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To cite this article: Manu Bazzano (2019): The tyranny of hope and the transformative tendency, Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14779757.2019.1618367>



Published online: 28 May 2019.



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The tyranny of hope and the transformative tendency

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ABSTRACT

Despite its adherence to organismic experiencing, person-centered therapy is the receptacle of second-hand metaphysics. These are evident in the notion of the formative tendency. The latter, 'observed in stellar space and in human beings', is a *teleological* model of organic development: it assumes an order directing development towards an end. It is a shadow of God, the powerful other that will come to our rescue. This is the foundation for *hope*, manifesting via human-centered attribution of a purpose to existence. With the rise of populism, bigotry and the far-right in many parts of the world, hope provides a beautiful daydream we can indulge in instead of being involved in the urgency of now.

Other evolutionary theories are presented that speak of *active* and *reactive* natural forces. Reactive forces are adaptive. Active forces affirm expenditure. PCT can be revitalized by greater alignment with *active* rather than *reactive* forces. The theoretical framework for this is the *transformative tendency*, and the example is the butterfly, an organism whose natural cycles of growth rather than being motivated by self-preservation ultimately place it at risk.

La tyrannie de l'espoir et la tendance transformative

Malgré son attachement à l'*experiencing* organismique, la thérapie centrée sur la personne est le réceptacle d'une métaphysique de seconde main. On le constate au travers de la notion de tendance formative. Cette notion, observable dans les espaces stellaires... comme dans la vie des êtres humains (Rogers, 1980, p. 133), est un modèle de développement organique téléologique. Il suppose un ordonnancement dirigeant le développement vers sa fin. Il s'agit de l'ombre de Dieu, l'autre tout-puissant qui viendra à notre rescousse. Il s'agit du fondement de l'espoir se manifestant comme finalité de l'existence sous des attributs centrés sur l'humain. Face à la montée mondiale du populisme, de la bigoterie et de l'extrême droite, l'espoir propose de nous satisfaire d'un rêve chatoyant plutôt que de nous inviter à nous engager dans l'urgence de l'actualité. D'autres théories révolutionnaires qui présentent les forces naturelles actives et réactives sont exposées. Les forces réactives sont adaptatives. Les forces actives sont dépenses d'énergie. La thérapie centrée sur la personne peut être revitalisée en s'ajustant aux forces actives plutôt qu'aux forces réactives. Le cadre théorique de cet ajustement est celui de la

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 August 2018

Accepted 31 October 2018

KEYWORDS

Hope; transformative tendency; active forces; organism

tendance transformative. L'exemple type en est le papillon, un organisme dont le cycle naturel de croissance, plutôt que d'être motivé par la préservation de soi, repose de manière ultime sur la prise de risque.

Die Tyrannei der Hoffnung und die Transformative Tendenz

Obwohl Personenzentrierte Therapie am organismischen Erleben festhält, enthält sie Second-Hand-Metaphysik. Evident wird das aufgrund der Idee der Formativen Tendenz. Letztere, 'beobachtet im Weltraum ... und in den Menschen' (Rogers, 1980, S. 133), ist ein teleologisches Modell organischer Entwicklung: Es geht von einer Ordnung aus, die Entwicklung auf ein Ende hin organisiert. Es ist ein Schatten von Gott, dem machtvollen Anderen, der uns retten wird. Dies ist das Fundament für die Hoffnung, die sich via menschenzentrierter Zuschreibung eines Sinns zu Existenz manifestiert. Mit dem Aufstieg des Populismus, der Bigotterie und der Rechtsextremen in vielen Teilen der Welt liefert uns Hoffnung einen schönen Tagtraum, in dem wir schwelgen können, statt uns mit der Dringlichkeit des Jetzt zu befassen.

Andere evolutionäre Theorien werden vorgestellt, die von aktiven und reaktiven natürlichen Kräften sprechen. Reaktive Kräfte sind adaptiv. Aktive Kräfte bejahen Aufwendungen. PCT kann durch eine stärkere Anpassung an aktive statt an reaktive Kräfte revitalisiert werden. Der theoretische Rahmen dafür ist die Transformative Tendenz; und das Beispiel dazu ist der Schmetterling, ein Organismus, dessen natürliche Zyklen von Wachstum, statt von Selbsterhaltung motiviert zu sein, ihn im Endeffekt aufs Spiel setzen.

