

The main weakness of TA as is acknowledged by many of its leading exponents, is that by itself it leads to the kind of insight which could remain purely intellectual. It can be just a headtrip.

The real potential in TA seems to lie in an alliance with one or more of the other humanistic psychologies of the last decade - systems which are orientated much more to the experiencing of feeling, such as Bio-energetics, Psychosynthesis, Gestalt, Encounter techniques and so on.

It is no accident, for example, that some of the best Gestaltists in the States use TA freely in their therapy, nor that the Gouldings (who run the largest single TA teaching institute) were close friends of Perls, and have Fagan and Shepherd on their advisory board.

If TA sometimes looks like a theory searching for a technique, some of the other therapies strike one sometimes as techniques looking for theory. Such marriages have already taken place between TA and other approaches are proving a potent tool for those whose script has landed them in the mysterious business of psychotherapy.

Ursula Fausset

THERAPIST-CENTRED PSYCHO-THERAPY

When beginning as a therapist, I was undoubtedly the centre of my universe. My needs were crying out to be satisfied. With my very first client, I needed to be seen as experienced, wise and confident and no one but the client could support me in this. Then I needed to know all sorts of 'facts' and details about their sex life and their childhood, in order that I could fit it all in with the theories I had been taught; so that I could understand just what was wrong and then, by subtle questions steer them towards the RIGHT answer. The theories at this stage were changing rapidly, so that it was a job for the client to keep his symptoms and insights up to date with my knowledge. There were also my emotional needs to satisfy. If I was in touch with my grief, then it soon became apparent that THE need of this client was to cry. If I had just been hit by my need to sleep with the builder, then my client was clearly (unconsciously) hung-up by his sexual guilts. As Jungian patients have Jungian dreams, so Ursula's were rapidly changing roles and ego boundaries, in order to help her find her therapeutic identity.

Fortunately this phase didn't last long. By the time I had gained enough confidence to charge a small fee, I had got the client doing all the work. As I sat there, umming and 'reflecting' back the odd phrase, my client was writhing and struggling with his soul, getting deeper and deeper into the mire, absolutely confident that he'd get no advice, that I'd answer no questions and not give approval or sympathy or encouragement of any description. My silence was clearly deep wisdom. The pain of this experience convinced people that it was doing them good.



It gradually dawned on me that this was being even more valuable for my own growth; each tortuous story with the struggle towards awareness, was hitting on deeper layers of me. While I sat there safe and passive, my client was working desperately hard for me. It reminded me of being in an ambulance when I knew I must abandon all responsibility and trust the person I was with to do it all. It was also rather like being at the theatre. And I was being paid for it! You can see that there is something very wrong about this situation.

For a number of months I did a lot of thinking about the role of the therapist; I read a lot and talked to colleagues. I recognised that I needed to be needed; that I enjoyed my sense of power. That I was getting vicarious thrills from my clients horrific secrets. That on one level I was a complete hoax, as they all imagined I had X-ray eyes and could read their minds. I could accept that I was doing this work entirely for my own benefit; but still some puritan conscience made me struggle to try and make the exchange more fair.

Then I came across Sidney Jourard's writing on the value of 'transparency' in the therapist. The therapist is most effective if he shows his weaknesses; the more he is able to be really open about his own difficulties and what he is feeling, the more the patient will be able to trust the situation and disclose himself. This news came at the same time as I became involved with Re-Evaluation Counselling, in which discharge gets all the prizes.

So that now I have come full circle, but instead of my needs being overt, they are transparent. Now I do all the work, which seems fair. My patient sits and listens (seldom a space for an umm) and is taken through whatever particular hang-up I am working on at the time. The emphasis is on transparency and release, so that my patients are entertained by a weekly hour of shouting and crying and rapid non-repetitive talk. This is proving enormously successful. It has a sort of shock value (confrontative therapeutic exposure) which stimulates discharge. Because of my experience I am much more skilled and free about getting into things than my patients and I really feel I am at last giving them something of the REAL ME. A bonus to this is that they become aware that, compared with me, they haven't really got problems; they realize how utterly sane they are (in contrast). As I am an authority in the field of psychology (presumably saner than sane) this gives people enormous confidence. Also, by my example (and every one agrees that the therapist's WAY OF BEING, who he or she IS, has a profound effect in therapy) my patients feel free to unleash the madman in themselves which of course soon brings them to rational behaviour.

Most therapists agree that the more a patient pays, the harder he'll work. I have expanded this principle. The more my patients pay the harder I work, the more they learn; the harder I work, the more they pay; in a vicious creative circle.

All neurosis has its roots in the inability of the person to leave behind the dependent state and become truly responsible. So that now the favoured few (my clients) have the opportunity, in a structured environment, to take full responsibility, not only for themselves, but also for me. I think my readers will agree that this is the breakthrough we have all been looking for.