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Alan Watts and the re-visioning of psychotherapy

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ABSTRACT

Alan Watts' seminal text *Psychotherapy East and West* was authored near Humanistic Psychology's beginnings, also a transformational time for psychotherapy theory and practice. Watts fostered appreciation for Eastern philosophical traditions, particularly in relation to self, identity, and counterculture. In this article, contributions of innovative thinkers cited by Watts, including Gregory Bateson, Erich Fromm, Jay Haley, George Herbert Mead, Rollo May, and Carl Rogers, are highlighted and historically situated toward tracking threads of contemporary influence vis-à-vis social construction, brief therapy, and therapeutic simplicity. The article begins with a brief note on Watts' countercultural positioning.

As a Master of Counselling program director and professor, I am often concerned about graduate students lacking coherent understandings of interconnections, similarities, and affinities shared among therapeutic perspectives, theories, concepts, and ideas. Context is everything, Bateson (1979) suggested, and I believe that socio-cultural and socio-political landscapes need situating when discussing psychotherapy's emergence and evolution. As collaborative therapist Harlene Anderson (2001) observed: 'Ideas and practices do not spring forth in a vacuum but develop within a context, a history and an era, being influenced by the personalities and passions of their originators' (p. 340).

Alan Watts authored *Psychotherapy East and West* (1961/1973) at a transformational, historical moment in Western psychotherapy's development, and at Humanistic Psychology's beginnings. Maslow (cited in Watts, 1961/1973) described prevailing American attitudes: 'The United States … is dominated by the Puritan and pragmatic spirit which stresses work, struggle and striving, soberness and earnestness, and above all, purposefulness' (p. 123). Psychology itself was not immune to Puritanism; again, Watts cites Maslow: 'American psychology … is overpragmatic, over-Puritan, and overpurposeful' (p. 123). Such values ran counter to the *ethos* or spirit promoted by practitioners influencing the development of Humanistic Psychological perspectives.

In this article, contributions by several thinkers discussed by Watts (1961/1973) are highlighted, particularly Gregory Bateson, Erich Fromm, Jay Haley, George Herbert

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Alan Watts speaks about the fallacies of psychotherapy. Archival Photographic Files, University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center. Copyright held by Chicago Maroon.

Mead, Rollo May, and Carl Rogers. I am interested in the cultural context and zeitgeist informing Watts' own thinking and writing. The historical context is important for understanding that contemporary perspectives and practices in the wide-ranging field of therapy are traceable to earlier times, particularly to courageous practitioners and researchers – those referenced by Watts (1961/1973) – who were rethinking and re-visioning post-war psychotherapy in North America.

Articulating the ineffable

Educated in Western theological traditions, and ordained as an Anglican priest, Watts (1915–1973) adopted interests in Eastern philosophies and mystical traditions from an early age. Christmas and Aileen Humphreys hosted the London Buddhist Lodge, introducing the 15-year-old Watts to D.T. Suzuki's works in 1930. However, Watts (1972) notes, 'I didn't meet the man himself until he came to London in 1936 for the World Congress of Faiths, at which time I had become the editor of *Buddhism in England*' (p. 90), having been secretary to the Buddhist Lodge since the age of 16. Watts observed that, by the age of 17,

> I was writing articles for the journal of the Buddhist Lodge, I had published a booklet on Zen, which is happily out of print … I was reading Suzuki … Lao-tzu, the *Upanishads* … the *Bhaga-vad-Gita* … the *Diamond Sutra*, Robert Graves, and Carl Jung – all the literature which was 'oddball' and screened out of the curriculum. (p. 121)

