

## Paraphrasing Eugene Gendlin in A Process Model

*To Elena Frezza for the formidable expansion of Focusing in Argentina*

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The main purpose of this article is to discuss and analyze a few key aspects of Eugene Gendlin's finished work *A Process Model*. To follow this purpose I will look at the conception of experience, along with the concept of the signifying body and the manner with which therapeutic change would be produced. To attempt to explain the phenomenon of change is in a way discovering that Focusing would be left explained by this process model, paradigm that hadn't yet been discussed with the systematic manner that Gendlin accomplished in this marvelous book. In a way, the current text attempts to familiarize the reader who knows Focusing and wishes to advance in understanding the same, with this book that was translated two years ago and is now available to all of the Spanish speaking community.

The key concepts are: *carrying forward, experiencing, felt sense, happening and occurring into implying*<sup>2</sup>

### **A Process Model where everything flows**

Focusing as a process of paying attention to a part of our body, to be able to find out the significance that has been constructed in that part of the body, and from there being able to unveil it experientially to reconstruct a paused or unknown process, can now be understood. This is due thanks to a complex theory of *Occurring and Implying* contained in Eugene Gendlin's *A Process Model*. No work had ever been written that had taken into account with such precision, the beauty and depth of how we are as human beings, how we change and how we rebuild our experience. There doesn't exist a paradigm or theory that could explain the phenomenon of Focusing discovered by Gendlin and that now in his finished work is explained in its totality. The discoverer now has an extensive explicative theory on this new paradigm. Lets take a look at the first concept, the way in which the human being is conceived in this theory of the Implicit.

### **Change in a human being, whose body is the same as his environment.**

The Human body and the environment constitute a secure path for carrying forward from authenticity, concepts extracted from the phenomenology and the existentialism of a new

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<sup>2</sup> Of the numerous new concepts that are described in this masterpiece, the proposed key concepts don't pretend to be key in the unique sense, rather that a small sample of new concepts has been selected. There many more concepts that are key, but focusing on a small area that Gendlin has dedicated all of his life to, such as psychotherapy, there is a want to look at the process of therapeutic change from the psychotherapy point of view. Nevertheless, they are all important, those concepts created by the genius of this man of the XX century who is at the same time philosopher and therapist, and we can appreciate his ingeniousness in both areas. This was philosophy's time, but a time for a human philosophy, and more precisely that deals with a new subject, this wonderful body of the homo sapiens. maravilloso cuerpo del homo Sapien. Aquí el filósofo Gendlin cabalga a sus anchas, había dedicado gran parte de su vida al cambio y ahora lo hace desde una perspectiva experiencial que es homínida. N del A.

era where traditional paradigms crumble. Nonetheless, Gendlin without particularly being an existentialist or a phenomenologist, but a philosopher and an exceptional therapist, he went further, focusing on experiential interaction, creating the philosophy of the implicit as a way of describing and realizing the way in which human beings build significance from experience. His original concept that also brought light to Experiential Psychotherapy is that of experiencing. Here lay the original, among many other originalities of his genius. For Gendlin, this experience is coming to life inside a determined body and that this human body is a live and pre-conceptual entity, whose nature is the *fundamental and uninterrupted interaction* of the body with its immediate environment. Gendlin overcomes the false dichotomies subject-object, emotion-reason, body-soul that stem from a rationalist paradigm, originating in Ancient Greece. The body is immersed in the world and the experience of the world is materialized in a matrix, generator of the significance in the unbreakable interaction with the immediate context. Interaction is in the experiential body and is available via the crucial concept, as a true internal matrix of meanings, Gendlin named it the *felt sense*, a term invented by him, since in language there doesn't exist a way to name this act of paying conscious attention to a part of our internal world, to *sense*, feel and listen to thousands of subtle sensations that build a meaning or a code of the experience by means of this matrix named the felt sense, a sort of reorganizing system of the authentic being or of the BEING that gradually builds because of an exact symbolization between feelings and events. When events fit with the implicit feeling of implying, then that event transforms into an occurrence of our being.

