

Christ in You

Impact on Counseling

Rescue

- On February 16th, 2023, ten days after an earthquake in southern Turkey, a lone survivor was pulled from the ruins of a destroyed city. At that point, over 40,000 bodies had been recovered in the gruesome rescue operation.
- Asked by a journalist how she survived, the 17 year-old girl stated:
- “I had nothing with me. I just tried to pass the time.”
- In NT Greek, the word “to save” [sozo] also means to rescue, and to heal.

“Where are you?”

- God’s first recorded question to man, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9), was not rhetorical. It was soulful. Rescue operations had begun.
- We help clients dig out parts of themselves that are viscerally buried.
- “In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:17)
- What, exactly, changed that day in the garden of Eden?
- Adam and Even were suddenly split-- mentally beside themselves ... their own bodies turned into objects of observation (and shame).

Dissociation vs. Burying

- Sin can be viewed as an original trauma, causing an original dissociation.
- *Clinical* dissociation arises from traumatic losses or dire threats.
- Burying parts of ourselves creates inner “distance” without full dissociation.
- Consider the following:
 - Inhibiting (suppressing) an emotion until it is “forgotten” (no longer felt),
 - Stoicism or studied distancing in response to suffering,
 - Rationalistic critique of Romanticism (to awe, the sublime, and smallness)
 - Theological critiques of Enthusiasm (bodily experience of the Spirit)

Interoception in the Chest

- Interoception (internal awareness of the body) is a field of human experience that is potentially pivotal to psychotherapeutic processes.
- Accessible by “common grace,” it can be enhanced by the indwelling Spirit.
- In The Abolition of Man, C. S. Lewis warned of cultivating people whose organs of perception are underdeveloped—of “men without chests.”
- More than metaphor, this means that we are viscerally designed for relationship. How does understanding this shape how we love and counsel others?

Interoception

- Interoception is the “voice,” “cry,” or signal that client and counselor follow when on a psychotherapeutic rescue mission.
- An umbrella term for the potentially conscious sum of all processes by which the brain receives sensory input from different bodily systems (Ceunen et al., 2016).
- The neural basis of interoception is partly based in the vagus, or pneumogastric nerve. The vagus is the longest nerve in the autonomic nervous system, curving and branching to many organs, from the larynx to the intestines. It contains up to 90% afferent fibers that relay interoceptive information to the limbic system and other areas (Fitchett, May 2021).

Interoceptive Resonance?

- Interoceptive self-report is primary, and the ultimate touchstone. But are clients ever unwilling or unable to sense and report bodily experiences—even with the help of techniques designed to help them do so?
- Interoceptive Resonance, if and when it occurs, refers to the (more or less accurate) mirroring of the another's interoceptive experience— regardless of the degree to which the other is conscious of, or willing to acknowledge, the experience.
- Mirror Neurons (Reddy, How Infants Read Minds)
- Taproot of genuine empathy (Stump, Wandering in Darkness)

The Harmonics of Dialogue

First, Second, and Third
Voices

Words

- Psychotherapeutic notes, quotes, and transcripts
- Text and Interpretation: exegesis and tight hermeneutics (what the other meant to say, intended to say, would readily acknowledge they meant)
- The Left Brain: emphasis on precision and categorization
- Diagnosis by symptoms-based categories, “objective” psychological testing
- Texting and Emailing as therapy?
- Records/legal implications

Theories: Words about Words

- Text and Interpretation: the enlarged hermeneutic (what the other would deny they intended to say, but might (fairly quickly) acknowledge could have been an accurate read of some context of their statement); this may require accumulating statements by the other that are not in close proximity, and that are not obviously versions of the same statement; indeed, some recollected statements might seem contradictory. The enlarged hermeneutic must also balance T's theories with C's eventual goals and current states (a triangle of tensions in therapeutic alliance).
- Emphasis on the dialogical skill, tact, timing, and warmth of the therapist.
- Tends to be received well if it appears that T is closely tracking and actively listening to C; less so if T extends beyond what C can readily experience as empathic.

Nonverbals

- Albert Mehrabian's studies of the impact of inconsistencies between the meaning conveyed by word and meanings expressed nonverbally led to the 7-38-55% rule.
- When trying to determine the emotion (liking or disliking) of another (using positive, neutral, and negative words), 7% of the impression is conveyed through words, 38% through tone of voice, 55% through facial expression.
- What is the focus of training & supervision? Words% Tone of voice% Facial expressions or body language? Incongruities between verbal and nonverbal? How common is videotape review of sessions?