Watts, in adulthood, lived for two decades in Marin County, California, residing in a cabin on Mount Tamalpais (in an enclave named Druid Heights by friend and neighbor, poet Elsa Gidlow, to whom his autobiography is dedicated), and on a retired ferry boat, the *SS Vallejo* in Sausalito. Together, Sausalito and Mount Tamalpais comprise Miwok indigenous people's territory, Mount Tamalpais being, for the Miwok, a sacred site. The southern Marin County region that Watts inhabited represented for him 'a powerful spiritual center of the nation' (Watts, 1972, p. 297). This locale was a fitting environment for Watts, who wrote in his autobiography's *Prologue*:

> My own work … is basically an attempt to describe mystical experience – not of formal visions and supernatural beings, but of reality as seen and felt directly in a silence of words and mindings. In this I set myself the same impossible task as the poet: to say what cannot be said. (p. 5)

I read Watts (1961/1973) in light of Bachelard's (1969) proposition: 'Psychologists do not know everything. Poets have other insights into man [*sic*]' (p. 125). Watts counted numerous poets among his friends and acquaintances, Elsa Gidlow plus Kenneth Rexroth, James Broughton, Gary Snyder and others. Watts (1972) reflected: 'All interesting descriptions of human character are poetic, imaginative, dramatic, and fantastic, whereas all attempts at valid descriptions are myopic, interminable, and dull' (p. 255).

Watts (1957) likewise viewed Zen Buddhism as 'a way and a view of life which does not belong to any of the formal categories of modern Western thought. It is not religion or philosophy; it is not a psychology or a type of science'. It is instead 'an example of what is known in India and China as a "way of liberation"' (p. 3). For Watts, liberation from attachment to theoretical and ideological orthodoxy of any kind was an important consideration in becoming aware, living in the moment with presence, acceptance, and joy.

Watts recognized, like others similarly creating alternative ways of being and living, that the way of life he envisaged and embodied ran counter to dominant cultural expectations. Reflecting on southern Marin, Watts (1972) noted: 'We have succeeded, more than anywhere else in the United States, in curbing the oppressive White Anglo-Saxon Protestant subculture of the nation, though our slight margin of victory requires incessant vigilance' (p. 295). Indeed, these days, Watts would be appalled at the changes occurring in Marin and in San Francisco (see, e.g., Kloc, 2014).

Watts, in many texts and talks, made lasting contributions to countercultural resistance to the Protestant work ethic, imperialism, invasions and wars, materialism, repression of sex and sexuality, and fears of psychedelic alchemy. For many people during Watts' era, the demands of dominant culture created psychological distress. Likewise, experiences and fears leading to psychological distress today are no different than when Watts (1961/1973) composed *Psychotherapy East and West*. Human beings today experience anxiety, anguish, and depression, associated with ecological devastation and climate change, continual warfare, fear of nuclear annihilation, fear of 'the other', racism, homophobia, and estrangement and alienation. For too many persons, such experiences or fears may eventuate in substance abuse, anorexia/bulimia, debilitating anxiety, severe depression, interpersonal violence, and/or violation.

The Bateson Communication Project

Psychotherapy East and West (Watts, 1961/1973) features substantive discussion of theory and research emanating from the Communication Project led by anthropologist Gregory Bateson from 1953 to 1963, thus marking a new direction in East-West psychology and psychotherapy (Columbus, 2015). Bateson's research team inspired innovative developments in the psychotherapy field, as noted by Anderson (1997):

> Through their study of schizophrenic communication – which focused not on past behaviors, historical events, individual characteristics, and psychic process, but on current observable interpersonal behaviors of individuals within their relationship context (the family) – … [they] were able to move beyond traditional individual behavioral descriptions to *interactional processes* and from linear to *circular causality*. (p. 17)

Watts, who considered Bateson 'one of the most brilliant scientists in the world' (1972, p. 103), became a Communication Project consultant after Bateson's colleagues, Jay Haley and John Weakland, attended a 1953 lecture by Watts at the American Academy of Asian Studies on 'Eastern Philosophy and Western Psychology'. Watts' consultation with Bateson's research team may explain the brief reference to Zen Buddhism in their historically important introduction to the double bind concept (see Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland, 1956). Indeed, Sluzki and Ransom (1976) note Watts' contributions to double bind theory, in particular 'his effort to correlate Zen mystical experience with double bind structures' (p. 184). Thus Watts' (1955) preface to 'The Way of Liberation in Zen Buddhism' – an analysis delineating how Zen practitioners resolve paradox – noted: 'The present study is an attempt to clarify the experiential content of Zen Buddhism, in view of the growing interest in the subject among Western psychologists and philosophers' (n.p.).

