



**DEVELOPING POSITIVE POLARIZATION**

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PSYCHOLOGICAL ENERGY  
TRANSFORMATIONS:  
DEVELOPING POSITIVE POLARIZATION

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Where you find one thing, you find its opposite—the two poles. And it is this fact that enables the Hermeticist to transmute one mental state into another, along the lines of polarization. Things belonging to different classes cannot be transmuted into each other, but things of the same class may be changed, that is, may have their polarity changed.

*The Kybalion*

He that overcometh shall inherit all things.

Revelation 21:7

By what men fall, by that they rise.

*Kularnava Tantra*

This paper will discuss certain principles and techniques of converting negatively polarized energies into their opposite positive form, as applied in the practice of transpersonal therapy and transpersonal growth work.

*converting  
energy  
polarities*

We will define the term “negative” energy in this context as psychological energy, including attitudes, thoughts, emotions, physiological states, etc., which is antithetical to our own growth and/or the growth of others; “positive” energy will be defined as that which promotes such growth.

Perhaps we should also define with more precision the term “growth” which is generally understood in a rather vague “common sense” manner. In order to adequately define psychological growth for our purposes, it seems useful to invoke the concept of the Self, which is a key concept in many transpersonal psychologies (e.g., Assagioli’s psychosynthesis,

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Jungian analytical psychology) and in most of the great religious traditions. (In Hindu philosophy the word Self or "Atman" is used, while in Western religious traditions the word "soul" is preferred.) The Self in these transpersonal frameworks is viewed as an innermost essence within the person—at once immanent and transcendent—which is a center through which integration of the personality and spiritual realization take place. In relationship to this concept, one might say that "growth" is the process by which one attains increasing alignment with the Self, thereby bringing the personality and the various psychological functions under its direction. The function of the Self, in this process, is at once guiding, energizing, inspiring, coordinating, nurturing and harmonizing.

*basic principle  
in energy  
transformation*

A basic principle involved in energy transformation is expressed in the aphorism that "energy follows thought." A therapist aware of this principle will not encourage excessive dwelling on the "dark side" of one's nature, on the imperfections and weaknesses. For to spend too much time focusing on one's deficiencies tends to create a morbid self-preoccupation, as well as discouragement and loss of self-esteem. Further, it binds energy that might otherwise be used to build positive qualities and to open oneself to more inspiring influences. Although it is important to be aware of our weaknesses and to see them clearly—otherwise they will catch us off guard and we will be unable to do anything to overcome them—the best antidote is often not to wallow around in them unduly, but rather to work toward developing the opposite qualities and attitudes. Under some circumstances it is possible to directly convert the negative energy into its opposite pole: in other situations the negative attribute simply drops away through attrition or through the opposing effect of the corresponding positive quality. As Erasmus said, "Give light and darkness will disappear of itself."

*first step*

The first step in working out a program for personal growth is to make an assessment of the person's strengths and weaknesses, needs and potentials. This provides some perspective on the work to be done and on the kind of energy which requires transformation, "redemption," or recycling. An adequate assessment includes input from conscious as well as unconscious levels, bearing in mind the psychological type of the individual as well as the interrelationships between the particular forms taken by his negative use of energy. This will provide the basis for determining an appropriate program for energy transformation.

A general principle in working with conversion of negative energy into its corresponding positive role is that the person's will must be involved in the procedure. The will is a topic which is gradually finding its way back into modern psychology after a period of banishment, attributable in part to the grave misunderstanding which prevailed in Victorian times concerning its real nature. In psychosynthesis, the will is accorded a central place within the human psyche, being seen as a direct expression of the Self. A true act of will, on the higher levels, is an integral act which involves commitment of the whole person to a goal which is both realistic and worthwhile; such an act mobilizes energies of vast power. In order for a person to will something, it is necessary that he have a sense of its value and importance, and that he freely choose it as a goal he is committed to attaining. As this principle applies to psychological energy transformation, it is necessary for the person attempting to convert negative energy to have some awareness of the painful and limiting effects of his negative attitudes and to sincerely desire to change them. If his desire is to be effective, it must go beyond passive and idle wishing to the point where he is able to commit his will—the focused energies of his total being—to achieve his goal. When will energy is called into play, it is central and powerful enough to still the voices of the more infantile aspects of ourselves that resist the idea of growing up. If the will of the Self—the unifying center of consciousness—is not mobilized, resistance of this kind often crops up and an inner "saboteur" aborts the attempt to change.

