USE OF THESES

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REFLECTIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY:
AN EXTRAPOLATION FROM JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S
EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY

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CONTENTS

PREFACE 1 - 3

CHAPTER I. Introduction: the Role of Consciousness In Psychotherapy. 4 - 10

CHAPTER II. The Concepts of Consciousness and Reflection: A Theoretical Framework. 11 - 32
  "Being" and "Existence" 11
  The Sartrean Concept of Consciousness 14
  The For-itself in constant pursuit of the In-itself: Man in constant pursuit of a Self 17
  The Concepts of Negation and Freedom 19
  Pre-reflective and Reflective Consciousness 20
  Being-for-other 25
  The Concept of "Bad Faith" 30

CHAPTER III. Pre-reflective Consciousness and Reflection: Its Implication for Psychopathology. 33 - 52
  Psychopathology 34
  Two types of Alienation or Neurosis 38
  Symptomology of the two types of Alienation 42

CHAPTER IV. Reflection: Its Implication for the Process of Psychotherapy. 53 - 83
  "Pure" and "Impure" Reflection 54
  The two-phase structure of Pure Reflection 58
  The distinction between Unreflective Emotion and Reflective Feeling 61
  Rogers' "Reflection of Feeling" - A Clarification 65
  "Intellectual" and "Emotional" Insights 71
  The Interactive Process of Psychotherapy 75

CHAPTER V. Techniques of Reflection in Psychotherapy. 84 - 126
  "Acting on - Reacting to" as compared to "Interacting with" 87
  Frankl's Logotherapeutic Technique of Paradoxical Intention 91
  Haley's Therapeutic Paradox 95
  Wolpe's Systematic Desensitization 103
  The use of Imagery in Psychotherapy 107
  Gendlin's Experiential Therapy 118

CHAPTER VI. Summary and Conclusion. 127 - 132

REFERENCES 133 - 139
The final form that this essay has taken arises from an initial impetus to investigate the role of imagery in psychotherapy. Three recent articles (Singer, 1970; Singer, 1971; Cordner, 1970) reviewed the recent upsurge of interest in the use of imagery in psychotherapy. These authors did not find any systematic account capable of integrating the various uses of imagery in psychotherapy; nor did they provide any useful theoretical integration themselves.

The use of imagery in psychotherapy varies from the traditional psychoanalytic use of "free associated" fantasy to Assagioli's (1965) extensive system of psychotherapy called Psychosynthesis which relies solely on image visualization and on to Gendlin's (1970) technique of Experiential Focusing and Wolpe's (1958) procedure of Systematic Desensitization.

In attempting to integrate these diversified theoretical frameworks into a meaningful conceptual system, I am struck by the lack of reference to the role of the activity of imagining on the part of the patient in psychotherapy. Most psychotherapists have put the emphasis on the content of imagery in accounting for their therapeutic
effectiveness.

This led to an exploration into the process of imagining. Subjectively, when I engage in an act of imagining I find myself changing the focus of consciousness. In other words there is an alteration in what I am conscious of. This brought me back to the issue of consciousness which is the topic of the present essay— the implication of the concept of Consciousness and its component element of Reflection in psychotherapy. Specifically, it is an examination of one particular conceptual system of consciousness— Jean-Paul Sartre's Existential Philosophy of Consciousness— for its implication in the practice of psychotherapy.

I hope to show that what has commonly been referred to as "the mysticism of Existentialism" can be understood in practical psychotherapeutic terms. Most important of all, I hope to show that the process of psychotherapy can be better understood using the concept of reflection in terms of the change in level of consciousness. It is thus an attempt towards providing a general theory of psychotherapy based upon Sartre's version of Existentialism.

Chapter I takes a quick look at the concept of consciousness in general psychotherapeutic literature. In this chapter, the purpose of this essay will be further elaborated. Chapter II introduces Sartre's conceptual
system of consciousness and reflection which will be applied in a general discussion of psychopathology in Chapter III. In the next two chapters the focus is specifically on the process of psychotherapy, with Chapter IV attempting to relate the concept of reflection to the general process of psychotherapy and Chapter V to further illustrate this through a discussion of some specific techniques of psychotherapy. This is followed by the conclusion to the essay in Chapter VI.