

ROGERS' LATE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE FULLY FUNCTIONING INDIVIDUAL: CORRESPONDENCES AND CONTRASTS WITH BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT. *In the last decade of his life, Rogers' conceptualization of the fully functioning individual, first fully described in 1961, was broadened to encompass new discoveries about the nature of human physical potentialities and of the physical universe. Rogers (1980) endeavored to describe the "person of tomorrow" who would live in an era when inner exploration of psychological capacities would commonly include meditative and other means of altering states of consciousness for purposes of enhanced self-understanding and physical well-being. He pointed out some correspondences between his then-nascent conceptions of new dimensions in psychic potential and models from Eastern traditions, and reprinted earlier, explicit references to Buddhist and Taoist principles as resonant with his views. Correspondences and contrasts between person-centered and traditional Buddhist psychological theories and the respective phenomenological realities they describe are explored here in greater detail. Finally, methodological approaches to becoming a more fully functioning individual through person-centered therapeutic and meditative practices are compared.*

In what Rogers described as a "fragile" paper first published in 1980, containing "ideas I have not formulated before" and "exposing my thinking in process, as it is at the present time" (Rogers, 1980, p. 339), he cited "many new developments today that alter our whole conception of the potentialities of the individual; that change our perceptions of 'reality'; that change our ways of being and behaving; that alter our belief systems" (p. 343). Among such new developments, Rogers (1980) included "a strong and growing interest in all forms of meditation -- the recognition and use of inner energy resources" (p. 343). Also cited were the many people who experience altered states of consciousness whether through use of psychoactive substances or, increasingly, through psychological disciplines to expand experiential horizons; biofeedback research indicating remarkable capacities of the nonconscious mind such as the control of cellular activity; research on paranormal psychological phenomena such as telepathy, precognition, and clairvoyance, which Rogers regarded as having withstood scientific scrutiny; discoveries that many human diseases can be healed or controlled through intentional direction of conscious and nonconscious processes; and "a convergence of theoretical physics and mysticism, especially

Eastern mysticism, "With the result that "in this view, matter, time, and space disappear as meaningful concepts; here exist only oscillations" (p. 345).

Regarding the prevailing scientific world view, Rogers asserted that the many converging trends I have listed constitute a paradigm shift" (1950, p. 348). He noted that the above "trends profoundly transform our concept of the person and the world that he or she perceives," and that taken together they "constitute a 'critical mass' that will produce drastic social change" (p. 347). Rogers went on to ask, "Who will be able to live in this utterly strange world?," and offered his characterization of the "new persons" who will be "fit to live in the world of tomorrow" (p. 348).

Rogers described twelve qualities of the "person of tomorrow:" (1) openness, (2) desire for authenticity, (3) skepticism regarding science and technology, (4) desire for wholeness, (5) wish for intimacy, (6) process persons, (7) caring, (8) a caring attitude toward nature, (9) anti-institutional, (10) the authority within, (11) the unimportance of material things, and (12) a yearning for the spiritual (1980, pp. 350-352). He noted, however, that he was aware that few individuals possess all characteristics and that he knew he was describing but a small minority of the general population (1980, p. 352).

Rogers' conceptualization of the fully functioning, well-adapted person of tomorrow corresponds closely in several primary aspects to descriptions of psychological well-being in the literature of Buddhist psychology. The present analysis endeavors to discern commonalities and differences in the person-centered and 2,500 year-old Buddhist phenomenological models of mental health, and draws in part upon the relatively recent emergence in psychological literature of the West -- particularly cognition, psychotherapy and health psychology -- of attempts to integrate the scholarship and experiential practices of Buddhism (e.g., Wilber, 1980; Welwood, 1983; A. Sheikh & K. Sheikh, 1989; Goleman & Thurman, 1991).

