



1995

Seeking Harmony with the Divine Energies an Eastern Christian Approach to Pastoral Psychotherapy

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SEEKING HARMONY WITH THE DIVINE ENERGIES
AN EASTERN CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO PASTORAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
INSTITUTE OF PASTORAL STUDIES

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JANUARY 1995

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was in a course taught by my director, Mary Kaye Cisek, that I first heard the term "energies" applied in the context of pastoral counseling. I thank her for this inspiration as well as her encouraging support through the process of developing and producing this thesis.

I am also grateful to Father Andriy Chirovsky for providing me his expertise in Eastern Christian Theology and for staying with me across the many miles.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Ariadne, for her continued understanding and care as I sat many months before the computer screen. May our love always bring us in greater harmony with the energy of God.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PG J.P. Migne, ed., Patrologia Graeca (Paris, 1857-66)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to present an Eastern Christian approach to pastoral psychotherapy. To do this I will open a dialogue between the Greek Patristic theological understanding of human nature and the human person, and Carl R. Rogers's psychological understanding of human nature and the human person. This I do in search of an integrated psychological and spiritual paradigm of the human person, God, and the therapeutic relationship which is operable and appealing in the twentieth century, yet grounded in Christian antiquity.

It is my intention to present from an Eastern Christian perspective, a psychotherapeutic approach to clients; a way of seeing and relating to clients; or as Rogers would say, a "way of being" with clients, which offers the pastoral psychotherapist a theologically informed understanding of the dynamic relationship between the client and therapist.

In that Carl Rogers uses the terms: "client," "therapist" and "psychotherapy" in his theory, I will do the same throughout this paper, while recognizing that the psycholog-

ical/spiritual paradigm which I present may be utilized by both the fields of pastoral psychotherapy and pastoral counseling.

Throughout this work, in my own text, I have consciously used gender-inclusive language. However in accordance with section 5.3 of Kate L. Turabian's fifth edition of A Manual for Writers: of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), all quoted texts which I present, I quote as they are in their sources, including their uses of capitalization and gender-exclusive language. I extend my apologies to those who may be offended.

All biblical references in this thesis have been taken from The New American Bible (Encino, CA: Benziger, 1970).

CHAPTER I

AN EASTERN CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN PERSON

In chapter one of the book of Genesis it is written that: when God created the light and separated it from the darkness, God saw it was good; when God created the sky, the land and the sea, God saw it was good; when God created every kind of plant and fruit with seed in it, God saw it was good; when God created the sun and moon, all the winged birds, all the animals and creeping things of the earth, each day, God saw it was good. And on the sixth day, it is written, when God created human beings in God's image and likeness and gave them dominion over all of the earth, God rejoiced at all of creation, finding it "very good" (Gen 1.1-31).

This notion of creation as "very good" is at the heart of the Eastern Christian understanding of creation and the human person as part of God's creation. Citing this scripture passage Saint Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-396) affirms: "All of God's creatures are good, and nothing He has made

may be despised. He made all things very good (Gen. 1.31)."¹

All things created by God are very good because they are born solely from the loving activity of God, who is the source of all goodness. In the beginning there was nothing but God freely choosing to create the cosmos from nothingness. "All things were not reshaped from some subsisting matter into phenomena, but the divine will became the matter and the essence of creation."²

The goodness and beauty of creation may be experienced in the world around us. Saint Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans: "Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognized through the things he has made" (Romans 1.20). Indeed, creation itself may provide us a window to

¹Gregory of Nyssa On Virginity, PG 46.371A, in Jean Danielou, S.J., From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings, trans. and ed. Herbert Musurillo, S.J. (Crestwood, New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), 113. Scriptural reference and italic (underlined) emphasis added in translation.

²Gregory of Nyssa On the Six Days of Creation, PG 44.73A, trans. Christos Yannaras, "The Distinction Between Essence and Energies and Its Importance for Theology," Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 19, no. 4 (1975): 239.

knowledge of God's existence, goodness and beauty.

Anyone who gazes upon the visible universe and sees the wisdom that has been impressed upon the beauty of all creatures, can argue from the visible to the invisible beauty, the fountainhead of all Wisdom, Whose influence brought all creatures into being.³

When we think of beauty, perhaps we foremost think of that which is appealing to the eyes, or our other senses. We might recall the smell of a fragrant red rose or the warmth of the sun. We might remember the sound of a bird singing or the taste of the sweetness of a ripe berry, and say, "Yes, that was good!"

While each of these things may certainly be recognized as revealing the joy and goodness of creation, for Greek Patristic authors, the goodness and beauty revealed in the cosmos was defined by much more. For the Fathers, goodness and beauty resided not merely in the attractiveness of things to the senses and the pleasure they may give humans in their earthly life. Rather, beauty resided in the good arrangement, orderliness, and harmonious relationship of the cosmos as a whole. This orderliness is expressed by the

³Gregory of Nyssa Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles sermon 13, PG 44.1049D-1052A, trans. in Danielou, 273.

Fathers with words such as diakosmesis, eukosmia, and eutaxia.⁴

Creation is described as a work of art. In it are many things which, when seen as a whole, express much more than the sum of its parts. Saint Basil the Great (c.329-379) writes:

It is not to the eyes of God that things made by Him afford pleasure, nor is His approbation of beautiful objects such as it is with us; but, beauty is that which is brought to perfection according to the principle of art and which contributes to the usefulness of its end. . . .⁵

The unity and oneness of creation makes evident the wisdom of God, who from the beginning desires communion with creation.

Relationship and harmony are the components of beauty in creation according to the goodness of God. Anything individual and seen apart from the rest of creation, has no

⁴For more on this see Thomas Spidlik, S.J., The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel, Cistercian Studies Series, no. 79 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1986), 127-128.

⁵Basil the Great On the Six Days of Creation homily 3, PG 29.76CD, trans. Sister Agnes Clare Way, C.D.P., in ed. dir. Roy Joseph Deferrari, Saint Basil Exegetic Homilies, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, vol. 46, (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 53.

meaning without its relationship to the whole and its relationship to its creator.

In fact, a hand by itself or an eye alone or any of the members of a statue, lying about separately, would not appear beautiful to one chancing upon them; but, set in their proper place, they exhibit beauty of relationship, scarcely evident formerly, but now easily recognized. . . .⁶

Just as the divine will is one and not to be divided, while common to each person of the Trinity, so too is creation intended to be one harmonious whole, where all is in all and everything and everyone is for everything and everyone, expressing the goodness of God.

God has provided creation with a driving force and a goal of harmony and unity. All that has been created has the divinely-willed intention and potential for communion and oneness with God. Why would a loving God abandon one's own work of love? The intended end for all creation is communion with God.

This teleological understanding of the created cosmos and its relationship to God, with the goodness of creation, is likewise at the essence of the Eastern Christian understanding of human nature and the human person.

⁶Ibid.

God's goal for the human person is communion with God. Indeed our task extends beyond this, for in Genesis we are told we have been given dominion over all the living creatures on earth (Gen 1.28). With this power we are called to direct all of nature toward harmony with the Creator.

We were set aside by God from the rest of creation. "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them (Gen 1.27)." It is being created in the image of God which makes us unique in the order of creation. The image of God, which we possess, is characterized by our freedom; or as Greek Patristic authors name it, our autexousion (self-determination).

Experience shows us, that as human beings we have the freedom to choose a road toward unity with God or a road toward alienation from God. We can believe or not believe, listen or not listen, obey or not obey, pray or not pray, love or not love.

Yet, God created us to grow in a relationship characterized by unconditional love and freedom, whereby we might choose harmony and unity with God, the source of all being. Bearing God's image gives us the potential to accept

the presence of God in our lives and enter a process of self-determined and accepted growth, in order that we might attain God's likeness and personal communion with God.

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (d. 209) taught that, from their creation, human beings were to enter a process of development bound by a relationship involving personal interaction with God. In the Garden of Eden, at the birth of this process, human beings were only children, with all the innocence and openness to growth of infancy.

For he was a child; and it was necessary that he should grow, and so come to his perfection. And, that he might have nourishment and growth . . . , [God] prepared him a place better than this world, . . . : and its name is Paradise. And . . . the Word of God continually resorted thither, and walked and talked with the man. . . . But man was a child, not yet having his understanding perfected; wherefore also he was easily led astray by the deceiver.⁷

⁷Ireneaus The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching chapter 12, this text survives in the Armenian translation presented as Der Apostolischen Verkündigung in Texte und Untersuchungen: zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur vol. 31.1, Adolf Harnack and Carl Schmidt eds. (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1907), 9-10, edited and translated into the German by Karapet Ter-Mekerttshchian and Edward Ter-Minassiantz, translated into English from the Armenian and German in J. Armitage Robinson, D.D., Saint Irenaeus: The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, Translations of Christian Literature, series iv, Oriental Texts (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920; New York: The Macmillian Co., 1920), 81-82.

In the beginning God wished, as our parent, to provide us direction, a path, and guidance. God called us to walk toward the divine likeness; to walk toward our own fulfillment and perfection of being. And God promised to walk with us in our journey.

The likeness of God is the goal of humanity. It is the telos (end) of humanity. It is divinity calling human persons to perfection, whereby we become complete--beginning and ending in God.

However, we read in the second chapter of Genesis how the first human beings abused their freedom, acting irresponsibly toward their Creator. Misled by the evil one, they alienated themselves from God by choosing to turn away from the presence of God, seeking another likeness (or unlikeness).

This choice tarnished the image of God with which they were created. They alienated themselves from the grace of God, the relational action of God, by which they were created and sustained. They alienated themselves from the means for achieving God's likeness and true life with God, and instead evoked the necessary consequence of their choice, death.

And such is our situation:

To as many who continue in the love of God, God imparts communion with Himself; and communion with God is life and light, and the enjoyment of all the good things which come from Him. But on those who have fallen away from God by their own choice He brings separation from Himself; and separation from God is death, and separation from light is darkness, and separation from God is the loss of all the good things which come from Him.⁸

Yet, another essential teaching of Eastern Christian Theology is the understanding, that the image of God in human beings--the freedom and potential for self-determination to achieve the likeness of God--although tarnished, dimmed or hidden, has not been destroyed.

