

THE ACTUALIZING TENDENCY CONCEPT IN CLIENT-CENTERED THEORY¹

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ABSTRACT. *The paper discusses the actualizing tendency as a biological concept. It aims to clarify the meaning of constructive in AT theory and resolve the apparent contradiction between human pro-social nature and anti-social behavior from the perspective of AT theory.*

In this paper I want discuss and elaborate on the organismic actualizing tendency (AT) concept - a first principle in Rogers' theory of client-centered therapy (CCT) and the person-centered approach (PCA). I aim to clarify the meaning of "constructive" as a fundamental feature of the AT, explain how the constructive direction of the AT is theoretically consistent with observations of destructive human behavior, and emphasize the biological, natural science character of the concept. My discussion is largely based on Rogers' writings, but it includes other ideas that I think are consistent with Rogers' thinking. Starting in the 1950s I was influenced by the organismic theory of Kurt Goldstein (1939; 1940) as I was developing my understanding of Rogers. Along the way, Rogers', Goldstein's and my own ideas have merged and become difficult to extricate from each other. Nevertheless, my intention is to discuss the AT and the organism in a manner that is consistent with Rogers' ideas.

The Concept

The actualizing tendency is the sole motivational concept in Rogers' theories of personality, client-centered therapy, interpersonal relations and in applications of the PCA. The concept of an AT was first proposed by Rogers in the 1950s (Rogers, 1951; 1959); it continues to be discussed in books and articles on CCT and the person-centered approach (e.g., Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Bierman-Ratjen, 1998; Bozarth, 1998; Hawtin & Moore, 1998; Merry & Lusty, 1993; Schmid, 1996; Thorne, 1992; Van Kalmthout, 1998). Similar concepts have been proposed by other theoreticians (e.g., Goldstein, 1939; Bohart & Tallman, 1999).

Rogers was sensitive to evidence of an inherent growth motivation from early in his career. He observed that psychotherapy clients do not benefit, or the gains are soon lost, when they have been guided, interpreted or directed. He observed that a self-determined client process appears to be most effective, suggesting an internal source of healing and growth. In an early book Rogers (1942) stated: "Therapy is not a matter of doing something

to the individual, or of inducing him to do something about himself. It is instead a matter of freeing him for normal growth and development" (p. 29).

The AT concept emerged out of therapy experiences and Rogers (1951) posited the concept as an hypothesis to be tested. He wrote:

[T]he counselor chooses to act consistently upon the hypothesis that the individual has a sufficient capacity to deal constructively with all those aspects of his life which can potentially come into conscious awareness. The counselor acts upon this hypothesis...being always alert to note those experiences (clinical or research) which contradict this hypothesis as well as those which support it (p. 24).

It is "an *hypothesis* in human relationships" that "will always remain so" (p. 23), because it cannot be conclusively proved or disproved. Although the AT is a hypothesis to be tested with each new client, it functions in theory as a first principle, axiom or basic assumption about organisms, including human organisms. In therapy, the AT functions as an assumption that influences the way the therapist proceeds as a helper.

Rogers' AT is a teleological concept - a final cause in Aristotelian terms - based on many observations of the behavior of humans and other creatures (e.g., Bertalanffy, 1960; White, 1959). Understanding of the AT concept is inextricable from understanding Rogers' biological concept of the organism. Schmid (1998) quotes Rogers: "I use the term organism for the biological entity. The actualizing tendency exists in the biological human organism" (p. 47).

The AT is the organism's "one central source of energy" (Rogers, 1963, p. 6); it has constructive directionality, aiming toward realization and organismic perfection. It is intrinsic to the life of organisms and cannot be defined without including or implying the concept of the organism. Rogers (1980) wrote: "The actualizing tendency ...cannot be destroyed without destroying the organism" (p. 118). Further,:

All motivation is the organismic tendency toward fulfillment. There is one central source of energy in the organism. This source is a trustworthy function of the whole system rather than some portion of it: it is most simply conceptualized as a tendency towards fulfillment, toward actualization, involving not only the maintenance but also the enhancement of the organism" (p. 123)

The AT is a meta-motivation that subsumes all specific motivations. All motives, needs and drives are an expression of the AT (Rogers, 1959). All functions, all activities of the organism, are manifestations or channels of the AT. Statements about the AT are in effect statements about the nature of the organism and thus are also about human beings. As a person lives in the world, specific motivations and functions become organismically, experientially and behaviorally salient. The AT is the person's energy and determines a *generally constructive* direction of his functions. The person's processes and specific aims, however, are determined by other causes as well as the AT - by inborn potentials, by conditioning, by learning and by circumstances. Understanding the AT concept simultaneously clarifies the concept of the organism in Rogers' theory. The following

discussion summarizes the major characteristics of the AT and of organisms, including human organisms.