*Basically there is no separation between the "mind" and the "body". The body feels the situations of life and of the cosmos; it is not just the body, not just mechanisms projected into the physiological. The body is a cosmic system. The body is interaction, not just life, but a life about something...*<sup>3</sup>

If the body contains the felt sense and the same is interacting with the environment in an unnoticeable way for us, then the environment is the other half or the other part of the meanings that I am creating in my human-being-in-the-world condition. This is a way of understanding that which Ortega and Gasset was telling us with his famous sentence "I am me and my circumstances". Ortega also inspires Gendlin, but his "bodily" thought comes mainly from Merleau-Ponty, when he describes the environment as an extension of the body or flesh as the Gallic philosopher would call it.

The implicit is then the infinitely significant that occurs in this body-environment interaction, made now by the conscious-humanely body living in a matrix as the *felt sense* has been named. In this manner it also occurs in the interaction between individuals, and all of this implicit in interaction is attributed by the experience that is in the total system of life in this *living, signifying and carrying-forward body* that interacts with the cosmos.

*It is a bodily sense, a worried feeling, even though implicitly it contains what you have not yet thought of or felt.*<sup>4</sup>

Gendlin perceives the body as a generator of meaning in interaction with the environment or immediate context or concrete situation, so that the body comes to implicitly signify

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<sup>3</sup> Gendlin, E.T. *Some notes on the relation between focusing and meditation*. Pag 211 In Bibliography

<sup>4</sup> Gendlin, ET, *ibidem* 2

the events of the world and the events of the inner world or of the experience, carrying inside itself, a knowledge, a loyal record and without logical or illogical categories of occurring. This knowledge comes from an implicit maze where feelings, emotions, thoughts, sensations are carried-forward in a pre-conceptual, immediate and corporal manner. Commenting on Merleau-Ponty, Gendlin says:

*The living body possesses characteristics that previous philosophers (to Merleau-Ponty) attributed to experience and existence. The body is conceived not just like physiologists conceive it, but also as a "reference" to external facts and still in a conceptually imprecise manner. What is most frequently remembered about Merleau-Ponty's work is the affirmation that the experience is "confusing" and "ambiguous", not yet as clear as scientific concepts. Rather the bodily life is the process in which, such conceptualization emerges. Merleau-Ponty aims for us to consider our concrete bodily being as our existence.*<sup>5</sup>

To Gendlin existence is equivalent to experience, and gradually built in this concrete experience is this significance of the infinite interactions that affect and occur for an individual daily or throughout his whole existence. Our body is our living being, our existence, and our whole and existential flesh.

Context can contain the body just like the body contains context, but this mutual implication is reversible via the *felt sense*.

### ***A Process Model***

Throughout his work, Gendlin shows us how we human beings are. He is not a philosopher worried about who we are or where we come from, but worried of the way in which we are, the way in which we make that which we have known traditionally as our essential nature: our symbolization, our capacity to create symbols. How we build meaning in an unconscious manner, how we symbolize without thinking, without using any of the functions that the traditional model of thought told us about. Gendlin tells us of a symbolization that occurs in an implicit manner, in a bodily way. The creation of meaning is not then a mental process, but a *bodily process*, it is worth saying, that it is not a mental operation like induction or deduction, it is a process of signifying that stems from our essential interaction with the environment. Gendlin goes outside of the traditional paradigm where thought and symbolic construction were conceived as a mental faculty, of its own intellect, in getting away from the traditional, he proposes that symbolization is a version that the body creates from its interaction, as something that flows like an experiential and underground river that is our uninterrupted interaction with the environment.