A tirania da esperança e a tendência transformadora

Não obstante a sua adesão à experiência organizacional, a Terapia Centrada na Pessoa é um recetáculo de metafísica em segunda mão. Tal é evidente na noção de tendência formativa. A mesma, 'observada no espaço sideral... e no ser humano' (Rogers, 1980, p. 133), é um modelo teleológico do desenvolvimento orgânico que assume um desenvolvimento ordenado com vista a um fim. É uma sombra de Deus, o poderoso outro que virá em nossa salvação. É a base da esperança, que manifesta através de uma atribuição centrada no humano um propósito da existência. Com o aumento do populismo, da intolerância e da extrema direita em muitos locais do mundo, a esperança proporciona um belo devaneio ao qual podemos entregar-nos, em vez de nos deixarmos levar pela urgência do agora. São apresentadas outras teorias evolucionistas que falam de forças ativas e reativas. As forças reativas são adaptativas. As forças ativas realçam os gastos. A TCP pode ser revitalizada por um maior alinhamento com as forças ativas em vez das reativas. O enquadramento teórico para que tal ocorra é a tendência transformativa e o exemplo é a borboleta, um organismo cujos ciclos naturais de crescimento colocam em risco a auto-preservação em vez de serem motivados por ela.

La tiranía de la esperanza y la tendencia transformadora

A pesar de adherir a la experiencia organizmica, la terapia centrada en la persona es receptaculo se una meafísica de segunda mano. Esto es evidente en la noción de la tendencia formativa. Esta ultima observa en el espacio estelar . y en los seres humanos '(Rogers, 1980, p. 133), es un modelo teologico del desarrollo organico: presume un orden dirigiendo el desarrollo hacia un final. Es una sombra de Dios, el otro poderoso que vendra a nuestro rescate. Esta es la base de la esperanza, manifestandose por via de la atribucion centrada en la persona de un proposito de la existencia. Con el surgimiento del populismo, fanatismo y la ultra derecha en muchas partes del mundo, la esperanza brinda un hermoso sonar despierto en el cual nos podemos complacer en vez de estar involucrados en la urgencia del ahora.

Se presentan otras teorías evolutivas que hablan de fuerzas naturales activas y reactivas. Las fuerzas reactivas son adaptativas. Las fuerzas activas afirman gastos. El ECP puede ser revitalizado por un mayor alineamiento con las fuerzas activas en vez de las reactivas. El marco teorico para esto es la tendencia formativa, y el ejemplo de la mariposa, un organismo cuyos ciclos naturales de crecimiento en vez estar motivados por la auto preservacion en el fondo la ponen en riesgo.

Introduction

This article is divided into three parts:

- (1) A general discussion of the notion of *hope* – its imaginary and socio-political implications, with a brief outline and critique of some of what the author understands as dominant narratives within Person-centered Therapy (PCT) that are arguably inadequate in addressing the global political challenges we face at present.
- (2) A critique of the theoretical construct known as ‘the formative tendency’ understood as a ‘shadow of God’, i.e. a consolatory substitute for the Ultimate Rescuer as well as an expression of both *teleology* (the explanation of phenomena by the purpose they serve) and *theodicy* (belief in the presence of divine providence in human history and human affairs).
- (3) A discussion of the alternative formulation of the transformative tendency as theoretical construct that values different evolutionary models that are aligned to the progressive spirit that is still alive within the PCA.

Hope and the political dimension

Ethical systems and ethical projects

Hope deferred makes the something sick. Who said that? (Beckett, 1994, p. 4)

I want to begin by presenting three instances that may help illustrate the meaning of the phrase ‘tyranny of hope’.

The *first* one is anecdotal. Despite a reputation that regards him as gloomy and despairing, the Irish avant-garde novelist, playwright, theatre director, poet, and literary translator Samuel Beckett had a great sense of humor. Famous for his tragicomedy in two acts *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett, 1994) Beckett had joined the French Resistance after the Nazi occupation in the 1940s, and continued to live in Paris after the end of the war. It was from Paris in April 1962 that he sent a newspaper clipping to his lover Barbara Bray. The article reported the arrest of a prominent member of a far-right criminal gang, the *Organisation Armée Secrète* (OAS), whose main adherents belonged to the French army. The OAS had carried out a series of terrorist acts (including an attack on Beckett's publisher and friend Jerome Lindon) in the hope of stopping the recognition of independence to Algeria from the de Gaulle government. The name of the man arrested was Lieutenant Daniel Godot (O' Toole, 2018).