Individual and Universal

The AT is both individual and universal (Rogers, 1980). The expression of the tendency is always unique to individuals and at the same time it is a motivating tendency in all organisms.

Holistic

The AT is holistic (Rogers, 1959). The functioning of the AT, and the functioning of the organism as a whole, is a changing gestalt. Different aspects of the person assume figure and ground relations (Goldstein, 1939) depending upon the specific aims of the person, and depending upon the immediate demands of the environment. The AT functions throughout all of a person's systems. It is expressed in a variable and dynamic manner through the subsystems of the whole person while maintaining the person's wholeness and organization.

Ubiquitous and Constant

The AT is ubiquitous and constant (Rogers, 1963; Rogers & Sanford, 1984). It is the generic motivation for all activity, at all levels of function within the person, under all circumstances. It is the energy and direction to the moment by moment living of the person. It is intrinsic to the person's moving, to responding to stimuli, and to maintaining wholeness. To the person's feeling, thinking, striving, and self-preserving activity. The AT is expressed through all of the person's capacities.

The AT functions under all circumstances. It functions when circumstances are favorable and when they are unfavorable to the maintenance or enhancement of the individual. It is the life force of the individual organism. If the person is alive, the actualizing tendency is functioning. Rogers (1977) commented in this vein:

This is the very nature of the process we call life. This tendency is operative at all times, in all organisms. Indeed it is only the presence or absence of this total directional process that enables us to tell whether a given organism is alive or dead (p. 239).

A Directional Process

The AT is a constructive directional process having two aspects. First, there is an overriding *organizational* directive process. The AT is always directed toward maintaining a person's integrity and organization, thus preserving identity and life. It involves assimilation and differentiation processes while maintaining the wholeness of the person. Secondly, the actualization direction is towards *realization, fulfillment and perfection* of inherent potentialities as well as learned capabilities of the individual (Rogers, 1963). The actualization process is a selective process in that it tends to maintain and enhance the whole organism/person. Rogers (1977) wrote: "Whether the stimulus arises from within or without,

whether the environment is favorable or unfavorable, the behaviors of an organism can be counted on to be in the direction of maintaining, enhancing and reproducing itself" (p. 239).

Changes in Tension

The AT is primarily tension increasing (Rogers, 1959). The organism/person is not fundamentally a drive reduction system. There is a dynamic equilibrium between organism and environment (Angyal, 1941) with energy and tensions shifting back and forth. According to Goldstein (1939): "Normal behavior corresponds to a continual change of tension, of such a kind that over and over again that state of tension is reached which enables and impels the organism to actualize itself in further activities, according to its nature" (p 197)

Organisms require reduction of tensions, especially in homeostatic and preservation mechanisms; tension reduction is a secondary, corrective reaction. From the perspective of the living organism, however, tension increase is most characteristic of its functioning. The organism is a system that increases tension levels to differentiate, grow, and further realize inherent capabilities. Changes in tension are channels for the AT, as are all functions. The organism's distinctive directional process is one of tension-increase for the sake of expansion and development.

Autonomy

The AT is a tendency toward autonomy of the person and away from heteronomy (Rogers, 1963). The person moves *inherently* toward self-regulation and self-determination, and away from being controlled. To avoid misunderstandings, it should be understood that this tendency does not imply a tendency away from relationships, interdependence, connection or socialization.

Self-Actualization

The concept "self-actualization" in Rogers' theory (1959) refers to the AT that is manifested in the "self", a human subsystem that becomes differentiated within the whole person through early life social interactions. The concept of "self" is essential to Rogers' (1951; 1959) theories of the development of normal personality and development of psychological disturbances. His theory of the self-system (Rogers, 1959), including the effects of detrimental socialization on the self, accounts for many outcomes of the actualization tendency which appear to contradict its constructive directionality.

