The Middle Phase of Therapy: An Exploration of the Depth Dimension

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Armed with the knowledge of family systems theory, and based on my observations of people in work, family and clinical situations. I have come to realize that Bowen's concept of emotional and intellectual functioning as evolutionary manifestations[1] and Fogarty's concept of four dimensional self[2] are invaluable tools for observing families during the middle phase of therapy.

In this paper, I have developed a theoretical rationale which has evolved while observing clients who have been willing and able to move into the middle phase of therapy. During this phase, a person explores more and more of his depth dimension; all the time moving his observations back and forth through the vertical or object dimension for some distance, to the lateral or personal dimension and to the extended family for understanding, connection and intimacy with reduced emotional, intellectual and personal fusion.[3] In addition, the values, basic assumptions, belief system and conceptual framework underlying one's life are explored and taken back through the extended family to understand their formation.

Simultaneously, a family member moves from the other three dimensions to the fourth dimension of space/time for a further understanding of self and extended family. Within the space-time continuum, events really take place since nothing ever happens in space or in time alone but always in both where objects are observed as elements or items in the stream of perceived events. Furthermore, our view of the past and future is very much a part of our experience of the present, just as our experience of the future is part of our past and present.

Generally, individuals and families appear at our office expressing difficulty keeping some anxiety or threat within manageable bounds. The balancing forces of the family or work situation have been temporarily or permanently upset due to the overwhelming impact of change or chronic stress on the system. During the early phases of therapy, the presence of a calm therapist who takes a non-reactive "I position" is often sufficient to reduce the anxiety of family members to manageable levels. This is often followed by a decrease in the emotional intensity of the family, thus permitting intellectual functioning to surafce.

At this point, operating styles are studied carefully, patterns of activity and reactivety are researched. Once a clear picture of the family pattern and organization emerges, strategies are suggested; distances between people are narrowed; moves towards nuclear or extended family are encouraged; reactions to the moves are explored; strategies are planned which open communication and permit increasing movement and freedom. The early phase of therapy may extend over months or years depending on the family members' ability to separate the thinking from the emotional process. It is assumed that the degree of fusion between the thinking and the emotional systems within an individual parallels the degree to which that person fuses into or loses self in personal relationships.[4]

Some symptom of fusion usually brings fam-

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ilies to our office in the first place—be it conflict, over- or under-responsibility, or some form of the projection process. Although varying degrees of fusion are always present, one needs to view fusion on a continuum of function. Fogarty's work spells this out more fully.[5]

The change that takes place in this early phase of therapy often reduces symptoms in family members. However, given a severe future stress the symptoms might conceivably occur once again.

Evolutionary change takes place during the middle phase of therapy when an individual or family members can calmly explore depth dimension while assuming full responsibility for observations and findings. This exploration of self or quest for a true inner identity has variously been called "The Hero's Journey,"[6] the quest for self-realization, and an "Inner Odyssey."[7] Plato alluded to the work of this phase with his famous statement in the *Apology*: "The unexamined life is not worth living." Fogarty refers to some of the work of this phase as the experience of emptiness.[8] Bowen refers to it as differentiation of self and reduction of pseudo-self.[9]

In order to enter the depth dimension which Fogarty has compared to a rich but underdeveloped country,[10] it is useful to have a guide or road map which alerts one to potential trouble spots or closed off detours encountered on the journey of self-differentiation within a family system. The theory presented is a beginning attempt to provide a conceptual understanding of some of the components of the depth dimension and origins in the process of evolution.

