Postmodern Openings

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Abstract:

The analysis of the disease from a spiritual perspective means to take into account those theories that do not consider the patient as part of some statistics or the disease as an exclusive psycho-somatic reality, which is due to disturbances of the physiological system. To consider the person exclusively from the stand point of the disease leads to a situation in which the diagnosis creates the patient. To asses that any condition of this nature can be cured or improved solely through medication - as there is pressure from the U.S. health insurance companies - has an effect of shrinking responsibility of the patient who is not involved in the healing process. Fortunately, in the twentieth century, a number of therapies that regard the patient as the central concern, have been developed- obviously, not regarding the chronically ill, which remain the patient of the psychiatric cure- as a person responsible for what happens to him/her, of affection, and the amelioration of his/her health. Of these, in our article we reviewed the principles of existential psychotherapy by Irvin

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D. Yalom, Viktor Frenkl's logotherapy and the humanistic psychotherapy (customer centric) by Carl R. Rogers.

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Existentialism and postmodernism, common roots

The philosophical origins of postmodenism (http://plato.stan ford.edu/entries/ postmodernism/) can be found in traces that run through the Western thought (and not only) regarding the divorce of the world which we access by our means of knowledge (senses, reason) in an incomplete manner, on the one hand, and a world of Ideas, the real world, on the other. The best known image of this division is, of course, developed by Plato, who tried to demonstrate that what we commonly know is but a shadow, a second-order reality, a pale copy of another world, the world of Ideas. If the Greek philosopher considered that the world of perfection may be accessed through reason, Immanuel Kant simply said that man is denied access to "the thing-in-itself" (das Ding-an-sich or noumen), being capable only to know the phenomenon. The human intellect interposes to the tendency of knowing the reality in itself, because only the intellect has the capacity to know reality through categories (time, space, causality), which "filters" the object, unaccessable directly to us. In "The Birth of Tragedy", Friedrich Nietzsche considers the Greek tragedy a synthesis of two gods: Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo is a solar god, a god of light, while Dionysus is the image of beatitude and frenzyness. Our modern civilization, under the sign of Apollo, becomes frozen and lifeless, the chance of its revival and salvation resides in the return of Dionysian impulses. Postmodernism uses this distinction to establish the difference between art and representation and also a new meaning of the concept "community".

These predecessors of postmodernism are close to those of existentialism. What the two philosophies have in common is the human attitude towards an existence devoid of principles, a world where "God is dead". We can clearly see this attitude in a statement like this: "There isn't only a single socio-temporal framework, but as many subjects and

frames of space and time are" (Yalom, 2010, p. 26). For both existentialists and postmodernists, man must manage in the world alone, a world where he has been thrown, different than his ancestors', and even from that of his parents'. Pascal Bruckner says, "deprived of their divine carrier, things reveal their gratuity, smallness, the fact that "I am what I am" (Hegel). The sublime medieval is being succeeded by the trivial modern, the grand absolute by the relative small. This creates the terrible vertigo of a man suddenly relieved of weights and suffering not a disappointment, but a disorientation and he discovers himself free, but a pygmy. Set free by the constraints of feudal power, which bound him at birth, and by those of the religious law, which bound him to the care of salvation, he doesn't know anything about predestination, or destination. However, with this release, banality arises, ie the total immanence of humanity. There is no escape except in the future, the sky is low and hard. We are bound to belong to this world, forced to stay on earth. We might say, following a formula of Paul Morand, there is nothing but the earth and its great periphery: the cosmos. Ceasing to bear fruit by waiting for a better life, our planet shrinks. In religion you had to expiate your sins in order to gain salvation, from now on, you only have to expiate the fact that you exist. The question: how to live in God, which was for more than a millennium the main question of the Western civilization, is gradually replaced by another, rooted in the concerns of the Ancient greeks: how to live. This is the end of the pathetic relationship with Him, of the biblical dramaturgy, simmilar to the couple in love, to the household scene and court appearance. Left alone with himself, man must learn everything: the plain fact of being born, of growing up and getting old. (...) But, if you can put your live at stake as you throw the dice, to prepare for new destinies, it is false that you can do anything, that you can be whoever you want, that you can embody in turn, the researcher, the artist, the astronaut, and that only "the sky is the limit". The American attitude of "you can do it", which doesn't set any limit to the individual capacity, believing that it is enough to "roll up sleeves", optimism of a nation of pioneers who believe in the brotherhood of effectiveness and will. To the constraints of salvation in the Old Regime succeeded the drunkenness of possibilities in secular societies and this array gives dizziness. He who hopes to follow all the roads may risk not to advance on any; one thing is to get out of yourself, other to think you

are unbound by the necessity of choice, ie of a framework that limits us, conditions our freedom" (Bruckner , 2000).

