

Clinical Study of Enlargement the Experience Reported by the Client, in Relation to Understanding Integrative Therapist

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Abstract

The clinical study presented here will show, through several excerpts from a therapy session with a 24-year-old client, the way in which the integrative impressions of the therapist are built, a heuristic concept borrowed from Maria-Villas Bowen.

It will be a question of following the assembly and the progressive genesis of the “insights” coming from the client in answer to the levels of comprehension and integration of the therapist and to observe here how the person explores and gives meaning to his experience.

Keywords: *Experiencing; Integrative Impression; Intuition; Interconnection; Reflexivity*

Position of the problem

The therapist’s empathic understanding of his client opens up a space of integration concerning several levels of experience: environmental, sensory, cognitive, emotional and relational.

It will be here to follow step by step, through extracts of significant verbalizations, the correlated evolution of the integrative impressions of the therapist and the progressive widening of the exploration by the client of the levels of his experience.

Therapeutic process and reorganization of the gaze on the experience

The relational dynamic between the client and the therapist is rooted in a web of relationships, shared meanings, emotional exchanges and cognitions co-developed in the crucible that are promoted by the six conditions theorized by Rogers (Rogers 1957 and 1959).

They constitute the range on which the client and the therapist rely to form the duo of an encounter based on empathic interaction.

According to Alan Schou: “Psychotherapy aims to rearrange internal patterns of insecure representations until they become safe models that allow for more intrapsychic and intricate modes of organization interpersonal, as well as a progressive development of the ability, in a variety of familiar and new contexts, to maintain a coherent and continuous unified sense of self”.

This orientation, which I consider as a first coherent tool for my questioning, joins another useful concept for the advance of my talk, that of “selfobject” of Kohut (1982) that relates in these terms Margaret Warner: By function “selfobject”, I mean a function necessary to maintain the coherence and stability of an individual’s experience. This function is performed by two people in a partnership relationship before being internalized as a relatively independent capacity [1].

This reorganization, which consists of a structuring exploration of an implicit already there, can only be done in the heart of a relationship where the therapist’s attitudes, both behaviorally, cognitively and emotionally, are liberating awareness movement.

This moment of movement, according to Rogers’ expression, punctuates the strata with an expression ranging from sensoriality, to the corporeal, to the subtlety of an innovative and imaginative reflexivity.

For the client and the therapist, it is an experience of shared complexity: “The bond of trust develops through an empathetic and separate presence, a living listening and just mirrors” [2].

It will show that the experiential dimension has an evolutionary aspect in relation to the therapist’s attitudes. These constitute a space of integration to the expressions of the client.

The correspondence between the levels of exploration of the experience and the manifestation of the integrative understanding of the therapist is the core of this research.

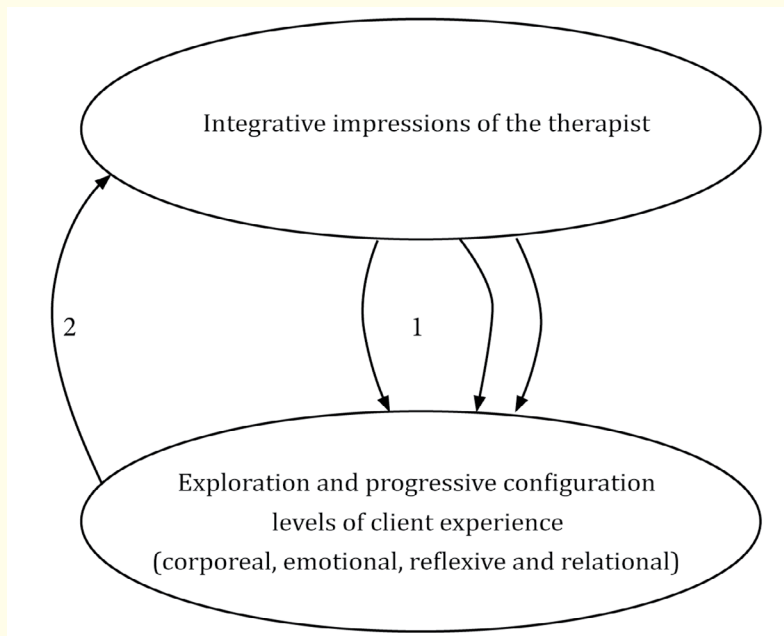
The gradual encounter between the therapist and the client: the spark of the process

The study of the evolutionary aspect of the client’s experience, in relation to the therapist’s attitudes, is an open research direction since the contributions of Rogers in chapter V of his book “The Development of the Person” [3], thus, he writes: “To try to grasp and conceptualize the process of change”, I began by looking for the elements likely to characterize the change itself even (...). What gradually appeared to me as I confronted the raw material of change is a continuum different from the one I had perceived before. I began to understand that individuals do not evolve from a fixed, “homeostatic” point to a new fixed point, although this kind of process is possible. On the contrary, the most significant continuum develops from a fixed point towards change, from a rigid structure to a fluidity, from a state of stability to an evolutionary process [3].