Bateson's research team included several family therapy visionaries, including Haley and Weakland plus Don Jackson and Paul Watzlawick. Haley (1992), in particular, credited Watts' Zen Buddhist thinking with inspiring his own work. In 1958, for example, Watts published 'Zen and the Problem of Control', describing 'the human predicament' as 'caught in a paradox and involved in a double bind' (p. 103) of contradictory self-control – the higher-order, cognitive self tries to control the lower-order, bodily self, but how and by whom is the controller controlled? 'The interest in Zen', particularly teacher–student interaction, Watts noted, 'is that it provides a … classic example of a way of recognizing and resolving the conflict or contradiction of self-consciousness' (p. 104). In 1959, Jay Haley's essay 'Control in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy' was published, and subsequently discussed at length by Watts (1961/1973) in his chapter on 'The Counter-Game' addressing client–therapist interactions. Watts writes: 'Haley supposes … [that] the task of the therapist is to break the double binds imposed upon the patient and so stop him from imposing them on others' (p. 173).

The double bind concept, noted Watts (1961/1973), 'may well prove to be one of the very great ideas in the whole history of psychology' (p. 140). Watts himself drew upon double bind theory in developing his work on social norms. Sluzki and Ransom (1976) observe:

> From the late 1950s onward, Watts utilized the double bind concept in a number of his writings to describe the position in which society places its individual members. He thought of life as a master game with norms and rules that casts society's participants into the role of players, each in an apparently impossible position. At base and at the most abstract and invisible level,

life in society itself is double binding: the rules of the game are such that independence is conferred and taken away at the same time. Not only is that contradiction concealed, but what is more, the participants are rewarded for their failure to perceive it. (p. 185)

As Watts (1966/1989) described, 'the social double-bind game can be phrased in several ways', including (1) 'The first rule of this game is that it is not a game', (2) 'Everyone must play', (3) 'You must love us', (4) 'You must go on living', (5) 'Be yourself, but play a consistent and acceptable role', (6) 'Control yourself and be natural', and (7) 'Try to be sincere' (p. 73).

Finally, note that Jay Haley was a practitioner alongside Don Jackson at the Mental Research Institute (MRI) in Palo Alto, California. Jackson, a psychiatrist who, from 1953 to 1962, worked with Bateson's group, founded MRI in 1958, and it is from MRI that the early research into brief therapies would emerge. Jackson (1967/2010) questioned the psychiatric criteria by which a 'normal' person was constructed, challenging practices of categorization and behavioral classification into pathological vs. non-pathological. Jackson, in an early paper co-authored with Watzlawick (1964/2010), wrote:

At the clinical end of the behavioral spectrum, 'crazy' behavior is not necessarily the manifestation of a sick mind, but may be the only possible reaction to an absurd or untenable communicational context. Seen in this light the terms 'sanity' and 'insanity' practically lose their meanings as attributes of individuals. (pp. 56–57)

These authors discussed the importance of paradox in their evolving psychotherapy and, perhaps as an homage to Watts, ended their paper with a Zen poem.

