

Carl Rogers' 'Congruence' As An Organismic

Not a Freudian Concept

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Abstract. *The principal purpose of this paper is to illumine the extent to which Carl Rogers' characterization of the central person-centred concept of 'congruence' is couched in terms of a Cartesian-Newtonian, paradigmatic world-view mediated by the theoretical formulations of Sigmund Freud. Crucial problems in such a quasi-Freudian characterization of 'congruence' are delineated demonstrative of a critical flaw in person-centred theory as a whole: its being a mix of concepts deriving from the discrepant Cartesian-Newtonian and 'organismic' scientific paradigms. The re-formulation of 'congruence' in organismic terms is envisaged as part of a general need to conceptualize all key person-centred concepts in such a fashion.*

The sciences....are born under quite special conditions—when their key concepts reach a degree of abstraction and precision which makes them adequate to the demands of exact, powerful, and microscopically analytic thinking. (Susanne Langer, 1962, p. 13)

As the matrix of ideas that underpins and guides person-centred counselling/psychotherapy¹, and crafted almost entirely by Carl Rogers, person-centred theory is not merely 'unfinished' (Mearns, 1997, p. 135), but, in my estimation, critically flawed.

The critical flaw intrinsic to person-centred theory has to do, I contend (cf. Ellingham, 1997b), with its being a mix of concepts deriving from two disparate ‘paradigms’, two fundamentally different guiding visions of the world: on the one hand, the Cartesian-Newtonian (‘C-N’) paradigm which underlies Newtonian physics and our contemporary ‘common-sense’ understanding of reality; on the other, a paradigm which is still in the process of emerging from the Cartesian-Newtonian, a paradigm variously labelled *holistic*, *organismic*, *process*, and from which has arisen *field theory*, *general systems theory* and *ecopsychology* (cf. Capra, 1982; 1996). A simple measure of the contrast between these two paradigms is that the former employs the machine as its root metaphor, the latter the living organism.

On the following grounds, therefore, (a) that Rogers developed person-centred theory in the attempt to generate scientific understanding of the phenomenon of c/p; (b) that contemporary advance in scientific understanding embodies a shift from a C-N to an organismic view of the world; (c) that in any case person-centred theory is at its core organismic not mechanistic in character (cf. Hall, Lindzey & Campbell, 1998, p. 454; Bozarth 1998, p. 28), I further contend that in order to remedy the critical flaw within person-centred theory and so render it a self-consistent vehicle of more advanced scientific understanding (even a paradigm for the field of c/p as a whole), various of the theory’s key concepts need to be organismically ‘purified’. That is to say, we should seek to define all person-centred concepts in exclusively organismic, as against C-N terms—an intellectual exercise with which Rogers himself professed agreement (cf. Rogers, 1963, pp. 19ff.).

In contemplating such a project, I hold that Rogers’ concept of ‘congruence’ constitutes a prime candidate for this kind of organismic ‘makeover’—supportive evidence for ‘congruence’s’ candidacy being provided, in my view, by disquieting appraisals recently voiced by a number of person-centred thinkers: viz., Barbara Brodley who concludes that ‘the

precise meaning of congruence [in Rogers' writings] remains somewhat ambiguous' (1998, p. 83); Len Holdstock who considers that 'the concept of congruence...seems to be in urgent need of attention' (1996, p. 48); Sheila Haugh who avows that '[u]nderstanding of the concept of congruence within person-centred theory and practice is at best blurred and at worst misinterpreted' (1998, p. 44); Gill Wyatt who charges that '[d]ifferent practitioners are using different definitions of congruence and, related to their different theoretical position, they have a different stance with regard the place of congruence in therapeutic practice' (1998, p. 6).

In the present article, I aim to point up how particular problems relating to Rogers' formulation of 'congruence' arise from that formulation being shot through with C-N notions mediated by the theorizing of Sigmund Freud. As such, the article represents a 'deconstructive', stage-setting exercise preparatory to a 'constructive' attempt to characterize 'congruence' in an organismically 'refined' fashion. In what follows, I first highlight the C-N flavour to Freud's classical conception of psychotherapeutic client change. Next, I consider how, in this regard, Rogers' characterization of 'congruence' bears the imprint of Freud's theorizing. Thereafter, I identify crucial problems involved in Rogers' Freudian characterization of 'congruence' and briefly allude to an alternative 'organismic' approach. Finally, I sketch the general context and character of an organismic re-visioning of 'congruence'.

In the footsteps of Isaac and Rene

It is hardly surprising that when Rogers came to theorize about the nature of c/p that his thinking should have been influenced by the views of Freud, the founder of the modern discipline of c/p as the 'talking cure'. Rogers, indeed, had no qualms in acknowledging that the development of 'non-directive or client-centered counseling' (earlier terms for person-

centred c/p) ‘would not have been possible without the appreciation of man’s unconscious strivings and complex emotional nature which was Freud’s contribution to our culture’ (1951, p. 4).

But, as we shall shortly see, Rogers’ ‘appreciation’ in this respect was not merely of a general character. In a quite specific manner, it involved him explaining psychotherapeutic client change—constructive self change effected by c/p—in decidedly Freudian terms, and, as such, expressive of a scheme of things grounded in the intellectual formulations of Isaac Newton and Rene Descartes, i.e. the C-N paradigm.

Three features of the C-N paradigm to take note of with respect to Freud’s theorizing are:

1. a dualistic view of reality wherein the person is considered made up of two fundamentally different and irreducible ‘substances’: Rene Descartes’ *res cogitans*, physically unextended, conscious *mind*; and *res extensa*, physically extended, unconscious *matter* (the latter being, of course, the body).
2. the notion that at its simplest level the physical realm of matter is comprised of unchanging ‘bits of stuff’ called atoms which get moved around in the container of absolute space in the cause-effect manner of parts of a clock or of billiard balls on a billiard table. It was Isaac Newton, it will be recalled, who specified such movement with mathematical precision.
3. the presumption that mind/consciousness operates according to the principles of thought which are of a different order to those which govern the workings of the physical domain.