Man is freed from the constraints of "Old Regimes", whatever they had been (the pression of faith, religious organizations, the power of tradition, the undiscovered territories) and confronted with his endless freedom, so large that it generates anxiety. What matters now is not the discovery of the world as it is in itself, the noumenal, but the discovery of the self. As Heidegger says, there are two fundamental ways of being in the world: (1) a state of forgetfulness of being and (2) a state of assuming the being. At the crossroad of both is situated both existentialism and postmodernism.

Assuming existence and despair

In the analysis of existential philosophy and existential attitude, as part of postmodern trends, we subscribe to Paul Tillich's approach, the German theologist, who refers to these from an ontological point of view and in relation to what he names "the courage to be", namely the assertion of own being despite those elements of existence that are in conflict with his assertion. Tilich distinguishes between an attitude and a content of the term existentialism. An existential approach refers to a knowledge involved in the entire existence, different from the detached, theoretical approach. The latter leads to the transformation of the studied object-even a person-in a matter of calculus and administration. In contrast with the theoretical knowledge, "the existential knowledge is based on an appointment where a new meaning is created and recognized". On the other hand, the content of the term "existential" is covered by the existential philosophy. In a sense, this is a pessimistic philosophy, that would challenge an optimistic essentialism whose representative was Hegel, according to whom man is capable to overcome, through understanding and life, the alienation and the uncertainty of human existence.

"When Kierkegaard detached himself from the hegelian system of essences, he did two things: he proclaimed an existential attitude and a philosophy of existence. He realized that knowledge of what concerns us is infinitely possible only through an attitude of infinite concern, through an existential attitude. At the same time, he developed a doctrine of man describing the essential nature of human alienation in terms of anguish

and despair. Man, situated in the existential situation of finitude and limitation may reach truth only through an existential attitude" (Tillich, 2007, p. 149).

Although existentialism is a philosophy that opposes essentialist optimism, its representatives deny that it is a pessimist one. In "Existentialism is a humanism", Jean Paul Sartre stands against this labeling and claims that as long as man is only what he makes out of himself, as long he is sincere to himself and the only "designer", then we deal with an "optimistic hardness". Of course, this does not mean, on the contrary, the consubstantial anxiety of existence.

Returning to Tillich, he discovers existential attitudes in the history of Western thought from Plato, St. Augustine to Dante Alighieri in the Divine Comedy, but also at artists such as Bosch, Grünewald, Breughel. On the other hand, an anti-existentialist trend, whose main representative is Descartes, was recorded (Sandu, 2012).

By putting man in parentheses (as Husserl would say, who derived his "phenomenological" method from Cartesius), he transforms man into "a pure conscience, an empty epistemological subject; the world becomes an object of scientific observation and technical organization".

As postmodernists would say, for Descartes the scientific language prevails, completely anihilating the discourse that reffers to man as existence, and analyzed from an existential perspective. This way, the human difficulties disappear with the price of the world's dissapearence. But, as I mentioned, the most important essentialist, who stated that history and existence are rational in essence and can be understood, was Hegel. He generated a "rebellion" whose representatives were Schelling (the first who used the term "existence" when he criticized Hegel, his former friend) who influenced Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, Max Weber. In arts, Cézanne, Van Gogh and Munch, and in literature Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Flaubert, Dostoievski, Ibsen and Strindberg imposed their names in the history of their disciplines.The core of this rebellion, in Tillich's analysis, represents the fact that "the safety guaranteed by the proper functioning of the mechanisms for technical control of nature, refined psychological control of the person, and increasing organizational control of society - is obtained with a huge price; man, for whom all of these were invented

as means, becomes himself means to serve other means". Man lost any meaning, either outside him or himself as a meaning. He is however aware of these losses and the awarness of these sacrifices leads to anguish and despair.