*reinstatement  
of will*

Sometimes it may be necessary to go through a process of catharsis before a person can let go of his negativity. This is particularly true in the case of anger; a person may be so identified with it that he cannot see beyond it. When this happens, it is important to encourage the person to take the "witness" position or the attitude of an objective observer as much as possible when he is expressing his anger so that he can begin to detach himself from it. He must come to understand the roots of his anger, learning to express it in appropriate and constructive ways and letting go of that part of it which stems from projecting his own unsolved problems onto others.

*process of  
catharsis*

It sometimes happens that there is unconscious resistance to developing a particular attitude or form of behavior that the person may regard as positive, in spite of the fact that the person believes he is ready and willing to change. This may be ascertained if, for example, the person attempts to visualize himself acting in a "positive" way but is unable to do so. One

common explanation of this is that the goal is a "false positive" as in the case of the young woman who believed she wanted to be able to practice the piano with more regularity and was hoping to transform her lethargy into enthusiasm. She attempted to visualize herself getting out of her seat to walk across the room and play the piano, but could not even imagine herself standing up. It turned out, on closer examination, that the choice of a concert career was not really her own and that she was unconsciously resisting her parents' choice by being unable to practice. She could not put her will behind it, though she consciously believed she wanted to; true will is an expression of the Self and requires assent of the inner person.

Another common cause of inability to develop positive qualities that people wish to develop is attachment to suffering—masochism and self-pity. Gurdjieff has said that "A man will renounce any pleasures you like, but he will not give up his suffering. Man is made in such a way that he is never so much attached to anything as he is to his suffering. . . . No one who has not . . . sacrificed his suffering can work" (Ouspensky, 1949, p. 274. The word "work," as employed by Gurdjieff, refers to the concept of "work on oneself" or inner work leading to spiritual growth). This attachment to suffering or self-pity is generally rooted in the wish to remain a child—to avoid taking responsibility for one's own development, to be taken care of by others, and to see others as responsible for our unhappiness.

At a deeper level, this attachment to suffering stems from a sense of inadequacy and unworth, from a false guilt that tells the person he does not really deserve to grow and be happy or successful. This lack of awareness among men of their true worth and essential divinity would seem to be a root factor in the self-defeating and destructive behavior we find in the world today. At the level of practical work with people, it is important to realize that tendencies to self-depreciation, self-punishment and dependency—if present to a marked degree—will interfere with effective use of the will. Thus, it is necessary to take steps to help the person see how his negative attitudes (often unconscious) are preventing his growth.

Now we come to the point of discussing some of the techniques for transformation of energy which can be used to deal with these negativities. The first category of techniques we will consider is based on the principle of substitution. These approaches do not attempt to directly convert negative into positive energy, but do so indirectly by replacing the negative

thought, attitude or assumption with the opposite positive thought. Their effectiveness is based on the fact that the negative attitude tends to be "starved out" through lack of attention and that the effect of the opposite positive attitude which is actively cultivated is to counteract or cancel out the corresponding negative attitude.

The first of these "substitution" techniques we will consider is that of *affirmation*—replacing the negative thought with a corresponding positive thought. It is a simple technique for a person to use, though some skill is required in formulating an effective affirmation. The theory behind this is that opposites cancel each other, just as light eliminates darkness, courage can overcome fear, and love can convert hatred. The tendency is always for the positive pole to control the negative pole, as it is of a higher order of "vibration," but the opposites must belong to the same class; thus, hatred cannot become courage. An interesting exposition of this theory may be found in a little book, *The Kybalion*, of anonymous authorship, which deals with psychic energy and the laws which govern its manifestation. Our first task in using the technique of affirmation is to accurately identify the negative thought or assumption. We can use the techniques of Albert Ellis in his rational-emotive therapy to help people understand the irrationality and harmfulness of the negative assumptions they make. It is much more effective, however, if in addition to debunking and unmasking the negative attitude, we also encourage affirmation of the opposite positive thought.