Thus it was that when Freud came upon ‘patients’ who had no conscious idea of what was causing their ‘neuroses’ (certain disturbances of bodily, behavioural and mental functioning), he at first sought to explain such disturbances neurologically. As a former

student of Ernst Brucke, this for Freud meant in terms of unconscious matter governed by Newtonian principles, i.e. in tune with Brucke's advocacy of mechanism, the reductionist doctrine that all mental functioning could ultimately to be explained in physico-chemical terms (cf. Appignanesi, 1979). Unsuccessful in this strictly mechanistic enterprise, Freud put to one side the question of the mind's relationship to the body, to matter, and came up instead with an explanatory scheme which departed from strict C-N assumptions by positing the existence of a psychological realm of which consciousness was not an attribute. Freud dubbed this realm 'the unconscious', further departing from a purist C-N view by conceiving both it, and the mind as a whole, in quasi-mechanistic terms. Here Freud appears to have been much influenced by the views of Johann Herbart who posited the existence of an unconscious mind, along with the notion of 'ideas' as entities (cf. MacIntyre, 1958, chpt. 2). In his classical topographical or spatial scheme, Freud thus saw the mind, complete with the 'compartments' of consciousness and 'the unconscious' and entity-like mental contents, as akin to a C-N physical apparatus.

Although Freud later developed a more complex scheme, as Janet Malcolm relates, it was this '*spatial* arrangement of the unconscious and conscious states' (1982, p. 29) that guided Freud when writing the papers elaborating the basic technique of *psychoanalysis*, Freud's term for *c/p*.

The crucial discovery that Freud 'explained' on such a basis was that of patients' neurotic 'symptoms' becoming alleviated when, aided by the psychoanalyst, they were able to verbally bring to mind a forgotten idea from their childhood, an idea of a particularly repugnant nature. Given that there seemed to be an associative link between the nature of the idea and the nature of the symptoms, Freud hypothesized that it was the idea itself that was 'pathogenic', in that it had previously been the underlying cause of the neurotic symptoms in the manner of a cancerous cell. What happened in childhood, Freud reasoned, was that when

ideas arose expressive of the primitive infantile impulses of sexual lust and intense hate, they could not be countenanced and allowed entry into the compartment of consciousness.

Consequently they became repelled from consciousness and confined in the chamber of 'the unconscious'. Freud coined the term 'repression' to denote the 'defence' operation by which this took place.

Psychotherapy, for Freud, thus consisted in the reversal of repression, a restorative process involving the 'excision' from 'the unconscious' of pathogenic repressed 'ideas' (conceived as unchanging 'atomic' mental 'entities' or 'things') and their concomitant passage into consciousness, their movement from one chamber of a quasi-mechanical system to another.

Insofar, therefore, as the therapist's task was to facilitate the entry into consciousness of previously repressed ideas, unconscious 'contents', Freud described the work of the therapist as that of making 'his [the patient's] unconscious conscious to him' (1973, p. 100). So construed, the effectiveness of the therapist depended on her or him being an expert on 'the unconscious', an expert in diagnosing the nature of the underlying unconscious idea on the basis of its disguised or masked expression in the patient's behavioural symptoms and mental imagery. The therapist thus *interpreted* to the patient the nature of the idea which lay below the surface in the *reservoir* of their 'unconscious'. This enabled the patient to know the repressed idea for what it was and through its having a place in consciousness to cease its subversive influence on the patient's mental functioning.

Overall, then, the psychotherapeutic process was roughly comparable to the hauling up of an anchor from the depths of the sea in order for it to assume its proper place on board ship, where it could be apprehended directly for what it was rather than being known indirectly through its previous undersea 'anchorage' effects. It was in such a fashion, therefore, that Freud developed a scheme in which the mind, and *ipso facto*, the enterprise of

c/p, became ‘placed among the inhabitants of the “billiard-ball universe” of Newtonian mechanics’ (MacIntyre, 1958, p. 17).

In the footsteps of Sigmund

It is Rogers’ formulation of ‘congruence’ as a concept integral to his explanation of psychotherapeutic change that sees this central person-centred notion being defined in a decidedly Freudian manner. Thus, mirroring Freud’s dualistic description of psychotherapeutic change as ‘the unconscious becoming conscious’, Rogers depicts such change as ‘a shift from incongruence to congruence’ (1961, p. 157)—where ‘congruence’ is associated with ‘awareness’ and constitutes the ‘state’ of a person who is ‘genuine’, ‘whole’, ‘integrated’, ‘without facade’, ‘adjusted’ (1959, p. 206; 1957, p. 224); while ‘incongruence’, ‘congruence’s’ polar opposite, is linked with ‘denial and distortion to awareness’ and taken to represent ‘the basis of all psychological pathology in man [sic.], and the basis of all his social pathology as well’ (1959, p. 205; 1963, p. 21).

Paralleling, too, Freud’s comparison between the analyst, who is conscious of ‘the unconscious’, as against the patient, who is not, Rogers construes the effective therapist as an individual who ‘is congruent or integrated in the [therapeutic] relationship’, in contrast to the client who, by definition, ‘is in a state of incongruence’ (Rogers, 1957, p. 221). Important to note here is that these respective characterizations of ‘congruent’ counsellor versus ‘incongruent’ client constitute two of Rogers’ ‘six...necessary and sufficient conditions for the initiation of a process of constructive personality [i.e. psychotherapeutic] change’ (ibid., p. 234)—the other four conditions being that therapist and client ‘are in psychological contact’; that the therapist experiences both ‘unconditional positive regard for the client’ as well as ‘empathic understanding of the client’s inner world’; that ‘communication to the

client of the therapist's empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard is to a minimal degree achieved' (p. 221).

Turning to the detail of Rogers' formal descriptions of 'congruence' and 'incongruence', not surprisingly we find a tendency to define 'congruence' with reference to the therapist and 'incongruence' with reference to the client—albeit that Rogers considers there to be a continuum from a 'maximum of incongruence' to the 'complete congruence' of the 'fully functioning person' (1961, p. 157; 1959, p. 235). The 'congruent' therapist is not, however, expected to be a 'paragon' of 'congruence' outside the therapeutic relationship (Rogers, 1957, p. 224).

Common to all Rogers' formal definitions of 'congruence' and 'incongruence' is their specification, respectively, of a concordant or discordant relationship between two or more 'levels' of a person's psychological functioning (Rogers, 1961, p. 339)—the two 'level' definition, in that it is linked with 'inner' psychological change, mainly appears with reference to clients; the three (or more) 'level' version adds on to the two 'level' definition an extra 'level' (or 'levels') relating to outward behaviour and verbal communication, and mainly appears in connection with characterizing the state of the therapist (or persons in general, including infants).

The total picture is perhaps easiest to grasp if we start by considering a three 'level' definition. Here, for instance, (inclusive of alternative terms found elsewhere) is one in which the 'levels' are clearly identified as such, and where the concordant relationship between them is characterized as an 'accurate matching' (1959, p. 206; 1957, p. 97).