"He (man) reacts with the courage of despair, the courage of taking desperation on himself and resisting the radical threat of non-being by daring to be himself. Each researcher of philosophy, art, and existential literature may be capable to underline their structural ambiguity: lack of meaning leads to despair, to a passionate denunciation of this situation and to an unsuccessful attempt to take the anxiety of meaninglessness as the courage to be in himself" (Tillich, 2007, p. 164).

Tillich considers existentialism as the assumption of despair, the courage to assume the anguish, "the courage to despair", into a direction that will be further exploited in Irvin D. Yalom's existential psychotherapy.

The two most important representatives of contemporary existentialism are Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre. The German existentialist philosopher raises questions concerning the authenticity of human existence and the relations between man and Dasein, the state of being in the world. As a precursor of postmodern thinking, Heidegger emphasizes the absolute subjectivity of the individual, his loneliness, being confronted only with his individual conscience because neither God nor conventions or laws of reason, no rules or principles are grounds for action. Man, in his state of "openness" (Entschlossenheit) is the one who makes right what must be right. Heidegger's extreme position has a number of effects, on the one hand, the German philosopher emphasizes the precarious condition of man in the world, that of being "thrown into the world", generating anxiety. In terms of disease or mental imbalance, this status is especially dangerous because it is not a philosophical concept, but rather an experience generated by a limit- situation, which can lead to a loss (confirmation) in the meaning of existence but also, paradoxically, to the rediscovery of it. On the other hand, Heidegger emphasizes the personal responsibility of the individual to lead a genuine life. Finally, his philosophy produced even historical effects, aspect which doesn't interest us here.

In line with the idea of individual responsibility is Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism. The French philosopher considers that the phrase

which describes his orientation is "existence precedes essence". "Atheist existentialism, among whose representatives I consider myself, says very clearly that if God does not exist, at least one being exists, whose existence precedes essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man or, as Heidegger says, Dasein. What do we mean when we say that existence precedes essence? Man first exists, becomes aware of him, occurs in the world - and only then he defines himself. If man, as the existentialist see him, is not definable, that is because in the beginning he is nothing. He will be something later, when he will be what he becomes. Thus, there is no human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is, not that he is what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wants and what he conceives himself after already existing - as he projects himself to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else than what he makes out of himself. This is the first principle of existentialism" (Sartre, 1994, pp. 5-6).

As I mentioned earlier, Sartre considers his philosophy to be optimistic as it leaves man open all ways of action ("there is not any other doctrine more optimistic because human destiny is in himself (...)"). He is not only free but "condemned to freedom" because he cannot be otherwise. Any determination may be overrun and therefore, a personal failure cannot be blamed on it. Man is his own creation through the choices he makes. A person - characters from sartrian novels or plays - is not given once and for all, but becomes and defines himself permanently: a coward may take courageous choices and stop being a coward, or vice versa.

In his book, Paul Tillich emphasizes the danger that an existential psychotherapists must take into account. Existential philosophy leads human freedom to the last consequences, but here a paradox arises. A modern cynic (as the German theologian names the one who doesn't follow anyone because has no reason to do so), out of the desire to preserve his freedom, becomes immobile, ie non-free. "The cynic cannot escape his own ego forces that may lead him to the complete loss of freedom he wishes to preserve" (Tillich, 2007, p. 177). Extreme concepts, the author seems to say, lead to extreme attitudes as happened in history with the contemporary forms of neo-collectivism - Marxism and national socialism.

Spirituality and mental illness

"The XXI century will be religious or it won't be at all," said Andre Malraux. This expression, depending on who is quoting it and the meaning is conffered, takes various forms: instead of the word "religious", sometimes words like "spiritual" or even "mystical" appear. However we consider it, it is obvious that we live in a world totally different from that existing at the beginning of the last century. Some assume the difference, considering that from some time we live in postmodernism, drawing a clear line from what was previously modernism. A feature of postmodernism would be considering language as an instrument of destruction-construction of the world. "Postmodernity emphasizes the power of words to create the world" (Sandu, 2009, p 10) and, from here, what really matters are not facts, but how each person represents and define them (as an individual or as a group)"4.

Hence, regarding the mentally ill, the discussion can be carried out on two levels: that of defining mental illness and how the "patient" himself defines his status and the situation in which he is situated.