Rollo May, Erich Fromm, and sociocultural critique

Existential psychiatry and psychotherapy became widely known in America with May, Angel, and Ellenberger's (1958) *Existence*, a text containing English language works of notable European existential psychiatrists. Writing in 1961, May noted: 'There has not yet been time for the existential approach in psychiatry and psychology to find its particular American form, nor time yet for American writings in this area to be significant' (p. 31). It is within this paradigmatic instability that Watts (1961/1973) weaved concerns of existentialist psychotherapists such as Rollo May into his philosophical tapestry. Cognizant of people's disconnection and alienation, and concerned with ecological problems and environmental degradation, Watts referenced May's contention that both Eastern philosophies and existentialist-influenced psychotherapy 'would insist that the Western absorption in conquering and gaining power over nature has resulted not only in the estrangement of man [*sic*] from nature but also indirectly in estrangement of man [*sic*] from himself' (May, cited in Watts, 1961/1973, p. 132).

Such estrangement and alienation, isolation and loneliness, is often encountered by therapists in their collaborations with suffering others. Watts (1961/1973) contends, in his exposition upon existentialism and Eastern philosophy, that the anxiety associated with being alive, 'Kierkegaard's *angst*' (p. 132), is not to be ignored or repressed, but rather is to be accepted and appreciated, writing, 'not to be thus anxious, not to take one's own and other people's being-in-the-world seriously, is to disregard the whole dignity of being a person, to fail in being fully human' (p. 133).

May (1950) had written a marvelous book tracing the Western philosophic (e.g. Spinoza, Pascal, Kierkegaard) traditions influencing Western psychoanalysis, existentialist

psychotherapy, post-structural perspectives, and psychotherapeutic understandings of human anxiety and ontological dilemma. Watts (1961/1973) highlights May's observation connecting existential psychotherapeutic perspectives and Eastern philosophic traditions, suggesting that 'both are concerned with ontology, the study of being' (p. 132). Comprehending the meanings of human being was a principle concern of philosophy and psychotherapy then, as now.

Watts (1961/1973) considered May 'one of the very few representatives of the [existentialist] school whose writing begins to be readable' (p. 115n). May (1961) noted in turn: 'I value greatly the serious interpretations of [Zen Buddhism] … of Alan Watts, despite my disagreement with some of his points' (p. 34). One disagreement – 'an ancient quarrel between East and West' (Watts, 1961/1973, p. 133) – concerned the relations of anxiety, ego, and death. Watts (1961/1973) suggests: 'the Existential school takes anxiety … and its concomitant guilt as inseparable from *being*', since existing 'necessarily involves the dread of not existing' (p. 132). In Watts' view, 'the existentialists give … the impression that to live without anxiety is to live without seriousness' (p. 133). He adds: 'What amounts in Existentialism to an idealization of anxiety is surely no more than a survival of the Protestant notion that it is *good* to feel guilty, anxious, and serious' (p. 136). Writing from an Eastern philosophic position, Watts contends that death anxiety is symptomatic of attachment to an illusory and abstract ego, 'and therefore liberation from the ego is synonymous with the full acceptance of death' (p. 139). Yet May (1961) warned of human tendencies 'to by-pass and evade anxiety, tragedy, guilt and the reality of evil … The term "transcend" … is often used in the service of this by-passing; you can escape by transcending, but it is hardly therapeutic' (p. 35). Watts (1961/1973) briefly referenced Erich Fromm's 'deep interest in Zen Buddhism' (p. 142n). Originally associated with the Frankfurt School, and influenced by Marx and Freud, Fromm developed significant post-World War II critiques of human alienation in the West (Jeffries, 2016). Fromm (1960) perceived a Western 'spiritual crisis', saying: 'It is the crisis which has been described as "*malaise*," "*ennui*," "*mal du siècle*," the deadening of life, the automatization of man [*sic*], his alienation from himself, from his fellow man and from nature' (p. 78). The North American proliferation of material goods and services following World War II resulted in more *angst*, more anguish, more despair, not less. Fromm (1960) observed: 'Western man [*sic*] is in a state of schizoid inability to experience affect, hence he is anxious, depressed, and desperate' (p. 79). As consumers, human beings have an appetite for more and more, not less and less; this appetite, this desire, leads not to satisfaction but rather to dissatisfaction and despair.