I will add that this continuum has a vertical dimension, a thickness having the texture of a memory. Because, since these first studies, it is established that the number and the quality of the “insights” is correlated with the nature of the attitudes, the presence to oneself and to others of the therapist: “From the theories resulting from the dynamic systems, we have hypothesized that processes of emergence or pattern formation occur during the evolution of psychotherapies and are to a certain extent associated with the results of the intervention (I emphasize this)” [4].

However, this correlation of measures remains here, in many ways, quantitative: social anxiety questionnaire, emotional well-being inventory, self-image assessment, symptom checklist, control beliefs, measure here the order of the therapeutic system. But what about the very movement of the experience that the client is exploring?

How my empathic understanding, my degree of internal agreement and acceptance will favor the new configuration of the experience and especially how the integrative perception of this experience is organized in my own schemas according to the following heuristic schema:



As Maria Villas-Bowen writes: "We therapists act as information collectors in which we capture the customer's disconnected and fragmented bits of experience and put them together in one integrative impression. We return this integrative experience to the client either in the form of reflection of feeling, metaphors, statements of underlying themes or suggestions of experience. Clients then use these integrative impressions as catalysts to organize their experience to another level of consciousness (...). There is a difference between a supportive encounter, which is supposed to help the client feel better and psychotherapy. In a support meeting, active listening is the only method required. In psychotherapy, the therapist introduces his or her own integrative impressions that serve as catalysts for the client's development process [5].

This quote is in my opinion fundamental. It recognizes an impact on the therapist's attitudes never expressed in this way.

The therapist, through his integrative impressions, captures the snippets of experience and integrates elements of his own experience, restitution that he delivers to the client, hybridized sensations, intuitions, awareness, explorations proposed, quality of being that facilitates its own coherence. It is an integrative experiencing (conscious, poetic, metaphorical, sensory, etc.) that emphasizes that still precarious and sometimes blurred client. As Bohart (1996) defines it: "This is a way of knowing that is different from that which goes through conceptual thinking". It is initially non-verbal, perceptual, holistic, malleable, contextual, physical, ecological before becoming conceptual and linguistic [6].

It is this dialectic that I will follow and try to restore through verbalizations carrying traces and meaning.

The statement of integrative impressions in relation to the process of exploration of her experience by the client will be sensitive:

- Where the experience takes place (emotional, bodily, historical, family, etc.);
- Its nature: a gap between the concept of self and lived experience;
- Its temporality: what configurations, what derivatives and defensive mechanisms are manifested, such as the illusion of all power or the search for a pleasure, an exhilaration...?

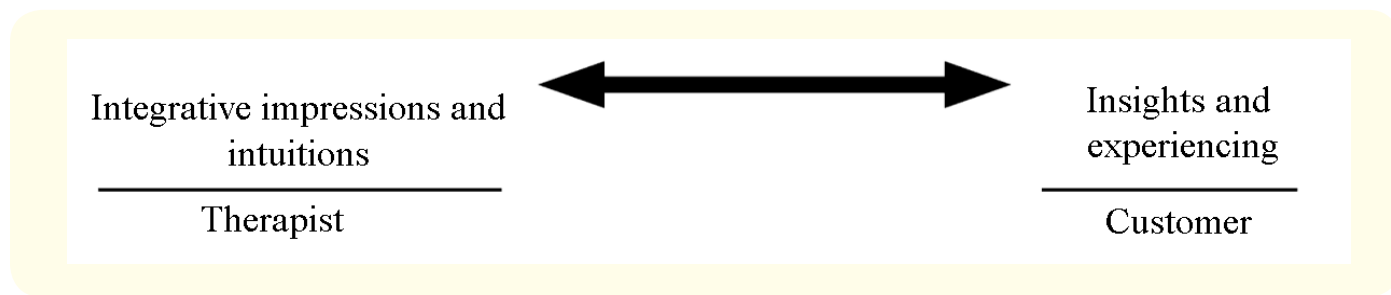
Two spaces are amalgamated, contracted, interwoven from the intention of meeting between the therapist and his client. I also note that this relationship between the integrative impressions of the therapist and the client's level of experiencing is timely to give a major role to the 6th condition of the therapeutic process, namely: "The perception by the client of the conditions at least 4 (unconditional acceptance) and 5 (empathic understanding) that the therapist testifies to him [7].