Human Pro-Social Nature

Human beings have a social nature with pro-social characteristics. Consequently, a basic direction of the AT, in human functioning, is toward constructive social behavior (Rogers, 1982). The following pro-social tendencies are probably universal. They include the capacity for identification leading to feelings of sympathy for other persons, capacity for empathy, affiliative tendencies, tendencies toward attachment, communication, social cooperation and collaboration, capacities for forming moral or ethical rules, and tendencies to engage in struggles to live according to moral or ethical rules.

Human social nature is as fundamental as are human tendencies toward self-preservation and sexuality. Social nature involves innate capacities tempered or enhanced by life experiences. Like other inborn tendencies, there are great individual differences in its strength and in the forms that social tendencies may take. They can be enhanced or diminished in the person by circumstances. They can be distorted, exaggerated, suppressed or develop in balance with the whole person, according to circumstances. Human social nature is complex, and its expression is inevitably influenced by social contexts. It may become unrecognizable in some individuals through their struggle to maintain viable integration, or it may flower in ways that are socially valued.

Reflective Consciousness

Reflective consciousness – specifically the capacity for self-awareness - is a salient human channel of the AT (Rogers, 1963; 1980). This kind of consciousness involves a relatively high degree of precision and clarity. It involves knowing the things that appear to it - things in the world or self-experiences - but it also "knows that it knows them" (James, 1890/1981, p. 263). Self-awareness permits a great range of choices for self-regulation and for expansion of functions. It permits the development of potentials that do not exist in other organisms.

Imperfect Outcomes of a Constructive Drive

It is a fact of life that defective or poorly realized organisms, as well as persons impaired in various ways, are born and live their lives. Obviously many inborn and environmental causes are involved in the creation and development of a normal, whole, well-functioning organism. The AT principle describes the phenomena of organisms, including persons, persisting, developing and functioning as best they can, *given their capacities and their circumstances*. The processes involved in survival, development and realization of the potentialities of any given person or organism are vulnerable to circumstances (Rogers, 1980; Rogers & Sanford, 1984), and circumstances may be favorable or unfavorable. They may be physical, social/cultural or interpersonal. Circumstances affecting organisms may be optimal, they may be merely adequate. Circumstances may be totally inadequate or destructive to individuals.

Although the AT is inherently constructive and aims the organism towards perfection, a living person's condition and behavior at any moment is also a result of other causes - innate characteristics, learned characteristics and circumstances. The dynamic interaction of the AT with the other causes of behavior may or may not result in what is organismically constructive or what the person's society considers constructive outcomes. Optimal actualization of a person's nature requires many different, highly favorable and ongoing circumstances and it is a rare phenomenon. Most circumstances affecting humans and other organisms range from the utterly deprived or destructive to a relatively adequate range. Human lives are lived in complex circumstances, sometimes including the whole range of qualities of circumstances in one general situation. The circumstances lived by many persons, probably most persons, are not appropriate for full development of many of their potentialities.

The concept of potentialities is complex. Potentials are characteristics or capabilities that are not yet developed; sometimes not even apparent, like the acorn that may become the oak

tree. The realization of potentials into full capabilities depends upon biogenic ontogeny and upon circumstances. For example, humans usually crawl before they walk but unusual circumstances can produce a different sequence. The emergence of different potentials into capacities fulfills various roles in the whole person. It is desirable for some potentials - for example, language ability - to be realized under all circumstances. The development of other potentials may be desirable only for special goals - for example, the ability to behave without feeling certain emotional reactions as in performing surgery. The timing of expression of a potential may be important for survival or restoring well-being, but would be destructive under normal circumstances - vomiting, for example. The development of certain potentials often precludes the highest development of others within the temporal limits of a lifetime. For example a woman's choice to bear many children and to personally raise them may involve a sacrifice of her potential as a classical dancer or singer. The valid generalization that the AT is directed towards fulfillment of potentialities covers a great variety of situations with many qualifying factors and variable results.