Affirmation should not merely be done once, but repeatedly, as Assagioli points out (1965, 1973); repetition is like the blows of a hammer which eventually drive in the nail. In working with affirmations, it is important to work with "root attitudes" or the basic and deeply-seated attitudes which underlie and determine our more surface attitudes. For example, if the outward negative attitude expressed is something like "I'm afraid my husband is going to push me around," the "root" attitude, or at least one aspect of it, might be "I do not feel strong enough or worthy enough to stand up for myself." In this case, one could select a positive affirmation along the lines of "I deserve respect" or "I am able to stand up for myself." One must avoid the use of the "double negative"—as in "I do not feel unworthy"—and, instead, formulate the affirmation in a clear, simple, and positive way which renders it much easier for the unconscious to assimilate. It is also important that affirmations be phrased in a way which is acceptable to the person using them so that no resistance is aroused; and it is preferable that

*technique of affirmation*

*preconditions for use of will*

*"substitution" techniques*

the person himself formulate in his own words the affirmation he will be using, after the general thrust of it has been identified with the assistance of the guide or the group.

The technique of affirmation can be very effective, if used on a regular basis—preferably at least twice a day and whenever the need arises in the course of the day. It can be reinforced by writing down the statement and displaying it in prominent places, as in the “technique of evocative words” described by Assagioli (1970). It is more powerful if the affirmation is spoken out loud until the person feels he is really saying it with conviction, but it may be spoken silently if circumstances do not permit overt speech. If used in a group setting, the group or subgroups may be used as a chorus to reinforce the positive thought after the person has spoken it himself, saying in unison for example, “Mary, you deserve respect.”

The technique of affirmation is only one of many “substitution” methods which may be employed to help overcome negative attitudes. Another method of great importance is *meditation on and invocation of positive qualities*, “virtues,” or character traits and attitudes which correspond to what the person needs to develop. This can be combined with the technique of evocative words mentioned above, in which the name of a quality such as “Patience” is written on a card and placed in various spots where it will catch one’s attention during the day. In meditating on a quality or virtue, one goes through the preliminary stages of relaxation and alignment, followed by concentration on one or more of the following points: the meaning of the quality; its characteristics; and its significance for one’s own life and for the world. It is well to begin the meditation with concentration on the more abstract aspects of the quality, followed by application of these principles to one’s own life. A good description of the techniques of reflective and receptive meditation is given in the book, *The Silent Path*, by Eastcott. One can write down any insights that come while meditating, as meditation is an altered state of consciousness in which one is in communion with the supraconscious and therefore “above” the ordinary level of awareness. A process of “psychic erasure” tends to wipe away the revelations of the intuition in these altered states, just as we are likely to forget our dreams—however vivid they may be at the time—unless we write them down. Frequently in the process of meditation images or symbols will come which we can use to deepen our understanding of the topic and with which we can identify ourselves, attempting to merge with the symbol. The effects of meditation on positive qualities is sometimes overwhelming, as in the case of an agitated patient to whom I had given the

directed  
“substitution”  
methods

assignment to meditate on the quality of “peace” during the week. She did this faithfully and by the next appointment was so transformed that she literally radiated peace. As soon as she entered the room, I immediately experienced a profound sense of peace within her, in spite of the usual ruffles on the surface, although I had forgotten about the assignment I gave her until she brought it up during the session.

Another way of working with positive qualities is to invoke their guidance or wisdom, asking them questions in a process of inner dialogue. If we are striving to develop love, we can let the spirit of Love direct us, though we may find out that another quality is required when the guidance comes. This happened to a member of one of our groups who carried on a dialogue with Love and was told that what he needed to give his love some backbone was will! Another example that comes to mind is a therapist in training who thought he needed to meditate on love, but when he started to do so, an inner voice told him that humility was the needed quality. He proceeded instead to have a most illuminating meditation on humility which helped him greatly to overcome the pride for which he had believed love to be the antidote.