It is understood that within a family each member evolves at a different rate both at birth and throughout the process of life. Some members achieve a higher level of differentiation than others, while an occasional family member is willing and able to explore new territory within the depth or self-dimension. This does not mean that it is humanly possible to reach the ultimate depth or bottom of one's being since man is a changing open system constantly interacting with a changing environment. [11] The concept of evolution mitigates against the notion of completion. However, rigorous journeys of discovery to the depth dimension, the vertical and lateral dimensions, and through space time to the extended family will, if successful, assist a family member to achieve a higher degree of evolution than other more timid members of his family. Futhermore, the degree of family reactivity to a differentiating move seems to be in direct proportion to the evolutionary potential of the move. For example, family systems tolerate a move through territory traveled by a previous family member, be it a great uncle or a parent. However, a move towards experience or knowledge not yet explored by a member of the family will create the greatest degree of family reactivity. For this reason, it is essential to carefully explore family response to each move of a member through the depth dimension.

When working with an entire family, it is relatively easy to observe the family response to moves into the depth dimension by one of its members. Although it is more difficult when the therapist is working with an individual rather than a family, the responsibility for close monitoring of family members must still be assumed. This can be done by questioning the client regarding family reactions to his or her work in the depth dimension.

In my opinion, one of the vital differences between an individual approach to therapy of the individual and a family system approach to treatment of an individual is recognition of the impact of individual change on the entire family system. This understanding reduces the likelihood of a divorce ensuing or Mom's becoming psychotic or physically ill when Dad or son begin to work on his depth dimension. If the family reactivity becomes increasingly intense, the therapist can encourage the client to slow down movement into the depth dimension, and increase movement through the lateral and vertical dimensions.

If Mrs. Jones' forays into the dimension of self are accompanied by severe acting out behavior in her son, and if Mr. Jones has had several automobile accidents, this may indicate that Mrs. Jones is distancing into her depth dimension too rapidly and withdrawing from vertical and lateral dimensions or moving too much into the past or future. When working with the Jones family, the therapist must also keep in mind that the ordinary temporal experience is personally and relativistically constructed.[12] The experience of space time varies among family members. Perhaps Mrs. Jones needs to move towards her husband and son in order to calm the extreme family reactivity before further moves through the depth dimension.

Of course, the family members will always be reactive to differentiating moves by one of their members; it is the degree of reactivity that must be monitored. If intensity reaches too great

a pitch, it is counterproductive. It is important to remember that, "The idea of a balance of forces is central to systems thinking, whether it is a cell, a cardiovascular system, a person, a family or an entire society that is under scrutiny. When this balance of forces is seriously disturbed, systems are not far behind."[13] In fact, nature is one grand balance of forces. The process of evolution as explored by Sir Julian Huxuley provides the foundation for a further exploration of the depth of self-dimension:

> The course followed by evolution appears to have been broadly as follows: From a generalised early type, various lines radiate out, exploiting the environment in various ways. Some of these comparatively soon reach a limit to their evolution, at least as regards major alteration. Thereafter they are limited to minor changes such as the formation of new genera and species. Others, on the other hand, are so constructed that they can continue their career, generating new types which are successful in the struggle for existence because of their greater control over the environment and their greater independence of it. Such changes are legitimately called 'progressive.' The new type repeats the process. It radiates out into a number of lines, each specialising in a particular direction. The great majority of these come up against dead ends and can advance no further: specialisation is one-sided progress, and after a longer or shorter time, reaches a biomechanical limit....
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> Sometimes all the branches of a given stock have come up against their limit, and then either have become extinct or have persisted without major change. This happened, for instance, to the echinoderms, which with their sea-urchins, star-fish, brittle-stars, sea-lilies, sea-cucumbers, and other types now extinct had pushed the life that was in them into a series of blind alleys: they have not advanced for perhaps a hundred million years, nor have they given rise to other major types.
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> In other cases, all but one or two of the lines suffer this fate, while the rest repeat the process. All repitlian lines were blind alleys save two—one which was transformed into the birds, and another which became the mammals. Of the bird stock, all lines came to a dead end; of the mammals, all but one—the one which became man.[14]

Evolution, as the cliche goes, is a journey of unknown origin to an unknown destination, a sailing along a vast ocean. However, we can at least map the route which has carried us from the reptilian stages to the conquest of the moon. There is a wind blowing which makes the sails move; it comes from a distant past pushing the boat along, but pull is also exerted by the future. The pressure may be compared to the force exerted by a compressed spring, the pull to that of an expanded spring threaded on the axis of space time.[15]

In our narcissistic and self-centered society, we often lose sight of our place in the larger universe. Although we have come a long way from the days of the sea-cucumber and the more complex reptile to the fascinating subject of this paper, man, we are still on the journey of evolution. Future generations will look at our turmoil, at our fear of freedom, life, and death. They will, I'm sure, view us as primitive.