Saint Athanasius (c.293-373) assures us of the free potential of human persons to act with the original goodness and desire to live in harmony with creation and God. He assures us of our potential to make free choices in the goodness with which we were created:

Just as they turned away from God with their mind and invented gods from non-existent entities, so they can rise towards God with the mind of their soul and again turn back towards Him. They can turn back if they cast off the stain of all desire which they have put on, and wash themselves until they have eliminated every

⁸Irenaeus Against Heresies 5.27.2, PG 7.1196BC, trans. from Kenneth Paul Wesche, "Pastoral Implications of Orthodox Christology," Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 34, no. 4 (1990): 298.

addition foreign to the soul and show it unadulterated, as it was made, in order that in this way they may be able to contemplate therewith the Word of the Father in whose Image they were made in the beginning.⁹

In the fourth century, Saint Basil The Great similarly writes in his work On the Human Structure, how human nature continues to bear the image of God with the potential through virtue to attain God's likeness.

I have received in my nature what makes me to be in the image of God: this is the origin and the roots of the good in me. The likeness of God comes to me through my actions, my labors to achieve the good, my virtuous life.¹⁰

Perhaps the greatest expression of this theology of the human person may be found in the writings of Saint Basil's younger brother, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, who expressed this understanding of human nature as inherently and potentially good with many metaphors.

⁹Athanasius Against the Gentiles 34, PG 25.68CD, trans. by Robert W. Thomson in, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1971): 94f, presented in Kenneth Paul Wesche, "Pastoral Implications of Orthodox Christology," Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 34, no. 4 (1990): 297-298.

¹⁰Basil the Great On The Human Structure 1.20, PG 30.32C, trans. in Maximus Aghiorgoussis, "Application of the Theme 'Eikon Theou' (Image of God) According to Saint Basil the Great," Greek Orthodox Theological Review 21, no. 3 (1976): 272.

In sermon 15 of his Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles, Saint Gregory likens the human soul to a mirror.

It is just like a mirror that has been artistically and practically designed: it accurately reflects on its pure surface the image of any face that is in front of it. So too the soul reflects the pure image of that unshorn Beauty, when she has prepared herself properly and cast off every material stain.¹¹

Again, in his work On The Beatitudes, Saint Gregory asserts the innate potential goodness of the human person to imitate the Creator and become like God.

For you do have within your grasp the degree of the knowledge of God which you can attain. For, when God made you, He at once endowed your nature with this perfection: upon the structure of your nature he imprinted an imitation of the perfections of his own nature, just as one would impress upon wax the outline of an emblem.¹²

It is God's will for human persons to grow into the perfect likeness of their creator. We have been marked by God toward this end. In his work On Virginity, Saint Gregory tells us that this potential is made possible only by the grace of God, the gift of God's image endowed in us

¹¹Gregory of Nyssa Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles sermon 15, PG 44.1093D-1096A, trans. Danielou, 282.

¹²Gregory of Nyssa On the Beatitudes sermon 6, PG 44.1272A, trans. Danielou, 101.

at creation. If we would only cooperate in freeing our souls from the mud of sin, then the glory of God would shine in us once more.

To achieve this likeness to God is not within our power nor within any human capacity. It is a gift of God's bounty, for He directly bestowed this divine likeness on our human nature at its creation. By our human efforts we can merely clear away the accumulated filth of sin and thus allow the hidden beauty of the soul to shine forth.

This lesson is taught, I think, in the Gospel, where our Lord speaks to those who have ears for the mysteries that Wisdom teaches us: "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17.21). I think that the text here points out that the gift [goodness] of God is not separated from our nature nor is it far from those who choose to look for it. It dwells within everyone of us, ignored and forgotten, "choked with the cares and pleasures of life" (Luke 8.14), but is rediscovered when we turn our minds to it.¹³

When we are open to the wisdom of God, we have the ability to look within ourselves for the meaning of goodness, the meaning of God, and the meaning of life. To be open to personally experiencing God in our lives, is to be shining a powerful light on our innermost selves and acknowledging who we truly are as children of God.

It is just like men who look at the sun in a mirror. . . . Even though you are not strong enough to see the light itself, you will find within yourselves

¹³Gregory of Nyssa On Virginity, PG 46.372D, trans. Danielou, 114.

what you are seeking, if you would but return to the grace of that image which was established within you from the beginning. For the Godhead is all purity, freedom from passion, the absence of all evil. And if you possess these qualities, God will surely be within you. . . . The dark cloud of matter will be removed from the eye of your soul, and then you will see [sic] clearly that blessed vision within the pure brilliance of your own heart.¹⁴

The "mud" and "dark cloud of matter" which Saint Gregory speaks of refer to the human passions such as pride, lust and greed, which are overindulgent, selfish human behaviors. These prevent human persons from focusing on the source of their lives, and all life, the Creator and creation. To see oneself as apart from creation and God is to experience disunity and disharmony.

Yet, while Saint Gregory of Nyssa is clear to acknowledge and challenge through his teachings, here and elsewhere, the tendency of the human person to turn away from God and seek false and selfish godliness; to act without responsibility toward creation and the Creator by overindulging in sensual pleasures and self-righteousness; to fall out of harmony with divine wisdom, and true beauty by focusing on the self apart from the whole, he never ceases

¹⁴Gregory of Nyssa On The Beatitudes sermon 6, PG 44.1272B, trans. Danielou, 102.

to proclaim the inner goodness of the human person and the potential to continue growing in the glory and likeness of God, who is the archetype for human persons. He with all the Greek Fathers never ceases to acknowledge the ability of the human person to become like God.

In truth the finest aspect of our mutability is the possibility of growth in good; and this capacity for improvement transforms the soul, as it changes, more and more into the divine. . . . One ought not then to be distressed when one considers this tendency in our nature [to foolishly turn from God]; rather let us change in such a way that we may constantly evolve towards what is better, being transformed from glory to glory, and thus always improving and ever becoming more perfect by daily growth, and never arriving at any limit of perfection. For that perfection consists in our never stopping in our growth in good, never circumscribing our perfection by any limitation.¹⁵

The process by which the human person cooperates with the grace of God to perfect his/her nature, approaching the divine, is called divinization, deification or, in Greek, theosis. More specifically deification takes place through uniting oneself through baptism to Jesus Christ, the God/Human, the divinized human.

Saint Maximus the Confessor (c.580-662) tells us:

God made us so that we might become "partakers of the

¹⁵Gregory of Nyssa On Perfection, PG 46.285BC, trans. Danielou, 51-52.

divine nature" (II Peter 1.4) and sharers in His eternity, and so that we might come to be like Him (cf. I John 3.2) through deification by grace. It is through deification that all things are reconstituted and achieve their permanence; and it is for its sake that what is not is brought into being and given existence.¹⁶

We know that what was intended in creation has yet to be fully manifest for each of us. In our lives we experience disharmony and disunity of creation and humanity which manifests itself in many forms. Whether it be as general as disease, war, poverty and political oppression, or more specific as breast cancer, gang murders, child abuse, or manic depression, we see that life often deviates from what we might attribute to the love and wisdom of God, and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

It is a contention of this paper, that psychopathological behaviors, syndromes and personality disorders are manifestations of such disharmony and disunity of creation

¹⁶Maximus the Confessor Letters 24, PG 91.609CD, extracted and quoted in the Greek Philokalia of Saint Nikodimos as a "Third Century"--a continuation of Two Hundred Texts on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God, reorganized and translated as chapter 42 of the "First Century" of Various Texts of Theology, the Divine Economy, and Virture and Vice, in G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, trans. and eds., The Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, vol. II (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 173.

and humanity. Whether such conditions result from inherited disease (e.g., schizophrenia), corrupted social environment (e.g., dysfunctional patterns in one's family of origin), or poorly informed human choices (e.g., some forms of alcoholism), what is apparent is that each exhibits a destructive, noncreative tendency, which is contrary to the goal of communion with God, to which we are called.

Yet again, Saint Gregory of Nyssa assures us:

The soul that looks up towards God and conceives that good desire for His eternal beauty, constantly experiences an ever new yearning for that which lies ahead and her desire is never given its full satisfaction.¹⁷

By what means, then, may we experience the eternal God who is the source of our being, the one we yearn for, and the goal of our becoming? And, how do we actualize our "good desire," our potential for harmony and communion with God?

To answer our first question, we will turn to the 14th Century Orthodox theologian and saint, Gregory Palamas (1292-1359).

¹⁷Gregory of Nyssa Commentary on the Canticles of Canticles, PG 44.1031B, trans. from George A. Maloney, S.J., A Theology of 'Uncreated Energies', The 1978 Pere Marquette Theology Lecture (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1978), 43.

Drawing upon the teachings of Greek Patristic authors, Gregory Palamas articulated the doctrine of the "divine energies" in response to the writings of his contemporary, Bernardo Barlaamo, the Calabrian, a philosopher and teacher of Byzantium, who among other things challenged the Eastern Christian understanding of God's grace as always uncreated, eternal and constantly flowing and present to all of creation.¹⁸

In opposition to the Eastern Christian tradition, Barlaamo purported a more Western Christian understanding of grace for humans as something created by God for us, which God gives or retrieves momentarily. It was difficult for Barlaamo to accept the notion that God could be completely other from human nature, while at the same time directly experienced by the human person. For him any knowledge of God could only be symbolic, and any interaction with God could only be created by God in the moment of encounter.

In particular, Barlaamo attacked the belief of the Eastern hesychastic monastics, who held that God was con-

¹⁸The following presentation of Gregory Palamas and Barlaamo is supported by the chapter entitled "Gregory Palamas" in Robert Payne, The Fathers of the Eastern Church (New York: Dorset Press, 1989), 268-294.

tinuously present in the universe, able to be experienced as light to "eyes of the heart" of the person who was properly disposed to encounter the energy of God. Barlaamo saw such an experience as a challenge to the uniqueness and separateness of the divine nature.

In response to Barlaamo, Saint Gregory Palamas gave an analogy by which to understand the mystery, that the eternal Creator remains separate, and yet, intimately ever-present to creation through grace. He defended the hesychastic experience of God's grace as a real type of experienced light.