Rogers (1973, 1980) indicated that he was aware of the complementarity between his views and Buddhist psychology. In a paper first delivered in 1972 at a meeting of the Association for Humanistic Psychology (Rogers, 1973), and reprinted in *A way of being* to "give some clues to the way my belief system has developed and altered" (Rogers, 1980, p. 27), Rogers noted that "many years" earlier Leona Tyler had "pointed out to me that my thinking and action seemed to be something of a bridge between Eastern and Western thought" (p. 41). He added that "this was a surprising idea, but I find that in more recent years I have enjoyed some of the teachings of Buddhism, of Zen, and especially the sayings of Lao-tse, the Chinese sage who lived some twenty-five centuries ago" (Rogers, 1980, p. 41). The special emphasis upon empathic responsiveness in the person-centered approach, evident in virtually all of Rogers' works, is reflected in his inclusion in his 1972 talk of these lines of Lao-tse's "to which," he remarked, "I resonate very deeply:

It is as though he listened
and such listening as his enfolds us in a silence
in which at last we begin to hear
what we are meant to be." (Rogers, 1980, p. 4 1).

COMMON ELEMENTS IN ROGERS' FULLY-FUNCTIONING "PERSON OF TOMORROW" AND BUDDHIST CONCEPTIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH

The present analysis will examine four of the twelve qualities Rogers (1980) cited as exemplary of the person of tomorrow: (a) openness, (b) process persons, (c) caring, and (d) the authority within. It is in these four characteristics that commonalities between person-centered and both Zen and Tibetan Buddhist perspectives' are arguably most evident and central to the phenomenological reality of the well-adapted individuals Rogers endeavored to describe.

Openness

Openness was described by Rogers (1980, p. 350) as referring to the experience of "openness to the world - both outer and inner," including openness to "experience, to new ways of seeing, new ways of being, new ideas and concepts." In a 1991 talk delivered at a Harvard Medical School symposium entitled, "Mind Science: A dialogue between East and West" (Goleman & Thurman, 1991, Eds.), the Dalai Lama, Tibetan spiritual leader and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, noted that "fundamental" to Buddhist philosophy are "the two truths that there are two levels of reality" (p. 14). One is the "empirical, phenomenal and relative level that appears to us, where functions such as causes and conditions, names and labels, and so on can be validly understood," while the other is "a deeper level of existence beyond that, which Buddhist philosophers describe as the fundamental, or ultimate, nature of reality, and which is often technically referred to as emptiness" (Dalai Lama, 1991, p. 14).

Consonant with Rogers' (1980) description of openness as a critical experiential reality for the fully-functioning individual, the Dalai Lama emphasized that in the Buddhist approach "it is crucial to understand not only the internal workings of mental and cognitive causation, but also their relationship to the external material world" (Dalai Lama, 1991, p. 15). In Buddhist psychology and practice, openness to inner experience goes beyond awareness of cognitive and affective phenomena and their relation to one's responses to events in the world. Buddhist practice also includes openness to the experience of "emptiness," or the second, "deeper level of existence" beyond the "phenomenal and relative level" to which the Dalai Lama referred (1991, p. 14). According to Buddhist literature which "discusses the various levels of subtlety of mind and consciousness," the "ultimate nature of mind is essentially pure," a "pristine nature ... technically called 'clear light' ". (Dalai Lama, 1991, p. 17). In the latter view, "the various afflictive emotions such as desire, hatred and jealousy are products of conditioning," but "not intrinsic qualities of the mind because the mind can be cleansed of them" (p. 17). While openness to inner experience was considered more generally by Rogers (1980) as a central quality of the fully functioning person of tomorrow, openness to experience of the fundamental purity of mind in particular is considered a hallmark of mental health in Buddhist psychology:

When this clear light nature of mind is veiled or inhibited from expressing its true essence by the conditioning of the afflictive emotions and thoughts, the person is said to be caught in the cycle of existence, samsara. But when, by applying appropriate meditative techniques and practices, the individual is able to fully experience this clear light nature of mind free from the influence and conditioning of the afflictive states, he or she is on the way to true liberation and full enlightenment. (Dalai Lama, 1991, p. 17).

Process Persons

Process persons are those who Rogers (1980, p. 351) described as "keenly aware that the one certainty of life is change -- that they are always in process, always changing." Rogers included among the trends generative of the paradigmatic shifts in psychology and science cited earlier the "new realization that the person is a process, rather than a fixed set of habits" (1980, p. 346). He also emphasized that the significance of this trend consists in the experiential reality of living "in a new universe, where all the familiar concepts have disappeared -- time, space, object, matter, cause, effect -- nothing remains but vibrating energy" (p. 347).