Invocation of the spirit of a virtue or quality can be a great help, not only to obtain guidance, but also for immediate inspiration and assistance in a difficult situation. If we can think or say “Help me, Patience” when we are about to explode in a trying situation, this may give us the strength we need to manifest patience at that time. It is interesting that the medieval “realist” philosophers actually believed in the ontological reality of the Virtues, thinking of them somewhat like the archetypes or “Eidos” of Plato. Whatever may be the metaphysical reality, it is a psychological fact that most people who seriously meditate on the virtues begin to experience their presence as real entities and are able to develop a creative relationship with them.

Another technique based on the substitution principle which can be effectively used to reverse a negative situation is the *as if* technique which forms part of the teaching in numerous esoteric systems and which has been described by various modern psychological writers (Assagioli, 1965, 1973; Maltz, 1964). This method consists of imagining oneself acting “as if” one already possessed the positive qualities one would like to have. This can take place at the level of inner activity, as when the imagination is employed to visualize and feel oneself acting with a particular quality or attitude, or it may take place at the level of outer action in which one actually behaves in a real

“as if”  
technique

life situation as if he already possessed a quality he wants to develop. The technique of "inner theatre," as de Ropp calls it (1968), has the advantage that it is less risky and permits the person to inwardly rehearse attitudes before trying them out in real life. The use of "outer theatre" in which one consciously plays a particular role in life in order to develop a desired quality has been employed by many famous men. Teddy Roosevelt wrote in his autobiography (Carnegie, 1956):

I was, as a young man, at first both nervous and distrustful of my own prowess. I had to train myself painfully and laboriously not merely as regards my body but as regards my soul and spirit. . . . When a boy, I read a passage in one of Marryat's books which always impressed me. In this passage, the captain of some small British man-of-war is explaining to the hero how to acquire the quality of fearlessness. He says that at the outset almost every man is frightened when he goes into action, but that the course to follow is for the man to keep such a grip on himself that he can act just as if he were not frightened. After this is kept up long enough, it changes from pretense to reality, and the man does in very fact become fearless by sheer dint of practising fearlessness when he does not feel it. . . . This was the theory upon which I went. There were all kinds of things of which I was afraid at first, ranging from grizzly bears to 'mean' horses and gun fighters; but by acting as if I was not afraid I gradually ceased to be afraid. Most men can have the same experience if they choose.

The psychological principle behind this technique is given in Assagioli's book, *The Act of Will*: "Attitudes, movements, and actions tend to evoke corresponding images and ideas; these, in turn . . . evoke or intensify corresponding emotions and feelings" (1973). It is based on the fact, recognized by William James years ago, that although the will has a limited capacity to control the emotions in a direct way, it can *indirectly* affect them more readily through physical attitudes and external actions.

It sometimes happens, when working with the "as if" technique, that a person is unable to imagine himself, even mentally, acting in the way he believes he wants to act. The case of the frustrated pianist has already been mentioned to illustrate the blockage caused by a "false positive" goal. A frequent cause of inability to work with the "as if" technique is the existence of strong unconscious attitudes conflicting with the attitude one hopes to develop, particularly, as Maltz points out, when these attitudes relate to the self-image. This may be seen in the case of a woman who had decided to give up being a bored housewife and go back to school and prepare herself for a career, but who was unable, in working with the "as if"

technique, to imagine herself functioning outside the home. We had to deal with her feelings of inadequacy, false guilt, and fear of failure before she could take a step as large as this. When the will is behind the desire to change, however, and unconscious blocks are eliminated, the "as if" technique can be extremely effective. The power of the creative imagination can be harnessed, under the direction of the will, to "dream the world into existence," and can greatly accelerate a person's progress.

All of the techniques described so far—affirmation, meditation on and invocation of positive qualities, and the "as if" technique—utilize the principle of substitution, according to which something positive is deliberately cultivated in order to counteract or cancel out a corresponding negative attitude. They replace something by its opposite. In addition to techniques of this type, there are various other categories of techniques for reversing negative energy.

There are, for example, techniques for directly converting the negative energy itself into a positive form. The techniques based on the principle of substitution allow the negative attitudes to atrophy through disuse and lack of attention, while the "direct conversion techniques" take the negative energy itself and, by applying the energies of the Self (primarily Love and Will) to it, transmute it into something positive. The Self, one might say, is like a catalyst, which acts upon the negative energy and liberates the life force latent within it. It is said, in the Hasidic tradition, that in all natural forms there is a "divine spark" waiting to be liberated by the "Shekinah" or Holy Spirit.