Congruence is the term we have used to indicate an accurate matching of experiencing and awareness. It may be still further extended to cover a matching of experience, awareness, and communication...He [the congruent individual] is one unified person all the way through, whether we tap his experience at the visceral [gut,

organismic, or physiological] level, the level of his awareness [consciousness, or symbolization], or the level of communication. (Rogers, 1961, p. 339)

Complementing this three 'level' characterization of 'congruence' is a three 'level' depiction of 'incongruence'. So conceptualized, 'incongruence' comes in two forms, 'incongruence A' and 'incongruence B', as Mearns and Thorne (1988, p. 84) dub them: 'incongruence between experience and awareness...usually spoken of as defensiveness, or denial [or distortion] to awareness'; and 'between awareness and communication...usually thought of as falseness or deceit' (Rogers, 1961, p. 341).

How 'congruence' might conceivably involve more than three 'levels' is suggested by two definitions relating to the therapist, definitions in which, as 'emotionally toned experiences....within the envelope of the organism' (Rogers, 1959, pp. 198, 197), 'feelings' have something of an unchanging 'thing-like' character:

By this ['congruence'] we mean that the feelings the therapist is experiencing are available to him [sic.], available to his awareness, and he is able to live these feelings, be them, able to communicate them if appropriate. (Rogers, 1961, p. 61)

Thus whether he [the therapist] is angry or affectionate or ashamed or enthusiastic, we sense that he is the same at all levels—in what he is experiencing at an organismic level, in his awareness at the conscious level, and in his words and communications. (ibid. p. 283)

To complete the portrayal and begin to gain a sense of how, in Rogers' view, a psychotherapeutic 'shift from incongruence to congruence' entails constructive self-change, consider the way in which Rogers depicts both 'congruence' and 'incongruence' as two-level notions. In this form the relationship between the two 'levels' is specified as 'accurate symbolization' or 'accurate representation'.

Focusing first on ‘incongruence’, ‘It’, according to Rogers, ‘refers to a discrepancy between the actual experience of the organism and the self picture of the individual insofar as it represents that experience’ (1957, p. 222). Whereas, by contrast, ‘when self-experiences are accurately symbolized [in awareness] and are included in the self-concept [self picture] in this accurately symbolized form, then the state is one of congruence of self and experience’ (1959, p. 206).

Especially strong evidence that this two level conception of ‘congruence’ leads to a depiction of psychotherapeutic increase in congruence that bears the hallmarks of Freud’s conception of ‘the unconscious becoming conscious’ is supplied by Rogers in the following declaration. ‘In client-centered therapy’, states Rogers,

our theory is that in the psychological safety of the therapeutic relationship the client is able to permit in his awareness feelings and experiences which ordinarily would be *repressed*, or denied to awareness. These previously denied experiences may be incorporated into the self. For example, a client who has repressed all feelings of hostility may come, during therapy, to experience his hostility freely. His concept of himself then becomes reorganized to include this realization that he has at times hostile feelings to others. His self-picture becomes to that degree a more accurate map or representation of the totality of his experience. (1961, p. 237)

Here, accentuated by Rogers’ deployment of the technical Freudian term of ‘repression’ and the entity-like nature of ‘feelings and experiences’, we appear to encounter a similarity between Rogers and Freud that is to the point of identity, a judgement confirmed by Calvin Hall, Gardner Lindzey and John Campbell (1998). ‘Explicitly recognized in Rogers’ theory’, they say,

is the concept of an organism that has many experiences of which the person is not aware. Some of these unsymbolized experiences are denied entrance to consciousness because they are inconsistent with the self-image. If this is not repression, in the psychoanalytic sense, then the distinction between it and repression is so slight as to be negligible. (p. 488)

Given this apparent concordance between the views of Rogers and Freud, are we to say, then, that Rogers' formulations relating to 'congruence' are merely the masked representation of an underlying Freudian scheme? Is Rogers himself being 'incongruent' in failing to 'symbolize to awareness' unconscious Freudian ideas?

A number of other features in Rogers' theorizing would seem to indicate that the correspondence between his views and those of Freud is some way from being an identity. To gauge the closeness of this correspondence, consider the following points:

(1) Rogers, as revealed already, did not conceptualize 'congruence' and psychotherapeutic change solely in terms of two 'levels' but of three, or more, so that it might be said that whereas Freud's scheme is dualistic Rogers' is not.

Countering this claim, though, are first the arguments of Brodley (1998) and Haugh (1998) that it is Rogers' two level formulation found in his (1957) and (1959) theory statements which provide us with the authoritative and delimiting definition of 'congruence'. Back to pure Freud is their implied message.

Second, there is the question of the character of the 'levels' in Rogers' three 'level' version of 'congruence'. 'Organismic experience', 'awareness', and 'communication' can hardly be said to be 'levels' in the sense of being relatively higher and lower categories on a single ladder-like scale of psychological functioning. Certainly, insofar as Rogers associates 'organismic experience' with the functioning of animals, and 'symbolization to awareness'

with adult humans (1961, p. 105), we can readily see how the latter can be considered to be on a higher 'level' than the former. But what case can be made that 'communication' is indeed a higher mode of functioning than 'symbolization to awareness'? If there is indeed a ladder linking 'symbolization to awareness' to 'communication' (and from a developmental perspective this would seem hardly to be the case), then it would not seem to be the same one as links 'organismic experience' to 'symbolization to awareness'.

Overall, therefore, a strong case can be made in relation to the definition of 'congruence' that we are still dealing with a Freudian style dualistic system, of 'organismic experience' and 'symbolization to awareness', in relation to which 'symbolization to awareness' and 'communication' represent different articulations of the same developmental level.

(2) In spite of the fact that 'Rogers seems to assume that feelings have a "thing-like" quality' (Wexler, 1974, p. 53), Rogers' account of feelings 'bubbling through into awareness' (cf. Rogers, 1961, p. 156) is different from Freud's depiction involving a 'billiard ball' feeling moving from one chamber in the mind to the other. For his part, Rogers appears to posit that denied feelings come to enjoy a presence at the levels of awareness and communication in tandem with their continued presence at an organismic level. Whereas an incongruent individual's feelings are 'denied to awareness', by contrast the congruent person 'is the same at all levels' (Rogers, 1961, p. 61), such that what he or she 'is feeling at an experiential or visceral level is clearly present in awareness, and is available for direct communication' (Rogers & Sanford, 1989, p. 1490).

This interpretation of the same 'thing' being present at all levels in the congruent person fits with Rogers having adopted the term 'congruence' 'based on the geometric concept of congruent triangles' (Kirschenbaum, 1979, p. 196), i.e. the notion of triangles

‘coinciding exactly when superimposed’ (Bozarth, 1998, p. 71), of their being identical clones, ‘things’ which are no different from one another.