Deep parallels in Buddhist psychology exist for the process conception of the self. The Dalai Lama (Dalai Lama, Bear, Geshe Thubten Jinpa, Benson, Matthysse, Potter, Schildkraut & Schwartz, 1991, p. 34) noted that "the reason why Buddhists do not accept the existence of an independent I, self, or eternal soul abiding within the body is because they conceive mind not so

much as a substantial entity independent of the body but rather as a dynamic, ever-present process" which is "very intimately connected to and related with the physiological states of the body." Here we see the conjunction between the perspectives of contemporary physics and Eastern traditions to which Rogers (1980) referred: Rogers pointed out that the theoretical physicist Fritjof Capra (1975) "has shown how present-day physics has almost completely abolished any solid concepts of our world, with the exception of energy," and noted that Capra Identified "the astonishing parallels" to this discovery in "Zen, Taoism, Buddhism, and other Oriental views" (Rogers, 1980, p. 130). The Dalai Lama (Dalai Lama, et. al., 1991, p. 23) observed, similarly, that "upon examining the ultimate nature of reality, Buddhist philosophers have concluded that things lack inherent existence, that is, they do not have self-defining, self-evident characteristics." He added that "this is because if we search for the essence of matter in whatever object it may be, we discover that it is unfindable, and when we subject things to ultimate analysis, we find that they do not exist as they appear to"(p. 23). The Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki pointed out the practical significance of such a viewpoint:

I have discovered that it is necessary, absolutely necessary, to believe in nothing. That is, we have to believe in something which has no form and no color - something which exists before all forms and colors appear. This is a very important point. No matter what god or doctrine you believe in, if you become attached to it, your belief will be based more or less on a self-centered idea In constantly seeking to actualize your ideal, you will have no time for composure. But if you are always prepared for accepting everything we see as something appearing from nothing.... then at that moment you will have perfect composure (1970, p. 116).

Caring

Caring as a quality of the person of tomorrow was described by Rogers (1980, p. 351) as 'gentle, subtle, nonmoralistic, nonjudgmental' in nature. Goleman (1991, p. 94) identified "loving kindness" as among three "healthy, or wholesome, mental factors, which are antidotes to the unhealthy ones" in Buddhist psychology, the other two being clarity ("seeing things very clearly, a sharpness of mind that is antithetical to delusion," p. 94) and detachment ("a non-grasping, non-clinging quality of mind," p. 94). Goleman noted that the three healthy factors "oppose what are seen as the three roots of mental suffering: attachment, hatred and delusion" (1991, p. 95). The Dalai Lama (Dalai Lama, et.al., 1991, p. 27) remarked that "I feel that from birth to death affection is the most important basis for the very existence of all sentient beings, particularly humans." He added that neonatal medical research has indicated that "just as a flower needs the right temperature and moisture to grow properly, human beings need the warmth of affection for the parts of their physical body to develop correctly" (p. 27).

Friendliness toward oneself is central to Buddhist practice, and is seen as the basis for the development of compassion for others. Tibetan meditation master Chogyam Trungpa (1973/1987a) noted that at a certain stage of practice "meditation is a delightful and spontaneous thing to do," and "is the continual act of making friends with yourself" (p. 97), as a result of which "you cannot just contain that friendship within you; you must have some outlet, which is your relationship with the world" (pp. 97-98). Trungpa described compassion as "a bridge to the world outside," and observed that "trust and compassion for oneself bring inspiration to dance with life, to communicate with the energies of the world" (p. 98). Importantly, Trungpa noted that in the absence of such trust in and compassion for oneself, "one remains trapped in the desire to improve oneself, the desire to achieve imagined goals," leading either to "despair and the self-torture of unfulfilled ambition" if one fails to achieve such goals, or self-satisfaction and aggression if one feels such goals have been achieved (p. 98).