To fulfill the key distinctions of human significance, the founder of Focusing speaks to us about A Process Model of three different types of body-environment interaction. The primary environment (A#1)<sup>6</sup> where the environment would be observed from the outside and therefore there would be an aquatic environment for a fish, or a wild environment for a tiger, body and environment can almost be conceived as separate. In the secondary environment (A#2) there would exist an inseparable unity between the body and the

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<sup>5</sup> Gendlin, E.T. Ibidem 1 pag 146

<sup>6</sup> A#1 is the way in which Gendlin refers to each one of the levels of interaction, differentiating them in #1,2,and 3. AN

environment like for example the process of breathing where the air penetrates the body through the lungs and from there the oxygen would facilitate a cellular metabolism, it can there be conceived as a *single unitary* process: and there would finally be a tertiary environment (A#3) where body and environment are mutually engaged, for example the spider and the web that it has constructed, where it lives and that constitutes *its* environment, where both occurrences complement each other, by maintaining an involvement that is not iconic, it is not representational but an involvement of the body; the Beaver had to cut down a tree to make its home, already this cut-down trunk is *part of its body* and not part of the forest. Here rises the *continuum* from greater to little distance between body and environment. Body and environment are understood as a single unit, the spider's web is an environment created by the body of a spider; body and environment are the same in this case. In this manner "the body is an environment in which the process of the body is "carried forward""<sup>7</sup> Our body is carried forward when experience to the world through fluid interaction, it is through this that the body comes to its *version* of its interaction with the world, in a carried forward way. This preoccupation about the interaction marks the first distinction and difference of the philosopher Gendlin in the 60s, when he describes his doctoral thesis, making existence a human process of being-in-the-world, as a way to pay attention to the difficult and inaccessible world of the subjective. Let's not forget that the title of that first written work<sup>8</sup> was a direct reference to subjectivity, but Gendlin already considered the same as an event derived from the fundamental interaction of man-world.

The fundamental interaction that makes the body contains its own intelligence, its own capacity of creating meaning. Language and feeling, and the theories of the universe are born from this body, they take shape in a bodily manner, Gendlin tells us this regarding this:

*Language is not something inherited in the body. Speaking is formed directly from the body. Its inherent order is much more vast than a coordination of audible units*<sup>9</sup>

The body is a whole and a unity with the mind, with all of the experiential fluidity of interaction. In the same way, the body possesses the interactive registry as an experiential memory that gushes like lava from a volcano when they near memory symbolization accompanied by empathy.

*Our memories aren't floating photographs or separated recordings; they can be formed for us just because our present human bodies are physically also the past.*<sup>10</sup>

Our body signifies not just the highlighted functions of the mind and the brain as was indicated by the traditional model, no, our signifying body is also temporal, meaning that the human drama of time is also symbolized by our body, time is signified as such because time has been incorporated to existence, by this new individuality being conceived, by initiating its intrinsic interaction with its context (life plunged in an amniotic ocean, or

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<sup>7</sup> Riveros, E. Un Modelo Procesal. Parafraseando a Eugene Gendlin (A Process Model. Paraphrasing Eugene Gendlin), Ecuador 2009, from pag 21, onwards UMP.PEG

<sup>8</sup> Gendlin, E.T 1962. *The Creation of meaning. A philosophical and psychological approach to subjectivity.*

<sup>9</sup> Idem 4 , (Chap VII B, . APM.PEG.)

<sup>10</sup> Idem 4 (Chap. VIIB, APM.PEG)

life before the birth of a context of the world); from there we carry the past and the present inside of ourselves not by determinism but by carrying-forward. But let's not just carry the present and the past, but also get out of determinism by untying or carrying forward that which had been stopped and therefore also *implying* the future. The philosophy of the Implicit is born from the phenomenon of implication in the environment through the occurrence, when an event turns into a meaningful or personal experience.

Through what Gendlin names *occurring*, we can understand what happens to us and what no longer works for us. Nevertheless, what is ours is occurring, implying our existence through life in the possible trajectory of individuation and as events turn meaningful to our authentic trajectory. The Theory of *experiencing* was the first foundation of the Implicit, key concept of the new model, that in forty years our author reformulates, similar to the Heideggerian Being and Time, producing a strictly human form of evolving ontologically: the intricate concepts of implying and happening are now being developed in A Process Model with an enlightened originality.