By accepting evolution, we relinquish the view that everything is, in one way or another, given at the beginning. We reject that static view of reality with its fixed elements and accept a more relative and systems view. We see evolution not merely as a process of change, of regrouping of the old into new forms; it is a new creation, not fashioned out of the old materials but a synthesis of the new with the old.[16]

As early as 1921, Smuts in his classic, *Holism and Evolution*, stated that an organism is really a unified synthesized section of history which includes not only its present but much of its past and even its future.[17] He states that an organism can only be explained in reference to its past and its future as well as its present. The central structure is insufficient and has not enough in it to serve as explanation. The conception of the field becomes necessary and will be found fruitful.[18] One can conceptualize a human field embedded in a family field which is embedded in curvature of space time[19] pulled in the future and pushed by the past.

As matter becomes closer to the concept of life in the cell, in the organism, and in evolution generally, it tends toward the concept of mind. A large measure of creativeness applies to mind both in its intellectual and in its ethical aspects; thought is creative in all its activities from the simplest sensation up to the most complex judgment.

Smuts points out that this view of evolution as creative of the new opens up fresh paths and renders possible new choices for the future. In a very real sense, it breaks the bondage of the past with its fixed pre-determinations. This viewpoint of creative evolution is embraced by scientists and philosophers. While science is preoccupied with the details of structure, philosophy continues to explore general principles and points of view. The real world is neither a mere structure nor a mere principle. Evolution is structure interacting with principle each vitalizing the other. Individuation and universality are equally characteristic of evolution.[20] The universal

realizes itself, not in idle self-contemplation, not in isolation from the actual, but in and through individual bodies in particular things, facts and relationships.

A strictly biological view of family system is insufficient to explain the totality of man; a philosophical view is also needed. However, an either-or position is not indicated; rather, creative evolution requires a creative view which synthesizes both biology and philosophy. In his theory of the four dimensional self, Fogarty has made a beginning attempt to do so.

Teilhard de Chardin sets forth a major thesis: "Mind has been undergoing successive reorganizations throughout the history of evolution until it has reached a crucial point—the discovery of its own evolution." This new awareness—evolving mind recognizing the evolutionary process is the future natural history of the world according to Teilhard.[21] He says that this awareness will eventually become collective. It will envelope the planet and crystallise as a species-wide enlightenment he called "Omega Point." He refers to "the family task" of bringing humanity into this larger awareness.

In his book, *The Phenomenon of Man,* Teilhard warns that a mind awakened to this evolutionary concept may experience fear and disorientation. It must create a new equilibrium for everything that was once tidy in its inner world. "It is dazzled when it emerges from its dark prison."[22] I believe the Smuts and Teilhard view of creative evolution for the human mind, is more in keeping with tenets expressed in this paper, than is the Bowen view of societal regression.

In his book, *Literature and Western Man,* J.B. Priestly points out that schizophrenic western culture is desperately searching for its center, for some balance between inner and outer life. He states that even if we believe that the time of our civilization is running out fast, while we are waiting we can try to feel, to think, and to behave as if we were finding our way home again in the universe.... We can stop disinheriting ourselves.... We can challenge the whole dehumanizing, depersonalizing process that is taking the symbolic richness, the dimension of depth out of men's lives, inducing the anesthesia that demands violence, crude, horrible effects, to feel anything at all. Instead of wanting to look at the back of the moon, remote from our lives, we can try to look at the back of our minds.[23]