Obliquely – yet irresistibly – the anecdote may suggest the following. When hope is latched onto an ethical system rather than an ethical project (De Beauvoir, 1948/1976), it will likely engender inflexibility rather than fluidity. For Simone de Beauvoir, the difference between a *system* and a *project* is that the former usually has a set of pre-ordained solutions, while the latter is receptive to the fundamental changeability, fluidity and ambiguity of existence. While an ethical system will likely bring about schemes of *exploitation*, an ethical project may open human experience to the fragile possibility of *liberation*.

Although the above formulation is of its time, i.e. inextricably linked to the widespread response, among progressive thinkers, to the murderous systems of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Soviet Union (both founded on the literal hope to rectify and 'improve' humankind), the current global swerve towards authoritarianism, fear and prejudice makes de Beauvoir's analysis relevant.

The urgency of now

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the urgency of now. (King, 2003, p. 103)

The *second* example draws on Martin Luther King's famous speech delivered at the Lincoln Memorial in August 1963 (King, 2003). *I have a dream*, as the speech is remembered, has become integral to the American dream. 'And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow', King says in his speech, 'I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream' (King, 2003, p. 104). In this beautiful, stirring, inspiring speech, King went on to say:

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice (King, 2003, p. 104).

One section of King's speech emphasizes the importance of hope and dreams for a better future. Many people can quote this section by heart, as it has rightly become canonical. There is another section of the speech, however, equally important, that has been largely forgotten. It emphasizes the *urgency of now*:

This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children. (King, 2003, p. 10)

Why is it that this part of King's speech is neither remembered or quoted? Could it be that, for some reason, we favor hope for the future rather than action in the present? Could it be that at critical moments in global history, such as the one we are undergoing right now, we prefer to cultivate dreams instead of taking urgent action? The tyranny of hope in this second example consists in this: under the guise of endurance and forbearance, we hide complacency and denial (Pastor, 2002).

Hope is the greatest evil

The *third* example is from Greek mythology. The enduring myth of Pandora and her 'box' (or, in the original version, a storage jar – *pithos* in Greek), superbly recounted by Peter F. Schmid (2018), first appears in a text by the 700 BC Greek poet Hesiod who has Zeus, 'father of humans and gods', saying, while laughing out loud:

I will give humans as the price for fire an evil thing in which they may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction. (Hesiod/Evelyn-White, 1950, p. 6)

Zeus then asks Hephaestus to 'mix earth and water and put in it the voice and strength of humankind, and fashion a sweet, lovely maiden-shape, like to the immortal goddesses in face' (*ibid*). He asks Athena to teach her needlework, Aphrodite to infuse her demeanor with grace and to fill her heart with pitiless longing and worries that will wear her out. He orders Hermes to give her a brazen, devious mind. Once all these tasks are carried out and the gifts of various gods and goddesses bestowed on the young woman, Zeus names her *Pandora*, 'the all-gifted'. The discussion rages on to this day as to whether the tale, much like Eve's in the Bible, reveals the intrinsic misogyny of the ancients (Johnson, 2015) or depicts instead the first woman created by Zeus as part of a divine balancing act, or even as personification of the feminist gift imaginary (Kailo, 2018).

What is *not* disputed, as far as I know, is the fact that the jar contained a bewildering array of evils – a wicked present from Zeus to humanity meant to balance out the gift of fire stolen by Prometheus for our benefit. Chief among this wild assortment of evils kept in the jar is the *evil of hope*. All evils are scattered in the world once the jar is opened by Pandora – the Greek equivalent of the fall from Eden depicted in the Bible. All but one: divine design requires that the evil that is hope remains within the jar. In section 71 of *Human all too Human*, Nietzsche (1878/1984) shrewdly sums up the story:

Pandora brought the jar with the evils and opened it. It was the god's gift to humans, on the outside a beautiful, enticing gift, called 'the lucky jar'. Then all the evils, those lively, winged beings, flew out of it. Since that time, they roam around and do harm to humans by day and night. One single evil has not yet slipped out of the jar. As Zeus had wished, Pandora slammed the top down and it remained inside. So now humans had the lucky jar in their home and think the world of the treasure. It is at their service; they reach for it when they fancy it. For they do not know that that jar which Pandora brought was the jar of evils, and they take the remaining evil for the greatest worldly good – it is hope, for Zeus did not want

humans to throw their life away, no matter how much the other evils might torment them, but rather to go on letting themselves be tormented anew. To that end, he gives humans hope. In truth, it is the most evil of evils because it prolongs humanity's torment. (Nietzsche 1878/1984, p. 58, translation modified)

The myth of Pandora's 'box' still endures, and so does the notion of hope, often taking on different interpretive hues and shades at different time in history. Nietzsche's starkly 'pre-existential' reading already implies, albeit indirectly, the close connection he will more fully articulate in later works between the Christian values of hope, faith and charity and *nihilism*, a viewpoint according to which 'the centre of life is placed not in life itself but in "the beyond" – in nothingness' (Nietzsche, 1895/2007, p. 44). Hope then would become a narcotic, a pleasant reverie. This view poses an immediate challenge to therapy, particularly to PCT, an approach that arguable relies a little too keenly on notions directly and indirectly borrowed from Christian metaphysics and ethics. To take Nietzsche's perspective on board means seeing hope as a form of denial, a poor substitute and surrogate for transformative action.

In Ernst Cassirer's interpretation of Goethe's own retelling of Pandora's myth, the heart of the message consists in the demise of a classical *individualistic* and contemplative era that lingers on vain hope and the beginning of a post-classical social and political age that is more oriented towards positive action (Panovsky & Panovsky, 1956). Faced with major events such as the French revolution and the Napoleonic wars, Goethe saw through, in Cassirer's reading, the intrinsic powerlessness of hope and contemplation, promoting instead active socio-political engagement. Leaving hope behind; turning to concerted, purposeful engagement with the world: this is the common thread in all three examples given above.

In praise of despair

A famous painting by George Friedrich Watts depicts hope as a blindfolded woman sitting on a rock, holding a one-string lyre. Gazing at it for a while, I began wondering whether, given the current state of the world, despair may be a more congruent response. Given some of the seemingly insurmountable difficulties, some of my clients go through; given the sort of predicament I find myself in at times, as do friends, colleagues and acquaintances experience from time to time, it often appears that despair is a wholly understandable and justified response. The difficulty, however, is that because of two millennia of conservative Christian theology and morality, the feeling/emotion/state of mind we call despair is taboo. Not only is despair a deadly sin. Alone among the other deadly sins, despair is the *unforgivable* sin. It sits in the company of other reviled undesirables, those unclean beings that inhabit the *imundus* or no-man's-land, the 'park of the cursed' (Cixous, 2008, p. 174). The Biblical text *Leviticus 11:13–19* has a whole list of them: the eagle, the vulture, any kind of raven, the owl, the gull, the cormorant, the heron, even the elegant red kite. And alongside birds, Hélène Cixous reminds us, 'the woman who gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days' (Cixous, 2008, p. 173). She will have to wait thirty-three days in order to be purified and before touching anything sacred. And if she gives birth to a baby girl, she will be unclean for sixty-six days. To birds and women, Cixous adds *writing*. Writing too is unclean, because 'it runs the risk of its truths – she writes – because it makes its way into

places where danger grows' (ibid, p. 174). 'Writing' can be understood broadly, not only as literature but as finding one's autonomous voice and internal locus of evaluation.

Birds, women, writing: cursed by religious conservatism, despair finds itself in such elevated company. Despair is a *stigma*, i.e. a mark of disgrace and infamy. And yet dwelling among its desolate peaks and forlorn valleys may yield unknown treasures and for one thing, help one go past the narcotic of denial.

Through despair, chapter 2091 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, the human being 'ceases to hope for his personal salvation from God, for help in attaining it or for the forgiveness of his sins. Despair is contrary to God's goodness, to his justice' (<http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p3s2c1a1.htm#2091>); despite God's capacity for forgiveness, despair cannot apparently be forgiven. Joyce Carol Oates writes:

The sins for which one may be forgiven – pride, anger, lust, sloth, avarice, gluttony, envy – are all firmly attached to the objects of this world, but despair seems to bleed out beyond the confines of the immediate ego-centered self and to relate to no desire, to no-thing. The alleged sinner has detached himself even from the possibility of sin, and this the Catholic Church, as the self-appointed voice of God on earth, cannot allow. (Oates, 1993, Internet file)

Viewed in this way, despair begins to look like a daring act of freedom. This 'least aggressive of sins', is nevertheless, Oates writes, 'dangerous to the totalitarian temperament'. Despair is 'a state of intense inwardness, thus independence'. In short: 'the despairing soul is a rebel' (Oates, 1993). Against the popular trends of positive psychology, self-help and the rosier version of humanistic psychology (including sections of PCT), the psychological taboo of despair can be unexpectedly liberating.