The AT itself persists and is not less strong, less present, or less functional, under unfavorable circumstances. The tendency's *expression* in the person's *processes*, or in the *results of processes*, however, may be more or less distorted or stunted depending upon the unfavorable circumstances. Rogers uses the metaphor of the potato sprout in the dark cellar growing toward a spot of light to describe the AT's persistence as well as its organismic vulnerability. Rogers (1980) wrote:

These sad spindly sprouts would grow 2 or 3 feet in length as they reached toward the distant light of the window. The sprouts were, in their bizarre, futile growth, a sort of desperate expression of the directional tendency....They would never become plants, never mature, never fulfill their real potential. But under the most adverse circumstances, they were striving to become. (p. 118)

The AT in the Conscious Person

Human organisms have evolved the capacity for self-reflective awareness or reflective consciousness. This capacity makes AT theory seem more complicated in humans because self-reflective awareness implies the capacity for conscious and deliberate choice. If humans are organismically constructive, and inherently prosocial, and if they are able to make conscious choices, the AT theory may be asked why humans engage in so much personal and social destructivity. How can the constructively directed AT, with the human organism's prosocial tendencies, and the human capacity for conscious choice, be reconciled with the obvious and frequent antisocial and self-destructive choices made by humans? The point made above addresses this question in a general way; the processes and results of the AT involve other causes than the AT itself.

Although it may seem contradictory to the idea of a basic constructive motivation, the unhealthy or the poorly realized person, or the person engaging in bad behavior is motivated as much by the constructive AT as the healthy, highly realized or socially good person. The AT is *a tendency*; it is *not a guarantee* of full health or full realization or good behavior. There are many causes, in addition to the AT, involved in health and development and constructive social behavior. Poor personal early life circumstances may severely limit or distort the development of potentialities resulting in personal and social tragedies. A striking

example that recently has become better understood is the role of child abuse in the etiology of war and other violence (Karr-Morse & Wiley, 1997; Miller, 1998). Poor circumstances in more mature persons may also dramatically affect *outcomes* at the personal and social levels - for example, the incidence of suicide rates among elderly men.

According to AT theory, a person is always doing the best he or she can under their circumstances. Behavior that is destructive in the social sense is in some way *organismically*, or in its *phenomenological meanings*, constructive as much as socially constructive behavior. Evil behavior, according to AT theory, is as much the result of the actualizing tendency as socially good behavior. The first factor to keep in mind when examining why a person's behavior is evil or bad rather than good is that the judgement is one being made from one's own cultural or personal perspective. The second and related factor is to examine the person's cultural context and to relate the "bad" behavior to the beliefs and practices considered normal in the culture, sub-culture, or society. Scrutiny of contextual cultural values may reveal that the evil or bad behavior is encouraged and valued in the society and thus the person is expressing their pro-social nature very well, within that framework.

It is necessary, for understanding from the AT framework, to examine a person's *individual* historical or current conditions when their bad behavior cannot be explained by expectations of their cultural context. It may in some cases require understanding of inborn characteristics, but it will more likely require understanding of exceptional personal experiences, or characteristics inculcated through personal relationships, or understanding the external conditions within which the person is existing. Some persons have been so deprived, punished or abused that their social identity and sense of connection is distorted, or their inherent pro-social potentialities largely undeveloped. Consequently some of their behavior may be considered bad or evil by the larger society. Theoretically, such persons, nevertheless, are motivated by a constructively directed AT as much as good persons. How this is so in the particular case requires close scrutiny of the exceptional personal experiences.

Many of the contents and patterns of a person's reflective consciousness, as well as their unconscious reaction tendencies, are learned through important personal socializing relationships in early childhood. Personal socialization is a major part of what shapes psychological actualization processes in individuals. Rogers' (1959) self-theory describes the development of psychological contents that inhibit accurate awareness of organismic experiences, create anxiety, and limit personal realization. According to his theory, depending upon the attitudes and reactions of significant adults when relating to a child, the basic need for positive regard in early childhood may result in "conditions of worth". These become part of a self-concept structured to protect the individual from full and accurate awareness of organismic experiences that contradict the "conditions of worth". Having such a self-concept over-rides the functioning of the person's basic *organismic valuing process* and limits the capacity for accuracy of awareness that favors a more complete personal development. The "honor killings" of girls and women in some contemporary cultures appear to be the result of a combination of cultural values and of learned conditions of worth. A man's sense of what he must do to maintain a "good self", a self that is worthy of standing and dignity in the community, requires he kill female relatives who violate local moral codes on male-female behavior. The example illustrates how a particular social value probably inculcated as a condition of worth, may over-ride powerful feelings of affectionate connection and socially valued feelings of protection towards female family members. Many people are unlikely to recognize the constructive drive and pro-social tendencies in "honor killings". Nevertheless,

wrong as the practice seems to many of us, the behavior in part expresses the AT and pro-social human nature. Rogers (1982) wrote:

I find...no...innate tendency toward destructiveness, toward evil...If the elements making for growth are present, the actualizing tendency develops in positive ways...Every person has the capacity for evil behavior...Whether I or anyone will translate these impulses into behavior depends,...on two elements: social conditioning and voluntary choice. (p 88)

Humans have the potential, through their capacity to reflect upon themselves and to make choices, to correct for at least some of the unfavorable or difficult forces that act within them and upon them. Many factors are at play. Personal, social, and contextual factors may determine any human choice. The more favorable the factors, given the constructive direction of the AT and prosocial tendencies, the more likely it is that choices will have constructive intent and constructive consequences, at least from the framework of their culture.

Rogers observed that clients tend to develop in growthful and socially constructive ways and make constructive choices as they proceed in client-centered therapy. Granted the common general cultural context Rogers shared with his clients, and granted the culture-bound values of Rogers' judgment, his observation suggests that CCT is psychologically a very favorable interpersonal situation for personal actualization.

The AT in Client-Centered Therapy

Client-centered therapy is nondirective (Rogers in Evans, 1975, p. 26); the therapist strives in all of the ways he or she relates to clients to be constant in promoting clients' freedom of choice. Clients in this therapy, as it progresses, tend to make constructive choices *without* external direction from the therapist. Rogers (1986a) wrote:

In client-centered therapy, the person is free to choose any directions, but actually selects positive and constructive pathways. I can only explain this in terms of a directional tendency inherent in the human organism - a tendency to grow, to develop, to realize its full potential (p. 127).

The therapist's provision of the client-centered therapeutic attitudes in relationship facilitates the client's psychological healing and development. When clients perceive and experience these attitudes, distortions diminish in the psychological expression of the actualizing tendency and the person's untapped capabilities are revealed. In effect, CCT facilitates constructive results of AT processes. Rogers (1980) wrote:

The central hypothesis of this [client-centered] approach [is that] individuals have within themselves vast resources for self-understanding and for altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes, and self-directed behavior; these resources can be tapped if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided (p. 115).

These attitudes include respect for the client, trust in the client's inherent capabilities for growth, a nondirective attitude (Rogers in Evans, 1975) and the therapeutic attitudes - congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding of the client's internal

frame of reference (Rogers, 1957). Clients change therapeutically when a therapist consistently provides the totality of these attitudes at a high level. When clients perceive these attitudes they engage in self-correcting processes or “pathways” (Rogers, 1986a, p. 127). Ongoing therapeutic effects within the client facilitate constructive choices. Some of these effects are clients’ decreased defensiveness, increased openness to experience, greater awareness, improved ability to create or find solutions to problems, and increased flexibility in behavior (Rogers, 1961). All of these therapeutic effects contribute to the processes of making constructive choices.

Anthropological, sociological and psychological observations across cultures support the idea of a human pro-social innate nature. It is also a rational inference given the positive and constructive choices made by clients in client-centered therapy. The likelihood that socially valued choices are different when made by persons in different cultures under the conditions of CCT does not negate the inference. It merely takes into account the role of culture in the specific learned meanings of “pro-social” to individuals. Emergence or development of clients’ innate universal pro-social potentialities (for sympathy, empathy, care-taking, social affiliation, communication, cooperation and sense of morality or ethics) are involved in therapeutic choices. If humans did not possess a pro-social nature, the freeing effects of CCT would tend to result in self-centered and self-seeking solutions and behaviors. We would observe more selfish tendencies, tendencies towards making selfish choices at the expense of others. This is not, however, what happens. Instead, clients tend more to take others into account, and tend to choose “greater socialization, improved relationships with others” (Rogers, 1989 p. 238) and greater social consciousness than they manifested before therapy. Rogers wrote: “[I]f we can provide a growth-promoting climate, ...choices prove to be, quite freely and spontaneously, in a socially constructive direction” (p. 238)