In Fromm's Western world, even 'Love had been poisoned like everything else in commodity capitalism, reified and neutered of its otherwise deranging power' (Jeffries, 2016, p. 295). Fromm (1956) observed: 'man's [*sic*] happiness today consists in "having fun." Having fun lies in the satisfaction of consuming and "taking in" commodities, sights, food, drinks, cigarettes, people, lectures, books, movies … The world is one great object for our appetite' (p. 87), yet the emptiness, disconnection, and *malaise* continue.

Social construction and Eastern philosophical influences

Watts wrote in 1972: 'the only real "you" is the shifting and momentary totality of everything you see and feel, within and without' (p. 255). Questioning reified identity and self-

knowledge is a theme running through Watts' body of work (see Brannigan, 1988). Thus, discussing James Moffett's (1962) review of Watts (1961/1973), particularly Watts' elucidation of the fictive ego, Columbus (2015) suggested that *Psychotherapy East and West* 'foreshadows certain postmodern, constructionist, and deconstructionist approaches to reading, writing, and living' (p. 350).

An informative source for Watts and social constructionist approaches to psychology and psychotherapy is Buddhism. Gregory Bateson, considered a formative influence on social constructionist thinking (see Lock & Strong, 2010, pp. 170–186), and whose own thinking on Buddhism was, as noted above, informed by Watts, observed:

> The Buddhists claim that the self is a sort of fiction. If so, our task will be to identify the species of fiction. But for the moment, I shall accept the 'self' as a heuristic concept, a ladder useful in climbing but perhaps to be thrown away or left behind at a later stage. (Bateson, 1979, p. 135)

Dialoging about something requires the 'something' to be named or personified. Bateson (1979) thus proposed that 'mind is empty; it is no-thing. It exists only in its ideas, and these again are no-things. Only the ideas are immanent, embodied in their examples. And the examples are, again, no-things' (p. 13). Psychotherapist William Lax (1996) likewise noted that 'no concept of a bounded, masterful self, an ego, or even an unconscious exists in Buddhist thought' (p. 10). He proposed that:

> upon closer examination, the … Buddhist view of and approach to life is very consistent with those of postmodernism … For both, multiple voices, stories, and views are to be valued, with one's own experience given centrality, and allowing (even encouraging) contradictions. (p. 11)

In light of the above, it makes sense that Kenneth Gergen, a principle theorist of social constructionist perspectives, remarked in conversation with Dian Marie Hosking (Gergen & Hosking, 2006), that Watts' (1957) *The Way of Zen* 'was most inspirational to me, and in significant ways … launched me toward a constructionist conception of psychology' (p. 303). Discussing similarities between social constructionism and Buddhism, Gergen and Hosking noted correspondences vis-a-vis self-comprehension, and the co-creation and co-construction of knowledge and meaning.

Another mutual source for Watts and social constructionist thinkers was George Herbert Mead's philosophy positing the shared establishment of *mind* (see Mead, 1934). Appreciating Mead's relational-interactional distinction between *I* and *me*, Watts (1961/1973) writes: '[Mead] goes on to show that the "I," the biological individual, can become conscious of itself only in terms of the "me," but that *this latter is a view of itself given to it by other people*' (p. 50, emphasis added). Mind, therefore, is co-created within relational interactions, 'mind is socially constituted' (Mead, cited in Watts, 1961/1973, p. 51). In time, Mead's influence was acknowledged by social constructionist thinkers (Lock & Strong, 2010). Sampson (1989) notes: 'Social constructionism … amplified the earlier ideas of Mead (1934), arguing that selves, persons, psychological traits and so forth, including the very idea of individual psychological traits, are social and historical constructions, not naturally occurring objects' (p. 2). In conversation with Hoyt (1997), Gergen described his sense of what comprised a *relational self*, remarking that he was interested in 'positing relatedness as the essential matrix, out of which a conception of self (or identity, emotion, etc) is born, objectified, and embedded within action' (p. 349; see also Gergen, 2009).