## Carrying Forward

Gendlin turns to the invention of terms that put a spotlight on the new phenomenon to which he hints at: one of the *concept-phenomenon*, as I will call them from now on, is *carrying forward*. Its origin stems through the Rogerian term *actualizing tendency*, as a universal energy that every organism possesses to expand itself toward growth that is given to it as a genetic energy. However, Gendlin goes straight to and without trepidation to the micro cosmos, meaning, what happens inside of people, and that we have deemed convenient to differentiate it as the experiential Wheel; this Wheel is different to the Process of Focusing, whose stages we described as a micro process named by Gendlin as *focusing* (Gendlin, 1964)<sup>11</sup>, that is to say the stages where change occurs, described in four stages that our author also has didactically named as *the experiential Wheel*. This Wheel would be comprised of a Direct Reference, an Unfolding, a Global Application and that by finalizing its first round, would get to a Referent Movement. Now then, this Wheel begins to move thanks to the motion of carrying forward, being the body's own energy, having it to construct meaning. To distinguish it with Focusing, I have personally named this WHEEL in Spanish *la unidad dialéctica del cambio* (UDC), (*Dialectic Unit of Change, DUC*).

Carrying forward is the power of becoming, that with which when we have made contact with the implicit meaning of what we are experiencing, then auto exploration is lit and we have total connection with the process of change that we are living. I would venture to confirm that carrying forward might be one of Gendlin's major conceptual contributions to understand the phenomenon of therapeutic and personal change, the construction of meaning, as a auto production that comes from the BEING in his abode, in his own signifying body, of a human being who

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<sup>11</sup> Gendlin E.T. Focusing a unit of change constituted by the Direct Reference, Unfolding, Global A, and Referent Movement, that is different from the process of Focusing globally known as a method of approximation to the implicit, published in the book *Focusing 1982. A theory of change of personality*, translation E.Riveros in the book *Focusing, un paradigma para una Psicología del Siglo XXI*, Salesianos, Chile, 2008.

develops his *world Project* (Heidegger), who is constructing *that promises that every man is* (Nietzsche), through the conquest of authenticity itself and personal experience itself. The process of symbolizing is making the person and experiencing something that originates from this enigmatic being that constructs itself, makes a person. Personally I have come to a new understanding of this carrying forward concept only after practicing for thirty years Experiential Psychotherapy, key concept of the Gendlinian puzzle, because it allows understanding why the client's person does not need external motivation to start to move into symbolizing internally, nor does the person need external interpretations that explain his development, but that by following its own experiential foot print, the client solely requires empathy. Meaning that exceptional ability of the therapist to resonate the experience through symbols that exactly represent the authentic and genuine experience that come from the mystery of one's own being. Carrying forward makes it possible for empathy to ***miraculously operate*** in the subjectivity of Another that suffers or that experiences anything meaningful, carrying forward allows that pause so that it will be authenticity itself that finds its experiential channel. But that is not all, carrying forward, on top of being a universal tendency of organisms in development to reach their own development, is also an assurance of the being to grow alone with its own symbols and in its own direction. Carrying forward is an accurate search of the symbols that underlie any *individuation* (Jung). Carrying forward would be giving us the possibility of designing authenticity through the direct question to the *felt meaning*, to conjugate this *new dialect* that we are in the universe according to Sidney Jourard, carving with new symbols and within experience itself thanks to it.

Carrying forward, in contrast to the Word Focusing, is a term mentioned throughout the philosophical journey of A Process Model that Gendlin makes of 40 thousand years of the hominid evolution of the specie, and of millions of years in which the biological universe has been creating new formulas of empathy and of superior behavior that is now not only the exclusivity of the *homo sapiens sapiens*, but also the exclusivity of an more vast animal behavior.