In his final novel, *Island,* Huxley portrays a society in which healing relied on powers of mind, extended families provided comfort and counsel, learning was rooted in doing and imagining. To emphasize the urgent need for awareness, trained mynah birds flew about crying "Attention! Attention!"[24]

And that is the work of the middle phase of therapy: attention. In that phase, a client calls his mind to attend to each of the three human fields: the biological field, the emotional field and the intellectual field. Since the human field is a composite of each of the other three fields, attention to the biological and intellectual as well as inattention to the emotional field provide a skewed view of reality. Conversely, a view that includes the biological and emotional fields and excludes the intellectual gives an incomplete view. De-emphasis of any one of the three components of the depth dimension provides a biased view of reality.

However, depending on particular values and a particular view of man, a given family may over-emphasize or de-emphasize one of the three fields. For example, in a family where alcoholism or drug addiction are presenting issues, one suspects that the emotional field is de-emphasized while the physical and intellectual fields are overemphasized. In the dry state, the family is very rational and unemotional, alcohol is ingested; it affects the biological system and permits emotionality to surface. Conversely, in a family where depression is the presenting issue, one can predict that the physical and emotional fields are overemphasized and the intellectual functioning is reduced. Since depression has been found to involve a disturbance in thinking.[25] the family members of the depressed person may think in idiosyncratic and negative ways about themselves, their environment, and their future. The pessimistic mental set and cognitive distortions affect moods, motivations, and relationships with others.

In a family with schizophrenia, biological distortions influence the emotional and intellectual fields. There is an overemphasis on the biological field and a disconnection from the more evolved emotional and intellectual fields. In a previous paper, I have compared the haywire development of cancer cells, a biological manifestation, to the schizophrenic process.[26] I believe that families who experience a good deal of physical illnes also de-emphasize either the emotional

or the intellectual fields and overemphasize the biological field.

Bowen originally conceptualized a "background process" in his family research on schizophrenia.[27] He sees it in the family as symptomatic of a background emotional process that has taken many generations to evolve. In support of evolutionary input as influences in our biological, emotional, and intellectual expression, one can study MacLean's experimental work and theoretical conclusions.[28] MacLean states that in its evolution, the brain of man retains the heirarchial organization of three basic types which can be labeled reptilian, poleo-mammalian, and neo-mammalian. The limbic system represents the poleo-mammalian brain, an inheritance from lower animals. Man's limbic system is much more highly structured than that of lower animals, but its organization and chemistry are similar. All three types are seen as having their own special subjective, cognitive, or problem solving memory and other parallel functions.[29] Each functions in a rather autonomous way on its own level.

One can study the evolution of the brain by comparing it to an orange: the central part or pulp is the oldest part of the brain, the part roughly corresponding to the structure of the reptile brain. It contains the essential apparatus for visceral and glandular regulation, primitive activities based on instincts and reflexes, and centers for arousing vigilence or promoting sleep. The outer part or cortex of the brain is like the rind of the orange. This apparatus for intelligent behavior includes the capacity to acquire new responses by whatever primitive form of learning as well as conceptual and abstract thought.

However, in the process of evolution, the most striking event of all evolution occurred. A great ballooning out of the neocortex convoluted over the old reptilian brain; this old brain, called the limbic system, can be contrasted to the neocortical system or the new brain. The limbic cortex is structurally primitive compared to the neocortex. It shows similar development in all mammals. This would suggest that it may function on an animalistic level in both animal and man.[30]

The cerebral cortex is most intimately connected with awareness and self-awareness, but Koestler would say that we cannot call it the seat of awareness.[31] The seat of awareness may be a further evolutionary development, one that Bucke in 1901, referred to as cosmic consciousness or awareness that man is essentially identified with the whole.[32] Bucke compares the passage from self to cosmic consciousness to the passage from simple consciousness to self-consciousness. As in the latter, there are two chief elements: added consciousness, added faculty.