Word Games

- Conundrum: the Emperor's clothes (*Thou shalt not name the obvious.*)
- Culturally trained to ignore (or to pretend to ignore) nonverbal signs?
- Words function partly as implicit commands (*Pay attention to THIS, not that.*)
- Words can be word-games ... diversions, distractions from distress, doubt, confusion, conflict, pain, shame. Word-games also invite connection.
- Beginning in childhood, many learn to inhibit vocal and nonvocal expressions of distress--- for their own sake, and for the sake of others.

A “Bad” Liar

- So now, *how?* How, exactly, do we dis-guise ourselves?
- Suppose we begin by disguising by means of our words.
- But if words are 7% of the information we give away to others, we are still exposed. We may be called a bad liar (which is sort of a compliment).
- To be a “good liar,” we must dis-guise our *nonverbal* communication— which initially requires that we suppress what muscles would naturally express.
- Inhibition of e-motion is an isometric exercise; it is static tension (strain).
- To become a “better liar,” it helps to have fooled oneself.

Guise and Disguise

- Weid (Proto-Indo-European root), 4500 BC to 2500 BC): to see Wison (Proto Germanic 5th C. BC – 5th C. AD) appearance, form, manner
- Wisa (Old High German, 750 – 1050)): manner, wise
- Wisa (Frankish, 5th – 9th C. AD): manner, fashion, way
- Guise (13th C.): style or fashion of attire
- Desguiser (Old French, 11th C): disguise, change one's appearance
- Disguise (c. 1300): conceal the personal identity of by changes of guise or usual appearance, with intent to deceive

Disguised to Whom?

- How do we know when our guise is a disguise? ... It depends:
- On *when* (developmental), and *why* (social or intrapsychic) we dis-guise ...
- On *how long* (duration) we dis-guise. E.g., Stockholm's Syndrome, perhaps even theatrical roles of long duration ...
- On *what* we disguise – especially on the **energy** of an **emotion**:
- From Latin via French: *emovere* (move out, remove, agitate)
- From *ex* (out) and PIE root meaning to push away. Generalized by 1808.

Disharmony

The Visceral (Fourth) Voice

Sub-expression

- **Central Hypothesis: suppression (inhibition) becomes sub-expression.**
- Sub-expression moves the inhibition of e-motion further from the brain, from craniofacial to caudal.
- Sub-expression moves e-motion further from ordinary consciousness, and further from vocalization or verbalization.
- Prolonged sub-expression tends to convert e-motion into musculoskeletal tension, visceral tension, and physiological (e.g., adrenal) excitation.
- Perpetual sub-expression leads to fatigue, pain, emotional cycling, illness.

Inhibition in the Jaw: “Biting One’s Tongue” & “Clamming Up”

- This re-action to e-motion can range from fully conscious to unconscious.
- When no longer felt or sensed, it tends toward somatization.
- Tension in the jaw is but one (musculoskeletal) layer of interoception.
- It is not rare for this simple symptom to be a “presenting problem.”
- TMD (Temporomandibular Disorders): more than 30 conditions that cause pain and dysfunction in the jaw joint and muscles. May co-occur with headaches, back pain, sleep problems, fibromyalgia, and FGID’s.
- Resonant interoception: have you ever *physically sensed* another’s tension?

“Listening” with the Throat

- “Choked up” (or choked down?): the globus sensation (globus pharyngeus)
- Interoceptive resonance (i.e., by the therapist) is easiest to first recognize in the throat, the gateway of vocal expression. More precisely, it involves interoceptive awareness of the lower pharynx and larynx (roughly, the voice box). Of all the visceral organs, the emotional notes struck in this region seem nearest to ordinary consciousness.
- Inverse relationship between aging and vocal crying
- Be prepared for the glimpse before the eclipse— a pivotal moment in therapy.

The Cycle of Suppression

- The cycle of the globus sensation is quick ... often lasting only 10-15 seconds. Therapeutic interventions must be swift, and a counselor must be prepared with interventions that will prolong awareness.
- Spontaneous (intrusive) globus pharyngeus: clients may be surprised that they are suddenly choked, but they may try to ignore it.
- Elicited (therapeutic) globus pharyngeus: response to an intervention that is likely to increase emotion.
- Resonant (transpersonal) globus pharyngeus— subconscious for client.