The AT – A Biological , Natural Science Concept

Students often confuse Rogers' constructive AT concept with a moral or ethical concept. The meaning of “constructive” at the organismic level, however, refers to a motivational direction towards maintenance, wholeness and realization of potentialities, not to the ethical or moral goodness of actualization solutions in response to circumstances. Rogers has been misunderstood. May (1982), for example, criticized Rogers, imputing to him a “good” and naive view of human nature. Rogers’ view of the positive AT did not mean he believed humanity is good. He (n.d.) wrote:

I have found that if you get to the core of the individual, you discover something constructive, not destructive. People say to me, “Oh, then you believe man is good.” I do not like the term good. That is a moral judgment... We look at a plant. We do not decide that it is [good or] evil by nature. We just take it for granted that, given the right conditions, it will grow, it will blossom, it will produce its normal life. We do not think that way about humans. . . I have certainly dealt with plenty of people who are doing evil things, who are doing things that are socially destructive. But, . . . if you can get to know the person inside, you will find that the person would like to live in harmony and is constructive by nature. And that is the essential basis of the whole theory (p. 41).

In other words, the AT is a biological, natural science concept, not a moral or ethical idea. The misunderstanding that the AT is an ethical concept expressing his optimism was a source of distress to Rogers. He (1958) wrote: "It disturbs me to be thought of as an optimist. My whole professional experience has been with the dark and often sordid side of life, and I know the incredibly destructive behavior of which man is capable" (p.27).

Clients' constructive choices in the context of nondirective CCT reveals their pro-social capabilities. These innate potentialities are brought out by the facilitative therapeutic conditions. Rogers (1958) wrote:

[M]an, when you know him deeply, in his worst and most troubled states, is not evil or demonic. . . . We do not need to ask who will socialize him, for one of his deepest needs is for affiliation and communication with others. When we are able to free the individual from defensiveness, so that he is open to the wide range of his own needs, as well as the wide range of environmental and social demands, his reactions may be trusted to be positive, forward-moving, constructive (p.28).

Without contradicting the natural science arena of CCT and actualization theory, there is an ethical meaning attributed to constructive choice in therapy that should be included in the picture. From a societal perspective therapy is partly concerned with the moral or ethical aspects of client's change. Granted, this is from our own cultural evaluative framework. A therapy that typically resulted in anti-social and self-destructive outcomes for clients, assuming our culture-bound definitions of these things, would not be acceptable to clients, therapists or society. This ethical or moral concern about therapeutic efficacy, however, does not imply that the AT concept is itself an ethical or moral concept.

Human innate pro-social characteristics brought out by client-centered therapy are a biological reality. We value those characteristics in ethical terms. But they are biological characteristics. They are potentialities that may develop, more or less, depending upon many factors. The interpersonal conditions provided by CCT appear to be psychologically favorable to humans because they are free of elements of moral guidance and they nevertheless lead to results many persons consider constructive. Thus innate pro-social tendencies appear to be revealed. Although we perceive these good consequences and consequently make positive ethical evaluations of these results of the AT, nevertheless, *it is a biological, natural science concept.*

The Value of the Actualizing Concept

What is the value of the AT concept? What does AT theory explain? The AT is a constructively directional motivation, but it does not necessarily result in constructive outcomes. The outcomes of the AT represent the whole range biological results and moral possibilities. In truth, actualization theory does not specifically predict nor explain anything. It is a very general heuristic concept. It may be used as a guide to inquiry and it may influence interpersonal attitudes. As a guide to understanding behavior the AT focuses attention on finding out what it is about the person's perceptions or his situation that gives constructive meaning to his activity. This goal promotes a phenomenological approach, one that reaches into the world of the subject and looks at the subject's perceptions of his context.

It requires listening to the person in order to understand their goals, their feelings, the personal meanings that are involved in their behavior.