"direct  
conversion"  
techniques

An example of a direct conversion technique can be found in the exercise we have called *turning the switch*. The seed for developing this technique was planted once during a conversation with a Unity minister who said that within each one of us there is a switch which can turn hatred into love and which can bring in the divine Light. It is a question, he said, of learning to find that switch. At first it may be difficult, as when we come into an unfamiliar and unlighted room, but if we search with patience we can find where the switch is located, and once we know where it is, we can return there the next time with ease. I first experimented with this technique in the fiery furnace of my own life and found that it produced remarkable results. At a time of great stress, when everything seemed to be hitting at once to make me lose my center and to provoke feelings of resentment, it occurred to me that there was a switch within me and that I had the power to turn it if I chose to. I

*“switch” technique*

turned the “switch” by a conscious act of will—which was facilitated by recitation of a certain mantra I had been using in meditation—and found indeed that it had the power of turning hatred into love and of freeing me from the terrible clutches of negativity. It made me more conscious than I had been prior to that time that we do not have to remain in a negative state unless we choose to, that we have the power to accept or reject any thought or attitude. As Mary Strong has said, “In every second of the day, you are making decisions—not upon what you shall do, but *what you shall think*, and that is what matters. Every instant the mind is accepting and rejecting, going forward or back, up or down” (1948).

Since that time, I have used the “switch” technique effectively, both in groups and in work with individuals. In an average group, something like half of the members are able to succeed on the first try, and in more evolved groups where there is greater alignment with the Self, the proportion is higher. With practice, the technique becomes easier to use and people can learn to apply it in their own lives whenever there is a need. In a group setting, people are instructed to find a place within themselves where they harbor negative feelings—hatred, resentment, self-pity, dependency, etc.—and to wallow around in these feelings for a moment. The length of time should be fairly brief in the beginning, lest they become so thoroughly identified with these feelings that it is too difficult to let go of them. Then a cue is given for turning the switch. A sound such as snapping the fingers, clapping the hands, or small cymbals is effective, though different people may wish to devise cues of their own when working alone. Turning on an actual light switch, if the room is darkened, is very effective. Such cues as a word or phrase (“stop,” “enough,” “rise above”), or a mantra, or an image such as the sun or a ball hitting the ground and bouncing up, or a physical act such as sitting up very straight or breathing deeply have been successfully used. It is important not to try to figure out consciously what the polar opposite would be, as this can have a paralyzing effect: rather, one should simply allow the wisdom of the unconscious to reveal the opposite pole. The “opposite” of negative feelings such as self-pity may be quite different from one individual to the next, depending on the meaning of the self-pity to the individual and the kinds of creative energy it binds for him. When the “switch” is turned, the expressions on people’s faces are visibly changed; there are frequent outbursts of joyous laughter, and the “vibrations” in the room are immediately raised.

One of the most valuable aspects of this technique is that it makes very clear that the energy we expend in negative ways is the very same energy that can be transformed into positive,

creative expression. One reason we operate on so few cylinders, compared to our potential, is that so much of our energy is bound in negative ways and hence unavailable for constructive purposes. If we can let go of the negativity, there is a tremendous influx of joyous, loving, creative energy. When we can actually observe our hatred turning into love and can experience how much better it feels to be able to use that energy to love, there is less desire to hold onto the negative attitudes. The technique is particularly effective in working with criticism, and it is relatively easy, when we catch ourselves judging and condemning someone, to turn this energy around and let it become compassion. People who can use the technique well and who set their will to systematically transforming negative states, are able to evolve very rapidly.