Just as the soul communicates life to the animated body--and we call this life "soul", while realizing that the soul which is in us and which communicates life to the body is distinct from that life--so God, who dwells in the God-bearing soul, communicates the light [grace] to it. However, the union of God the Cause of all with those worthy transcends that light. God, while remaining entirely in himself, dwells entirely in us by his superessential power; and communicates to us not his nature, but his proper glory and splendor.¹⁹

¹⁹Gregory Palamas Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts 1.3.23., taken from John Meyendorff's critical edition Gregoire Palamas, Defense des saints hesychastes, 2nd ed., Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, etudes et documents, fascicules 30 and 31, Lovaine, 1973, translated by Nicholas Gendle in Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts, ed. John Meyendorff, a volume of The Classics of Western Spirituality: A Library of the Great Spiritual Masters, editor in chief Richard J. Payne, et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 39.

What Gregory Palamas articulated was the understanding, that while God's essence remains ever-the-same, eternal and uncircumscribable, distinct and beyond human comprehension, there are divine activities or energies by which human beings have been created, are sustained, and may come to experience and know their God.

The Melkite Archbishop Joseph Raya clarifies this meaning in his work The Face of God, where he writes:

The Uncreated Energies of God are not "things" which exist outside of God, not "gifts" of God who is himself in his action. They are the very God who is himself Uncreated. They are therefore called "uncreated" because their cause and origin is the Essence of God. In them God, as it were, goes beyond himself and becomes "transcendent" in order to really communicate himself.²⁰

While the essence of God is purely distinct and separate from human nature, the divine energies of God interact with human nature--transcending and transforming human nature. The divine energies are manifestations of the Triune God. They are God's constant relating presence to creation, especially human persons, by which we may be joined to the love of the Trinity, and divinized.

²⁰Archbishop Joseph M. Raya, The Face of God: Essays in Byzantine Spirituality (McKees Rocks, PA: God With Us Publications, 1976), 37.

Since one can participate in God and since the super-essential essence of God is absolutely above participation, there exists something between the essence that cannot be participated and those who participate, to make participation in God possible for them. . . . Thus, He makes Himself present to all things by His manifestations and by His creative and providential energies. . . . By participating, each of us, in the manner proper to each and by the analogy of participation, may receive being, life, and deification.²¹

The crucial understanding of God which Gregory Palamas defended, is that God is both immanent and transcendent. In his work A Theology of Uncreated Energies, George A. Maloney identifies Greek Patristic theology as having a "process" approach similar to that purported by the mathematician and philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead. Both teachings see the world and human nature as in constant motion; dynamically evolving and developing through a series of encounters and "occasions" for growth. For Whitehead, these "occasions" are made possible primarily through social interaction. For Gregory Palamas, personal growth and development are made possible through the real presence of the divine energies

²¹Gregory Palamas Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts 3.2.24, presented by John Meyendorff, ed. in Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense (Louvain, 1959), 687, and in John Meyendorff, St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality, trans. Adele Fiske (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 123-125.

with which we may interact.

God transforming man into His likeness by His energies. A "process" approach to man is absolutely fundamental in the theology of the Fathers . . . Palamas [insists] that God, through His energies, is constantly transforming man so that he truly may become" a partaker in the divine nature."²²

In summary, we have seen that the Eastern Christian understanding of the human person and of all creation, begins with the understanding of creation as "very good." The goodness and beauty of creation is not to be seen so much with individual creatures in themselves, as in the artistic orderliness and harmony of the cosmos as a whole.

Human persons, created in the image and likeness of God, are self-determining, with the freedom to seek harmony and communion with God, which leads to eternal life; or, we are free to choose disharmony and alienation from God, which leads to eternal death.

While human beings are capable of making the latter choice, our original disposition toward harmony with creation and God, although tarnished, or dimmed, remains alive, yet hidden, beneath the mud of sinfulness, or misguided

²²Maloney (1978), 100-101.

choices. I contend that psychopathology may be included as a form of mud, which can inhibit the human person from realizing his or her inner potential goodness.

Our task then is to return to the grace which lies deep within us and which transcends us. While God is unique and separate in essence, God is constantly manifest to all of creation through the divine energies. It is through the divine energies that God is intimately present to those who are open to God's presence.

In answer to the first question posed earlier, as to how we may interact with God, we see that God is constantly present and relating to us through the divine energies. As to our second question, we see that we may actualize our potential for harmony and communion with God by participating in the divine energies of God.

The true freedom, deification and eternal communion with God, which we are called to, are ours, if we accept them. By claiming the original goodness of our souls, and by seeking harmony with the energies of God, our lives may be transformed, perfected and transfigured into the likeness of God.

A new question now arises: What does living in harmony

with the divine energies look like?

Before we turn to this question, let us look to the twentieth century psychological theory of Carl Rogers for a contemporary understanding of human nature and the human person.

CHAPTER II

CARL R. ROGERS: A TWENTIETH CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Carl Ransom Rogers was born in 1902 to a mid-western, American, Protestant family. As a youth Carl's family moved to a farm where he was exposed to agricultural science and became attracted to the scientific method of learning, which he studied at college in Wisconsin.

The strong religious values of his family would later influence Carl to enter Union Theological Seminary, in New York City. However after two years of college there, Rogers's own developing, more scientific, thinking led him across the street to Teachers College at Columbia University, where he found a more appealing highly experiential and statistical method of study.

It was here that Rogers was introduced to clinical psychological work with children under the direction of Leta Stetter Hollingworth, whom he called a "sensitive and practical

person."¹ In his internship at the Institute of Child Guidance, Rogers was also emersed in Freudian psychoanalytic theory and practice. The latter he found incompatible with the warmth and practicality of the former.

It was his opposition to Freudian analysis which would lead Rogers to join and become a leader in the "Third Force" of Psychology, the humanistic school of psychology pioneered by Abraham H. Maslow, which honored the uniqueness of the individual human person and gave validity to subjective human experience.

Unlike Freud, who saw the human person as a product of inner drives imbedded in the unconscious, accessible only through analysis, humanistic psychology upheld the ability of the human person to grow from awareness of oneself on a more conscious level by freely choosing to shape one's life and actualize one's potential.

Above all else, Rogers held subjective experience to be the source of all knowledge. In his work On Becoming a

¹Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), 9. The first chapter of this book provides a concise autobiographical account by Rogers.

Person, he writes: "Experience is, for me, the highest authority."² And a little later in the same work he exclaims: "Neither the Bible nor the prophets--neither Freud nor research--neither the revelations of God nor man--can take precedence over my own direct experience."³

By scientifically recording and studying the subjective experience of people in therapy and searching for some order in the chaos, Carl Rogers would come to introduce his theory of "client-centered therapy" (later termed "person-centered approach")--born from the scientific study of subjective human experience. His "way of being" with clients revolutionized the way psychotherapy had been done up to the middle of the twentieth century, and he would come to launch, what has come to be known as, the "human potential movement."

During his sixty-year career until his death in 1987 at the age of eighty-five, Carl Rogers introduced an approach of thought, a philosophy of the person, which has impacted not only psychology and counseling, but much of American

²Ibid., 23.

³Ibid., 24.

education, culture and our worldview today.

Roger's understanding of the human person, human nature, all living things and the entire universe, necessarily begins with one's own firsthand experience of things in reality. He writes: "I enjoy the discovering of order in the experience. It seems inevitable that I seek for the meaning or the orderliness or lawfulness in any large body of experience."⁴

In his 1977 work Carl Rogers on Personal Power, Rogers recalls the mere childhood experience of potatoes to illustrate his understanding of the functioning of human nature and the human person.

I remember that in my boyhood, the potato bin in which we stored our winter's supply of potatoes was in the basement, several feet below a small window. The conditions were unfavorable, but the potatoes would begin to sprout--pale white sprouts, so unlike the healthy green shoots they sent up when planted in the soil in the spring. But these sad, spindly sprouts would grow 2 or 3 feet in length as they reached toward the distant light of the window. They were, in their bizarre, futile growth, a sort of desperate expression of the directional tendency . . . [within them]. They would never become a plant, never mature, never fulfill their real potential. But under the most adverse circumstances, they were striving to become. Life would not give up,

⁴Ibid.

even if it could not flourish.⁵

For Carl Rogers, from their first day of life until their last, all living organisms have within them an inner tendency to live and thrive, to be and become, the fullest of being that they have the potential to be. Rogers applies the term "tendency" to the motivating force of life observable in all forms of life ranging from interacting cells, to plants, to animals, to human beings.

In his last major work A Way of Being, which also contains an account of this boyhood experience, Carl Rogers goes even further as to hypothesize that beyond the thrust for life in all organisms, which we have just described, there is indeed a greater tendency of the universe at the heart of all becoming.

I hypothesize that there is a formative directional tendency in the universe, which can be traced and observed in stellar space, in crystals, in micro-organisms, in more complex organic life, and in human beings. This is an evolutionary tendency toward greater order, greater complexity, greater interrelatedness. In humankind, this tendency exhibits itself as the individual moves from a single-cell origin to complex organic functioning, to knowing and sensing below the level of consciousness, to a conscious awareness of the organism and the external world, to a transcendent awareness of the

⁵Carl R. Rogers, Carl Rogers on Personal Power (New York: Delacorte Press, 1977), 8.

harmony and unity of the cosmic system, including humankind.⁶

Rogers gives his term "tendency" many other adjectives: It is a "natural tendency" in that it is innate in every organism. It is a "growth tendency" in that it is the initiator of developmental change. It is an "actualizing tendency," in that its goal is the realization of the potentialities of the organism. It is a "directional tendency," a "positive tendency" and a "selective tendency," in that it compels the organism toward life-giving and not self-destructive behaviors. It is a "constructive tendency," motivating the organism toward its own fulfillment of being.⁷

Fulfillment of being, for Rogers, involves "self-regulation and independence from external control." The organism is always interacting with its environment in search of ways to achieve fulfillment.

It must be emphasized that the growth tendency of an organism ordinarily involves the actualization of those

⁶Rogers, A Way of Being (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), 133.

⁷Ibid., see 117-121.

potentialities which lead toward self-constructive behaviors. For Rogers, development for an organism is a dynamic process of interaction between the organism and its environment. In this, potentialities are not to be seen as pre-determined static constructs waiting to emerge, but rather, potentialities are more like rules or guidelines which themselves change and grow as they direct and shape the organism interacting with its environment.

Because of this, an organism does have potential for negative change. However, "only under unusual or perverse circumstances do [negative or self-destructive] potentialities become actualized."⁸

Thus we saw in the example of the potato above, that the sprouts, because of the improper environment, did not grow with the strength and beauty of those which would grow in the earth. Here there emerged an inferior potentiality. Yet, they nonetheless grew in hope of some survival. "The actualizing tendency can, of course, be thwarted or warped, but it cannot be destroyed without destroying the organism."⁹

⁸Ibid., 121.