Emphasis upon self-acceptance is another point of convergence between person-centered and Buddhist approaches to the cultivation of mental health. Welwood (1983, p. 49) observed that "though therapy and meditation both may take a person through many stages of development, I see their major point of overlap as helping to develop what is known in Buddhism as *maitri*, or . unconditional friendliness to oneself," which, as contrasted with "trying to get ourselves to live up to how we think we *should be* ... involves accepting ourselves unconditionally and allowing ourselves to be human."

Rogers' (1980) discussion of one of the therapeutic consequences of effective communication of empathic understanding to clients illustrates the facilitation of *maitri* to which Welwood (1983) referred. Rogers (1980, p. 152) noted a "consequence of empathic understanding is that the recipient feels valued, cared for, accepted as the person that he or she is," and added that "the message comes through to the recipient that 'this other individual trusts me, thinks I'm worthwhile. Perhaps I *am* worth something. Perhaps I could value myself.. Perhaps I could care for myself"(pp.152-153).

The authority within

Valuing "the authority within" was described by Rogers (1980) as also characteristic of persons well-adapted to the world of tomorrow. Such persons, he wrote, "have a trust in their own experience and a profound distrust of external authority. They make their own moral judgments, even openly disobeying laws that they consider unjust" (p. 351). Similarly, if more related to validation of inner experience than struggle with societal forces, the Dalai Lama (Dalai Lama, 1991, p. 14) emphasized that "Buddhist thinkers take the Buddha's words not so much as an ultimate authority, but rather as a key to assist their own insight; for the ultimate authority must always rest with the individual's own reason and critical analysis."

Finally, and perhaps most broadly, a central correspondence between Rogerian and Buddhist psychological theories of the self consists in the basic nature and directional tendencies of mind. Rogers (1961, p. 26) observed that "one deep learning" that had "been forced upon me by more than twenty-five years of trying to be helpful to individuals in personal distress" was that "*it has been my experience that persons have a basically positive direction.*" Similarly, Trungpa (1984, P-30) noted that "every human being has a basic nature of goodness, which is undiluted and unconfused" and which "contains tremendous gentleness and appreciation." He emphasized that "it is not just an arbitrary idea that the world is good, but it is good because we can *experience* its goodness," adding that "we can experience our world as healthy and straightforward, direct and real, because *our basic nature is to go along with the goodness of situations*" (p. 31, emphasis added). At the same time, there is an important distinction between the "basically positive direction" Rogers observed as characteristic of human beings and the notion of "basic goodness" Trungpa discussed. Trungpa (1984, p.42-43) explained that

When we speak of basic goodness, we are not talking about having allegiance to good and rejecting bad. Basic goodness is good because it is unconditional, or fundamental. It is there already, in the same way that heaven and earth are there already. We don't reject our atmosphere Basic goodness is that basic, that unconditional. It is not a 'for' or 'against' view, in the same way that sunlight is not 'for' or 'against.'

Welwood (1983, p. 205) notes that "basic goodness" is "a term translated from a Tibetan phrase referring to a fundamental, unconditional quality of presence, wakefulness, receptivity, and sensitivity that all human beings share, beyond conditioned ideas of good and bad." Welwood added that "this term is not meant to deny or ignore the existence of greed and aggression, or evil

and suffering in the world, but it points to a more basic human quality underneath these phenomena" (1983, p. 205).

Another fundamental commonality between Rogerian and Buddhist perspectives concerns the directional tendency of mind. Central to the person-centered approach is the recognition of what Rogers (1961, p. 351) emphasized as "*man's tendency to actualize himself to become his potentialities*," by which he noted he meant "the directional trend which is evident in all organic and human life -- the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature -- the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, or the self" (1961, p. 351). A similarly described directional tendency is referred to in some Western translations of Buddhist psychology as manifested by "*basic intelligence*," which Welwood (1983, p. 205) defined thusly:

This term translated from Buddhist psychology refers to a universal quality of wakeful awareness that all human beings share, underneath the many forms of ignorance, delusion, and self-deception that exist. This intelligence operating in us is considered to be a direct expression of the universal life tendency to move toward balance and greater wholeness.