Brodley, on the other hand, draws attention to Rogers’ writings supporting a somewhat different interpretation of the above circumstance. Writing from her two level position, she is forceful in asserting that ‘The theoretical definition of congruence as accurate representation of experience by inner symbols is about the [‘accurate’] relation between the contents of experience and the symbols [‘in awareness’] representing the contents’ (1998, pp. 87 & 92). This view of matters would seem to have in mind ‘contents’, unchanging ‘things’, existing at an experiential level with symbolization involving the simultaneous presence at the level of awareness of a representative mark or label, in the way a mark on a map represents a ‘thing’ or feature of the real territory. Given the point, though, emphasized by Rogers himself, that the map is not the territory (cf. Rogers, 1951, p. 485), a difficulty which arises for this interpretation is how to square it with the notion of a congruent person being ‘the same at all levels’.

And then again, in relation to ‘feelings’ being things, a further scenario somewhat at variance with Freud arises from Rogers’ conception of ‘accurate symbolization’ as simply involving an ‘openness to experience’, i.e. the individual is ‘openly aware of his [sic.] feelings and attitudes as they exist in him at an organic [i.e. ‘organismic’] level’ (Rogers, 1961, p. 115). It is as if the process of ‘accurate symbolization’ is equivalent to the cleaning of a glass panel to enable ‘open’ apprehension of whatever lies beyond it. So envisaged, ‘feelings’ denied to awareness are like fish swimming beneath a glass bottomed boat which cannot be apprehended as such due to the dirty glass. Once the glass is cleaned, though, the fish can be accurately perceived for what they are. In such a characterization, then, with the development of ‘congruence’ the individual comes to enjoy ‘the gift of a free and undistorted

awareness' of previously denied 'thing-like' feelings which all the time continue to reside at the organismic level (Rogers, 1961, p. 105).

(3) Leaving aside the question of the distorted conscious representation of a denied feeling, which is common to both Freud's and Rogers' accounts, Rogers' conception of feelings coming to awareness incorporates a complexity not found in Freud's equivalent formulation. For, for Rogers it is not only a matter of a previously denied feeling suddenly being consciously apprehended in its full glory—in a sudden moment of insight, as for Freud—but of such a feeling being capable of becoming apprehended 'with varying degrees of sharpness, from dim awareness of something existing as ground, to a sharp focus of something which is in focus as figure' (Rogers, 1959, p. 198). There is thus a continuum in relation to being conscious of a feeling, from a complete 'denial to awareness' to the condition of 'experiencing a feeling fully', i.e. with optimal 'richness' (Rogers, 1961, p. 151).

Again, though, it is questionable in this instance just how different Rogers' views are from those of Freud. David Wexler, for example, points up that given that feelings have a 'thing-like' quality for him, 'Rogers must assume that a richness of feelings exists outside awareness prior to symbolization', and thereby 'that outside of awareness there is some kind of reservoir, not unlike the Freudian unconscious, where a richness of feelings resides and exists' (1974, pp. 53 & 54).

(4) If, in Rogers' theorizing, there is indeed an implicit 'reservoir' of denied feelings, then we would have to say that it is certainly different from Freud's with regard to both its contents and its structure. For a start, we would have to presume that located within it are not only destructive and negative feelings (equivalent to the repressed contents of Freud's unconscious), but also those of both a neutral and a positive nature, with the more positive and constructive to be found at the greatest 'depth', at the person's essential core. Thus, in relation to the case of his client 'Mrs. Oak', Rogers reports that 'underneath the bitterness and

hatred and the desire to get back at the world which has cheated her, is a much less anti-social feeling, a deep experience of having been hurt'; while 'underneath the bitterness, underneath the hurt, is a self that is without hate' (1961, pp. 96 & 101).

A similar picture emerges, also, with respect to another client of Rogers. Rogers relates that in his therapeutic work with this second client he was 'responsive both to the anger and the pain that was discovered to be underlying it' (1982, p. 253). Directly referring to the client, Rogers reports that in the course of therapy the client's 'armor begins to crack' such that '[w]e find the upper layer is anger, but further down in the slime are the unspeakable hurts' (in Farber, Brink & Raskin, 1996, p.308).

According to Rogers' own hypothesis, what we see in these instances is a process wherein 'only when a gut-level experience is fully accepted and accurately labeled in awareness can it be completed. Then the person can move on' (1980, p. 158).

With 'congruence' resulting from gut-level experience becoming accurately labelled in awareness, the client's 'moving on', of becoming more 'congruent', thus appears to entail the symbolization to awareness of increasingly positive feelings, a descending step-wise process that presumably continues until the hypothetical end-point of complete 'congruence', of being fully functioning, is reached. As we have seen, it is this 'congruent' condition which is epitomised by the effective therapist in the therapeutic relationship, as one who feels and communicates unconditional positive regard towards another (the client). What we have apparently is a scenario in which there appear to be different storage levels for feelings denied to awareness such that as one delves down the layers one passes from negative to positive feelings.

(5) In the face of criticism from Eugene Gendlin (1962; 1964), Rogers' later writings can be said to show a shift away from a C-N, Freudian style of conceiving psychotherapeutic change towards a more organismic or process orientated conception. One argument that

might be made, therefore, is that Rogers' final position regarding the definition of 'congruence' has shifted away from that of his earlier quasi-Freudian conception. Whatever the truth of such a claim, there nevertheless remains clear evidence that in his final writings Rogers still continued to characterize 'congruence' and psychotherapeutic change in a Freudian manner.

We have already seen how in his later years Rogers spoke of discovering feelings at layers 'down in the slime', but note, too, how he refers to his own personal satisfaction at being able to be 'congruent', to get close to himself, as he idiosyncratically puts it. 'So it is a very satisfying thing', he says, 'when I sense that I have gotten close to me, to the *feelings and hidden aspects that live below the surface*' (1980, p. 16—my emphasis).

Note, further, how in the same later period, Rogers declares that the role of the therapist is not that of 'trying to uncover totally unconscious feelings' (1980, p. 142).

And finally, note how, close to the end of his life in a work written jointly with Ruth Sanford, Rogers appraises 'Ben's' account of an experience of personal psychotherapeutic change. 'Ben', Rogers and Sanford comment,

gives a beautiful description of defensiveness—a denial to awareness of his anger—and the dissolving of that defensiveness in the safe and trusting environment initiated by the facilitator of learning. His masked feelings become unmasked. He can accept himself as angry. (1989, p. 1487).

Get thee behind me Sigmund!