When an organism which possesses simple consciousness only attains to self-consciousness, it becomes aware for the first time that it is a separate creature or self, existing in a world which is apart from it. The oncoming of the new faculty instructs it without any new experience or process of learning. At the same time, it acquires enormously increased powers of accumulating knowledge and of initiating action. So, when a person who has self-consciousness enters into cosmic consciousness, according to Bucke, the person knows without learning that the universe is not a dead machine but a living presence. Its essence and tendency are infinitely good, and individual existence is continuous.[33] Bucke points out that once this level of evolution has been reached, a person takes on enormously greater capacity both for learning and initiating. He parallels moral development with development of self and with cosmic consciousness.[34]

Now, where does this vast jump from the reptilian brain and the limbic system to the brain and the neocortical system, from self-consciousness to cosmic consciousness, lead us? I would say that it leads right to what Bucke calls development of the most appropriate goal for an individual life: "aware participation in one's own growth and in the evolutionary process." Bucke goes on to say that the good society is one which fosters development of the individual's transcendent and emergent potentialities. This is a new paradigm which may replace the scientific-industrial paradigm that created the modern technological industrialized society. In the new epoch, the limitations of the external environment are recognized, and human activity fits into a new set of ecological relationships.[35] We have expended a great deal of energy in developing the external environment; the time has come for harnessing that energy and developing the inner environment; self-realization is an important component in the process.

The field of family therapy has also invested a great deal of energy in the external environment. The individual has been de-emphasized. We now need to take knowledge of family functioning back and forth between inner and outer reality. This leads to the middle phase of therapy when a person has given up investing his energies

trying to change other people, to stop inequality, to stamp out evil, and to create his version of the perfect world. Instead, the person reaches the point in consciousness where he recognizes that the world is what it is with a vast history and an infinite future. As points on the space time continuum, it behooves the human being to explore self or the depth dimension to see how he is similar to, yet vastly different from, every other human being. He must see the world with new eyes since perception is the screen preventing him from seeing reality as it is.

Perceiving is a skill, one that we approach with the remnants of our reptialian brain and the glories of our more recent neocortical brain. However, remnants such as the schizophrenic process of thinking remain to some extent in all of us. When this occurs, the reptilian brain reigns supreme; emotionally colored thinking emerges; logic is eliminated. One can sit in with a family and note that whenever the anxiety reaches extreme proportions, the more primitive thinking mechanism takes over. Either thoughts are not completed or they are developed in an illogical or unusual order. Words or ideas are inserted in unexpected contexts; behaviors inappropriate to the situation are carried out.[36] I believe that the temporary emerging of the schizophrenic thinking process in a generally well-functioning family results from extreme anxiety. Under severe stress and extreme emotionality, or physical pain, the more primitive coping mechanisms are employed. Logical and abstract thinking are the most recent of our evolutionary emergents. They are also the first to go when the stress or anxiety becomes extremely intense.

Carefully watching a videotape following a session, the therapist sees that as soon as a highly toxic issue, such as suicide of a parent, is raised, a client will often revert to illogical, emotionally-colored, schizophrenic thinking. If one stays with the emotionality of the issue, the schizophrenic process will continue. However, if one leaves the toxic topic and asks questions which appeal to the more evolved intellect, the schizophrenic process will be reduced or eliminated and the anxiety level decreased.

Let's return to the limbic system which is hypothesized to be the seat of schizophrenic thinking. In contrast to the neocortical system, which generates awareness, the limbic system is intimately connected by neural pathways with the hypothalmus and other centers in the brain stem concerned with visceral sensations and emotional reactions—including sex, hunger, fear, and aggression.[37] The limbic system emotes and thinks, though not in verbal concepts. The limbic system is compared to a primitive television screen which combines and often confuses projections from the internal visceral environment with the external environment.[38]

However, the old brain is not only concerned with effect, it also perceives, remembers, and thinks in its own quasi-independent way. It occupies a strategically central position for correlating internal sensations with perception from the outside world and for initiating appropriate action according to its own lights.[39] Though dominated by instinct, this reptilian brain is clearly capable of learning simple lessons; for instance, a monkey will taste a burning match only once. This old brain generates emotions but does not participate in cognition, memory, and other functions.