Within each living being there is a positive thrust toward life for that being. Just as the potatoes, unearthed in the cold of the basement, continued to reach out for the light in the window, so too do all living things reach in the direction of that which feeds their potential to become all that they can be.

For Rogers, life is a "flowing process" which involves relationship and interaction; driven by a force for positive becoming. As a living organism, the human person likewise participates in such a process.

Rogers accepts the classic definition of human beings as rational animals and perhaps more so as rational organisms. What makes human organisms unique from others is their ability to have self-awareness. Indeed the human self is defined by one's own subjective experience and experience of relating to the world.

To me, the self includes all of the individual's perceptions of his organism, of his experience, and of the way in which those perceptions are related to other perceptions and objects in his environment and to the whole exterior world.¹⁰

⁹Ibid., 118.

¹⁰Carl R. Rogers, quoted from interview with Richard I. Evans, presented in Evans, Carl Rogers: The Man and His

Like every organism, every human person has within one's self the capacity, potential and tendency for growth toward maturity. Every individual is driven toward self-regulation and independence. In this process of becoming there are potentialities seeking actualization, and it is the self-awareness in humans which is the key as to whether and how self-actualization takes place.

For Rogers, unlike other organisms, the human person has power over her/his destiny because of her/his consciousness. We have the potential to be aware of what our needs are and to make free choices in the direction of our fulfillment: We may feel hungry and choose when to eat and drink and how much. We may feel tired, and choose to sleep. We may feel tense, and choose to meditate or exercise. We may feel lonely and decide to call a friend.

However, just as in the potato described above, the driving tendency of the human organism can be thwarted by negative environmental influences, resulting in the emergence of unhealthy potentialities. In such a case:

This tendency may become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defenses; it may be

hidden behind elaborate facades which deny its existence; but it is my belief that it exists in every individual, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed.¹¹

Thus, we may be hungry but starve ourselves; or become bulimic, because the media demands a thin body. We may feel all twisted up inside, but not willing to give up our high-stress job. We may feel all alone, but remain avoidant or antisocial, angry at the world for not accepting who we are.

The growth tendency or drive toward self-actualization of the individual person is always present but not always evident. It is self-awareness which leads the human organism toward its fulfillment.

When the self is aware of what is going on in the organism, then it keeps changing, growing, and developing in the same way that the organism does. In most of us, the static aspects of the self are what really constitute maladjustment. Maladjustment would result if I persist in holding a set view of myself which doesn't correspond with what's actually going on in my organism.¹²

As we mentioned earlier, Rogers abandoned and rejected the Freudian theory of psychology, and any subsequent theo-

¹¹Rogers, On Becoming a Person, 35.

¹²Rogers, quoted in Evans, 16. This quotation is followed by an example.

ries, which viewed the human person as determined (e.g., by sexual drives and instincts) and not as self-determining. He also rejected the therapeutic approach in such theories for being highly directive--treating the individual as an object to be cured (e.g., by external analysis).

Over the years I have moved a long way from some of the beliefs with which I started: that man was essentially evil; that professionally he was best treated as an object; that help was based on expertise; that the expert could advise, manipulate, and mold the individual to produce the desired result.¹³

In Roger's eyes, views such as Freud's identified a negative driving force in the human person. In 1961 he exclaimed, "There is no beast in man. There is only man in man, and this we have been able to release."¹⁴

At the deepest core of the human person, Rogers does not see a chaos of uncontrollable negative destructive forces. Rather, he sees at each person's core a wealth of positive unifying energy waiting to be known, realized and shared by that person.

Contrary to those therapists who see depravity at men's core, who see men's deepest instincts as destructive, I have found that when man is truly free to become what he

¹³Rogers, A Way of Being, 43.

¹⁴Rogers, On Becoming a Person, 105.

most deeply is, free to actualize his nature as an organism capable of awareness, then he clearly appears to move toward wholeness and integration.¹⁵

What then is this "man in man"? What is the true self of the human person?

For Rogers, the potential growth for each individual human person is unique to each individual. For him, there is no one mold; no ideal image of the human person into which one will grow. Yet, from his empirical study of human subjective experience, Rogers has discerned characteristics of the process of becoming which will enable one to live the fullest of one's potential, with wholeness and integrity of being. He presents these traits of such a process in chapter 6 of his aforementioned work On Becoming a Person.

One characteristic of the process of becoming a person involves "getting behind the mask." Here one's mask is the composite of unrealistic behaviors directed by false expectations or "shoulds" which one has learned from one's upbringing and society, contrary to the "genuine reactions of

¹⁵Carl R. Rogers, "Client-Centered Therapy" presented as chapter 13 in Silvano Arieti et al., eds., American Handbook of Psychiatry, vol. 3 (New York: Basic Books, 1959 and 1966), 193.

[one's] organism."¹⁶

Rogers found that many of his clients, when given the proper conditions, spend much time and positive struggle separating who they think they "should be" from who they actually are. Clients experience relief from anxiety and other disturbances as they uncover and relinquished their facades; or false selves, and discover and accept who they truly are; their real selves.

Another important aspect of this process is the "experience of feelings." For Rogers, feelings are the energy at the core of the human person. Feelings provide the human organism with true self-awareness.

When a person has, throughout therapy, experienced . . . all the emotions which organismically arise in him, and has experienced them in this knowing and open manner, then he has experienced himself, in all the richness that exists within himself. He has become what he is.¹⁷

Rogers also identifies characteristics of the person who emerges from the process of becoming. For one, this person has an "openness to experience," the opposite of defensiveness, by which one perceives oneself and the world

¹⁶Rogers, On Becoming a Person, 110.

¹⁷Ibid., 113.

as they are. Such a person does not filter reality through preconceived lenses to fit his or her own notions. Rather, he or she has a high tolerance for the ambiguity that life brings.

This openness of awareness to what exists at this moment in oneself and in the situation is, I believe, an important element in the description of the person who emerges from therapy.¹⁸

Another trait of the person in the process of becoming is the ability to "trust in one's organism." This trust is born out of an inner knowledge of, and comfort with, one's own feelings and impulses, as well as the ability to compare and contrast one's own experience with that of the world. Such a person freely interacts with and processes social demands as well as past memories of behavior.

He is better able to permit his total organism, his conscious thought participating, to consider, weigh and balance each stimulus, need, and demand, and its relative weight and intensity.¹⁹

Thirdly, the person truly becoming oneself has an "internal locus of evaluation," wherein one discovers and claims the right and authority to make all choices for one-

¹⁸Rogers, On Becoming a Person, 116.

¹⁹Ibid., 119.

self. Such a person accepts the vulnerability and risks of being responsible for oneself--for the experience of strength and integrity in being one's own person. "To recognize that 'I am the one who chooses' and 'I am the one who determines the value of an experience for me' is both an invigorating and a frightening realization."²⁰

The final attribute Rogers gives to one in the process of becoming is the "willingness to be a process." It is the ability to accept oneself as dynamically moving toward fulfillment without predetermined goals, nor established notions of what one "should" be. It is the openness to simply be and become.

It means that a person is a fluid process, not a fixed and static entity; a flowing river of change, not a block of solid material; a continually changing constellation of potentialities, not a fixed quantity of traits.²¹

From what has been presented, it is clear that Rogers measures human fulfillment by the degree to which individuality, independence and autonomy of the person are achieved. Here it is important to understand that, while Rogers

²⁰Ibid., 122.

²¹Ibid., 122-123.

prizes uniqueness, he does not prize a separateness which leads to alienation. While fulfillment of being involves freedom from external control by others, it does not mean one does not interact with others.

Indeed the healthy development of the human person can not take place without one's interacting with other human persons. For it is only in freely relating to other persons that we may come to differentiate who we are on the inside from who we are on the outside. One's deepest true sense of self is best found through intimate relationships with other persons. "Rogers . . . insist[s] that 'full humanness' is possible only through the psychological experience of becoming receptive to the transformative energies of 'the other'."²²

Rogers critiques Western society for having placed too much emphasis on individuality and separateness.

We in the West seem to have made a fetish out of complete individual self-sufficiency, of not needing help, of being completely private except in a very few selected relationships.²³

²²Robert C. Fuller, "Psychological Religiousness: Resisting the Tide of Disenchantment," Pastoral Psychology 36, no. 3 (Spring 1988): 159.

²³Rogers, A Way of Being, 198.

Rogers found in his experience with groups in his workshops, that human beings need to be together to grow.

We discover that we prize deep intimacy, that it helps us to grow, that it empowers us to act in our society. We are sad with one another, and we rejoice with one another. We are quite willing to put up with discomfort in order to be together. We enjoy nourishing one another. We find our private selves lost in the larger endeavor of forming a community, and yet, we discover that this gives us a deeper and more solid sense of self.²⁴

It is this understanding of the human person as communal and in need of intimate relationship which provides the basis for Roger's "person-centered theory." To this we shall return in chapter five.

In summary, we have seen that Carl Rogers's understanding of the human person begins with his experience of organic life and proceeds to the discovery of the presence of a formative directional tendency in the universe, which pervades all things. This formative, growth-producing, actualizing, selective, constructive, tendency is the force behind a process of becoming for all things from the galaxy, to cells, to the human organism.

Human persons are distinguished from other organisms by

²⁴Ibid., 199.

their ability for self-awareness. Consciousness provides us the means for coming to know and responding to all of our needs. If given the proper conditions, we may actualize potentialities which lead to self-regulation and freedom from any external control by one's environment--the fulfillment of our being.

While there may be environmental factors which inhibit self-actualization and personal growth by provoking psychological defenses, the positive directional tendency for growth, although buried, is nevertheless present and active in the individual human organism.

The process of becoming for the human person is characterized by an ability to distinguish between one's outer facade, and one's inner experience. This process requires awareness of one's emotions and feelings which are the energies at the core of the human person. The person that engages in this process will exhibit the traits of having an "openness to experience," a "trust in one's organism," an "internal locus of evaluation," and a "willingness to be a process."

The maturity which comes with the awareness and distinction between one's genuine self and one's external mask,

takes place through interpersonal relationships. A person in the process of seeking harmony with oneself and others, is a person who is in harmony with the transcendent formative directional tendency of the universe and all the positive formation which this brings.