Listening with the Chest

- Next to the throat, resonance is easiest to sense in the upper chest. This sensation can be rather distinct in size, and fixed in location-- about the size of a walnut or golf ball, roughly 1 - 2 inches under the sternum.
- Pain does not tend to radiate, and corresponds to what The American College of Gastroenterology describes non-cardiac chest pain (NCCP): “pain ... felt behind the breast bone [which] can be squeezing or pressure-like [... and which] can last from a few seconds or minutes to many hours.”
- It is thought by GI specialists to originate somewhere along the esophagus, probably involves a localized tightening or spasm of the esophagus. Esophageal pressures have been found to increase in healthy individuals in response to even mild cognitive stressors.
- But consider possible tracheal or bronchial tightening or spasms as alternative source.

Chest Pain

“Swallowing” the Globus

- Non-cardiac chest pain can feel remarkably like a submerged globus pharyngeus.
- The two sensations can occur in sequence with the same client; might fittingly be called globus esophagus or globus trachealis. This upper chest pain seems to represent, both emotionally and physically, a suppressing (in effect, a swallowing or sub-pressing) of the globus sensation—which was already a suppression of emotion in the first place.
- Put differently, we could say that chest pain is *the suppression of the suppression of emotional expression*. This means that neither globus pharyngeus nor globus esophagus are direct experiences of first order emotion; they are both experiences of emotional defenses.

Transpersonal Resonance

- Suppose a client, let us call her Esophia or Trachea, does not report chest pain ... but that the therapist feels it as he or she listens. What could this mean?
- Esophia may not be interoceptively attuned, or may be rather accustomed to it. She may not think it worthy of mention. She may even dread it—knowing at some level that she has an unknown “it” under wraps if only she keeps quiet about it.
- She may have been *rewarded for shutting up* about it. The lump in the throat may long ago have become the knot in the chest, further from conscious associations. If so, it is likely to become episodically anxiety-provoking or painful. Unlike the lump in the throat, which the client can sometimes explain, the knot in the chest is often inexplicable and thereby forbidding.

Ex-pressive Intervention

- While some clients can present theories for their presenting problems, others may only be able to say, “It hurts ... right here.” In psychoanalysis, the analyst might watch for associations that would illuminate the inexplicable “it.”
- Is there a more direct route to working with such clients? The knot in the chest is not merely an insight waiting to be grasped or a perspective needing to be challenged; it is an emotion in the body being inhibited by another motion in the body. And the inhibition requires muscular force and energy—enough to cause cramp or fatigue.
- Leaving room for artistry, it may nonetheless help to have examples. One can ask the client what *sound* the chest pain might make if it had a voice; note that this figuratively “elevates” the pain from the chest to the throat. It simultaneously elevates it toward emotional awareness.

Further Intervention

- Inhibited clients might be asked to inwardly hear or make the sound. Or, one might offer to quietly try to make that sound right along with her; this reduces shame about making noises that may have been frowned upon in some historical context. If the therapist is truly resonating with the client, then he joins in from a place of empathy rather than mere imitation.
- In some cases, this will lead to eruptions of first order emotion (e.g., sadness or anger). In other cases, it may require some additional practice and amplification (e.g., drawing or journaling while sounding off in ways that cry out from the knot in the chest).
- At this stage, the source of the emotion may not be apparent or matter. Later, it will.
- The source and meaning of it often unreels once the suppression is counteracted. In other words, the source is suppressed along with the emotion- but somehow associated with it.

Heart: The Biblical Lexicon

- It may help to address a semantic issue. Both the Old and New Testaments have words that are commonly translated as “heart.” In scripture, “heart” rarely refers to human anatomy.
- Strong’s online concordance indicates that “heart” appears 830 times in the King James Version, usually with broad but indistinct reference to the heart of God or the fallen, redeemed, or transforming hearts of men.
- There are 30 lexical entries related to heart (21 in Hebrew, 9 in Greek), and the range of meanings and contexts defies simple summary.
- Christian psychologists may require more precise or technical definitions of terms shared with the scriptures. This point will be illustrated later, since one New Testament word sometimes translated as “heart” is actually the Greek word for intestines.

Emotional Breakthrough

- Iconographies of the detached heart, the broken heart, and the sacred heart have added new layers of meaning to an organ that already had rich poetic connotations.
- In a narrower, psychotherapeutic sense, we can focus on how our clients (and we ourselves, with our clients) experience the region of the heart. How does the heart “come up” in counseling?
- When clients present with a globus sensation in their throat (pharynx) or their upper chest (substernal esophagus/trachea), and when interventions produce a sudden breakthrough or release, it most often occurs in the form of vocal crying or sobbing. When this happens, the remarkable thing is that the globus sensation instantly resolves. Without such a breakthrough (e.g., with tearing), the globus sensation remains.
- How does this work? Somatically speaking, what is being released?