Fogarty appeals to greater understanding of the limbic system when he suggests that clients "paint a picture" of their experiences. Symbolism is the way to reach the limbic system; verbal symbolism is ineffective.[40] Poetry is an ideal way of bridging the gap between the limbic and the neocortical systems. The limbic brain could not conceive of red as a three letter word. However, it can associate the color symbolically with flowers, blood, etc. Phobias and compulsive behaviors as well as the illogical word salads of schizophrenics may emerge from the limbic brain.

During the middle phase of therapy, an exploration of the depth dimension takes us into contact with the biological heritage of a person as well as with the emotional and intellectual equipment he has inherited from his ancestors. We begin to see the ways in which he has been taught to perceive or to avoid perceiving, to see or to avoid seeing, to feel or to avoid feeling, to think or to avoid thinking. One of the outcomes of work in the depth dimension is that people learn to outgrow self-deception. They start to cleanse from distortion the curtain of perception and to see the world for the first time. The old ways of perceiving die slowly and are eventually replaced by a more realistic view of self and others. For in the course of evolution, living things have had to make sense of their environment. They have had to develop increasingly proficient sense organs for selecting from all the activity and stimuli around them. The ways in which action patterns follow from the arrival of messages suggest that the best action patterns are instigated by sense messages.[41]

However, when it comes to human responses to this puzzling world, opportunities for self-deception (or inappropriate response to signals) are grossly multiplied. The too-muchness of life requires, from the viewpoint of the family, that young and old acquire blinders as well as selectors lest the overload be unbearable—lest one make misinterpretations dangerous to the individual as to the family—lest threats multiply beyond all possibility of our successfully confronting them.[42] Moreover, our blinders perpetuate self-images, images of family, friends and co-workers. Everyone who is precious to us receives the benefits of some idealization or exaggerated gifts of charm, wit, insight, or strength. We often ignore their weaknesses and focus on their strengths. Rarely do we think of them as ordinary folks. Our parents are resourceful, courageous and unique; our blinders prevent us from seeing their insensitivity to the needs of others. Naturally, our own uniqueness comes to us from such unusual parents.

Conversely, our blinders may provide a lifelong grudge against parents, siblings or spouses who have enraged us in some way. We fail to see the hurt and pain that precedes their behavior.

In each of these instances, blinders shut out evidence that would contribute to a balanced and objective view of the person or group we defend (as an extension of ourselves) or reject (as dangerous and harmful).

For Socrates, a central problem of philosophy was to "know thyself." He was speaking of the self as conveyed by perception, memory, and reason, by conversation with colleagues, and by some deep sense of the cultural and familiar destiny of which one is a part. In current society, we can use X-rays, biofeedback, electrocardiographs and a variety of other instruments to enhance this knowledge. However, one of the most interesting things about this pursuit of inside information is discovery of ways in which we block ourselves from observing the rich incoming information. For instance, muscle tension and breathing patterns can tell us a great deal about self, but we block them out. Videotape provides another view of self. Information from eye, ear, skin, and from within the body are ordinarily misread. We deny the rapid pulse, the fury, the passion, and the fears. We are poor at scanning internal information.

In evolutionary terms, there are many reasons why we should expect the perceptual system to be far from perfect. In fact, it is organized in such a way that it fights against perfection and prevents the receipt of full-fledged, clear, errorless information. At the human level, this tendency to emotional distortion of cues from the environment is further complicated by familial and cultural factors which make us stand together, so to speak, against unwanted information.

In some families, the unwanted information is in the biological and emotional realm, and family members band together in ignoring input and output from these fields. In others, biological and emotional data receive priority, and the thinking process is de-emphasized. In effect, the person receives faulty data, and decisions are based on emotionality or physical discomfort with little input from the rational faculties. In other cases, the family member acts as a disembodied spirit, and all input is rational with no regard for the emotional and biological information.