Another example of direct transmutation of energy is not a technique as such, but rather an attitude of mind which can be cultivated by various techniques. This is the capacity to *turn obstacles into stepping stones*—to see the difficulties life presents as challenges and opportunities for growth rather than as a reason to feel sorry for oneself and to lament one’s destiny. The secret to achieving this attitude lies in realizing that the apparent obstacles that confront us belong to us in a particular way, that they have significance and purpose in terms of our own life, and that each obstacle contains the key to its overcoming. In one exercise we have developed to help people work with this concept, they are asked to choose some circumstance of their lives which they have come to regard as a hindrance to their happiness or their development. They are to study this obstacle until they find the key to overcoming it, that key being the quality within themselves which they must develop in order to deal with it constructively. Dealing with the obstacle may entail changing outer circumstances, if this is possible and appropriate, or it may simply require changing the internal environment by altering the way in which one perceives the circumstances. The prayer used by the A.A. is a good guide to the principles involved here: “God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference.” So dealing with an obstacle sometimes may mean simply to accept with good grace a situation which cannot be changed rather than resenting it, and learning to develop patience, cheerfulness, and forbearance. If we did not strive to overcome difficulties, we might live in comfort, but would stagnate inwardly. Only by evolving the will, can we develop the higher qualities which are part of being fully human.

*opportunities  
for growth*

*evolving  
of will*

It is of prime importance to help people learn to accept their challenges cheerfully and with courage, aware of the pos-

meditation  
on  
seed thoughts

sibilities these afford for growth. Another technique which can be used to this end is *meditation on seed thoughts* related to the theme. Meditation on seed thoughts can be a most powerful and effective means of transforming consciousness. It is often recommended to remain with one thought for a relatively long period of time—a week or even several weeks—in order to allow its meaning more fully to unfold. Or, one can alternate similar or complementary thoughts. The following are some seed thoughts we have collected on this theme:

All that we are is the result of what we have thought.  
*Dhammapada*

To be in the weakest camp is to be in the strongest school.  
Chesterton

By what men fall, by that they rise.  
*Kularnava Tantra*

His majesty's loyal opposition.  
term used in the English Parliament

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear.  
Mark Twain, *Pudd'n Head Wilson*

Experience is not what happens to a man. It is what a man does with what happens to him.  
Aldous Huxley

The difficulties that come to you are exactly in proportion to your strength. Nothing can happen which does not belong to your consciousness, and all that belongs to your consciousness, you are able to master.

The Mother

The more obstacles, whether outer or inner, that we meet in our effort to acquire a virtue, the sooner and more deeply it will take root in our soul, if we strive to overcome them resolutely and without self-pity.

Scupoli, *Unseen Warfare*

Two men were walking barefooted along a rock-strewn road. One man complained, "Someone should have this road paved," while the other replied, "Wouldn't it be easier for us to put shoes on our feet?"

Tibetan tale

A further conversion-of-energy technique, though a more advanced one, for changing resentment and self-pity into appreciation and learning, utilizes techniques for obtaining *answers from the unconscious* (Crampton, 1969; in press). The question asked is something like "What is the meaning and purpose of this situation in terms of my own development?" The answer is allowed to come in the form of mental imagery—visual or auditory. The evocation of words is particularly helpful, and this can be done by having the person

answers from  
the unconscious

imagine seeing words written on his mind screen or by techniques of auditory evocation such as hearing words spoken from the vault of the heavens or from a symbol of inner wisdom such as a fountain, a flame, or a sage. The technique of automatic writing is also very revealing and spontaneous movement and drawing may also be employed, though the former techniques tend to be more fruitful for this exercise. The objective of this exercise is to come to an understanding of the spiritual significance (which may be "karmic" as well as future-oriented) of the obstacles in our lives so that we can benefit from our encounter with them and gain whatever learnings are possible through the situation.

The techniques just mentioned might also be classified among the next class of methods we will consider, as it is based on gaining insight into the true nature and significance of our experience. We will call this category of techniques for energy transformation "insight techniques" as they draw on the transforming power of the Self as *fair witness* to dissolve negative attitudes—based on illusion—with the clear light of Truth. This technique is particularly effective with intelligent and spiritually sensitive persons for whom recognition of reality is sufficient motive to change their attitudes and behavior. Any of the methods designed to help take the "fair witness" or objective observer position are applicable here. This includes the evening review, the psychological log, and many other techniques, some of which we will describe.