Beyond social constructions of individual identities is the manufacture of cultural 'others'. Watts (1961/1973) himself thus noted the social construction of 'the East' in the Western world:

> If it is true that psychotherapy has not been seen clearly in its social context, it is also true of the Eastern ways of liberation as they have been studied and explained in the West. Almost all the modern literature on Buddhism, Vedanta, and Taoism treats of these subjects in a void with the barest minimum of reference to the larger background of Indian or Chinese culture. (p. 60)

No idea or perspective is immune from being co-opted, popularized, turned into a commodity, and mass marketed, Buddhism being no exception. Watts (1961/1973) cautioned: 'One gathers, therefore, that these disciplines are exportable units like bales of rice or tea, and that Buddhism can be "taken up" anywhere at any time like baseball' (p. 60). Thus, in contemporary psychological practices, Kwee and Taams (2006) write: 'the Theravada inspired Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, pioneered by Kabat-Zinn in 1979 … in the beginning never mentioned its Buddhist origin so as not to scare people away. We object to the use of Buddhist meditation techniques without instructing its basic tenets' (p. 473).

Simplicity and a not-knowing perspective

Watts (1961/1973) noted: 'Successful psychotherapy is carried out by Freudian psychoanalysis, by Rogers' nondirective counselling, and by Jung's analytical psychology. The theories and methods differ and diverge, but there may be some hidden and essential factor in common' (p. 73). Persons seeking therapy inform us nowadays that effective and beneficial transformation and change are afforded when the person of the therapist is demonstrating *presence* (Sanders, 2016) within therapeutic engagement. Presence is not analogous to technique or trickery; presence, as such, is more an art, a craft not necessarily learned from a manual. Thus, Andersen (2012) speaks of therapeutic practice as a *human art*. In my view, the commonality between the psychologists and psychiatrists referenced by Watts was an interest in articulating a language of mind, or soul, i.e. giving voice to the soul's suffering or the mind's confusion, anguish, or torment. As James Hillman (1975) wrote, 'out of psyche-pathos-logos came the meaning of suffering of the soul, or the soul's suffering of meaning' (p. 71).

Regarding realization of mutual solutions to difficulties and dilemmas, and dissolution of problematic and restraining interactional patterns within communities, Watts (1961/1973) suggests:

> The way of liberation is 'the way down and out'; it is taking, like water, the course of least resistance; it is following the natural bent of one's own feelings; it is by becoming stupid and rejecting the refinements of learning; it is by becoming inert and drifting like a leaf on the wind. (p. 90)

Again, Watts proposed:

> What is really being said is that intelligence solves problems by seeking the greatest simplicity and the least expenditure of effort, and it is thus that Taoism eventually inspired the Japanese to work out the technique of *judo* – the easy or gentle Tao (*do*). (p. 90)

Watts (1961/1973) saw similarities between Eastern philosophic 'simplicity' and Carl Rogers' person-centered perspective 'in which the therapist simply draws out the logical conclusions of his client's thinking and feeling by doing no more than rephrasing it in what seems to be the clearest form' (p. 90; see Rogers, 1950). Rogers' important text, *On Becoming a Person* (1961), was contemporaneous with Watts (1961/1973), contributing significantly to movements away from the pathologizing of persons. Rogers focused upon viewing consultees simply as human beings, as persons, with whom his presence was demonstrated by listening with patience, consideration, respect, humility, and compassion. Anderson (2001) offered a synthesis of Rogers' philosophy and perspective in terms of *a way of being*:

> Emphasis is placed on the client's expertise regarding his or her life, and the therapist's expertise on how a client should live his or her life is de-emphasized. Said differently, a way of being does not equate skill or technique, contrived or interventive, but natural and authentic. (p. 348)