Having presented both the Greek Patristic and Rogerian understandings of the human person and human nature, let us now compare and contrast their understandings as we begin to formulate an Eastern Christian approach to pastoral psychotherapy.

CHAPTER III

DIALOGING THE EASTERN CHRISTIAN AND ROGERIAN UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE HUMAN PERSON

In beginning this chapter, we must first recognize that there is a fundamental epistemological difference between the Eastern Christian and Rogerian understandings of the human person. Whereas, in the former, knowledge proceeds from divine revelation to the enlightenment of human experience, in the latter, knowledge proceeds solely from pure subjective human experience to the hypothesis of the existence of a greater transcendent dimension to life, as we know it.

As we have seen, the Greek Patristic understanding of the human person is a theological perspective where knowledge begins foremost with what has been revealed by God in Scripture and Tradition and proceeds to inform our experience of the world.

Thus it has been revealed to us in the book of Genesis, that God created us "very good" and in God's image and like-

ness, with the self-determination, autexousion, and freedom to lead ourselves and all of creation toward communion with each other and God.

Without presenting an extensive sociological study here, I think it is safe to say that human beings bear the freedom of self-determination which other animals lack. For the most part we choose to positively use our freedom for the benefit of ourselves and others. We also choose to live, and we flourish best, in societies with communal support for each other. Human beings also tend to look for some higher power to provide love and direction by which our freedom may become most productive.

As we have also seen, the Greek Patristic approach accepts that knowledge of the Creator may be discerned (although in an incomplete way) from the experience of creation, God's activity. Thus, from our experience of the movement of the cosmos, enlightened by our knowledge of God as Creator from Scripture, we can understand that the goodness of God is characterized by orderliness and harmony. In this sense, creation itself acts as a form of revelation.

In contrast, in the Rogerian psychological perspective knowledge begins solely with what has been empirically sur-

mised from human experience, without any transcendent source of enlightenment (such as Scripture), yet proceeds to hypothesize the existence of some greater tendency.

Thus, Carl Rogers, beginning from his own experience of the processes of organic life (such as the potato) came to postulate that there is a growth tendency in the human person directing all living things in a dynamic interactive process toward fulfillment of individual being. And, from here, Rogers took this notion a step further (toward the end of his life and work), postulating that the tendency in human persons is indeed a manifestation of a formative tendency in the universe.

With this, Rogers also acknowledges that there is a spiritual transcendent dimension to the human person which is, as of yet, a mystery to scientific understanding.

Our experiences in therapy and in groups, it is clear, involve the transcendent, the indescribable, the spiritual. I am compelled to believe that I, like many others, have underestimated the importance of this mystical, spiritual dimension.¹

What this statement indicates is that Rogers seems to have been moving away from his earlier notion that the only

¹Carl R. Rogers, A Way of Being (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), 130.

true experience for the human person is the subjective experience of the physical and emotional needs of one's organism in the here and now. Indeed there may be a whole other dimension to life that transcends one's organism, which one needs to be in touch with.

I am open to even more mysterious phenomena--precognition, thought transference, clairvoyance, human auras, Kirlian photography, even out-of-the body experiences. These phenomena may not fit with known scientific laws, but perhaps we are on the verge of discovering new types of lawful order.²

For Rogers the mind is so constructed that it permits of interpenetrating realms of causality. Under certain conditions creative energies from an ontologically "higher" realm can enter into and stimulate activity in the psychological sphere.³

I believe that here Rogerian psychology and Greek Patristic theology are viewing the same reality through different lenses. In that Rogers asserts that the formative tendency of the universe he experiences, among other things, is positive and constructive, I believe he is discerning from his own experience, what the Eastern Christian understands from revelation and experience--that creation and the

²Ibid, 83.

³Robert C. Fuller, "Psychological Religiousness: Resisting the Tide of Disenchantment," Pastoral Psychology 36, no. 3 (Spring 1988): 157.

human person are fundamentally good and called to a process of attaining a perfection of being.

In relation to asserting the fundamental goodness of the human person, both understandings, while different in approach, also meet at another point.

As we have seen, Greek Patristic theologians from revelation, and Rogers from his experience, both acknowledge that human life, as we know it, is not as it might be. While ultimately self-determined and free (Greek Patristic), or self-aware and free (Rogers), the human person may be misled to behavior, which is not conducive of one's greatest potential (both). Human beings have the ability to alienate themselves from God (Greek Patristic), each other (both), and their true experience of self (both). One's environment may mislead one to develop psychological defenses in creating a facade, or mask, behind which to hide (Rogers)--a process of becoming unlike God (Greek Patristic).

Yet, the image of God, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa describes it, and Rogers's positive directional tendency of the human organism, while buried at times beneath the mud of sinfulness (Greek Patristic) or the crust of psychological

defenses (Rogers), are never destroyed. For both, the human person is always fundamentally disposed towards a goodness which leads toward fulfillment of being, even though fulfillment of being may be defined differently by each.

At this point it is necessary to address an important area of difference between the Eastern Christian and Rogerian notions of the human person--namely the role of external authority and the notion of personal sin.

As we saw earlier, one of Roger's characteristics of the person in the process of becoming is an "internal locus of authority". In a 1974 article entitled "The Emerging Person: A New Revolution," Rogers describes this autonomous aspect of the person who emerges from the process of becoming:

The new person has a trust in his own experience and a profound distrust of all external authority. Neither pope nor judge nor scholar can convince him of anything which is not borne out by his own experience. So he often decides to obey those laws which he regards as sound and just, and to disobey those he sees as unsound and unjust, taking the consequences of his actions.⁴

For Rogers, any notion of sin (and Rogers does not use

⁴Carl R. Rogers, "The Emerging Person: A New Revolution," presented in Richard I. Evans, Carl Rogers: The Man and His Ideas (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1975), 167.

this term in his theory) could only be defined as the violation of those norms and values which one authentically sets for oneself. There is no sin in violating rules imposed by others, which contradict one's inner desires. Indeed Rogers might say it would be sinful to live by standards set by others which are incongruent with one's needs.

For Rogers, self-awareness is the means to self-acceptance, where self-acceptance is free from external moral standards or limitations. Prior to accepting what social norms may dictate, one should first seek to fulfill one's physical and emotional organismic desires. This for Rogers, is the sole reality of the individual. To deny and repress inner desires without reflection would be to stunt a person's process of becoming and maturing.

This notion of human independence and autonomy has raised criticism of Rogers in some Christian circles.

In the November 8, 1985 edition of Christianity Today, two articles address the impact which Rogerian thought has made on religion in America. In the first article, psychologist and author, William Kirk Kilpatrick, warns the Christian community against the notion of the self, pur-

ported by Rogers:

In this secular religion, being born again does not mean receiving the Spirit or "putting on Christ." Rather, it means being baptized in the fluid waters of your own self. Who needs a God above when there is one within? The self, according to Rogers, is, in its unlimited potential, virtually a god. The most sublime sacrament is then the actualization of self.⁵

In the second article, Robert C. Roberts, contrasts the ministry of Jesus to the therapeutic approach of Rogers. He writes:

Our Lord assumes that a person has violated a standard (sinned), and then he goes on to accept him despite the violation (forgives him). The Rogerian assumes that persons have only fallen into the illusion of thinking they must live up to certain expectations, and then he cuts through this illusion by accepting them.⁶

These critiques of Rogers rightly serve the purpose of alerting Christians to the possible misuse of the Rogerian understanding of human growth and self-actualization. Clearly, unlike Rogers, Christianity accepts the existence of external standards and norms (such as commandments) which

⁵William Kirk Kilpatrick, "Carl Rogers's Quiet Revolution: Therapy for the Masses, This Quiet Midwesterner is Out to Make a 'New Creation', Christianity Today 29, no. 16 (November 18, 1985): 23.

⁶ Robert C. Roberts, "Carl Rogers's Quiet Revolution: Therapy for the Saints, Does 'Empathy' Equal Christian Love?", Christianity Today 29, no. 16 (November 18, 1985): 26.

gain their authority primarily from revelation. To live one's life according to the Bible and the traditions of one's religious community is to be led by greater reality of God, and not solely from the limited reality of one's own subjective experience.

Yet, I believe, there is a way in which Rogers's understanding can be seen in less of an extreme light than in these two critiques. There are elements of Rogers's approach which I feel are compatible with what has been revealed in Scripture, concerning human ethical judgement.

The Christian ethic is not founded merely on a set of external codes to be obeyed. In Jeremiah's prophesy of the New Covenant, we hear that God desires that the divine norms, extrinsically revealed in the commandments of the Old Covenant be intrinsically revealed to human persons as well: "I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts" (Jeremiah 31.33b). The essence of the commandments is truly to reside within oneself.

In the Eastern Christian notion of the human person, complete and true knowledge of oneself and reality can only come by knowing oneself in relation to the transcendent God, who may be experienced both extrinsically in revelation and

creation, and intrinsically within one's heart.

As we have seen, Carl Roger's notion of the human person is restricted to the experience of one's organism alone. In this sense, subjectivism provides one's norms. However, Roger's approach does hypothesize that attentiveness to one's true self will lead to some unknown ultimate sense of truth. Rogers holds, "If there is such a thing as truth, this free individual process of search should, I believe, converge toward it."⁷

Perhaps one can say, like Kilpatrick, that Rogers calls the individual to focus on the self in an idolatrous manner. While there is a danger here, one need not reject the whole Rogerian notion of self-awareness and self-acceptance. When one's self-focus is placed in relation and harmony with one's external knowledge of God, and one defines oneself by the greater experience and reality of revelation, then the process of becoming aware of one's physical and emotional needs may become a positive endeavor.

With this perspective, self-awareness leads not to the

⁷Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), 27.

identification and realization of oneself as a god; but to the identification and realization of oneself as God-like.

As we have seen, both the Greek Patristic and Rogerian notions reject that the human being is fundamentally bad and a beast. Whereas the Fathers recognize that in human persons there is the potential existence of the divine, Carl Rogers asserts only that there can be "man in man." It is here that his theory is limited.

Although our primary core has been created very good, with the disposition toward fulfillment in God, we know that we may make choices which do not serve our ultimate well-being and this end. We may build psychological defenses and wear masks which keep us from knowing who we truly are, as children of God, and lose the orderliness which the self experiences when in harmony with the energies of God.