In his *Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness* (Thera, 1973), the Buddha reminds us that there are forty things worth remembering – the first two being the certainty of death and the uncertainty of the time of its occurrence. We are like guests on market day, the Tibetan poet and scholar Gendun Chöpel says; our possessions are like mist on a mountain pass (Chöpel, 2009). What often follows from these meditations is (in my own experience and in that of fellow practitioners), not gloomy renunciation but a sense of urgency that spurs one to act and begins pursue what is meaningful and valuable, discarding what constitutes a hindrance.

In the words of Nikolai Punin, a Russian and Soviet art critic who died in the Gulag aged 64 and quoted by Tatiana Karyagina in an engaging and moving presentation:

Our time has taught us to live with despair, and this is the summit... Do not lose despair, because for someone who has lost despair, there is only one way: the abyss. At the peak of despair, there arise the purest feelings such as love. (Karyagina, 2018)

While hope creates psychological time, the threshold experience of existential despair engenders timelessness (Karyagina, 2018). During World War II, ordinary citizens of besieged Leningrad kept diaries. This makes for difficult, excruciatingly painful and moving reading, as Karyagina stated:

In the words of a teenage girl: "Diary, keep my story." My little time, my little life goes into a big life, into the History. The hope that the diaries will be read by the descendants after the author's death was mentioned by many people. Their task was to convey their thoughts about their past, feelings and ideas about their present. They didn't mention their future, but dreamt about future of their partners or children, evacuated from Leningrad. Surprisingly, many people in such terrible conditions wrote about the beauty of nature,

music, favorite books. The authors viewed their life as a meaningful whole, as a message to the world... They created and recreated their life narratives ... My life and death are not in vain. Here the main thing is the step beyond oneself, the departure from the egocentric position, the turning to the others. (Karyagina, 2018)

Immanence – a life

Not losing despair, the phrase used by Nicolay Punin and quoted by Karyagina (2018), can then be understood as marking the moment when the realism of expectation and linear time gives in to what truly matters, i.e. to higher values. This is Karyagina's reading, as I understand it. As an instance of the *limit experience* (Blanchot, 1993), it can also be read, in my view, as the moment when personal projects cave in to make room for the emergence of impersonal, immanent life. In Charles Dickens's tale *Our Mutual Friend* (Dickens, 1865/1989), a dishonest man and a scoundrel, hated by everyone, is found lying in the middle of the street, dying. Everyone instinctively rushes in to help, forgetting the man's surly personality and bad deeds. They save him, and the wicked briefly man feels softness and gentleness engulfing him. As soon as he is back on his feet, however, his rescuers become indifferent, and he too goes back to be the nasty piece of work he had always been. Deleuze comments:

Between his life and his death, there is a moment that is only that of a life playing with death. The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens: [someone with whom everyone empathizes and who attains a sort of beatitude. It is a [case] *no longer of individuation* but of *singularization*: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad. The life of such individuality fades away in favor of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other. A singular essence, a life ... (Deleuze, 2001, p. 29, emphasis added)

One hypothesis, following this discussion, can be the following: hope belongs to the personal life of the individual, to one's projects, schemes, likes and dislikes. Despair, on the other hand, as with all states of mind where the intensity of life presses on at the door of individual consciousness (ecstatic joy being another example) prompts us to respond with greater urgency. The question is then whether one is able, willing, or has gained sufficient training/education to sustain the intensity of pure immanent life (Bazzano, 2012). This is, I believe, a central question for psychotherapy practice and for PCT in particular. Is our work aimed at merely *regulating* the beauty, intensity and terror of the world? Or is it geared instead towards sustaining more life? Phrasing the question rhetorically, and in much broader terms: does PCT's ethos *foster* or instead *denigrate* the bountiful and complex life of the organism?