In either case, the work of the middle phase of therapy is one of balancing the thinking, emotional, and biological fields of the person so that the thinking "I" weighs input from each of the three dimensions prior to a decision. One dimension is not superseded by another. Power struggles or fusion among the three dimensions are replaced by harmonious interaction among the thinking, emotional, and biological fields.

One can compare this to a triangle in which two of the components are fused and the third placed in a distant outside position. In some cases, conflicts between the two fields, *i.e.* intellectual and emotional, may lead to dysfunction in the third. For example: cancer has been said to occur after the unresolved intellectual and emotional conflict accompanying loss of a loved one. In other cases, conflicts between the intellectual and the biological fields may lead to dysfunction in the third field. For example, schizophrenia implies tension between the old biological and emotional brain of our ancestors and the newly emerged rational brain.

For a therapist working with a person in the depth dimension, it is essential that one identify the process that takes place among the intellectual, emotional, and biological fields. Trace this process to its origins in the extended family. As with all triangles: reduce fusion, separate thinking process from emotional processes; separate physical from emotional manifestations; narrow distances. Encourage over-functioners to back off. If emotionality has guided the person's life, teach him how to think. Use the phases of cognitive development as devised by theorists,

such as Piaget, and guide the person through various phases of cognitive development that end in the ability to think intuitively, logically, and abstractly.

Most of the health problems observed in our society can be viewed within the context of the four-dimensional self with its biological, emotional, and intellectual fields. A great deal of research points out the emotional and cognitive components of physical illness.[43] Theorists, such as Scheflen, have identified the biological component in thought disorders like schizophrenia.[44] Cognitive theorists, Burns for example, provide evidence that emotional disorders like depression result in part from buying into one's self-deceptions. According to Burns, the pessimistic lucidity that accompanies depression is not the truth but cognitive distortion; feelings are determined by the meaning one attaches to the event, not the event itself.[45]

Cognitive theorists imply that all moods are created by "cognitions" or thoughts. A cognition refers to one's way of observing things—perceptions, mental attitudes, basic assumptions, and beliefs. It includes the way one interprets things—what one says about something or someone to oneself. Cognitive theorists would say that negative thoughts which cause emotional turmoil nearly always contain gross distortions.[46]

Therefore, the work of the middle phase of therapy lasts a lifetime. It deals with separating emotional process from thinking process; separating expectation from emotional and biological reactivity; differentiating self-deception and true self from pseudo-self; identifying reactions coming from the limbic system and from the neocortical system.

In the middle phase of therapy, people begin to think more clearly; they recognize that we think with our experience and not merely with our intellects. The family is the breeding ground for clear thinking. However, one of the dangers to clear thinking is inertia. Some families, schools, and cultures discourage thinking and encourage closed-midnedness. "To have doubted one's own first principles," Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once wrote, "is the mark of a civilized man." To do this is hardest of all. Our first principles, our basic ideas are those most intimately enmeshed with our personality, with the emotional and physical make-up we have inherited or acquired. Detached, impersonal thinking is almost impossible; it scarcely ever happens.

The goal of the middle phase of therapy is to trace our perceeptions, values, beliefs, feelings, emotions, and our thinking through the extended family. In order to approach clear thinking, humility is necessary. We must be willing to recognize the limitless contents of the depth dimension, the known but true—the known but distorted—the unknown and the unknowable. These contents can be traced through the extended family roots using the four-dimensional self as a guide, while keeping the influence of our evolutionary heritage and its manifestations at the forefront of our mind.

During this phase of therapy, liberation from self-deception involves a process of confronting the outer world. Slowly and with difficulty, one also faces and integrates impressions about the inner world. This leads to the ethical issues of choice and freedom in decision-making. The choice we make—whether or not to face our inner reality—will go with us into the jungles of our most decisive moments.

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