I believe that the Rogerian notion and approach to the human person provides an important part of the process by which true complete self-actualization may take place and the human person may grow in the image and likeness of God.

As we have seen, with Rogers, growth toward one's human potential cannot occur without self-acceptance.

The paradoxical aspect of my experience is that the more

I am simply willing to be myself, in all this complexity of life and the more I am willing to understand and accept the realities in myself and in the other person, the more change seems to be stirred up. It is a very paradoxical thing--that to the degree that each one of us is willing to be himself, then he finds not only himself changing; but here finds that other people to whom he relates are also changing.⁸

For the Eastern Christian, self-awareness and self-acceptance are likewise of great importance to one's own growth and the growth of others. However, unlike Rogers, with whom self-acceptance is an end in and of itself, for the Christian, self-acceptance is merely one part of the process by which the greater reality of oneself, one's God-likeness, is attained.

One certainly needs to be in touch with and accepting of all organismic needs and feelings within oneself; those which dispose one to moral, as well as, immoral behaviors. Self-acceptance requires acknowledgement and acceptance of one's potential sinfulness, as well as, one's potential goodness. To deny or repress the existence of one's needs or feelings would create a situation where one's personal energy would become trapped and one might fall out of harmony with the energy of God. However, self-awareness and

⁸Ibid., 22.

self-acceptance does not have to imply only self-enlightened behavior.

This statement that human feelings and needs are OK, may at first seem contrary to Greek Patristic teachings, where there is a strong call for one to ascend to one's spiritual self by rejecting one's bodily passions. Here it must be clarified, that letting go of one's passions is more a process of acceptance and transcendence, than an outright rejection of bodily needs as evil.

The human body, born from God's creative activity, is necessarily good. The basic needs to eat and drink, to rest, and to have sexual intimacy and procreate the species are, likewise, good. For these are manifestations of the breath of God within us. They express the passionate part of the soul which desires life on earth; an essential part of the process which leads one to God.

However, the "Passions", such as gluttony, lethargy, and lust, are the result of the abuse of one's passionate dimension. They are overindulgent behaviors which lead one away from God. To engage in the spiritual exercise of "dispassion" is to engage in a self-disciplinary process, whereby one's passionate energy is not negatively denied,

but positively accepted and transformed into a more spiritual expression of life. As Gregory Palamas responded to Barlaamo:

We have not been taught that dispassion is the putting to death of the soul's passionate part; on the contrary, it is the conversion of the passionate part from the lower to the higher, and its active devotion to divine realities, completely turned away from evil and towards what is good.⁹

In order to be in harmony with the divine energies, one must have some personal experience of who God is. True freedom cannot come without some knowledge of the life with God, which we all are called to.

I believe that the formative directional tendency of the universe which Rogers identifies, from his own experience of the human person and the universe, is what Eastern Christian theology understands, from revelation and experience, to be the energies of God which create, sustain and transcend the entire cosmos and humankind.

From a purely theological standpoint, one might perceive this Rogerian understanding as being limited, unen-

⁹Saint Gregory Palamas The Ladder 29, PG 88.1149A, trans. Liadain Sherrard in Georgios I. Mantzaridis, The Deification of Man: Saint Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 79.

lightened and incomplete. While Rogers applies many adjectives to the tendency he experiences, his identified tendency remains without any real characterization or personal quality. For him the tendency can only truly be known as it exists in the individual. The mirror within Rogers's human person has nothing to reflect but itself.

In contrast, for the Eastern Christian, the divine energies reveal the face of God and provide a real personal and relational means for the human person to find one's true self by looking without and within one's personal existence. When one looks at one's mirror within, one sees the reflection of God.

For Rogers, by becoming aware of and fostering one's particular manifestation of the formative tendency of the universe, one may come to the knowledge of and actualization of one's physical and emotional needs and what it is to be human.

In the Eastern Christian perspective, by constantly seeking harmony with the divine energies, the human person may attain much more than mere knowledge of oneself as a unique organism--human and mortal. For in recognizing that one's being originates and ends with God, one may attain

complete knowledge of oneself as divine and eternal in the image and likeness of God.

Let us now turn to answering the question posed at the end of chapter one. Let us explore what life is like for the one who lives in harmony with the energies of God.

CHAPTER IV

LIVING IN HARMONY WITH THE DIVINE ENERGIES

What does the "likeness of God" which we are called to actualize look like?

Obviously we could have an endless list of the characteristics of God, which would inform us.

In the most general sense we know that God is goodness. Indeed we must assert that God, as infinite being and the creator of the universe, is the goodness above goodness, hyperagathos, as we know it. This is to say, anything which we see as good in our experience of the world and each other may only be identified as good when illumined by our knowledge and experience of God, the source of all goodness, who is beyond all goodness.

We have experienced and continue to experience the goodness of God through God's divine energies--God's activities and actions in all of creation and in our lives. Whether it be the beauty and goodness of a child being born, the commandment of revelation to love one's neighbor, or the

sense of peace and healing that one experiences praying to his/her creator, God's energies are present, creating, sustaining, informing, and calling forth the image of God in us toward God's likeness.

All human beings remain with an inherent potential to discern the goodness of God. However we are in need of divine illumination of the part of ourselves which has been dimmed by the consequence of our first parents' choice. Eastern Christians believe such illumination has been made available to all through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the God/Human, the Theanthropos, who is the fullest and truest revelation of God to us. He is the perfect gift of God's love for us, God's presence among us, as one of us. He is the New Adam, the new human person, who reveals to us what it is to be like God by living a sinless life in this world; never choosing to be alienated from communion with the Triune-God, even through death.

Jesus is the Way toward true life and salvation. He is the "Light" (Jn 1.4) of humankind. In following the teachings of Jesus and participating in his body, the church, we may be illumined to see the way to our fullest potential and

achieve the likeness of God.

God reveals himself progressively in history, and man, endowed with all the potential, endowed with God's presence in his being, moves forward progressively toward his ultimate and eternal life in God. God's progressive disclosure culminated in the person of Christ, and man's high point of spiritual evolution culminates in theosis.¹

Throughout the revelation of the Old Testament, and especially in the revelation of God as Jesus, we see that God is a personal being. Indeed, we come to learn that God is three persons in a dynamic interrelationship and communion with each other bound by love. It follows then, that the goodness of God, out of which we have been created and called to actualize in our lives, is a goodness which is personal, relational, and communal in nature.

In Holy Scripture, these characteristics of God and potentialities for ourselves are encompassed in the concept of agape-love.

Agape-love is the unconditional acceptance of others revealed to us foremost by the unconditional acceptance of us by God.

¹Demetrios J. Constantelos, "Irenaeos of Lyons and His Central Views on Human Nature," Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 33, no. 4 (1989): 362-363.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life. God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him (Jn. 3.16-17).

In Jesus, God emptied divine being into human nature, exhibiting the ultimate expression of love, the gift of self for another for the sake of the other. God became human so that humans would have the source of illumination for their potential to love each other and God, in this way, and enter the intimate communion of the Trinity through Jesus.

When asked by the lawyer of his day what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied:

You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love you neighbor as yourself (Mt. 22.37-40).

Here agape-love is presented in the form of two all-encompassing commandments, which form the Christian ethic.

In a Western society where scientific thought rules with its values of rational precision and objectivity, the concept of agape-love seems vague, and too encompassing as an ethic. One might say, "Just tell me the specific rules of good behavior I am to follow, and my actions will be good." Yet, what may be seen as too general and useless to the

secular West, has been seen as the fundamental criteria of ethical decision-making in the Christian East.

What is essential here, is that agape-love is not merely a set of objective specific laws to follow, as in the Old Testament, but a more subjective attitude and inner disposition through which our likeness of God may be expressed, shared, and realized.

This is not to say that human beings are not to be guided by doctrines and laws. These are a necessary part of human communal and societal ethics. However, agape-love stands at the center of the Christian ethic as personal, relational, and transcendent--beyond a particular law, norm, or ethic.

The Greek Orthodox moral theologian, Stanley S. Harakas, describes the nature of agape-love well:

Agape-love must be seen as framed by the ontological reality implied in the doctrines of image and likeness/Theosis, by commandments, both natural and revealed, and by the requirement for the conformity of inner dispositions with external appropriate ethical behavior. What emerges is not a strictly rational ethic, but an ethos, a style of life, a politeia, or . . . a mode of living. There is an element of indefinability in this holistic approach, a certain lack

of rational precision.²

The one who lives his/her life by such a Christian ethic rooted in agape-love, is one whose life is characterized by a balance of inner conviction and external direction which produces more a sense of integrity, beyond the mere sense of justness gained from following objective norms.

I believe it is this integrity of self which Carl Rogers seeks in his approach to the human person, but which he does not achieve in a full sense due to his absence of a notion of a concrete end, telos, for humankind. As stated earlier, while Rogers has discerned that there is a positive directional tendency in the human organism, this direction remains without a goal and without a face.

Jesus provides us the goal and face for this direction. In him, the divine energies are perfectly manifested in human history, not in the form of static written laws to be obeyed (as in the Old Testament), but in the form of a dynamic personal attitude to be engaged--the attitude of agape-love.

²Stanley S. Harakas, Toward Transfigured Life: The "Theoria" of Eastern Orthodox Ethics (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1983), 172.

This attitude is expressed in the genuine presence of Jesus to the man waiting by the pool called Bethesda (Jn. 5.1-9), which challenges the man to find the faith and power of the divine within himself, to see his true authentic self in the presence of Jesus, and to be cured, to stand up and walk, rather than being dependant on others to take him to the activity of God in the pool.

This attitude is characterized by the unconditional love of the forgiving father in the parable of the "Prodigal Son" (Lk. 15.11-32), where God is analogously revealed to us as one who waits with open arms while we explore the boundaries of our freedom.

This attitude is revealed in the empathy of Jesus as he receives the woman accused of adultery without condemnation and challenges the community to look within themselves for justice rather than condemning her (Jn. 8.1-11).

Throughout the New Testament we see that, to encounter Jesus, is to experience God's love both extrinsically and intrinsically. Again and again Jesus proclaims that it is the faith of the individual or community which has brought healing and eternal salvation. Jesus shows us that it is not simply his presence and power which brings healing and

salvation, but the inner process of the individual as well.