To this point my primary concern has been to lay bear the extent to which Rogers' concept of congruence and, *ipso facto*, his conception of psychotherapeutic change, correspond to Freud's C-N formulations. I move on now to briefly consider certain basic problems involved in conceiving 'congruence' in a Freudian fashion.

Give or take whether they are considered to move from one location to another, as I see it the central problem endemic to Rogers' quasi-Freudian conception of 'congruence' arises from the treatment of mental events ('feelings', in particular) as 'things' or 'contents' which explicitly or implicitly are assumed to dwell in some kind of psychological 'container' or 'envelope'. When leading person-centred authorities Dave Mearns and Brian Thorne (1988) inform me that my 'congruence' as a therapist depends on my ability to '[f]eel the feelings that are within me' (p. 75); and when in explicating 'congruence' they draw a diagram with a square area housing '[t]he counsellor's underlying feelings in response to a client' of which the counsellor may be '*unaware*' (pp. 84f), there can be no doubt that Cartesian-Newtonian, topographical Freudianism is alive and well within the person-centred approach. It is a situation in relation to which a suitably augmented observation of Eugene Gendlin is entirely apt. 'Whether', says Gendlin, 'they are "in" awareness or "in" the unconscious, [or 'at the organismic level'], the contents ['feelings'] are viewed as already defined, fully formed, and unaffected in their nature by "coming into" awareness' (1962, p. 30).

As it happens, though, it doesn't take too much thought apropos this 'jack-in-the-box' scenario to realize that the idea of an 'unconscious feeling', 'an underlying feeling of which one is unaware', i.e. an '*unfelt* feeling', is logical nonsense.

'Incongruence A', declare Mearns and Thorne, 'is where the counsellor has underlying feelings in response to the client, but is unaware of these' (1988, p. 85)—a case in point being the counsellor whose 'incongruence was due to a lack of awareness of the anger within her' (p. 84).

Pause for a moment to consider the kind of notion that is being suggested here: that I am experiencing an unfelt feeling of anger of which I would be aware, would be feeling, if

only I wasn't actually feeling a feeling of anxiety, of depression, or of exhilaration—or, indeed, were feeling no feeling at all.

Just what at the moment of my not feeling it is a feeling of which I am unaware? Perhaps, like an unseen sighting, I am to equate it with the emotional hurt I would be feeling if I weren't on Prozac?; or to the pain I would be feeling under the dentist's drill were it not for the anaesthetic, or self-hypnosis?

A feeling of pain where I have no feeling of pain? That is something I definitely think I can handle! In fact, 'sock it to me one more time'! A feeling is what I feel, not what I don't feel.

Relevant to such reflections, social constructionist Rom Harre (1986) fittingly pours scorn on the notion of an already 'fully-formed' feeling of anger existing 'within the envelope of the organism' prior to our awareness of it. On Harre's testimony,

there is a relatively new 'anger' language game that is played in T-groups and Rogerian therapy sessions. 'Let's let all that *anger* out!' This kind of talk suggests that there is a buried affective state, a kind of emotional boil, that can be lanced and the poison removed. But even a brief encounter with 'encounter' groups shows that there is almost certainly no such thing as 'buried anger'. The anger displayed by the members seems to be created by the therapy session itself. (p. 7)

Feelings of anger or of other emotions, Harre thus points up, are always a social construction, very much a product of our cultural values and language system. Not only, too, are they *about* some societal circumstance, but most importantly they are *created* in the here and now—our feelings being, in Eugene Gendlin's phrase, 'newly produced each moment' (1981, p. 97).

Such a conception of the momentary and creative formation of feelings highlights, in particular, Rogers' unavoidably 'passive' conception of symbolization. For him

symbolization can only be a simple labelling process, a process of opening up our awareness to what is already present at the level of organismic experience, a shining-the-light-upon a pre-existing, previously hidden 'thing'.

With the contemporary awareness that individuals from different cultures live in different worlds, thanks to the modes and schemes of symbolization passed on as part of their cultural heritage, we see that whatever may be going on at 'an organismic level' that the feelings we become aware of are the result of a creative act involving our cultural values. It is for this reason, as Len Holdstock recounts in his specific discussion of 'anger and congruence', that 'very little anger is elicited in some...cultures' (1996, p. 50). It is not that there are feelings of anger dwelling inside us which some cultures 'let out' whereas other cultures 'keep them in', or 'repress' them, but that what actually is felt is a function of the culturally specific way a person interprets certain configurations of the total field of events relevant to their life, events both 'internal' and external.

Such a social constructionist approach to the experiencing of feelings also sheds light, in my view, on another difficulty intrinsic to Rogers' Freudianesque conception of 'congruence': a difficulty related to the notion of feelings of which we are unaware dwelling at different organismic layers or levels according to how negative or positive they are.

The precise definition of 'congruence' and 'incongruence' becomes more than problematic when we envisage positive feelings of affection and regard, say, underlying more negative ones like anger. For, under such circumstances, a person might be said to become 'congruent' by accurately symbolizing feelings of anger to awareness, but yet remain 'incongruent' in terms of not yet having accurately symbolized feelings of positive regard. To resolve this difficulty, one can decide to characterize 'congruence' solely in terms of accurately symbolizing to awareness the positive feelings at the core of the person. This would mean, however, that the conscious awareness and expression of anger, say, would be

regarded as an instance of 'incongruence'; that anger itself became interpreted as an 'incongruent' emotion.

Certainly such an approach could prove helpful in combating the psychologically damaging situation of 'therapists' expressing therapeutically destructive negative feelings in the name of 'congruence'. But, even so, it still leaves us with a bizarre picture in which out of awareness 'at the organismic level' and stacked in order of 'positivity' there exist different ready-made feelings patiently waiting to step up in turn into surface consciousness. And in any case, aside from the bizarreness, there is still the issue of feelings being conceived as things.

An alternative explanation of such a progressive experiencing of increasingly positive feelings, one influenced by social constructionism, would relate whatever feelings a person experiences to the socio-cultural context in which they occur, with the therapeutic relationship itself constituting such a context. So, for example, with one therapist the same 'incongruent' client might become aware of feelings of anger, with another the less 'negative' feelings of deep hurt. Through the quality of the relationship that she offers, the second therapist may directly have facilitated an expression of feelings arising from the client's core 'incongruence', whereas the first therapist served to facilitate the experiencing of feelings expressive of less fundamental 'incongruence'.

One question which arises from such an interpretation, therefore, is whether or not it has to be the case that clients, either in individual or group therapy, must necessarily first 'get in touch with' negative feelings before they can experience more positive ones.