Laughing and Crying: The Diaphragmatic Ground of the Heart

- The base of the heart is fused with the diaphragm through fibrous tissue of the pericardium. The anatomy matters because it corresponds with phenomenological observation. The emotions associated with the heart are partially imparted to it from below, by the diaphragm on which it rises and falls through this firm, fibrous connection.
- Through this attachment, each deep inhalation produces an expansion via the pericardium, and each exhalation produces a slight compression. The ride can be as soothing as a sailboat on the swells of the sea, or as exciting as a roller coaster.
- Aside from these undulations, there is a third diaphragmatic action. The diaphragm can be seized by surplus tension – a sense of tension beyond what is needed for the cycles of contraction and relaxation. This often produces shallow or almost imperceptible breathing.
- Each diaphragmatic action creates a passive sensation (a passion), and each passion is perceivable and interpretable as an emotion.

Gestures of the Heart

- The heart could be said to have implicit movements, gestures, or spatial dynamics.
- Expansion (joy)
- Shrinking, Contracting (heartache, heartbreak)
- Bowing (deep admiration and moral awe)
- Sinking (grief)
- Seizing (anxiety, restriction of joy/sorrow/longing)
- Release (peaceful release)

Anesthesia: Numbing and Hardening of the Heart

- Interoception, and openness to the spatial dynamics of the heart require emotional tolerance, skills, permission, support, and “work.”
- Parents (family) are the natural teachers, but this optimal environment is often lacking or adverse.
- Even with support, numbing (e.g., drugs, perpetual distraction) & hardening (e.g., through determination to be “strong” or callous) can be tempting alternatives to emotional tolerance and seeking support.
- Likely gender, culture, and individual differences.
- Highly sensitive children may be *more* likely to develop defenses, thus appearing “hardened” or insensitive.

Trinitarian Theranostics

A Phenomenological Approach to
Healing Encounters

Theranostics Defined

- Theranostics combines the **diagnostic** and **therapeutic** elements of healing.
- In nuclear medicine, theranostics refers to the identification of peptides that selectively bind with cancerous cells, so that these can be used to carry agents that image and treat (i.e., destroy) cancerous tissues throughout the body.
- As here applied to psycho-spiritual healing, theranostics refers to I-Thou encounters with the Godhead designed to target, image, and heal injury and sickness of soul.

Theranostic Queries

- Where do you locate yourself right now? Your own center.
- What is my greatest concern/hope at this moment?
- Ask client to picture Father, Jesus, Spirit relative to their bodies.
- Where is Father-God for you right now?
 - Associations: father, authority figures
 - Safety, provision, identity, value, body
- Where is Jesus for you right now?
 - Associations: siblings, peers, friends, communication, soul
- Where is Holy Spirit for you right now?
 - Associations: mother figures, sisters, muses, comfort, wisdom

From Pain to Wound

- From Pain (interoception) to Wound (memory):
 - Identify the first associated wound/event/wrongdoer.
 - “Where is God (Father, Son, Spirit) for you during this?”
- Pivotal: healing cannot proceed without a God who is *there*.
 - Clients questions need to addressed directly to Father, Jesus, Spirit.
 - Answers: wait for a response from God– in *any form* (word, image, touch).
 - If no answer, return to theranostic queries--possibly to another Person in Trinity.
- If God is *there*, what would client like to let God (e.g., Father) do for or with that wounded part?

Forgiveness

- Forgive us as we forgive (see e.g., parable of the debtor, Mt 18:35)
- Forgiveness is an imminent, curative, cleansing act-- not a remote and doubtful outcome. It is release from something that holds us captive.
- “Are you *willing* to forgive, to leave him/her/them at the Cross?”
- This is a *radical departure* from secular psychotherapy.
- “Where is [or do you see] the wrongdoer now?”
- “Do you want to say it, or do you want me to lead you?”
- If client not ready, that is accepted. Find what they are ready to do.
- Focus on *connection* with Trinity.

“Speak, for your servant is listening”

I Samuel 3:10

- Christ-in-us (body) is whole & holy, but our union with Christ is progressive.
- Interoception (bodily awareness) is not only pivotal to effective counseling, but it provides a phenomenological rendezvous with the Trinity. The body is designed to be theophanic, i.e., a vessel in which the Word becomes flesh.
- Sub-pression of bodily awareness limits union with Father, Savior, and Holy Spirit. Sub-pression can be felt in the jaw, the throat, the chest, heart, and the diaphragm.
- Interoceptive resonance may be enhanced by the Holy Spirit.
- **Connection with Immanuel** (God-with-us, Christ-in-us, Indwelling Spirit), on any life concern, is the primary goal of Christian counseling.