insight  
techniques

Since a good many of our negative attitudes are based on projection of our unacceptable qualities onto other people, *re-owning of projections* is an important aspect of energy transformation. Taking our projections back inside us where they belong both saves us the energy we waste in criticizing others and enables us to do something to change those things we do not like in ourselves. An exercise for doing this, which may be employed in a group setting or in working with individuals, starts off by asking people to identify critical, condemning attitudes within themselves. A general principle is assumed that whenever we are unduly irritated or angered by another person, this is an indication that we have projected unsolved problems of our own onto that person. The second step in the exercise, having contacted judgmental attitudes toward another person, is to ask ourselves just exactly what it is about that person's behavior that annoys us. It is very helpful in pinpointing the problem to put into one word or short phrase the trait or quality that "gets to us" the most. If the exercise is done in a group, dyads can be formed at this point and the group members can work with each other in trying to

re-owning of  
projections



pinpoint the irritating quality. An optional next step is to have each person try to “get inside the skin” of the person he has criticized and to speak as though he were the person concerned, explaining why he behaves as he does—as the person would speak if he were capable of real insight into his behavior. Next, each person asks his partner in the dyad in what way he himself manifests the behavior he has criticized in the other person, attempting to reintegrate the projection. The person attempts to answer this question, using a meditative dyad technique in which he looks within for an answer and allows it to come from a deep place within himself, speaking only when he feels he has gained some insight. Finally, the partner may ask the person speaking how he can overcome the quality which he does not like in himself. Again, the meditative dialogue can be used and may be combined with the techniques for obtaining answers from the unconscious and the “as if” technique.

*mental  
television*

Another technique for helping people to perceive objectively we have called *mental television*. This consists of asking the person to visualize himself in front of a TV screen watching a program in which he sees a scene played from his own life. This is to be an incident in which he felt wronged by another person and perceived himself to be in the right. After watching this incident from the “identified” point of view in which he originally experienced it, with all the ego-defensiveness, the person is asked to switch the program on his TV set and this time to turn to a station on which the scene is played again, with the difference that he will view it now as a “fair witness.” He will be able to clearly perceive what happened, both within himself and within the other person, and to understand the true causes of the communication gap between them. He will no longer feel defensive or identified with the position of his own ego, but will see what happened from a more lofty and detached perspective. The analogy of the television set has the advantage that it helps people to realize that they can change the programs in their own minds in the same manner as they can turn to a different TV station. An optional addition to this exercise is a variant of the “as if” technique and directs the person to change stations once again, this time turning to a station which will play back the same scene, but in a way which will reflect the added wisdom and insight he gained from his experience of viewing it as the fair witness.

*power of  
love*

A further class of techniques for transforming negative energy draw on the power of *love*. We have discussed techniques in which the Self effects transformation through will and through knowledge or insight, and we will now touch briefly on some

methods in which the transforming power of the Self operates through love.

An important way of evoking the energy of love and compassion is the use of exercises involving empathy or identification with another person. One such technique was described above in the exercise for re-owning projections. Sometimes as people play the role of the person they have criticized, they may break into tears, overwhelmed with compassion for the suffering individual they have been so harsh with. One girl, after playing the role of her mother, burst into sobs saying “She is so lonely and so sensitive. I have been unwilling to see her as a person with needs of her own and unable to give her the love she needs. I can understand why she has been so critical of me.”

Some other techniques for opening people to the reality of love have already been described under other headings. Meditation on seed thoughts related to love or on love as an integrative quality can be very helpful. The “as if” technique is also relevant, and the technique of “good deeds” described by Sorokin, in which one performs acts of kindness for a disliked person, is a good example of applying the “as if” technique to learning to love.

Whatever can be done to enable a person to experience genuine love from another person is also an important means of discovering the transforming power of love energy. Of course the relationship existing between therapist and patient, or guide and student as I prefer to call it, provides an opportunity par excellence for this to happen. If it does not, perhaps one should not be attempting to work with this particular person as, in the final analysis, it seems to be more through love than through any mere professional technique that healing takes place. In a group setting, there are other opportunities for giving and receiving love, and it is important to create the type of group climate in which this can be experienced. One method which we have found very effective for transmitting love is work in meditative dyads. In one variation of this technique, the partners take turns in the role of speaker or listener, and one person focuses on a question his partner asks him while the partner listens without speaking. The question may be anything at all; some typical ones are, “Tell me who you are”; “Tell me how you would like to become”; “Tell me what things have made you happy”; “Tell me what things have made you sad”; “Tell me something you think I should know”; “Tell me anything that comes to your mind.” The role of the silent listener is very significant in this exercise, as the discipline of not speaking or preparing an answer while the person is talking