Towards a critique of the formative tendency

Hope, faith and charity

In its long and rich history, PCT has differentiated itself from other orientations in its genuine commitment to an ethically methodology aimed at fostering greater

emancipation, equality and cooperation among human beings. Alongside other humanistic approaches, it was from the start devoted to unshackling human experience from the yoke of prejudice and superstitious belief. Unlike other humanistic approaches, it has markedly grounded its best theory in the organism (e.g., Rogers, 1951; 1963/2008; Tudor & Worrall, 2006; Cornelius-White & Kriz, 2008, among others). What in my view distinguishes PCT from self-help and brands such as positive psychology is that its 'root metaphor' is 'the biological and social reality' (Tudor, 2010, p. 58) of the organism.

In this context, I believe that PCT's in turn implicit as well as explicit adherence to Christian theology and morality presents us with some unsettling questions. The first question is whether we as PCT practitioners are alert to the fact that we are aligning the approach with a politically dominant frame (Bazzano, 2018a). More specifically: do we accept Christianity's claims as universal rather than culturally specific? Do we override other mytho-religious or secularist narratives that challenge the worldview or, worse, do we choose to read them within the Judaeo-Christian frame?

The second question is whether the above influence comes from progressive or conservative sectors of Christianity. At a first glance, it would appear that the approach's emphasis on *love* and, more recently, *hope* (the central theme of the 13th World Conference in 2018) tilts towards the latter – if not towards an avowedly conservative agenda, then perhaps towards a celebration of consolation, aspiration, and hopefulness rather than towards 'the urgency of now'. Perhaps there are reasons for this. In Corinthians 1, 14, the apostle Paul speaks of hope as one of the three sisters, the other two being faith and charity. Another name for charity is love, a notion that has been promoted in recent person-centered literature (Keys, 2017; Schmid, 2016; Thorne, 2005). While faith has somewhat waned in our increasingly secular societies and among person-centered therapists, love is more accepted, alongside hope, as the underlining basis for therapy (Bazzano, 2018a). It remains to be seen whether hope fosters psychological change in clients.

Against teleology, against theodicy

One of the conceptual frameworks that bolster the notion of hope in the PCA is that of the formative tendency. Rogers (1980) hypothesized the presence of a "formative directional tendency in the universe... This is an evolutionary tendency toward greater order, greater complexity, greater interrelatedness" (p. 133).

The formative tendency, 'observed in stellar space, in crystals, in micro-organisms, in more complex organic life, and in human beings' (Rogers, 1980, p. 133) is a 'shadow of God', i.e. a consolatory substitute for the Ultimate Rescuer. It is an expression of *teleology* and *theodicy*. Teleology, from the Greek *telos* (ultimate object or aim) is the explanation of phenomena by the purpose they serve. In PCT, it has been useful as an antidote to mechanicism, a view according to which nature is made up of 'things', with the human being one more thing among them. Mechanicism is still rife in psychotherapy thanks to the neopositivist ideology that is being aggressively promoted in the humanities. Yet *teleology too must be overcome*: to posit an evolutionary goal, to think of a tendency in the universe, reflected in all living organisms, to actualize, grow, and develop is to replicate the error of mechanicism. The teleological nature and the faith in growth and progress is present in many guises, including the formulation according to which 'formative' is understood in terms of moving towards greater complexity.

Both views establish univocal explanations of life. While mechanicism maintains that existence unfolds blindly, searching nothing other than its mere continuation, teleology declares that all values originate from the end towards which everything allegedly strives. A critique of teleology does not imply a dismissal of *goals* in therapy. But these are seen, as Adler understood, as *fictional* (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964), i.e. as useful, flexible signposts that help one find direction towards greater actualization. A fictional goal does not require cosmological or metaphysical props. It is a pragmatic, verifiable construct that functions as a catalyst on the path.

Theodicy is closely linked to teleology by assuming the presence of divine providence in human history and human affairs. Like teleology, it ascribes an anthropocentric and spiritually tinged design to the unfolding of becoming. Both notions are inadequate because in attributing human-centered designs to (organismic) life, fail to appreciate the latter on its own terms.