In summation, both person-centered and Buddhist perspectives emphasize openness to inner experience; a recognition of the self as a dynamic process; the importance of trusting and unconditionally accepting oneself; and valuation of one's own reason and judgment, as against unquestioning obedience of external authority.

DISSIMILARITIES BETWEEN PERSON-CENTERED AND BUDDHIST MODELS

Nye (1992) observes that "the notion of *self or self-concept* is so important in Rogers's psychology that his theory is often referred to as a 'self-theory' ". (p. 102), and it is with regard both to the nature of the self and the significance for psychological well-being of the self-concept that person-centered and Buddhist understandings may be seen as divergent.

Rogers (1961) noted that "the client's concept of self" is "a construct which is central to the client-centered theory of therapy and personality" (p. 256). He noted that "it is reasonable to conclude" from Q-sort studies of pre- and post-therapy changes in the ordering of self-descriptive items that "one of the changes associated with client-centered therapy is that self-perception is altered in a direction which makes the self more highly valued" (p. 258). Rogers added that from other studies "we know that it is primarily the self-concept which changes in therapy, not the ideal self" (p. 258). Importantly, with regard to the present comparative analysis, Rogers also noted that such "change is not ... transient ... but persists after therapy" (p. 258).

Rogers (1961, p. 122) emphasized that the process of becoming a person as he observed it in clients with whom he worked in client-centered therapy included a "willingness to be a process," by which he indicated he meant "the individual seems to become more content to be a *process* rather than a productto drop ... fixed goals, and to accept a more satisfying realization that he is not a fixed entity, but a process of becoming." However, such a realization will differ in depth, scope and/or temporal accessibility to consciousness from one individual to another, depending upon a variety of factors including the state of consciousness in which it was acquired and the nature of the cognitive structure within which it becomes encoded. It is therefore uncertain, for example, whether "a person who accepts the locus of evaluation as residing within himself (Rogers, 1961, p. 124) as a result of the client-centered therapeutic process has experienced a phenomenal field similar to that experienced by a practitioner of mindfulness meditation, since the "evaluator" in the latter instance intermittently "disappears" during states referred to as "egolessness."

Welwood (1983, p. 206) defines "egolessness" as a "term from Buddhist psychology" which

... implies that all self-images and attempts to create a fixed identity are not primary or ultimate. Just as we cannot tighten our hand into a fist unless the basic condition of the hand is open, so a more fundamental openness of mind is considered to underlie the grasping attempt to forge a separate, solid self-concept. To endeavor to experience less disparity between a "real" and an "ideal" self is a fundamentally different aim than to endeavor to experience the inherent insubstantiality or "emptiness" of the self.

The Dalai Lama (Dalai Lama, et. al., 1991, p. 25) points out that "emptiness IS the ultimate nature of reality in the sense that it is the mere absence of the inherent nature, or reified projection, that we impute on reality. The mind is also devoid of such reified existence and this aspect of mind is known as the emptiness of mind." Rather than merely a philosophical position, however, this realization is considered by Buddhist psychologists central to the resolution of day-to-day emotional conflicts, as the Dalai Lama explains:

Emptiness plays a crucial role in Buddhist discussions and occupies an important place in Buddhist literature. This is because Buddhism maintains that at the root of our many psychological and emotional problems lies a fundamental misconception of reality. We have an innate belief in the existence of things as they appear to us and are ignorant of the discrepancy between the appearance of things and their true mode of existence. Because of this innate belief in the validity of appearances, we automatically grasp on to things as enduring entities that possess self-defining characteristics, essential natures, and this leads to all our confusion, psychological disturbances and so forth. Buddhism claims that it is only through understanding the true nature of reality by gaining insight into this essencelessness, the emptiness of things, that one can dispel all this psychological and emotional confusion. (Dalai Lama, et al., 1991, p.25-26).

Although Walsh (1989, p. 545) observed that both Eastern and Western theorists "have acknowledged that our usual adult egoic mind state together with its limitations may be a developmentally necessary stage," he added that "the problem is that at this time most of us do not recognize, correct, and develop beyond the limitations of this conventional stage even though such transconventional development is the very *raison d'être* of Eastern psychologies."