This process of faith involves the simultaneous awareness and acceptance of oneself as sinner, falsely living alienated from God, and yet, saint, truly created in the image and likeness of God with the potential for eternal communion with God. It is the acknowledgement of the mud on one's diamond of goodness within, and the openness to allowing the presence of God to wash it away. It is the realization that one is not alone and dying, but truly loved and alive.

God's love is: patient, just, caring, ever-present, approachable, encouraging, accepting, directing, challenging, healing, and much more. Perhaps the greatest expression of the inner disposition to which God calls us, is that expressed by Jesus in his "Sermon on the Mount" and in the "Beatitudes."

In chapter 5 of the Holy Evangelist Matthew's account, Jesus proclaims how blessed are the "poor in spirit" (v. 3), those in "sorrow" (v. 4), the "lowly" (v. 5), those "who hunger and thirst for holiness" (v. 6), those who "show mercy" (v. 7), the "single-hearted" (v.8), the "peacemakers" (v. 9), and the "persecuted" (v. 10).

In naming those who are blessed in the eyes of God, Jesus reveals to us the attitude and disposition of God, and thus, the inner attitude and disposition which we are called to claim and live. One is called to be open to the grace of God; nonviolent, meek and peaceful; in search of goodness and justice; merciful toward oneself and others; filled with inner conviction of what is right and wrong; exhibiting virtuous behavior that prevails in the face of persecution; disposed to providing a relationship of kindness, care, and direction for others.

What emerges is a Christ-like figure of gentleness, combined with moral and spiritual seriousness, a combination of tenderness and strength, a person of virtuous integrity whose relationship with others is redeeming and reconciling.³

Following the Beatitudes, the "Sermon on the Mount" continues in chapter 5, with Jesus preaching more specific dimensions of the moral law concerning murder, adultery and lying. Yet this he does by addressing not the sinful acts themselves but the inner dispositions of anger, lust, and deceit which may stand at the heart of these sinful behaviors destroying oneself and one's community.

³Ibid., 153.

Jesus always approaches others with the greatest compassion. The letter to the Hebrews shows Jesus as the compassionate high priest: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned" (Heb. 4.15). This compassion is characterized by a patience and great respect for the other where he/she is in the here and now, and yet with a vision of where we all are called to be.

We are called to be the same way. As Saint Paul tells us:

We who are strong in faith should be patient with the scruples of those whose faith is weak; we must not be selfish. Each should please his neighbor so as to do him good by building up his spirit. . . . May God, the source of all patience and encouragement, enable you to live in perfect harmony with one another according to the spirit of Christ Jesus . . . (Rom. 15.1-2,5).

We are called to establish harmony with one another so that we may experience the power of agape-love, the love of God for us, which transcends us and saves us. Jesus assures us, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" (Mt. 18.20). When two or more people are truly present to each other without masks (facades and superficiality), open to the hearts of each other, the

presence of God and divine energy in each is not only revealed but magnified and experienced in even a greater way.

To live in harmony with the divine energies of God involves recognizing God as the origin of one's own personal energy, and then tuning oneself into the greater transcendent reality of God. The greater being of God may be seen in other persons and all of creation, but it is most real when it is reflected and experienced within oneself. To do this one must truly know and accept oneself with all one's strengths and weaknesses.

Let us now turn to Carl Rogers approach of "client-centered therapy," as a practical means by which one may foster the self-awareness and self-acceptance necessary to open oneself to the reality of God.

CHAPTER V

"CLIENT-CENTERED THERAPY" AND THE "PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH"

In this chapter I will present Carl R. Roger's approach to psychotherapy which developed over the course of his career from his scientific observations of the therapeutic process in the 1940s, to a model for psychotherapy in the 1950s through '60s, to a philosophy applicable to all aspects of human life in the '70s and '80s.

This chapter will primarily present Rogers's concept of "client-centered therapy" which he explains later evolved into his "person-centered approach."

The old concept of "client-centered therapy" has been transformed into the "person-centered approach." In other words, I am no longer talking simply about psychotherapy, but about a point of view, a philosophy, an approach to life, a way of being, which fits any situation in which growth--of a person, a group, or a community--is part of the goal.¹

In looking at the Rogerian notion of the human person we have already seen much of the philosophical approach to

¹Carl R. Rogers, A Way of Being (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), ix.

human growth which stands behind "client-centered therapy."

I will let Rogers himself summarize this for us:

The central hypothesis of this approach can be briefly stated. 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.²

Rogers presents the most concise presentation of his psychotherapeutic theory in chapter 13, of the American Handbook of Psychiatry vol. 3, published in 1959 and 1966, entitled "Client-Centered Therapy". Here the necessary climate for therapy is defined by three basic conditions which the therapist must provide the client: "congruence or genuineness," "unconditional positive regard" and "a sensitively accurate empathic understanding."³ As we look at each of these I will also quote other supporting works of Rogers.

The most basic condition of the proper climate for Rogerian psychotherapy is the therapist's ability to be

²Ibid., 115.

³Carl R. Rogers, "Client-Centered Therapy" presented as chapter 13 in Silvano Arieti et al., eds., American Handbook of Psychiatry, vol. 3 (New York: Basic Books, 1959 and 1966), 184

"congruent" or "genuine" with the client.

We have already seen in chapter II, that the person who is in the process of becoming whole is one who gets behind one's mask or social facade; away from external "shoulds" to the internal needs of one's organism, the basis of who one actually is. The person exhibiting congruence is one who's self-perception matches one's inner experience, and who permits one to express oneself to others in a genuine way.

The person coming for psychotherapy is usually one experiencing a lack of congruence or genuineness. For Rogers, psychological disorders from depression and anxiety to schizophrenia are the result of the client's conflict of internal and external experience of one's self. "We came to see the troubled or neurotic individual as one whose self-concept had become structured in ways incongruent with his organismic experience."⁴

True self-awareness and acceptance begins with an encounter with a therapist who him/herself bears the congruence and genuineness we are all called to have.

Genuineness in therapy means that the therapist is

⁴Rogers, in Arieti, 192.

his actual self during his encounter with his client. Without facade, he openly has the feelings and attitudes that are flowing in him at the moment. This involves self-awareness; that is the therapist's feelings are available to him--to his awareness--and he is able to live them, to experience them in the relationship, and to communicate them if they persist. The therapist encounters his client directly, meeting him person to person. He is being himself, not denying himself.⁵

Rogers admits that this necessary openness to one's actual self by the therapist is not an easy task to accomplish or maintain. In intimately meeting another person, the therapist will inevitably experience a whole range of feelings, both those of the client and her/his own.

Being genuine does not mean, that the therapist will express every feeling that comes to her/him, but she/he is "willing to experience transparently any persistent feelings that exist in their relationship and to let these be known to [her/]his client."⁶

This attitude toward the client begins to establish a safe environment of trust. "The genuineness of the therapist is one of the elements in the relationship that make

⁵Ibid., 185.

⁶Ibid.

the risk of sharing easier and less fraught with dangers."⁷

Following on the foundation of the first, the second condition necessary for Rogerian psychotherapy is the therapist's "unconditional positive regard" of the client.

This means that the therapist communicates to his client a deep and genuine caring for him as a person with human potentialities, a caring uncontaminated by evaluations of the patient's thoughts, feelings, or behavior He prizes the client in a total, rather than a conditional, way. He does not accept certain feelings in the client and disapprove of others.⁸

In such a nonjudgemental and unpossessive climate, the client is given the space to freely express his/her full range of emotional experience.

It involves as much feeling of acceptance for the client's expression of painful, hostile, defensive, or abnormal feelings as for his[/her] expression of good, positive, mature feelings.⁹

The room for complete freedom of expression leads to complete self-acceptance in the presence of another.

For Rogers, psychotherapy can only free the potential of the human organism to heal oneself. The role of the

⁷Carl R. Rogers, quoted from interview with Richard I. Evans, presented in Evans, Carl Rogers: The Man and His Ideas (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1975), 12.

⁸Rogers, in Arieti, 186.

⁹Rogers, quoted in Evans, 14.

therapist is to reflect back to the client only that which the client presents. Far from Freudian psychoanalysis, where interpretation of the client is solely the realm of the therapist, in this client-centered approach, any insight into the client's life, must be born from the client's own process.

I can only try to live by my interpretation of the current meaning of my experience, and try to give others the permission and freedom to develop their own inward freedom and thus their own meaningful interpretation of their own experience.¹⁰

The third and final condition of Rogerian psychotherapy is the therapist's necessary attitude of "accurate empathic understanding."

This involves the ability of the therapist to enter into the world of the client, as the client presents it, with great care and concern for the client's potential to own and direct her/his life.

Accurate empathic understanding means that the therapist is completely at home in the universe of the client. It is a moment-to-moment sensitivity in the here-and-now, in the immediate present. It is a sensing of the client's inner world of private personal meaning as if it were your own, while never forgetting that it is not

¹⁰Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), 27.

yours.¹¹

The therapist who offers accurate empathy to a client is able to keep one foot in and one foot out of the client's experience.

To sense the client's private world as if it were your own, but without ever losing the "as if" quality--this is empathy, and this seems essential to therapy. To sense the client's anger, fear, or confusion as if it were your own, yet without your own anger, fear, or confusion getting bound up in it, is the conditions we are endeavoring to describe.¹²

As with the other two attitudes presented, when a client is accurately understood in the presence of a sensitive caring person, he/she begins to develop this same therapeutic attitude toward him/herself and personal healing takes place.

When the other person is hurting, confused, troubled, anxious, alienated, terrified, or when he or she is doubtful of self-worth, uncertain as to identity--then understanding is called for. The gentle and sensitive companionship offered by an empathic person (who must, of course, possess the other two attitudes) provides illumination and healing. In such situations deep understanding is, I believe, the most precious gift one

¹¹Rogers, in Arieti, 187.

¹²Carl R. Rogers, "The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change" Journal of Consulting Psychology 21 (1957): 95-103, reprinted in Journal of Consulting Psychology 60, no. 6 (1992): 829.

can give to another.¹³

As we have seen, the three conditions presented above involve three attitudes which are at the heart of the client-centered approach. As the therapist responds to the client with this stance, Rogers found that the client begins to proceed through a therapeutic process which involves: (1) a release of feelings and authentic expression of self, "an emotional catharsis,"¹⁴ which leads to (2) insight to the nature and source of the problem experienced, followed by (3) the making of new "positive choices and decisions,"¹⁵ which alter the problematic conditions of the client's life and a developing greater ability for the client to problem-solve in the future.

