will make us forswear indoctrination and recall us rather to our inward Teacher, it will also make us unashamed of having a religious point of view. The teacher of nondirective therapy is not ashamed of his faith, nor does he suggest that therapy be taught by a presumably “neutral”

non-therapist or not taught at all. Neither should the religious teacher feel ashamed.

We all live in a cultural frame of reference; as Lawrence K. Frank has pointed out, any culture as a whole is built around its answers to man's ultimate concern—what the universe is, what man is, our destiny and our duty. In short, culture is inescapably religious, and all education, as transmission of culture, is inescapably religious. Education, however outwardly secular, is giving some answer, if only by implication, to these ultimate questions. If this answer is openly voiced it can be examined fearlessly in the light of the transcendence of further truth, and the answer itself, if it is a living one, will judge and transform the culture that gave it birth. But if it remains unacknowledged and illicit it will become as irrational and confused as any other thought or feeling that is repressed. Here a religion of *agape* can be of immense help in providing for education an integration around man's ultimate concern which proceeds from life-transforming experience rather than from empty speculation.

Conclusion

Somewhere in religion there is the awareness of and reach toward a divine agency beyond the purely human, whether the divine activity is conceived to be found in Holy Scripture, or a divinely guided Church, or in the stilling of creaturely thoughts in a Friends meeting. All religion asks of psychotherapy is that God be given a chance to will and to do of his good pleasure in us. Religion may fearlessly ally itself with a therapeutic spirit in which the role of man

is the humble one of providing the field of action for the Holy Spirit. The therapist is a Christ-bearer, as we are all called to be Christ-bearers in our measure, confirming the intimation of the Spirit that we are sons of God and capable of growing into his image from glory to glory.

About the Author

Carol Murphy (1916-1994) devoted the majority of her life to the study of religious philosophy and pastoral psychology at Pendle Hill. She first studied political science at Swarthmore College and International Studies at American University. She found her true vocation as a writer and an editor in 1947, when she moved to Pendle Hill. She published seventeen books and pamphlets with Pendle Hill Publications, making her one of its most prolific authors. In addition to her writing, she was a member of Swarthmore Friends Meeting and served on the Pendle Hill Publications Committee and the board of the Friends Historical Library.

Pendle Hill

Located on 23 acres in Wallingford, Pennsylvania, Pendle Hill is a Quaker study, retreat, and conference center offering programs open to everyone. Pendle Hill's vision is to create peace with justice in the world by transforming lives. Since Pendle Hill opened in 1930, thousands of people have come from across the United States and throughout the world for Spirit-led learning, retreat, and community.

At the heart of Pendle Hill is a residential study program which encourages a step back from daily life for reflection and discernment in preparation for deeper engagement in the community and wider world. Because spiritual experience is essential to Quakerism, Pendle Hill's education is experiential, or experimental, at its core. Adult students of all ages come for a term or a year of education designed to strengthen the whole person – body, mind, and spirit. The Resident Program captures the earliest vision for Pendle Hill while responding to the call of the world in which we exist today. Program themes include:

- Quaker faith and practice
- Dismantling oppression
- Spiritual deepening
- Leadership skill development
- Ecological literacy
- Personal discernment
- Arts and crafts
- Gandhian constructive program
- Building capacity for nonviolent social change.

Programs are offered in a variety of formats – including term-long courses, weekend workshops, and evening presentations. Those unable to come for a term or a year are encouraged to take part in a workshop or retreat. Information on all Pendle Hill programs is available at www.pendlehill.org. Pendle Hill's mission of spiritual education is also furthered through conference services – hosting events for a variety of religious and educational nonprofit organizations, including many Quaker groups.

The Pendle Hill pamphlets have been an integral part of Pendle Hill's educational vision since 1934. Like early Christian and Quaker tracts, the pamphlets articulate perspectives which grow out of the personal experience, insights, and/or special knowledge of the authors, concerning spiritual life, faith, and witness.

A typical pamphlet has characteristics which make it a good vehicle for experimental thought. It is the right length to be read at a single sitting (about 9000 words). It is concerned with a topic of contemporary importance. Like words spoken in a Quaker meeting for worship, it embodies a concern, a sense of obligation to express caring or to act in response to a harmful situation.

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