A person engages in some form of unconstructive or destructive behavior. Inquiry starts with the hypothesis or assumption of the AT, the assumption that a person is necessarily actualizing her nature as best she can under her circumstances. She is doing the best she can and it is apparently not very good from a mental health or a moral perspective. The general question is - how is the person's actualization motivation expressed in this destructive behavior? What are the internal, subjective realities or external circumstances that are distorting the outcomes of this person's inherently constructive and pro-social directions? How is the destructive behavior serving the personal maintenance, the integration, or the fulfillment of the person? Answers following from inquiry based on the AT assumption tend to make sense of destructive behavior in humane terms. Such understandings tend to promote compassion and rational considerations - fruitful conditions for creative and humane solutions to human problems.

Actualization theory views people as functioning as well as they can, given their circumstances at a particular time. They may be able to function better if certain conditions are changed - if unfavorable internal or external circumstances can be determined and removed and if favorable circumstances can be created. But, according to AT theory, at a given moment, persons are doing the best they can. The AT theory may function in a person's mind as a belief, a faith, an assumption or as an hypothesis. Adopted in any form, it is likely to influence the person's attitudes towards other persons. The assumption of a basic constructive motivation tends to dissipate critical judgements. It precludes invoking ideas of inherent badness or of *evil* as an explanation of destructive behavior. Evil may be a valid moral description of certain human behavior, but it is a dead end as a guide to understanding it. Instead, the AT assumption leads to a particularly open intellectual approach and a compassionate or at least neutral attitudinal approach in understanding those actions.

The helping attitudes that are likely to emerge from holding the AT as a belief or assumption are *trust* and *respect*. The trust is for persons' capacities and abilities to find constructive solutions to their problems and for their ability to change their behavior. Respect for persons is regardless of their flaws, mistakes or crimes. The person who adopts the AT as an operative principle in his or her view of human functioning is likely to hold a compassionate attitude towards people and their shortcomings. Humans are profoundly vulnerable to circumstances beyond their control - especially in early developmental life. Destructive feelings and actions are thought to be the result of historical or immediate unfavorable circumstances acting in or on the person. Circumstances are, by definition in the theory, beyond the person's choice or control at that time. An implication of the AT concept is that persons are fundamentally innocent even when they are obviously guilty of bad behavior.

The view that people are inherently innocent promotes understanding and sympathy. It does not, however, preclude moral, ethical or legal judgements about bad behavior. It does not preclude feeling responsible for one's behavior nor preclude holding other persons responsible for their actions. It does not prevent individuals or social groups from acting rationally to protect themselves or others from persons who commit bad actions. It does not preclude the creation of legal punishments for behavior that causes injury to others. It does affect the manner of judgments and the kinds of consequences imposed for bad actions. The

view that people are basically innocent imbues moral, ethical or legal responses to them with compassion, empathy and the intention to be fair.

The AT principle fosters an attitude of respect for persons and for persons' innate capacities for self-determination, for finding solutions and for therapeutic change. Therapists and other helpers who adopt AT theory are likely to be motivated to protect the self-determination and autonomy of the person being helped and to be careful to not try to control or in any way disempower the person being helped. A nondirective facilitative attitude results in a humane non-authoritarian approach in helping relationships and in other human-relations situations.

Conclusion

Client-centered therapy was created and evolved pragmatically. As Rogers' therapy developed, he formulated theory (Rogers, 1942; 1951; 1959; 1963; 1977; 1980; 1986b) and the AT concept became more salient. Actualization theory elaborates an idea of an inherent constructive motivation. This motivation is a kind of wisdom of the organism, to persist, to maintain its organization, to heal if needed and to develop its capacities. Favorable circumstances promote specific survival, integrative and developmental processes and socially valued outcomes in behavior. Unfavorable circumstances limit the processes and limit the results of the AT in organismic and personal life. Sometimes the results of unfavorable circumstances involve behavior that is considered wrong. The AT principle is biological, but it has consequences that we evaluate from an ethical or moral perspective.

The AT is a first principle in CCT and belief in the AT leads such therapists to hold two fundamental beliefs. (1) The therapist can trust the client's tendency to grow, develop and heal. (2) All of the therapist's actions must express respect for the client - viewing the client as person who is capable of self-determination with capacities for self-understanding and constructive change. These beliefs function as the therapist's fundamental attitudes towards clients. AT theory provides the intellectual grounding for these two functional beliefs. In this way the AT has a functional role in CCT practice (Bozarth & Brodley, 1991). In reciprocation, client-centered therapy is an endeavor that tests the actualizing tendency premise with each client.

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