The therapist, through his intuitions, by the signifying "vibration" of his attitudes, would encourage the client to express the stages of her experiencing. In his barely perceptible personal space, the echo of the integrative understanding of the therapist resonates: openness, broadening in depth, explorations all in shared creativity, built of improbable assemblages.

My questioning concerns the focus on these levels that the client is aware of in relation to the degree of involvement of the therapist.

This movement has several dimensions like a right intuition, a presence in a distanced touch, a sensory adjustment constituting a joint attention. It is here again that the sixth condition finds its true value, as underlining an existential heartbeat, so precise and so fine that the client is approaching potentialities belonging to the dyad of shared intuitions. These are the result of a "configuration acting like a magnet on iron filings, it brings together disconnected fragments of the customer's experience" [8].

It is these fragments and their re-configuration that interest me in the coupling and which would be the indicators that a meaning coming from an unconscious level, reflected by the integrative impressions of the therapist.



It implements an art, a relational poetic that Maria Bowen describes well when she relates the therapy sessions she had with Fritz Perls, the founder of gestalt therapy: “My experience was that he entered my world and his way of assembling my fragmented impressions (it is me who underlines) was to propose to me an experiment which had the effect of bringing together the scattered parts of my experience in an integrated order (id). This was a moment of profound change for me (P.17).

As such, I agree with what Frank Margulies writes: “Höger was able to show that the three basic attitudes should not be understood as therapeutic interactions per se, but as principles that generate psychotherapeutic interactions with a given client [9].

Excerpts of verbalizations illustrating the co-adjustment between the client’s experience and the integrative impressions of the therapist

I now propose, through verbalization excerpts from a session with a 24-year-old client, to highlight the movement between the nature of my integrative impressions and the progressive configuration of her experience levels. . This link illustrates a shared dynamic.

Excerpt # 1

- C1: Oh yes, there were excesses. I was very much in the mood that night!
- T1: But at the same time, I hear that these excesses, they correspond to movements in you, a little like a fish swimming at the bottom of the water and rising to the surface. “That’s it! He’s here” and he stands out.
- C2: It’s also because it’s something I drowned for a long time.
- T2: You drowned the fish!
- C3: (Laughs) Yes, that’s it! But whether it’s about “roommates” or what I would like to share with R, but I find it a pity that it is done in an alcoholic context, because it is not really healthy. I could have done that by being sober.
- T4: It is as if this part of yourself which contained a part of truth and suffering, could have been expressed only in an alcoholic context.
- C4: Yes, yes.
- T5: And did not have the opportunity or the opportunity to speak normally.
- C5: Yes, that’s it and suddenly, I think I had desires in my words, because we do not control...
- T6: Do you know what I’m hearing, Emilie*? The excesses of which you spoke to me are excesses of silence, in relation to painful situations.
- C6: Well, yes! But right now, I feel like I have to catch things that have not happened for too long. And as I was in an excess before, well now I switch in the other, and I do not like it either.
- T7: Do I understand that the fact that everything is moving in you - as you change your apartment, you’re already moving in space - it’s as if it releases energy that would have been stuck in a kind of immobility due to the situation.
- C7: Yeah, that’s it, and it’s scary for me.
- T8: A bit like an earthquake, huge energies that are released when the plates are too molten.

C8: Yes, yes, but are we forced to go through these phases of excess, whether on one side or the other? Is the balance so difficult to achieve, what!

T9: When you sites that, you regret one thing, it is to not be able to say in moderation, something that you can only say in excess, in excess of emotion of modified consciousness, of disinhibition”.

Comments

When I found myself in the client’s world, my integrative impression was expressed (T1) as an overdue truth (by the metaphor of a fish of the depths rising to the surface) that is manifested excessively in a context alcoholic (C3 and T4) confronting the client with a controlling tendency (C6).

The client will come below to express a high level of incongruence resulting from the gap between her experience when she is alcoholic, and the controlling slope coming from a family heritage.

Excerpt # 2

C9: “I do not know too much... It would be between - once we spoke on the side a little delusional, and on the side much more mother.

T10: The one that makes the jams...

C10: Grandmother, grandmother. Is not there a middle ground between either falling into complete madness, or in the mother what! What I would like to do with my life is a balance.