3. The transformative tendency

Beyond adaptation and self-preservation

Despite having been historically dominant, Darwinism and similar evolutionary theories do not constitute the sole account of biological and organic life. Lamarck's *Zoological Philosophy* (1809/2012) prefigured the presence of active forces of *metamorphosis* as opposed to reactive ones of *adaptation* depicted by Darwin. Similarly, by advocating cooperation as a key to evolution, the notion of *mutual aid* championed by Kropotkin (1902) is another valid example that refutes the Darwinian notion of the survival of the fittest (Bazzano, 2012). These examples chime with the contemporary developments of *new materialisms* (Ansell Pearson, 2011; Bennett, 2010) according to which matter (or rather 'materiality') is no longer conceived as inert stuff but as "active, dynamic, self-creative, productive and unpredictable" (Ansell Pearson, 2011, p. 47).

The above is wholly compatible, within psychotherapeutic discourse, with Claudio Rud's notion of the *transformative tendency* (Rud, 2016), a revision of the formative tendency that filters out the latter's reliance on teleology. The term 'transformative' emphasizes *becoming*, an ongoing process with no aim or finality – a view that is congruous with process philosophy (Whitehead, 1978) and with Rogers' vision of the self as "a fluid process, not a fixed 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" (Rogers, 1961, p. 122).

One important source that corroborates the notion of the transformative tendency is found in section 12:2 of the *Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche 1887/1996). Important developments in Nietzschean scholarship have in recent years helped clarify the hidden metaphysical prejudices inherent in dominant, allegedly objective scientific pronouncements (Acampora, 2006; Ansell Pearson, 1997, 2006; Babich, 1994; Cox, 1999; among others). My own reading of Nietzsche is naturalistic/organismic (Bazzano, 2006, 2016, 2018b), and for that reason highly relevant to PCT. Drawing on Nietzsche's cogent insights, these developments assemble a cluster of alternative evolutionary accounts. What these accounts deplore is the neglect of *activity* in favor of mere *reactivity*. They encourage us to remedy the error of the philosophical, psychological and scientific

traditions; the latter did not recognize the essence of life; they overlooked the 'spontaneous, attacking, overcoming, reinterpreting, restructuring and shaping forces, whose action precedes "adaptation"' (Nietzsche, 1887/1996, p. 59, my emphasis). To heed their call would mean reshaping psychology by beginning to thoroughly examine the presence of active and reactive forces within the organism.

Taking the organism hypothesis further

Psychology and psychotherapy have on the whole followed cultural and scientific trends that are by their nature inclined to focus on reactive forces. They have on the whole neglected the life of the body; they have tended to forget the vibrancy of the living organism in favor of consciousness. But consciousness only conveys the *effect* that active forces exert on reactive ones. *Consciousness is itself reactive* and as such it does not really 'know what a body can do or what activity it is capable of' (Deleuze, 1962/2006, p. 38). Consciousness merely sees the organism from its own perspective and apprehends it in its own terms, i.e., reactively. The origins of consciousness are steeped in the reactive forces of *adaptation* and *survival*.

Conversely, a psychology whose main focus is *transformation* will be aligned to a different mode: not adaptation but *expenditure*. Not survival but risk. Not acquisition but relinquishment. It will focus not on consciousness but on the complex, multiple life of the organism. It will humbly investigate the darkness of the body, understood not as a hidden foundation that can one day be attained through painstaking archaeological investigation, but as the 'philological enigma of plurality' (Blondel, 1991, p. 210).

The purpose of psychotherapy (and of psychotherapy training) is then altered. The task is no longer *ontological* (i.e. concerning 'Being', the 'truth of Being', or 'authenticity' as in some humanistic/existential accounts) but *axiological* (relating to questions of *value*). PCT's great advantage over other humanistic traditions is that it is at heart an *organismic* psychology (Tudor & Worrall, 2006). As such, it may be less prone to the pitfalls of *onto-theology* (the fascination with 'Being' and 'God') and *subjectivism* (the vagaries of the Cartesian self and its throng of 'dead ringers'). Once we are prepared to work with the organism hypothesis, however, we then need to take its implications further.

Active and reactive forces

What is 'passive'? – To be hindered from moving forward: thus an act of resistance and reaction. What is 'active'? – reaching out for power. (Nietzsche, 1968, pp. 346–347)

The organism is the cluster of ever-changing nodal points where active and reactive forces come into play. The task is to weigh up the presence of *active* (life-affirming) and *reactive* (life-denying) forces at play within the organism and tilt the balance in favor of active forces. There is already a term for this in PCT's tradition, a term that is also a tenet of the approach: *congruence*. Its essential meaning is alignment, correspondence; here, it comes to mean alignment to active forces. Consequently, incongruence comes to mean alignment to passive, reactive forces.