In general, the evidence from a number of research studies shows that the process moves away from "fixity, remoteness from feelings and experience, rigidity of self-concept, remoteness from people, impersonality of functioning" toward "fluidity, changingness, immediacy of feelings and experience, acceptance of feelings and experience, tentativeness of constructs, discovery of a changing self in one's changing experience, realness and closeness of relationships, a unity and integration of

¹³Rogers, A Way of Being, 160-161.

¹⁴Rogers, in Arieti, 191.

¹⁵Ibid.

functioning."¹⁶

Responding to the therapist's attitudes of "genuineness," "unconditional positive regard," and "accurate empathy," the person who emerges from Rogerian "client-centered therapy," comes to be in awareness what he/she is in experience. This is a positive, solid, whole, and healthy sense of self, which is born from one's own harmony with the formative tendency of the universe.

I am most impressed with the fact that each human being has a directional tendency toward wholeness, toward actualization of his or her potentialities. I have not found psychotherapy or group experience effective when I have tried to create in another individual something that is not already there; I have found, however, that if I can provide the conditions that allow growth to occur, then this positive directional tendency brings about constructive results.¹⁷

Having compared and contrasted the Greek Patristic and Rogerian understandings of the human person, and having explored both the healing attitudes of Jesus and the therapeutic attitudes of the Rogerian therapist, we are now ready to discern an Eastern Christian approach to pastoral psychotherapy.

¹⁶Ibid., 192-193.

¹⁷Rogers, A Way of Being, 120.

CHAPTER VI

AN EASTERN CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO PASTORAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

As I stated in my introduction, it has been my goal to present an integrated psychological and spiritual paradigm of the human person, God, and the therapeutic relationship. I believe such a paradigm emerges from the interface of Rogerian Psychology and Greek Patristic, Eastern Christian, theology.

Although founded upon different epistemologies the Rogerian notion of the human person bears many similarities with the Eastern Christian notion of the human person.

Both Rogers and Greek Patristic authors see the human person as fundamentally good, free, and in a process of becoming the fullness of being. Both accept that human choice may be influenced by one's environment in a negative direction, while affirming that the potential for goodness and positive growth is never destroyed. Both recognize a formative power in the universe and a transcendent dimension to the human person which reflects this power. Both recognize

that human beings are personal, relational, and communal. Both hold that self-awareness and self-acceptance produce a sense of wholeness and well-being.

As we have seen, personal wholeness, characterized by a congruent awareness and acceptance of one's self and one's organism, is the goal for Rogerian psychotherapy. Personal wholeness, or holiness, is likewise the goal of an Eastern Christian approach to pastoral psychotherapy. Yet, Christian holiness is much more than Rogerian wholeness.

The human person for Rogers is called only to an awareness and acceptance of one's self, which includes a limited notion of a transcendent aspect of oneself. The human person is called to be in touch with one's own energies--one's feelings which define oneself. Rogers has no concrete vision or archetype to which the human person may aspire.

The human person in the Eastern Christian view is called to an awareness and acceptance of one's self and one's potential to be like God--a potential which has been revealed. The human person is called to relate to a personal God and to find harmony with the divine energies, by which one is created, stained, and perfected. The Eastern

Christian has revealed to her/himself the transcendental dimension of human existence which Rogers can only hypothesize about; yet, which he vehemently seeks.

As we have seen in the last chapter, the fundamental therapeutic factor in Carl Rogers's "client-centered therapy," is the particular attitude of the therapist toward the client. For him, healing and wholeness are made possible solely by the genuine, unconditionally-accepting, and empathic climate created by the therapist.

In chapter four we have seen, how the fundamental healing factor in Jesus' approach toward those in the distress of sin, is his knowledge of the goodness within each person and his attitude of openness and acceptance. Jesus' presence facilitates self-knowledge and self-acceptance of one's inner goodness. For him healing and holiness are made possible by the inner disposition and attitude of agape-love.

An Eastern Christian approach to pastoral psychotherapy begins with the understanding that all human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, have an inner goodness and potential to become like God. Human persons, in the image of God, are self-determining and free with the ability to

choose harmony or disharmony with each other and God.

The human potential for goodness is much like a beautiful diamond, deep within one's person, which is in need of light to display its radiance. In psychological terms, this diamond may be likened to the self of the human person; the most fundamental "I" which awaits actualization. Unlike with Carl Roger's notion of the self, for the Eastern Christian, the actualized self bears not just the experience of one's organism, but also the transcendental characteristics of God, to which all persons may ascend.

True humanity approaches divinity in the process of theosis with characteristics such as: freedom, knowledge, self-acceptance, forgiveness, authenticity, self-security, vulnerability--always open to relationship with others. All of these just begin to characterize what it is to be in harmony with the divine energies.

Yet, because life is a process of interaction with one's environment, human choices are susceptible to being misguided. The diamond within is often buried under the mud of human sinfulness, which includes personal choices as well as psychopathological behaviors, syndromes, and personality disorders.

This mud covers one's ability to reflect within and obstructs or deters one from a process of self-actualization--such as when one misuses one's psychological defenses to create a mask behind which to hide, thereby alienating oneself from one's deeper dimension, and that of other persons.

It is the role of the pastoral psychotherapist to help the person in need of wholeness and integration come to a greater realization and acceptance of oneself and one's core of transcendental goodness and divine-likeness, so that one may continue on the teleological journey toward communion with others and God. To do this the therapist must first see him/herself in this light.

The Eastern Christian pastoral psychotherapist sees him/herself as one who has engaged his/her potential to grow toward the goodness and likeness of God through acceptance of the illumination offered by Jesus Christ in baptism and the continued presence of the Holy Spirit in the church and our lives. He/she recognizes, accepts, and lives a personal journey toward wholeness and holiness, guided by the wisdom and strength of agape-love.

Accordingly, the Eastern Christian pastoral psychother-

apist seeks to bear the ethos, or poleitia, we have spoken of in chapter four. This person's character has as its ideals the meekness, gentleness, understanding, concern, spiritual seriousness, inner conviction, tenderness, strength, virtuousness, humility and integrity, which have been revealed by Jesus, recorded in Holy Scripture and experienced in the church community, as well as one's own and each others lives. This view sees the pastoral psychotherapist as personal, relation, and communal, in the likeness of the Triune-God.

The Eastern Christian pastoral psychotherapist knows the transcendental joy of living in harmony with the divine energies and goodness of God, as well as, the finitude and darkness of alienating oneself from the source of life. She/he knows first hand the limitations of life in this world, while fully aware of the potential life of the Kingdom of God to come.

As an Eastern Christian pastoral psychotherapist I come to a particular client with an understanding of the human person as one bearing the image of God, autexousion, self-determined, with the potential to move forward toward the likeness of God which he/she is called to. This person has

within his/her inner most being, the potential to exhibit the goodness of God. There is a diamond buried deep within.

What this goodness looks like, and the degree to which the client has actualized his/her potential, must be respected as being within the freedom of the individual, and not the domain of the therapist. But I know that this diamond is there. I will recognize it and encourage the client in accepting and seeing its beauty through the mud.

Through agape-love, as an Eastern Christian pastoral psychotherapist, I seek to facilitate the illumination of the potential in the individual. For a diamond with no light has no beauty.

This does not mean that I ascend to my pulpit and begin to preach conversion. This is not the approach of the therapist. Rather, as therapist, I approach the client where she/he is, in the here-and-now, and provide an environment in which one's harmony or disharmony in life may be expressed and contained.

The Eastern Christian pastoral psychotherapist sees God as part of the process of therapy, even if the client does not recognize this reality. This of course does not mean that the client is forced to understand this reality.

But, as therapist, I am aware that in the encounter of both the client's and my own personal energies there is magnified a presence of the divine transcendent energy, implicitly directing the process of therapy.

This knowledge leads the therapist to trust his/her intuition in responding to the client. There is a faith that one's inner disposition and attitude toward the client will provide a personal presence which provokes inner healing.

Carl Rogers similarly speaks of the therapist's need for responding to one's deepest intuition as an aspect of the client/therapist encounter:

I find that when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then, simply my presence is releasing and helpful to the other. There is nothing I can do to force this experience, but when I can relax and be close to the transcendental core of me, then I may behave in strange and impulsive ways in the relationship, ways which I cannot justify rationally, which have nothing to do with my thought processes. But these strange behaviors turn out to be right, in some odd way: it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and becomes a part of something larger. Profound

growth and healing and energy are present.¹

The Eastern Christian pastoral psychotherapist must maintain the attitude of unconditional positive regard which Rogers describes and Jesus lives. In this there is respect and acceptance for the client where he/she is in the present moment with an openness toward the ways he/she is expressing his/her energy. A climate is created in which feelings, such as, anger, fear, confusion, and frustration, are held and explored with the belief that, in doing so, joy, courage, clear-sightedness, and peace will eventually emerge.

The transforming light which comes from agape-love emerges in the encounter of the two children of God who meet in each therapy session. An enlightenment of soul and mind occurs in the dynamic relationship formed between therapist and client, where the client is free genuinely met like the man by the pool of Bethesda, unconditionally accepted like the Prodigal Son, and empathicly heard and acknowledged like the woman accused of adultery.

The pastoral psychotherapist and client express two

¹Carl R. Rogers, A Way of Being (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), 129.

unique manifestations of God's energy. Yet each bears God's image and has the potential for God's likeness. Each has his/her own unique history of accepting and rejecting the inner reality of God. Thus, in this way, each is a source of revelation and further illumination to the other.

The pastoral psychotherapist who has continually engaged in seeking harmony with the divine energies, brings a context of freedom to the client in which the client may likewise become engaged. And it is precisely in this encounter of two individuals, that illumination is intensified, the presence of God is made manifest, all facades are exposed, an emotional catharsis takes place, and the process of decision-making is enlightened.

Out of the chaos and confusion that a client brings to the therapy, the Eastern Christian pastoral psychotherapist elicits an orderliness, and inner beauty of life, by engaging the client in the attitudes and inner dispositions of Christ. This is an implicit process which may or may not lead to explicit knowledge of God, depending on the particular religious beliefs of the client.

Nonetheless it is a process in which the human person is led toward the transcendence of God. It is a process of

seeking harmony with the divine energies, where true wholeness and holiness may be found.

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The thesis is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

11/30/94
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