T11: And when you look at your life, you feel an impatience with regard to this imbalance, this tension, this kind of movement, a little like an oscillating barrel, this double tension.

C11: Yes, because here I experienced the very square, very grand-maternal side.

T12: Yes, which comes from your grandmother.

C12: Yes, with this rigor, with this non-fun.

T13: Serious, who takes care of the house, who does the shopping, who makes food.

C13: And who criticizes everything, apart from that (your irritated, annoyed). Then who never has fun! She never had fun, never, never, never! Never fun, incredible...

T14: I feel you put your finger on a kind of heritage, an inheritance that is missing something, and that, you try to compensate for it by the delusional side!

C14: Yes!

T15: As an addition.

C15: More than to say what my mother represents for me. Even if it is a little road, what! This pleasure side.

T16: But you mean that this pleasure side comes into your life as you saw at your mom’s, in an excessive way. Because I could tell you “there may be moderate pleasures”, you seem to say that pleasure can only be expressed in an explosive way...

C16: So, yes, at home that’s it yes! I am in the excesses.

T17: And that, you say that it is an inheritance of your mother.

C17: Maybe more, yes.

T18: The two ways of being do not manage to combine in you and can exist only in an exclusive way. It is sometimes one, sometimes the other.

C18: I would like something more...

T19: An alloy?

C19: Yes, a balance.

T20: Where the square side can have fun, and the pleasure side, fun, can find a solid without going into anything.

C20: Yes. But there, I do not manage anything...

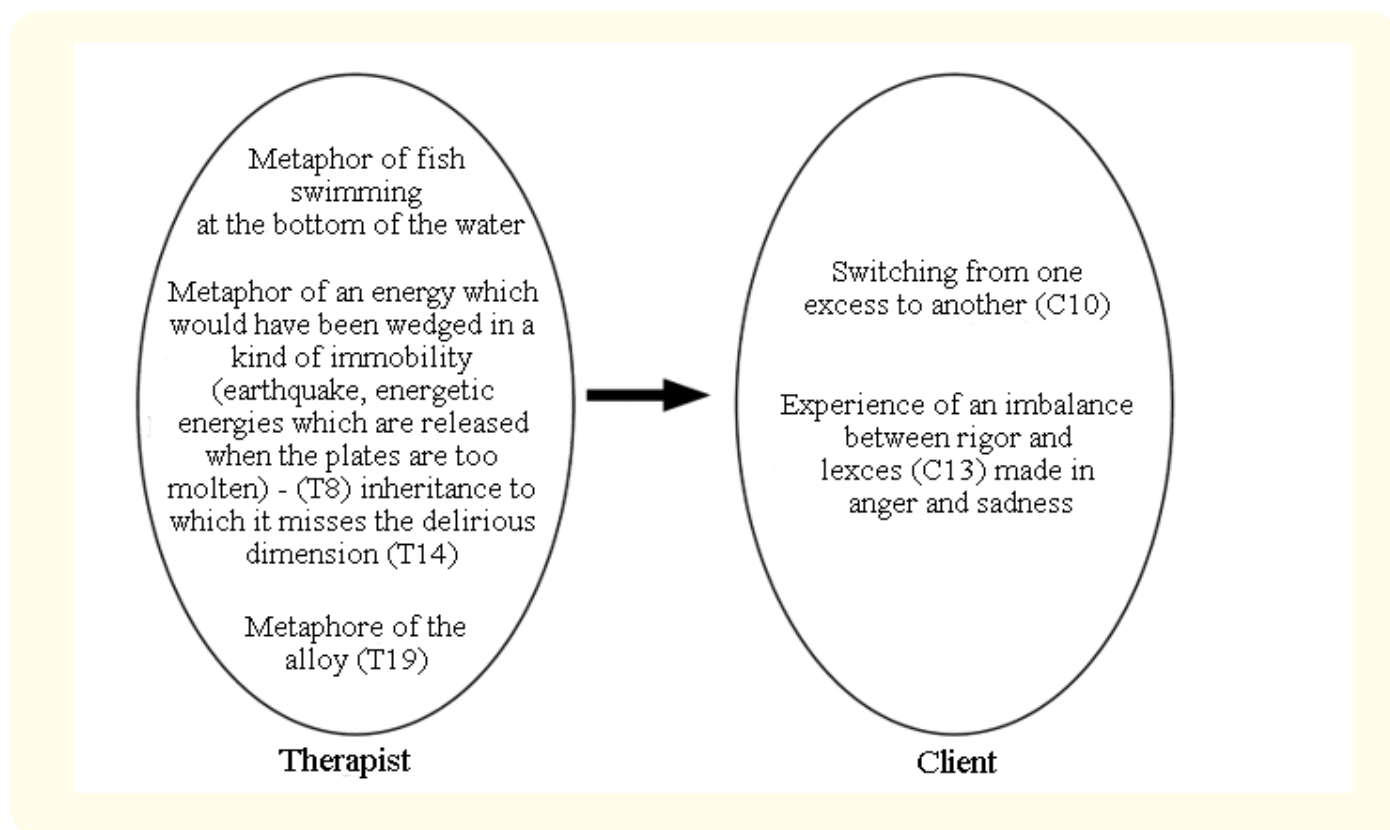
T21: How are you right now?