A further question is whether or not Charles Truax and Robert Carkhuff (1968) were right in the judgement they formed when in a particular study of client-centred therapists it was observed 'that the client-centered process of therapy somehow avoids the expected and usual patient expressions of negative, hostile, or aggressive feelings' (p. 503). Truax and

Carkhuff's judgement was that 'the client-centered therapist for some reason seems less open to receiving negative, hostile, or aggressive feelings' (ibid.). Might it not be possible that such unpleasant feelings only existed for the practitioners of other therapeutic approaches?; that person-centred practitioners did not act in such a way as to create them for the client?

In a lively 'dialogue' with Rogers, we find Rollo May endorsing the same judgement of person-centred therapists as Truax and Carkhuff. May pronounces that 'aspects of evil—anger, hostility against the therapist, destructiveness—need to be brought out in therapy' (1982, p. 246), even as the way he suggests the therapist should act would likely serve to generate the experiencing and expression of 'evil' by the client. We seem to be back to the same old blaming the victim, 'transference' game to which psychoanalysts are prone: namely, your present problem in relating to me, the therapist, is nothing to do with my behaviour towards you, but entirely down to the nasty 'unfelt' feelings which lie within you, the client.

When, therefore, person-centred authority Germain Lietaer (1998) employs the above judgement of Truax and Carkhuff to warn us that 'our training within a certain therapeutic orientation may sharpen or blunt our sensitivity to certain types of experiential content' (p. 70), I, for one, would want to be reassured that such a warning was not being issued from a quasi-Freudian point of view.

By way of rounding off this brief discussion of problems arising when 'congruence' is defined in a Freudian fashion, I would not want it to be forgotten that there is always inherent in such a definition the implicit presence of Cartesian mind/body *dualism*. That is to say, that in a situation in which mental phenomena—ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc.—are conceived as 'bits of stuff' the question continues to remain unanswered as to how, in the case of the person, mental 'bits of stuff' form a unity with physical counterparts composed of a fundamentally different kind of stuff/substance. It is the question, in other words, of how one goes about resolving the notorious 'mind-body' problem.

At times, instead of speaking of feelings being experienced ‘at an organismic level’, Rogers refers to such ‘experiencing’ taking place ‘at a physiological level’ (1961, p. 340). An ‘incongruent’ man, for instance, is said to be ‘experiencing anger’, ‘at a physiological level’, when ‘[c]onsciously he is *not* experiencing anger’ (ibid.). In such a context, Rogers certainly seems to be bringing the physical body into the equation.

However, what needs to be remembered here is that ‘feelings’, for Rogers, are a special type of ‘experience’ (of the ‘emotionally toned’ variety) where ‘experience’ itself is defined by Rogers ‘as all that is going on in the envelope of the organism at any given moment which is potentially available to awareness’ (1959, p. 197). ‘It is thus’, in Rogers’ terms, ‘a psychological, not a physiological definition’ (ibid.).

Just as Freud set to one side the question of the relationship of mind and body, so it seems the same can be said of Rogers—although perhaps not entirely. For in proposing that we can read from physiological and behavioural activity what a person is feeling—viz. the flushed face, voice tone, shaking finger signifying anger (Rogers, 1961, p. 339)—Rogers seems to be advocating the ‘James-Lange’ theory of emotions that proposes that for each emotion we feel there is a specific physiological pattern of skeletal and visceral changes (cf. Gross, 1996, p. 123). Whether Rogers is advocating such a theory or not, certainly contemporary psychologists are in general sceptical of such a notion (cf. Ginsburg and Harrison, 1996). In particular, they point to empirical evidence demonstrating that different individuals interpret the same physiological and behavioural events according to their idiosyncratic socio-cultural context, and thereby experience different feelings (cf. Gross, 1996, pp. 127ff.).

From the preceding discussion of problems that arise from characterizing ‘congruence’ in a quasi-Freudian, Cartesian-Newtonian manner, it should be clear by now that any adequate formulation of this central person-centred notion will necessarily involve

the resolution of certain fundamental issues regarding the nature of human mental functioning and the nature of the human being as a unity of mental and physical happenings. In my final remarks I present in broad strokes the paradigmatic context by which, in my view, these fundamental issues can be adequately dealt with, along with some discussion of how, on such a basis, 'congruence' might be more precisely defined.

Epilogue and Prologue

According to Susanne Langer,

Among all the facts with which psychologists deal, the one they seem least able to handle is the fact that we feel our own activity and the impingements of the world around us. The metaphysical status of 'feelings', 'contents of consciousness', 'subjectivity', or of the private aspects of experience, generally, has been an asses' bridge...ever since Descartes treated *res extensa* and *res cogitans* as irreducible and incommensurable substances. (1962, p. 11)

In my discussion of Carl Rogers' concept of 'congruence' I have sought to indicate the manner in which its characterization by Rogers is couched in Cartesian-Newtonian terms derived from Freud. I have endeavoured to make plain how a C-N world-scheme underlies certain crucial problems to do with both Rogers' definition of 'congruence' and his interrelated conception of psychotherapeutic change. Insofar as these formulations of Rogers involve the treatment of 'feelings' as substantive 'bits of stuff', the Cartesian asses' bridge, to which Langer refers, has definitely lived up to its name. As to how we might circumvent this bridge, I have already postulated that for this to be achieved 'congruence' and other key person-centred concepts need to be defined in exclusively organismic/process terms. In the preceding section, I touched upon certain aspects of such an organismic 're-visioning' of

‘congruence’ in indicating the relevance of the ‘field theory’ perspective of social constructionist thought.

Beyond this, though, through incorporating the conceptual features I have specified elsewhere as the basis for a future paradigm of c/p (Ellingham, 1996;1997a), the whole task, as I see it, will involve giving concrete expression to the radical ‘process’ view of the world articulated most profoundly by Alfred North Whitehead, a world-vision in which ‘the process is the reality’ and we best think of ourselves as ‘process immersed in process beyond ourselves’ (Whitehead, 1925, p. 72; 1938, p. 8). Thereby with mental and physical ‘stuff’ construed in terms of differing expressions of patterned activity (‘process’), we humans, as complex rounds of process (‘organisms’), become portrayed in a unitary fashion—with the creative self-actualization of our individual being caught up in an interrelationship with every other ‘organism’ courtesy of the all-embracing creative advance and actualization of that ‘organism’ that constitutes the universe as a whole. So conceived, ‘[t]he process of creation is the form of unity of the universe’ (Whitehead, 1933, p. 179).