In the attempt to define the disease, some argue that the patients are the result of including people in some diagnostic categories, in other words, the diagnosis creates the patient. "In 1929 Israel Wechsler's publication, The Neuroses, identified about a dozen of mental illnesses. In 1938, in the Handbook of Psychiatric and Mental Hygiene about 40 psychogenic disorder could be found (...). In 1952, with the publication of the first Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Diagnostic, edited by the American Psychiatric Association, about 50-60 psychogenic disorders were identified. Until 1987 the manual was revised three times. With the publication of the DSM IIIR, the number of mental disorders nearly tripled (ranging between 180-200 depending on the choice of border definitions). DSM IV further extends the list" (Gergen, 1997).

With the extension of the list, terms from it are being taken by experts, thrown on the market, where the common language starts using them as labels through which people define themselves and others. This would be the process through which the diagnostic leads, if not to the

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4 The Stoics have said: "What troubles people are not facts, but their opinions of them" (Epictetus)

disease, at least to its proliferation in the social environment. "Consider the following: DSM-I, in 1952 listed 112 mental disorders, DSM-II, in 1968, 163 mental disorders, DSM-III, in 1980 reached to 224 and the last edition of DSM-IV, in 1994, 374. In the '80s, psychiatrists estimated that one in ten Americans was mentally ill.

In 1990, the proportion reached one of two. Soon, everyone will fall under this category -except psychiatrists, of course. They will discover "mental illness" everywhere - except in the laboratory- and will prescribe so many drugs as insurance companies will be willing to pay. While indeed there are people for whom medication or confinement is necessary to stop hurting them or others, their number is not by far one from two or ten or a hundred" (Marinoff, 2009, p. 65).

Whatever the interests underlying this state of affair, this is a fact and we believe that the emphasis should be shifted from the discovery (by some, as we have seen,"invention") of the disease towards the individual responsibility for what happens to him, this being the second aspect that modern conceptions of social science can do in the field located at the intersection of psychiatry with sociology and social psychology (Ponea, 2009).

In the first part of this article I stressed the social causes that can unbalance the mind; determining these factors should not lead to resignation and apathy but, on the contrary, to responsibility and activism in order to maintain the mental health. "It doesn't matter what others have done out of you, but what you did from what others have done out of you," said Sartre, the existentialist. Although often considered a philosophy of resignation and surrender to the absurdity of life, existentialism has led to some therapies that bring into question a new kind of spirituality, one that we could call the freedom of man in front of his own destiny. The great questions of life - Who am I? Why do I live? What is the meaning of life? – have been constantly avoided by specialists in social-humanistic sciences, being considered too philosophical.

However, there are developments in contemporary psychotherapy that start precisely with these "philosophical" problems asked by the patients, providing answers to internal imbalances, that's why we consider them directly related to spirituality.

Existential Psychotherapy – Irvin D. Yalom

"...existential-phenomenological therapists are followers of a form of psychotherapy with philosophical roots in the works of Heidegger, Sartre, Husserl and Kierkegaard, whose first objective is to increase the patients' self-knowledge by broadening his perspectives on his own life and the world around him. Second, the therapy aims to help the client to clarify the ways to proceed in the future based on lessons from the past and creating something of value, life being worth lived for; in other words, the process involves confronting, examining and reevaluating the problems and inherent limitations imposed to his options by the fact to be-in-the-world" (Spinelli, cited. Marinoff, 2010, p. 27).

It is believed that existential psychotherapy, with Ludwig Binswanger's attempts in 1950 to apply therapeutically Heidegger's theory, followed in the United States by Rollo May. Today, the main followers are Irvin Yalom in the United States, and Emmy van Deurzen and Ernesto Spinelli and in the UK.

Yalom believes that mental illness is the result of refusal or inability of individuals to satisfactory confront the existential anxiety resulting from the tension with the main concerns of existence.

"Existential Psychotherapy is a dynamic approach of therapy that focuses on the concerns rooted in individual existence" (Yalom, 2010, p. 13).

The "fundamental concerns "are four: death, freedom, isolation and meaninglessness. For the person faced with these concerns there may appear an inner conflict (other than the Freudian drive), devastating for the him. Yalom analyzes the confrontation with each of these concerns, trying to develop specific defense mechanisms. The accent is placed on how individuals respond to these existential issues, considered insurmountable if analyzed until the last consequences: death exists and will irrevocably end and will end our life, man is "condemned to freedom" and therefore responsible for absolutely everything that happens; he is also alone both to himself and, especially, to others; finally, life has absolutely no meaning, any meaning being open to challenge, destruction and criticism. Even under these conditions, Yalom believes that there are solutions offered by the existential therapy.