C21: At this moment?

T22: Yes.

C22: I am sad. I do not like to complain..."

Record of integrative impressions in these two protocol snippets



Understanding and experiencing integrative emerging conceptualizations. Other excerpts of the session testify to the jerky force of experiencings, accompanied by a deep and overwhelming feeling, coupled with the sobriety of the integrative impressions of the therapist.

Excerpt 3

T23: "The side too square is saying to the other part of yourself:" you have seen, you are insensible, you are not amenable you, look what you did!"

C23: Yes (crying) ... Yes, I do not know where it's going to lead me all this!

T24: When you look at these two legacies, there is yet another look that is middle. It is this look that would make balance. There is a third person who speaks there, she wants to live differently. I do not hear you talking about it from sadness, nor from the square side, in an exclusive way, any more than on the delusional side. It's as if there is something in you that is powerless to put them together.

C24: Yes.

T25: And that's us, it's Emilie. That's the person I have inside, who looks at it and says, "But what did I do with that mess? What am I doing with this?"

C25: Yes, and how am I going to make them get along?

T26: When you say that, you speak from a position that seems to have no power, but the other two aspects have great power, since when you are in the "square" side, everything is square!

C26: Yes!

T27: And when you are in the "delusional" side, everything is delusional.

C27: Yes! (crying)... Yes, that's right. Yes it's true that it's me who finally decides.

T28: You say that you decide from one side or the other.

C28: Yes.

T29: You also say that there may be circumstances, and there you touch the essential point, exteriors and interiors that tip the scales on one side or the other.

C29: Yes, and it's still me who has the key!

T30: And the key is to be able to appreciate the circumstances, to go to one side or another or to stay in the middle.

C30: (reflected silence) Yes

T31: A bit like - do you have the license you?

C31: Yes.

T32: So a bit like when you drive, either you decide to take the turn and then make an accident, or take it in a correct way at the speed that is appropriate not to slip! It's you who are driving the car, it's not the car that drives!

C32: It's me...

T33: Except when the person is for example alcoholic, where the car is driving ... It's not the person when you press the accelerator, the car will not say "no, no rest!" She's going !

C33: It's funny what you say, because I had a big car accident, 6 months after having the license...

T 34: Ah, here! (surprisingly pronounced T).

C34: Yes!

T35: What's going on there? As if both of us had just shared something we had felt together...

C35: Yes ... Yes, I have the impression that I lost control of the vehicle".

Comments

In this excerpt, I leave my impressions (T23, 35, 31 to 35) to meet a level of perception recessed, as a look at the scenes of consciousness in the client. There is a potential for equilibrium that has not yet been manifested (C29), a scenario in which two configurations slip away and confront one another, where the truth of the person can only be expressed in alcoholic drink, in order to escape the distance produced by meaningful referents internalized by the client: the rigorous grandmother and the whimsical mother replaying the scene in the client's life (T24, T26 and T29).

Then (C32 and 35), the client contacts a decision energy, a position, a movement of initiative and choice taken up by the integrative impression of the driving of the car (T32), which opens on the intuition of the accident that the client experienced 6 months before (C35) by the therapist (T33).

Excerpt # 4

T36: "And you lose control of the vehicle when you do not decide anything. You lose control of yourself when the conditions of internal and external alertness, when you no longer take into account the information that allows you to regulate your speed.

C36: Yes. I was going too fast, I was dizzy, indeed I was in a kind of all power in relation to this rain that fell and tell me that nothing happens to me. I left the house saying to my mother, who warned me "you'll be careful! And me: "What do you want that happens to me?"

T37: And you have seen that the two positions there are positions of any power...: the mother who wants to govern everything, and the other part, complement crazy, these are postures of any power that lose contact with reality.