Such a radical process view, I contend, is entirely at one with the core thrust of Rogers’ theorizing. For, as Harry Van Belle (1980) attests in his explication of the entire range of Rogers’ thought, ‘Rogers thinks principally in terms of process, dynamics, movement and change’, the person being defined ‘as a tendency, a process, an activity or functioning’, not as ‘something *other than* this activity, as a substance that is itself to itself regardless of how it functions’ (p. 71). ‘[F]or Rogers’, declares Van Belle, ‘man [sic.] is always and everywhere an organismic actualizing process’ (ibid.). Moreover, in that the ‘actualizing tendency’ powering this ‘personified’ growth process is part and parcel of a ‘formative tendency at work in the universe, which can be observed at every level’ (Rogers, 1980, p. 124), Rogers espouses a doctrine in close accord with Whitehead, one wherein

‘everything that exists, including human beings, is taken up into this total evolutionary process of becoming’ (Van Belle, 1990, p. 49).

To so approach the task of re-conceptualizing congruence and psychotherapeutic change is in many ways to proceed along a path already roughly trodden by Eugene Gendlin and others who have forged a form of therapy termed ‘experiential psychotherapy’, an approach which has its roots in person-centred theory and which many see as falling within the compass of the person-centred approach. Gendlin’s own ‘focusing-oriented/experiential psychotherapy’ originated when Gendlin, ‘coming from the philosophical tradition of Dilthey, Dewey, Merleau-Ponty, and McKeon developed a Philosophy of the “Implicit” and applied it to the work that Rogers was doing’ (Hendricks-Gendlin, 1999, p. 2). Beyond Gendlin, another major development of experiential psychotherapy is that associated with psychologists at York University in Canada, the main principals being Laura North Rice and more recently Leslie Greenberg. Building upon the ideas of Gendlin, this brand of experiential psychotherapy has taken ideas from contemporary cognitive psychology—initially from information processing theory; latterly from neo-Piagetian cognitive developmental theory—in formulating a ‘dialectical constructivist model of experiential therapy’ (Greenberg & Van Balen, 1998, p. 42).

The provision of anything like a detailed description of these contributions to experiential therapy theory, along with an in-depth discussion of how my own organismic theorizing about the nature of ‘congruence’ builds upon and seeks to transcend such contributions must wait for the paper which succeeds this one.

However, as part of the present attempt to sketch the general outlines of this organismic endeavour, allow me to comment briefly on how my views both accord with and differ from those of Gendlin and Greenberg.

According to Mary Hendricks-Gendlin (1998), during his period of collaboration with Rogers Gendlin made a 'move to speak in terms of process, using a different underlying philosophical model than Rogers had access to' (p. 1). The point for Gendlin, in Hendricks-Gendlin's words, was that in defining 'congruence' Rogers employed terms which 'use a reductive unit model which has been extremely powerful in the realm of physical science [i.e. in Newtonian physics], but not so good for human process' (ibid.). Gendlin has made clear that 'Rogers' formulations imply that experience sits there first outside of awareness waiting to be more or less accurately perceived, as though it were something already separately formed apart from the perceiving' (ibid.). As will already be evident, therefore, I am in general agreement with Gendlin in regarding Rogers' scheme as 'like the "flashlight" model that Freud used with the unconscious id impulses sitting there in the person and the work of therapy was to shine the light of awareness or consciousness on them' (ibid.).

I am in agreement with Gendlin, too, insofar as he puts 'activity, or interaction [i.e. process] as the basic, first term [i.e. root concept]' (ibid., p. 2). Where, though, I am at odds with him is in his seeming inability to completely free himself from Cartesian dualism and think in entirely process terms. Gendlin hangs on, for instance, to 'the body' as a base concept employing it to denote 'the vast number of interactional aspects that we live' (1974, p. 236). Thus, if indeed, as Marilyn Ferguson attests, 'the body' is 'a term Gendlin uses to mean the total brain-mind environment as we sense it' (1981, p. ix), he is certainly deploying it in a highly idiosyncratic and strange way. It is as though, on the one hand, he concurs with Whitehead in affirming that 'the process is the reality' and we are 'process immersed in process beyond ourselves', but, on the other, still wants to retain the notion of a substantive 'body', as a 'basic, first term'.

Perhaps what motivates Gendlin to retain reference to 'the body' in this fashion (rather than purely construe the person as an 'organism', i.e. as a system of patterned activity,

which at other times he does) is his desire to legitimise his concept of ‘experiencing’ in the guise of ‘a bodily felt sense’. For to Gendlin, ‘experiencing’, i.e. ‘all “experience” viewed in terms of the process framework’, is the ‘process of concrete bodily feeling which constitutes the basic matter of psychological and personality phenomena’ (1964, p. 111).

As summarized by Greet Vanaerschot, ‘[t]wo levels of interaction can be distinguished in the experiencing process’ (1997, p. 142). ‘The first level’, she says, ‘refers to the bodily felt whole concerning a situation and originates in the person and situation or environment’ (ibid.). ‘This leads us to the second level of interaction, which is the one between bodily sensing and symbols (such as words) through which explicit meanings are formed from preconceptual, implicit, and incomplete meanings’ (p. 143). Important for our present discussion is the fact that ‘[t]he explicit meaning is not a previously hidden or repressed one that now becomes clear, but one that is formed in the interaction between felt sense and symbols’ (ibid.). Thus, prior to symbolization, what the counselling client can become aware of through a quasi-meditational technique called ‘focusing’ is a vague, global, holistic, fuzzy bodily felt sense of a problem situation at ‘the edge of awareness’ (Gendlin, 1984), a mode of knowing akin to that possessed by animals (Gendlin, 1991). When symbolization occurs in relation to such a mode of knowing, according to Gendlin, an experiential ‘felt shift’ occurs, a process of ‘carrying forward’ whereby an implicit meaning becomes explicit. On Hendricks-Gendlin’s (1998) testimony, such a felt shift constitutes our becoming ‘congruent’ (p. 2). It is also this shift from implicit to explicit meaning that explains ‘the striking way in which the individual during psychotherapy becomes aware of what (so he now says) he has long felt but has not known that he felt’ (Gendlin, 1964, p. 105).

Allied to Gendlin’s curious way of conceptualizing ‘the body’ is the peculiar manner in which he characterizes the bodily and physical vis-à-vis what is mental and of the mind. ‘A

felt sense', he declares, 'is not a mental experience but a physical one. Physical' (1981, p. 32); it 'is body *and* mind before they are split apart' (p. 165).