Yalom's approach consists in unravelling from every difficult situation the main concern of the client and help him deal with it successfully. Regarding death, the American psychotherapist believes, following Heidegger, that it makes authentic life possible. Death experiences are one of the limits which enables the transition from the forgetfulness of being to the assumption of being. There are also another revealing experiences that determine the individual to leap from one level of existence (superficial) to another (deeper): "The suffering caused by the death of a loved one, an incurable disease, the end of a relationship, an important age threshold (fifty, sixty, seventy, and so on), a devastating trauma, such as a fire, rape or robbery, children leaving home (empty nest syndrome), losing a job or a career change; retirement, hospitalization in an asylum, powerful dreams that bring to the surface a message from a deeper area of the self "(Yalom, 2011, p. 37).

Closely following Heidegger, Yalom believes that these "revealing experiments" determine the individual to reconsider his entire life, to review it in different light and set new priorities.

But does actually this therapeutic process take place? How do we pass from anxiety to healing, from philosophy to psychotherapy? As Paul Tillich said, anxiety is the fear of nothing, the fear of absence. "The first statement regarding the nature of anxiety is that anxiety appears when the being becomes aware of its possible non- being. The same assertion, but in a shorter form, can be formulated as: anxiety is existential awareness of non-being. In this formulation, "existential" means that whatever causes anxiety is not the abstract knowledge of non- being, but being aware that non- being is a part of being. (...) Anguish is finiteness, experienced as own finiteness. This is the man's natural anxiety as man, and somehow of all living beings. This is the anguish of non- being: the awareness of finiteness as finiteness" (Tillich, 2007, p. 47). It may seem that there is a closeness between anxiety and fear, but the difference between them is fundamental: fear has a defined object that can be faced, analyzed, attacked, endured. This is the abandonment of philosophy and the beginning of psychotherapy and counseling. The therapist doesn't work with the fears but with his client's fears. "If we could turn the fear of nothing into fear of something, we would be able to initiate protective actions - in other words, to avoid things that we fear, develop magical rituals to diminish it, plan a systematic campaign of

detoxification" (Yallom, 2010, p. 59). Certainly, the psychotherapist's option is the third. If a person, as currently happens, avoids fears or succumbs to magical rituals (Yalom includes religious practices that have the purpose of diminishing the fear of total extinction), he will remove only some effects and in no case the causes underlying those fears. Only mature confrontation with the deepest fears of the client may be helpful, and the solution is to eliminate the cause - fear of death, loneliness, threat of meaninglessness, aspects consubstantial to life - but living with it consciously.

By these means, existential psychotherapy tries to transform through assumption and confrontation the existential problems into allies of existence, into means to determine the client to become stronger and more integrated. Despite these generous intentions, this theory is not exempt from criticism (Popa, 2010). "One of the major criticism to this type of counseling reffers to the overestimation of the human ability to choose their emotional responses, but objections of this kind are only partly justified, as the existential-phenomenological therapy emphasizes that reflection on the way we are-in-the-world creates the possibility to change it. Choosing this option will affect our future emotional responses and, accordingly, it will increase the contribution in the proces of building our lives. Another criticism to therapies inspired by existentialism is related to doubts about the presence of significant meaning at the level of emotions. Although it is unlikely that all emotions are loaded with meaning and purpose, the customers' exploring - facilitated by existential counselors – of their own emotional responses, together with the warning that some emotions may represent nonreflexive reactions, can make the "losses" insignificant. However, even if it grants emotions a place so important and provides an elaborate platform to explore the customer's system values, existential-phenomenological therapy, through its image of human condition, cannot guarantee the eradication of emotional distress, an aspect sanctioned by many opponents and critics" (Maronoff, 2010, p. 29).

Logotherapy - Viktor Emil Frankl
Logotherapy or therapy through meaning, as its name suggests, focuses on searching and finding the meaning of life at the individual level". He who has a reason to live can bear almost anything", are the

words of Nietzsche, the starting point of the German psychiatrist in developing his theory. "Life does not owe us happiness, but gives us a meaning," says Frankl, who believes that a life that makes sense, even unhappy, is worth living and could lead to fulfillment.