*significance  
of love*

*meditative  
dyads*

brings a high quality of attention. The concern and attention on the part of the listener is very important in enabling the speaker to contact meaningful material. Then the roles are reversed. This exercise generally brings a deep sense of mutual appreciation and love. It is rare in ordinary social intercourse that we experience being listened to with such fullness or that we have the opportunity to communicate from the meditative depths within ourselves.

*"I-Thou"  
encounter*

Another dyadic technique which is more advanced and very powerful is the "I-Thou" encounter in which partners gaze into each other's eyes until they experience the contact between their own essence or true Self or that of the other person. Then they are to communicate this experience, first non-verbally, then verbally. This can often become an extremely moving transcendent experience. The healing power of love can make negativities seem as ridiculous as they really are and help to overcome the feelings of unworth and false guilt which form such powerful obstacles to the release of positive energy.

*dedicated  
activity*

A word should also be said about the role of service or dedicated activity in bringing about alignment with the Self and in overcoming negativity. Dedication of oneself to an ideal not only affords an outlet for creative energies, but can bring about alignment with the Self, evoking its guidance and inspiration, providing one avoids the pitfall of fanaticism. The function of "good works" or service to the world in the process of transpersonal development has been emphasized in many spiritual traditions. "Karma yoga" or purification through dedicated activity is one of the major branches of Indian yoga, and serving God through serving one's neighbor has long been an important concept in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Assagioli has spoken of the role of the "ideal model" (1965, p. 25) in setting a goal toward which one can aspire, and has mentioned that for some an "external unifying center" or a cause to serve can help to overcome psychological complexes by withdrawing the psychic energy from morbid self-preoccupation so that it has a chance to reorganize itself around a new center. This can effect a breaking up of old complexes so that their hold is weakened.

*alternating  
processes*

This brings us to another aspect of energy transformation which seems worthwhile to touch on briefly—the alternating cycles of "coagulation" and "dissolving," to use the alchemical terms, which seem to be involved. It is interesting to note that the alchemists recognized this cyclical process and, in their search to create the "philosopher's stone," would alternate processes tending to separate and break down substance

("calcinatio," "mortificatio," "solutio," etc.) with those which would reunite the separated parts in a new form ("coniunctio," "coagulatio"). In order to evolve, we must break out of outgrown forms, as the snake sheds his skin. To participate in the continual process of self-renewal and rebirth, we must remain non-attached to previous forms of existence. Hence the importance of disidentification and Self-identification, of firmly establishing our identity in the essential Self so that we are not threatened by the changing manifestations of the personality vehicles.

There are many other aspects of energy transformation that one would have to explore for a complete treatment of the subject. For the purposes of this paper, we have limited ourselves primarily to those which might be conceptualized as transformation of negative energy into an opposite form of positive energy. Another important aspect—the synthesis of opposites—has been dealt with in a number of transpersonal psychologies (Assagioli, 1972; Jung, 1970). Other principles related to transformation are outlined by Assagioli in his book, *The Act of Will*, in which he discusses the concepts of "elevation" or sublimation, purification, interiorization (utilization of the higher aspects of an extroverted negative attitude for constructive inner purposes, as when personal self-assertion is transmuted into spiritual affirmation); "amplification" or "extension," as when our circle of love is widened; and "outer expression," as when aggressive tendencies are converted into the struggle against social evils. These latter categories tend to be more concerned with the purification, perfection, and refinement of qualities which are already positive, with raising them to a higher level of expression, so to speak, rather than with the counteracting of negative attitudes or their conversion into "opposite" positive attitudes.

*synthesis  
of opposites*

In conclusion, I would like to underline the importance of coming to understand the basic laws of psychodynamics with the same accuracy we have achieved in understanding the laws of thermodynamics. I believe that the topic we have treated herein, though not developed in such a way, is a rich field of investigation, and that the new science of transpersonal psychology will find seminal insights in the study of polarity and energy transformation.

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