Rogers' practice, and its guiding thought, represented a shift toward simplicity, being present, listening attentively, and inherent belief in people's capacities for discovering solutions to dilemmas afflicting them. Watts (1961/1973) again found similarities here with Eastern philosophy:

> The responses of the therapist are confined to expressions of his own understanding of what the client says to him. He trusts in the wisdom of the 'positive growth potential' of every human being to work out the solution of the problem if only it can be clearly and consistently stated. The therapist is therefore 'stupid' and 'passive' like a Taoist in that he has no theory of what is wrong with his client or what he ought to become in order to be cured. (p. 90)

Watts (1961/1973) presciently saw the benefit of simplification for psychotherapy practice. Not long after the publication of *Psychotherapy East and West*, there was a movement among family therapy practitioners engaging in more simplified ways, employing more common sense practices (Lomas, 1999) in their therapies. Likewise, an entire brief solution-focused perspective would evolve within the family therapy field, similarly embedded within ideas of simplicity and strength. Two innovative practitioners of brief therapy, John Weakland and Steve de Shazer, agreed that the shift toward brief therapies was about '*simplifying*' (Hoyt, 1994, p. 12). For brief therapy practitioners such as Weakland and de Shazer, the requirement was a willingness to 'live with uncertainty' (ibid., p. 14), engaging therapy from a position demonstrating 'simplicity training', 'stupidity training', 'beginner's mind' (ibid., p. 28), and curiosity.

Anderson and Goolishian's (1988, 1992) practice of assuming a *not-knowing* position within therapeutic conversation has correspondences with a 'beginner's mind' presence and curiosity. Anderson and Goolishian (1992) explain:

> To 'not-know' is *not* to have an unfounded or unexperienced judgment, but refers more widely to the set of assumptions, the meanings, that the therapist brings to the clinical interview. The excitement for the therapist is in learning the uniqueness of each individual client's narrative truth, the coherent truths in their storied lives. (p. 29)

For Anderson and Goolishian (1992), a not-knowing way of being within therapy entails an understanding that

> therapists are always prejudiced by their experience, but that they must listen in such a way that their pre-experience does not close them to the full meaning of the client's descriptions of

their experience. This can only happen if the therapist approaches each clinical experience from the position of not-knowing. (p. 29)

Conclusion

In this article, I have discussed post-World War II psychotherapy innovators interested in (1) comprehending people as meaning-making and meaning-sharing beings, and in (2) communication patterns performed by human beings in pursuit of meaning and coexistence. Focusing primarily upon Watts' (1961/1973) *Psychotherapy East and West* and the re-visioning of psychotherapy, I have identified affinities and correspondences between contemporary social constructionist practitioners and earlier practitioners of Humanistic Psychology.

Psychotherapy East and West (1961/1973) positioned Watts, like Gregory Bateson, outside of and against the grain of established academic and psychological traditions in North America. In so doing, Watts challenged psychotherapists to think and reflect upon their practice and their understandings of theory, moving them to experience 'the loneliness of liberation, of no longer finding security by taking sides with the crowd, of no longer believing that the rules of the game are the rules of nature' (pp. 123–124).

Accordingly, I will conclude by noting that Watts gave the first ever talk at the Esalen Institute in 1962. Early on, visionaries from multiple fields gathered there, including many radical and innovative thinkers associated with the countercultural and Humanist Psychology] movements: Gregory Bateson, Joseph Campbell, Stanislav Grof, R.D. Laing, Rollo May, Abraham Maslow, Fritz Perls, Carl Rogers, and Virginia Satir, among others (see Kripal, 2007). Fittingly, as an illustration of correspondences, and as an example of Watts' (and Bateson's) continuing legacy, Gregory Bateson's youngest daughter, Nora Bateson, and Alan Watts' son Mark co-presented a January 2015 workshop at the Esalen Institute on their respective fathers' philosophies, entitled: 'Mischief Makers in the Cultural Metaphor'.

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