Finally, person-centered and Buddhist approaches differ in their methodologies for facilitating mental health, the former relying upon an interpersonal relationship characterized by therapist-offered facilitative conditions (empathy, congruence, unconditional positive regard) and devoted to discussion of the self-experience, while the latter relies primarily upon meditative techniques and study guided by an accomplished teacher-practitioner. As Goleman (1991, p. 95) notes, in the Buddhist approach to the development of mental health,

. . . the primary, fundamental psychotechnology is meditation in its many, many varieties. To reframe this, meditation, in terms of cognitive science, is simply the sustained effort to retrain attentional, perceptual habits. The effort is to transform the *process* of consciousness, not its content, and this is where the two paths, East and West, start to diverge.

SUMMARY

Rogers' (1980) description of the "person of tomorrow," one well-adapted to live in a world in which our understanding of human potential is vastly extended, shares with Buddhist psychology emphases upon openness to inner experience; recognition of the self as a process

rather than a fixed entity; trust in and unconditional acceptance of the self; and reliance upon one's own reasoning for guidance, rather than upon external authority.

Divergences between person-centered and Buddhist psychologies may be discerned in their respective views of the nature of the self and in methodologies for facilitating mental health. In the person-centered model, more emphasis is placed upon transformations in the content of the self-experience, whereas in the Buddhist approach both the recognition and experience of the "essencelessness" of the self (egolessness) is central. However, an underlying similarity consists in the preeminence accorded by both approaches to facilitation or another's experience of his/her immediate phenomenal field, as against provision of interpretations of another's self-experience. Suzuki (1970, p. 77) noted that Rinzai, an early Chinese master, taught in four different ways:

Sometimes he talked about the disciple himself-, sometimes he talked about the teaching itself-, sometimes he gave an interpretation of the disciple or the teaching; and finally, sometimes he did not give any instruction at all to his disciples. He knew that even without being given any instruction, a student is a student. Strictly speaking, there is no need to teach the student, because the student himself is Buddha, even though he may not be aware of it. And even though he is aware of his true nature, if he is attached to this awareness, that is already wrong. When he is not aware of it, he has everything, but when he becomes aware of it he thinks that what he is aware of is himself, which is a big mistake .

The person-centered therapeutic model relies upon an interpersonal relationship characterized by the facilitative conditions and devoted largely to verbalization of the self-experience, while the Buddhist approach to facilitating mental health emphasizes the practice of meditation to transform habitual attentional and perceptual patterning.

However, these contrasting methods neither constitute mutually exclusive nor antithetical therapeutic activities: they are related by the developmental continuum which informs their use, a continuum of stages in both inward and outward expansions of consciousness. Wilber (1980) views the role of the humanistic therapist as that of helping "the consenting ego begin its transformation-upward," adding that "true transformation -- on any level -- is not a form of brain-washing, hypnosis, or propaganda," but "rather a form of emergence, of remembrance, of recollection" (p. 144).

Just as Rogers' conceptualizations of the fully functioning individual may be understood by therapists as a bridge between Western and Eastern psychologies, so can the person-centered approach function as a bridge for clients between phenomenologically distinctive stages of self-absorption, self-understanding and self-transcendence.

NOTES

¹The elements of Buddhist psychology cited in this paper are common to both Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, the schools perhaps most familiar to contemporary Western students. Trungpa (1975/1987b, p. 5) noted that "the contemplative traditions of Buddhism, such as the Tibetan and Zen traditions, emphasize practice very strongly and see study as something that should go side by side with it." A discussion of the philosophical and methodological differences between "Zen" (the Japanese pronunciation of "Ch'an," which is the Chinese pronunciation of the Sanskrit "dhyana," or meditation), the approach to Buddhism developed in Japan since 550 A.D., and the Buddhist literature and practices developed in Tibet since the seventh century, is beyond the scope of this paper. A concise comparative history of Buddhist thought and practices from their origin in India to their contemporary American forms may be found in Fields (1992); Trungpa

(1992) provided a phenomenological analysis of differences between Tibetan and Zen Buddhist teachings.

²A discussion of the experiential bases for therapist-offered facilitative conditions in terms of Buddhist psychological principles may be found in Harman (1990).

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