Here my own felt sense of what is at play is a failure on Gendlin's part to appreciate the Whiteheadian insight that from a process perspective body, mind, spirit, etc. are discursively symbolized construals of certain facets of process-constituted reality. To my mind, the 'fuzziness' in Gendlin's own theorizing apropos what is body, what is mind, etc., can be overcome by paying heed not only to the formulations of Whitehead, but to those of other organismic theorists, principally of Whitehead's erstwhile student Susanne Langer and of her other mentor Ernst Cassirer. Specifically, this involves:

- (a) thinking more thoroughly in process terms in the manner of Whitehead.
- (2) employing Langer's and Whitehead's notion of 'feeling' rather than Gendlin's concept of 'experiencing' to denote the fundamental constituent of subjective awareness. Here it is not simply a matter of employing a roughly synonymous term, given that 'in natural language feeling is usually a synonym for "experiencing"' (Bohart, 1993, p. 58), but of adopting Langer's and Whitehead's technical definition of 'feeling' as 'felt process'; that is, as analogous to the sound given off by the patterned activity of a vibrating guitar string (cf. Langer, 1967, pp. 20ff).
- (c) joining with Cassirer and Langer in conceiving the human being as '*animal symbolicum*', the symbolizing animal (Cassirer, 1944, p. 28), and so making use of their conceptualization of the process of symbolization to shed light on the psychotherapeutic symbolization process and *ipso facto* on the nature of 'congruence'.

Introduction of the thought of Cassirer, Langer and Whitehead in such a fashion also provides, I believe, a fruitful link with the formulations of Leslie Greenberg. For Greenberg's model of experiential therapy is one in which 'a person is seen as a symbolizing, meaning-creating being who acts as a dynamic system constantly synthesizing information from many levels of processing and from both internal and external sources into a conscious experience' (Greenberg & Van Balen, 1998, p.42). In Greenberg's scheme, principally '[t]hree levels of processing—innate sensory motor, emotional schematic memory, and conceptual level processing—are identified' (ibid.).

Important as I consider Greenberg's model to be—in particular in its incorporation of organismic, neo-Piagetian 'schemes' in a multi-level developmental formulation—it suffers, in my view, from being based on an information-processing machine model and thereby on the assumed analogy between 'hardware'/'software' and body/mind. Thus, though he is at pains not to do so, Greenberg does tend at times to treat feelings and emotions in a substantive sense in accord with Cartesian dualism and so raise the spectre of the existence of 'unconscious emotion' (cf. Greenberg & Safran, 1987, p. 165; Greenberg & Paivio, 1997, pp. 43 & 48). Further, growing out of Gendlin's theorizing as it does, Greenberg attempts to integrate into his model Gendlin's notions of 'experiencing' and of 'a bodily felt sense' (cf. Greenberg & Paivio, 1997, p. 39; Greenberg, Rice & Elliott, 1993, chpt. 9). Not particularly successfully, in my view.

These matters aside, by comparison with Gendlin's two level scheme, as I see it, part of the value of Greenberg's model is his presentation of not just two, but three or more levels of organismic sense-making ('information processing') as constitutive of human awareness. Thus, given the importance that Greenberg attaches to the person as 'a symbolizing, meaning-creating being', deserving of special attention, in my opinion, is a developmental scheme of levels of sense-making/symbolization that derives from Cassirer and Langer (cf.

Cassirer, 1955a, 1955b, 1957; Langer, 1967, 1972, 1982). In accord with Greenberg and Gendlin, such a scheme connotes a basic, global affective-cognitive level of sense-making becoming progressively refined from one level to the next. Not too different from Greenberg, the levels identified by Cassirer and Langer are as follows: a bodily, sensori-motor level (exhibited by animals and human infants); an iconic, non-discursive mode of symbolizing (found in mythic consciousness and older infants, i.e. Freud's 'primary process') and the level of conceptual thought, of discursive symbolization .

On such a scenario, an organismically refined formulation of 'congruence' would be couched in multi-level developmental terms, 'congruence' being said to exist where a higher level pattern of process validly symbolizes, has a congruent pattern with, a structural component of the level below. For, as Langer attests,

formal analogy, or congruence of logical structures, is the prime requisite for the relationship between a symbol and whatever it is to mean. The symbol and the object symbolized must have the same common logical form. (1953, p. 27)

Further, insofar as 'feeling', subjective awareness, is taken to be the felt quality of a particular pattern of process, it becomes possible to explain why there is a before-after *sameness*, as against *identity*, between what the client feels prior to the felt-shift of the psychotherapeutic process and what he or she feels afterwards. For, even though the pattern of process intrinsic to the higher level of sense-making is more complex and qualitatively different from that of the preceding lower level, there is nevertheless a congruency of pattern, and thereby a common feeling, between the two—as say, when different guitar strings play the same note in different octaves.

Both Gendlin and Greenberg, especially Greenberg (cf. Greenberg & Van Balen, 1998, p. 36), being mindful that Rogers' definition of 'congruence' implies awareness of experience that is outside of awareness, effectively sideline 'congruence' in their own theorizing. Even so, both relate the harmonic functioning of the individual to the condition of being psychologically healthy, with Greenberg proposing a 'principle of *coherence*...as supplementing the principle of congruence or consistency in explaining healthy functioning' (p. 43). 'In this view', according to Greenberg, 'aspects of experience as well as levels of processing are coordinated to fit together in an affiliative relationship with each other, integrated into a coherent whole' (p. p. 43).

Such a conception is, I believe, in accord with my own supposition that in order to adequately define 'congruence' organismically, we will have to characterize it in a multi-level process fashion—in terms, that is, of increasingly complex and differentiated modes of sense-making. So construed, 'congruence' will become defined in the same manner that Bernie Neville (1996) has proposed we define empathy, as a multi-level, developmental affair.

Insofar, therefore, as empathy involves 'an emotional response...that is *congruent* with the other's emotional state or situation' (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987, p. 5—my emphasis), this raises the question of whether the road ahead in the organismic refinement of Rogers' concept of 'congruence' is one whereby empathy becomes defined as 'congruence-between-organisms', and 'congruence' is conceived as 'intra-organismic' empathy, possibly as 'self-empathy' (cf. Barrett-Lennard, 1997). For, for Rogers, deep empathy involved 'resonance', congruence of patterned activity, between himself and the client 'at all levels' (1980, p. 9). The resonance between himself and the other thus involved resonance, 'congruence', between all levels within himself. The love and unconditional positive he radiated was nothing less than being one with himself and the other in this way.

Note

1. Throughout, in accord with person-centred tradition, I consider the terms ‘counselling’, ‘psychotherapy’ and the hybrid ‘counselling/psychotherapy’ (‘c/p’, for short) to be synonymous terms for the same essential phenomenon (cf. Barrett-Lennard, 1997).

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