C37: That's it.

T38: Yes, with the circumstances, with the gravel that is on the road, with the rain, these are two parts that are in the all power that are no longer in the exchange with the external environment.

C38: But in both cases!

T39: Yes, in both cases.

C39: And even in both cases of my person, that's it too.

T40: Yes, that's it too. These are two postures of all power that make you lose contact with what could come to ensure regulation and internal control, that is to say the perception of self, the perception of the other, the inner perception of yourself, the information that comes from the environment, etc. we could find tons like that.

C40: Yes, it's interesting that...

T41: Your inner vehicle loses control when you are in full power.

C41: Yes, but how to put humility back in all this?

T42: I feel like you're like this right now ... I'm not talking to a wall, I'm talking to someone who understands everything I say to him, who's in humility, who's in a recoil position, which processes the information, you see what I mean ...

C42: Yes.

T43: Who is not in the all power.

C43: But it's easier to be in the power, it's exhilarating! (Laughter)

T44: Something can be added here, it's the dimension of pleasure.

C44: Yes!!

T45: The intensity of life...

C45: At the same time, it's far too tiring...

T46: Yes, because you come out... broken...

C46: Yes!

T47: Already, you're breaking a car!

C47: (laughs)!

T48: And then, after an exhilarating evening - by the way it's fun, the people who are drunk, we put them in a cell of sobering - at the same time, you come back broken, you are exhausted. Finally, the consequences of the omnipotence are not very pleasant the next day!

C48: No... But should we always think about the next day? Because when I start thinking about the next day, I'm no longer in the moment, it's the square side that comes...

T49: In fact, what I'm hearing is that the all-powerful of these two legacies that comes from your grandmother and the one that comes from your mother, the full power of two legacies, these are parts of you who do not already think that you are in the moment and that in a way are very scary, are very afraid of the future...

C49: Oh yes!

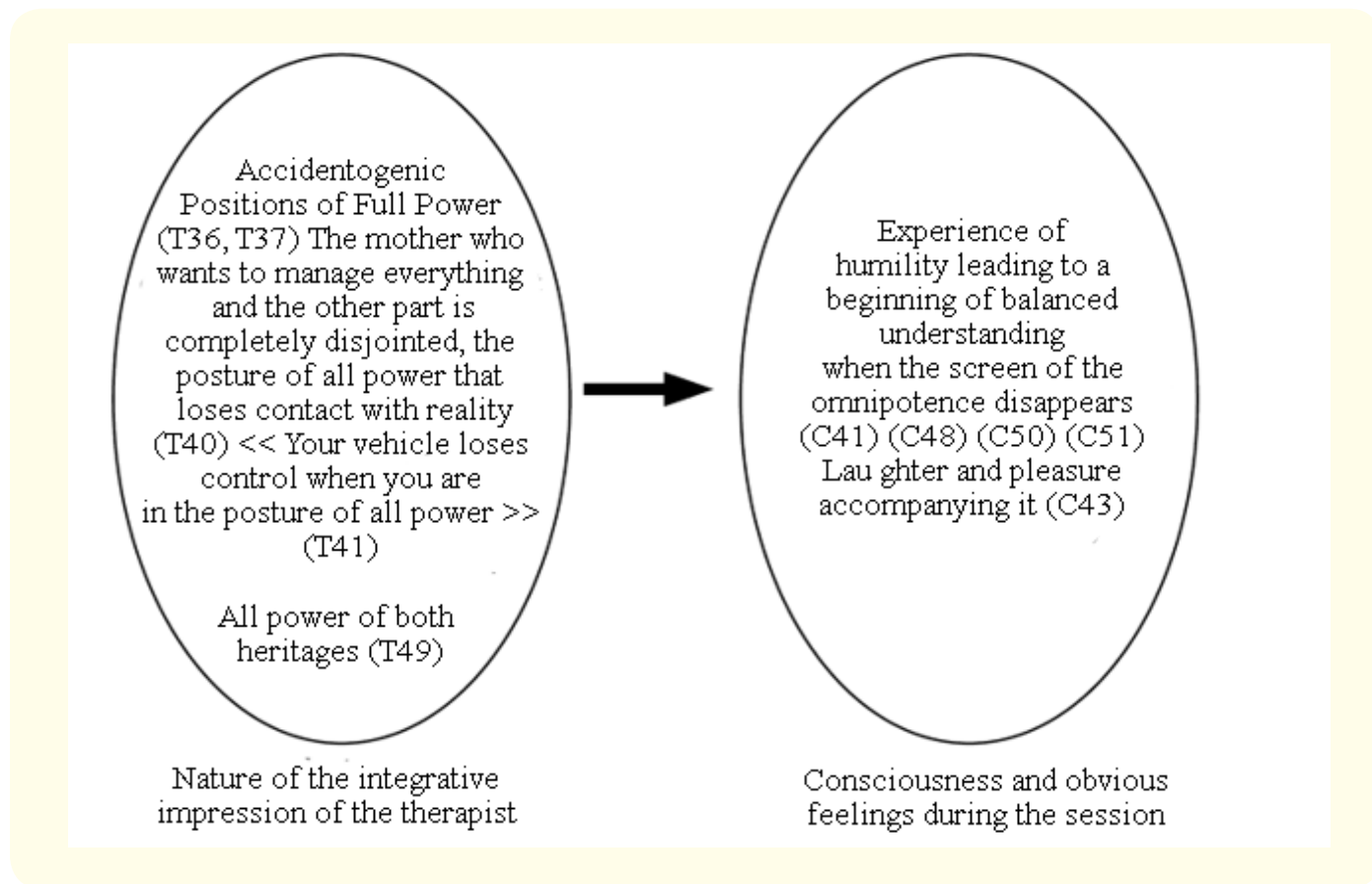
T50: Because they want to control everything!