The meaning of life can be found in three ways:

− By realizing something (an act), making a work, a mission etc. – creative values.
− Experiencing something (good, beauty, truth in nature or culture) or knowing someone in the privacy of his being, loving him/her - experiential values.
− By the attitude we take in spite of adversity or / and unchangeable suffering, relying on the defiant power of human spirit, which is capable to turn a misfortune, suffering into a personal achievement - attitudinal values.

Frankl's psychotherapy seems to be built around suffering and the struggle with it. This is only partly true - suffering is not necessary to find a meaning in life but, when it is inevitable, man can find a meaning in spite of suffering; if possible, the cause of suffering should be removed; to suffer without having to is not an act of heroism, but a masochist gesture.

As the existentialist philosophers, Viktor Frankl believes in the absolute freedom of the person, placing it at the basis of salvation and recovery. "We cannot conceive anything to condition man so much to leave him without the slightest trace of freedom. Therefore, even in cases of neurosis and psychosis, a remnant of freedom still remains, however limited it may be. Indeed, the innermost core of the patient's personality is not even touched by psychosis. An incurable psychotic may lose usefulness, but still preserve the dignity as man" (Frankl, 2011).

This quote contains some of the most important beliefs that support Frankl's conception. These are the following:

− The human being is an entity consisting of body (soma), mind (psyche) and spirit (nous). We have body and mind, but we are spirit.
− Life has meaning under all conditions, even in the toughest.
− People are endowed with the will to find meaning, to give a meaning.

- People have in every situation the freedom to express the will of meaning.
- Life questions us ("the demanding quality"), it holds us accountable and we must respond responsibly for our own lives, so that our decisions become meaningful.
- We answer to life by becoming responsible for our own lives.
- The individual is unique, hence its unique role in life.
- Life does not owe us happiness, but gives us meaning.

Human existence is characterized by suffering and the problem of meaning is essential. Frankl believes that suffering without a purpose (like work or creation, love or an option in a given situation, immutable, that cannot be changed) leads to despair. For any person (whether the average person, disabled or terminally ill) the conclusion would be valid, empirically validated, that "life has meaning until the last breath, in any circumstance, no matter how miserable it would be". Once man founds a gap in his life, he balances his inner life and is capable to do everything. Frankl has tragically validated his theory when, in 1942, was sent to the concentration camp together with his father, mother and two sisters. He had with him the manuscript in which he described his theory, but it was confiscated and destroyed. After his release, he rewrote the manuscript (published as "The Doctor and the soul"), stating that he owes his survival to the effort of restoring the confiscated manuscript. Later, he was accused by his critics that he excessively theorized his experience. Also, Frankl was accused of authoritarianism. "Rollo May, for example, suggested that Frankl's therapy presents a plain solution to all of life's problems, an assertion that would seem to undermine the complexity of human life itself. May contended that if a patient could not find his own meaning, Frankl provided a goal for his patient. In effect, this would negate the patient's personal responsibility, thus "diminish[ing] the patient as a person" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logotherapy).

Humanistic psychotherapy - Carl R. Rogers

As the name suggests, this theory is based on the belief that the positive nucleus of the human person can be reached by the patient, with or without the help of the therapist. Part of this task is to understand all the limitations and social determinations that have affected the subject's

personality and inner freedom. Thus, we reach what the existentialists have called the "authentic I", unbound by social constraints. "In my experience, people have a fundamentally positive direction. I see that this is true in my contacts with individuals who are in therapy, even with those whose problems are extremely disturbing, whose behavior was extremely antisocial, whose feelings seem extremely abnormal. If I can understand the way they express their feelings, if I am able to accept them as distinct persons, they tend to move in certain directions. And what are the directions towards which they tend to move? The words that properly describe this aspect are words like positive, constructive, movement towards self improvement, increase in maturity, growth in socialization. I came to believe that the more the individual is fully understood and accepted, the more likely he tends to renounce the false masks he used in his life in order to carry on in the "forward" direction. (...) I am aware that, despite their defensive stance and personal fears, individuals can behave and they even do it sometimes, in incredibly cruel, horribly destructive, immature, regressive and anti-social ways. And yet, one of the most refreshing and comforting part of my experience is working with such individuals and to discover in them strongly positive directional trends, as in all of us, at the deepest levels" (Rogers, 2008, p. 63).

Based on this conviction, Rogers developed a method to lead the patient to confront with what he/she is at the deepest possible level, to understand and, ultimately, to accept him/herself. If at the beginning this road is covered together with the psychotherapist, then the client learns to be courageous, to be himself and to become autonomous (Sandu, 2011).