An *active force* has three fundamental characteristics: (a) 'plastic, dominant, and subjugating' (Deleuze, 2006, p. 57); (b) it 'goes to the limit of what it can do' (ibid); (c) it affirms and enjoys its difference.

A *reactive force* has also three characteristics: (a) it is a 'utilitarian force of adaptation' (Deleuze, ibid, p. 57); (b) it also 'separates', as well as denies what the active force 'from what it can do' (ibid); (c) it turns the active force *against itself*.

The way reactive forces implement their quantity of force is by acquiring mechanical resources and final aims. They accomplish life's conditions by producing the functional undertakings of *utility* and *adaptation*. This is in itself valuable, but consciousness has difficulty in characterizing active forces. Historically, psychology has more readily registered reactive forces; it has been excessively fixated with their mechanics and intricacies and has neglected active forces altogether. *We have been strangely contented to think that it is enough to understand the life of an organism in terms of reactive forces; we are fascinated by their trembling and shuddering, and have gone on to erect theories of life entirely on their account, while neglecting to study and understand more closely the nature of active forces* (Bazzano, 2018b).

Consider the butterfly – a conclusion?

My conclusion to this brief investigation brings up a gnawing thought. Could it be that the prevalent, rosier accounts of teleology to which arguably the notion of the formative tendency belongs constitute a misunderstanding of teleology itself? Could it be that teleology moves in an altogether different direction than the happy endings fostered by hope? In some accounts of Hegelian teleology (for instance, Žižek, 2013), the absolute, the ultimate aim in the incessant movement of history and human affairs is not acquisition but relinquishment. It is not symbolized by the crowning glory of Church and State, but by the utter desolation and despair conveyed by a 33-year-old man dying on a cross with the words: *lamma sabachtani*: 'why have you forsaken me?' Yet the crucial moment of existential pain and abandonment is often forgotten in canonical readings in favor of yet another instance of redemption. *Lamma Sabachtani* is cast aside, in favor of *Thy Will Be Done*. 'Why have you forsaken me?' is interpreted as a necessary instance of human weakness that makes the final act of surrender all the more significant.

Yet what this alternative reading of teleology seems to suggest is two things: (a) existential crisis is an inevitable adjunct to transformation; (b) a crisis brings the person next to a threshold (Bazzano, 2016), a *limit* (Blanchot, 1993) where human experience loses its imaginary boundaries and steps over into the greater life of the world. This is a point of vulnerability and radical receptivity.

Expanding on Kurt Goldstein's notion of the organism and its inherent, self-organizing tendency to realize its potential (Goldstein, 1939, 1940/1963), Rogers (1980) famously came up with the vivid image of the potatoes in the cellar of his boyhood home:

I remember that in my boyhood, the 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.

The sprouts were in their bizarre, futile growth, a sort of desperate expression of the directional tendency I have been describing. They would never become plants, never mature, never fulfil their real potential. But under the most adverse circumstances, they were striving to become. (pp. 118–119)

This striving to grow, develop and become – pithily conveyed by Rogers in the above example – is what living organisms do. With some species and organisms, their natural cycles of growth ultimately also place them at mortal risk. In the attempt to fulfill their potential, some organisms leave aside self-preservation and embrace transformation. A vivid example of the transformative tendency is the butterfly. Butterflies' life cycle is one of complete metamorphosis. In one of its three fundamental stages of growth (from caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly), known as *molting*, the caterpillar faces a tremendous challenge; it makes a new, larger skin and then sheds the old skin. From the point of view of the caterpillar, this process of transformation is disastrous. Its body is practically dissolving and a whole new being emerges. After two weeks, the butterfly begins to emerge. Is this example relevant to the human organism? Yes, if one sees humanity as 'the experimental material, the tremendous surplus of failures: a field of ruins' (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 380). It is highly relevant if one takes on board the fragility of growth, the ever-present possibility of death, and the tremendous amount of risk and adventure present within the process of actualization. It is relevant, especially if one considers, with Beckett (1983), the invitation to 'fail again, fail better' (<https://genius.com/Samuel-beckett-worstward-ho-annotated>).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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