C50: Yes, that's right, they're afraid of losing their place.

T51: And to stay around the table, even if they do not want to be there.

C51: Yes. It is a sacred legacy that I carry...

T52: And I hear that it is heavy, even if it can have exhilarating sides, there, you realize that it rots your life...



Excerpt # 5

T49: "I also hear something in you, it's the fear of scattering. The fear of something that could be undone.

C49: Oh yes! Completely...

T50: Like your "crazy" *!

C50: Yes, but that's it!

T51: Which are a little in pieces. Fear, she is here. To go in one direction or another or to explode!

C51: Sometimes I get scared when I come home from work. Sometimes, I put an hour to sit what! I think about 60 things at the same time. I cannot smoke a "cigarette", I'm everywhere, I put an hour to arrive. But because, they project, they do not care about the face, it's all day, all day, and more in a context of daily life.

T52: What is important is to hear that always, as before, there was a third instance that looked at the other two, the two parts, there is one too. Because you, you are in the background enough to say "they are projecting me stuff! Be careful, it does not come from me. There is always a reflexive attitude that allows you to keep your balance and not be in the excesses all the time.

C52: Do you think that's what saves me?

T53: Yes, I am convinced of it and it is the first time that I hear it. You know, when you said "I would like me to balance between these two levels, between these two legacies" and there you say to me, "I'm afraid of losing my balance with these crazy people" is that there is something in you that is in control, in mastery, in "pay attention"!

C53: Yes, a look what!

T54: Yes. And that's you; I want to call him Emilie!

C54: (Laughs)...

T55: That's you.

C55: That's funny... I like it.

T56: Because you are not all the time exploded, and you are not always in the maternal attitude, castrating or I do not know what! Since you are able to discern two aspects of yourself, it is good that there is a posture that is there to say "Attention"!

Comments

Here the integrative impression of the therapist considers the part that looks at the other two (T52 and T53). This one wants to control in conscience the excesses of the one which "delirium" and the rigor of the other which controls. This impression is E the client, perceived in its entirety! (T54).

I find Maria Bowen when she writes that, "My work is guided by the belief that we have in ourselves all the resources necessary to accomplish a creative life and that we are interconnected with the energy that transcends our egotism. I know that when a person is ready to contact his inner self, she will do it, I cannot push her into this experience, but I can encourage her to enter the realm of consciousness that allows her to make" (Article cited p.20).

The excerpts of verbalisations that will follow, and which end the session, will involve interactions of great strength. The hyphen appears between the therapist's inner impressions and the client's levels of experience (T59 - C62).

Extracts of verbalization no 6

T57: "Do you know Emilie what I'm hearing here? It is an inner movement which consists, at home, of giving you to yourself of value. To give you self-assurance, a movement of self-recognition - I have no other word - I feel like it's okay!

C57: Yes, but why am I obliged to do it by comparing what? It sucks! Why do I need someone to be worse than me!?

T58: (all right) Because you are afraid everyone will be better than you! Here!

C58: (Silence of about 5 seconds) ...well yes...