This is a different position from that of existential psychotherapy, at least in the form expressed by Irvin Yalom. Rogers takes into account a positive nucleus of man (a concept often found in other New Age theories rooted in different religions) towards which the individual moves naturally, this being a journey of self discovery which, however, can sometimes be crossed, thwarted by social norms, distorted representations of self, inability to self-expression, etc.. This approach is not always easy and the client needs help and support from the therapist.

Although Carl Rogers is a psychotherapist and counselor, strongly anchored in reality, he feels the need to base his research on

philosophical support, founding it at the forerunner of existentialist philosophy, Soren Kierkegaard. One of Rogers' articles is called *"To be that self which you truly are" The theory of a psychotherapist on personal goals*, where he presented his conclusions about the customers' directions in the free climate of the therapeutic relationship. In fact, the problem is the goal you have in life, your purpose and, in general, the meaning of life. Each person, at least in some moments of his life, asks himself these questions and not founding a satisfactory response can lead to internal imbalances. Rogers believes that the goal of life, as it was revealed in his relation with the clients, is expressed by Kierkegaard's words: "To be that self which you really are"[5]. Further, he describes in his article the manners in which the clients – in client-centered counseling or non-directive exercise the initiator's goal is not to influence or direct him – manage to reach themselves. The process begins with an "appearance removal" of the alienating self, accepting in parallel who he really is (a frightened person hiding behind a facade, a mask shown to the public). "Removing the need" is the next step, respectively of some social models, or of a "good", "right" person etc.. The client's conclusion from this analysis is: "I do not care what you say! I will not be ashamed of myself". In continuation of the previous tendencies, the client will "remove the fulfillment of others' expectations", ie social conformity, the requirement to be as it is required - explicitly or implicitly - to be. The consequence of going through these stages is "to stop pleasing others." So far, Rogers described how customers define themselves negatively, how they express what they don't want to be, what they don't want to do anymore. But where are they headed? "First, the client moves toward autonomy, by this I mean that, gradually, to choose those goals he wants to achieve. He decides which activities and ways of being are meaningful for him and which not" (Rogers, 2008, p. 245). Also, the client in the free environment of the therapeutic relationship begins to feel the existence as process, fluidity, change. He no longer analyzes himself in the rigid frames of a static design with fixed goals, but accepts himself as dynamically changing, unpredictable, surprising. A component of "To be that self which you truly are" is the emergence of open and friendly relationships with your own experiences. It is about the

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5 Nietzsche also said it: „Become what you really are!"

acceptance and understanding of own feelings and experiences so that they would become allies and not enemies. "He (the client) is not anymore afraid of what he might find. He comes to understand that his reactions and inner experiences, the messages from the senses and the viscera, are his allies, thus he starts to understand his internal sources of information, rather than block it" (Rogers, 2008, p. 249). Self acceptance leads to acceptance of other individuals as they are and an increase in self-confidence. "To be what you really are is the way in life that he appreciates mostly when he is free to move in any direction. It is not a simple choice of an intellectual value, but appears to be the best description of stuttering and vacillating behaviors, through which he approaches, exploring, what he wants to be"(Rogers, 2008, p. 252). The therapist emphasizes the difficulty of this approach and that this "finding oneself" is more a search for self because it doesn't actually reach an end. More than a goal, it is a way of life.

Although the approach described above may seem excessively theoretical or plain simple, its stake is important. Rogers uses the term congruence defined as "consistent correlation between experience and awareness" (Rogers, 2008, p. 388). Or, if the individual is inconsistent in his relations, presenting to the world what he is not, the false masks (via two mechanisms - distortion and denial) are reflected in a defensive behavior and a rigid internal structure. Thus, inconsistency leads to a type of behavior that can be described as "neurotic" and which can degenerate into pathological behavior.

These three orientations in modern and contemporary psychotherapy we consider to be "spiritual" theories because they appeal to man's power - which can be considered having a divine nature – to get rid of what it is not proper, what is binding and obliges him to be what he/she is not, a mentally ill person. With help from others or through own effort, these three theories try to convince us that man (as an individual and not as "patient") has the strength of liberation and becoming.

These psychotherapies, but not only these, focus on the individual, with his personal resources, who with the help of the counsel, tends to overcome the crises in which he is involved.

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