T59: That's right, that's what's so distressing to you that you're not sure of your value that when you get to a place, you get the impression that others are better than you and there, that does it happen, by reflex. You will find in your heart the inheritance that is best suited to maintain control: the maternal part, which will be loved because it knows how to make jams and because it is solid, strong, clean and plant the beans!

C59: Laughs!

T60: Or the other party that will go crazy and that will send everything in the air!

C60: Yes...

T61: Look how both heritages are resources that you mobilize when you are not sure of yourself...

C61: Yes, that's right.

T62: And they are not to be eliminated; but at the same time, they are stuck because they are excesses!

C62: That's it! ... These are excesses, and it's not me!

T63: No, it's not you ... On the other hand, I hear you being completely yourself, or at least a little more yourself, when you have a kind of self-awareness that you have of value, even if for that you have to compare yourself to someone who is less good than you. You are here..."

Discussion

The integrative impressions of the therapist are only valuable because of their ability to organize:

1. Multi-plane metaphors (sensory, bodily, cognitive, relational, etc.) combining empathy (which is to meet others by experiencing their feelings, their story, their thoughts) to intuition, which is a focus that decrypts the thought before it is formalized and unfolded (e.g. the fish swimming in the depths, the earthquake, the inheritance setting in motion the transgenerational levels in the client). As if intuition was the empathy of the unconscious.
2. Third-party understanding patterns of contradictory parts present in the client (T49-C50, C51, T52-C53).

Conclusion

This research is an illustration of a conceptual, artistic and integrative advance that occurred in the therapist, following the encounter with the sparkling writings of Maria Bowen.

The awareness was made from reading these lines, in the paragraph dealing with the meeting between the therapist and the client: "On the other hand, she says, the reflection of feelings may or may not be an impression integrative that will facilitate a reorganization of the customer's experiences into a new consciousness. It will depend if we, the therapists, share the customer's inner world instead of just listening to the words (...). In psychotherapy, the therapist introduces his or her own integrative impressions that serve as catalysts for the client's development process"(Article cited p.2).

This is the case with the client's conflicting movements: "It is a little as if this part of yourself which contained a part of truth and suffering could only have been expressed in an alcoholic context (T4 extract 1).

This integration brings together:

- A symbolism of the emergence of a life present in the depths (T1 extract 1).
- A pendulum swing from "excess of silence" (T6) to "release of energy that would have been stuck in a kind of immobility due to the situation" (T7)
- Sheds light on an internal disagreement between a childhood and adolescent way of exasperating the client who, in the third position, expresses her desire to better control her emotional relationships. We are at the end of the session.

Excerpt 7

T63: "It's a bit like taking your first steps, as if you were rowing against the tide, and you're not used to it. It's difficult. Like a child who takes his first steps and falls.

C63: Yes, but I wonder if I will do this all my life! I would like to learn and then move on!

T64: A bit like a step you would like to go through.

C64: Yes.

T65: And that at the same time comes to sting you by what you are impatient.

C65: That's it!

T66: Impatient to move on to another stage of your life where you could say things without having to pile them up.

C66: Yes! There is that and there is also that ... how to say, that I do not learn from my mistakes what! When I left Paul, I said to myself, "Well, you do not leave Paul to do anything again with the boys, and do what you did 5 or 6 years ago." And I start again anyway!

T67: Do I understand that you are putting your finger on a way of being that is no longer adapted to the new person that you are?

C67: Yes...

T68: Because you are a young person who observes that you continue to "function" as a 15/16 year old teenager

C68: Yes, that's not possible.

T69: It is no longer possible for the young adult woman that you are now.

C69: No, it's not possible anymore! It's funny 5 minutes, but not anymore.

T70: Look how important it is to see that there is in you a way of being, a way of being with boys who is late, not running at the same speed, the rest of your no one.

C71: Yes, and I think that cannot go in the middle".

And a little earlier, the person told me:

C27: "Yes, it's true that it's me who finally decides. (...) yes, and it's still me who has the key! (C29).

In the end, the integrative impression of the therapist includes this image of equilibration decided, considered, enlightened: "(T30) and the key is to be able to appreciate these circumstances, to go either side or to stay in the middle".

In other words, the encounter with the client sets in motion, in dialogue, in juxtaposition, her levels of experience catalyzed by the expression of the "patchwork" of my integrative understandings. This experience had the effect of bringing together the fragmented parts giving birth to a meta posture, a source of choice, and finally comfort for my young client (T67 to C69).

Finally, the spiritual dimension of the Person-Centered Approach appears when the experience of the client and the therapist merge into a new temporality rewriting the experience of suffering and discomfort [10,11].

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