Carrying forward is an original concept that belongs to Gendlin from his book *Experiencing and the creation of Meaning* and that is embedded in the present with his written work ***A Process Model***. Carrying forward is that energy which unties itself when an event finds its empathetic symbol, its accurate symbol that brings it to imply in the body what until the present moment could not signify anything special. That is why when a client says with vehemence: ***THAT, that is exactly what is happening to me, that exactly represents what I feel***, he cannot but refer with more vigor what he is living, somewhat like a fisherman whose canvas is launched and tugged from the fish itself who tries to free itself from it. The process tugs from within itself, the process has already been put into motion, and lets see how Gendlin says it in a masterful way:

*Carrying forward is that which happens, changes the implying, in such a way that what would be implied would no longer be because "it" has happened. Happening changes the past and the future.*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem 4 Chap

This revolutionary concept is responsible for several Gendlinian therapeutic practices in becoming revolutionary, for example, the therapist must go where the carrying forward of the client indicates, he must follow what is functioning and what is not functioning, he must follow the hierarchic procedural chain of signifying, etc.

### **Happening and Implying, time and space**

It happens to rain, but that rain has saddened me, it has affected me, it has implied something in me. Gendlin, as can already be seen, makes an existential and experiential distinction between these two terms as two phenomenon that operate within the body, implying or not, depending on what is implicitly being felt. The experiential dynamic of this conjugation is widely described in the masterpiece that is A Process Model. To the contextual dimension, Gendlin adds the temporal dimension, making this combination the finest braid that develops in space and time. The events of the environment have a different impact on us, it has always been said to be due because every human being is a separate universe, and that is true, nonetheless, Gendlin explains to us how this happens and that allows us to understand how we become experientially, implying within us those developments or better yet not implying, what does it depend upon? It is clear that it is not only a response to the environment in a linear fashion, but that we interact with it, and in this interaction, events can or not disgorge in the experiential river of implying, occurring in an irreversible change in us. And such development is irreversible when a carrying forward motion occurs, meaning the felt sense is ignited, I happen to be affected by that rain, or by that response that the therapist gives me when he empathetically listens to me. Gendlin says it poetically and synthetically

*“When the occurring is carried forward, this occurring is a change in the implying”,(CH IV-A APM), or it is when the happening crosses the barrier of time and then the change that occurred in the present can arrive and it indeed achieves this by involving time, since a profound transformation changes the process of feeling and because of this we sometimes hang from an existential string, when we don’t know what has happened and where we are in time, Gendlin says is in the following manner, in his characteristic style*

*“It can seem as if this present possesses no connection with the future that is not yet, and with the past that no longer exists” (Ch.IV-A APM)*

So seconds become eternal, and that occurs in psychotherapy, when the client gone deep in his experiencing and has occurred in change, it happens that after a session of focusing it can take hours for a client to coming back to feeling rested, just as if he had been running a marathon, this phenomenon of the impact of subjective truth, just as Kierkegaard would say, the *truth is only true when it is subjective*, that phenomenon so thought of by philosophers and poets, is pronounced by the philosopher and therapist Eugene Gendlin in the following manner

*Time becomes human, becomes living and unique and subjective truth only if it is turned into carrying forward known now as Implying, (Ch.IV-A APM)*

Carrying forward makes human what has not happened yet; it makes the world human, and operates in milliseconds, before history occurs as science of the past. The implicit is a new dimension, a new paradigm since it operates with a subjectivity product of the interaction known now as experiencing. Carrying forward is essential for change to occur, it puts into motion the experiential wheel, and it is what is triggered when empathy delivers that one accurate symbol that completes the implicit meaning.

### **The new Paradigm summarized.**

The new paradigm of the implicit is widely described by Gendlin in A Process Model, and even though he never talks again about new paradigms, I firmly believe that we are dealing with a new model and whose Outlook is wider than the traditional and the solutions that it offers are very different, an example of this is the appearance of Focusing. This new paradigm is then characterized by the following conceptualizations that make up a revolutionary platform for Psychotherapy and for human endeavor from a social and cultural point of view.

1. It describes the human being as a *unit* with his context or environment, transcending the traditional dichotomies.
2. It compresses in its interior the bodily, emotional and pre-conceptual concept of the *felt sense* as a matrix where the *verb experiential* is conjugated, the incessant symbolization between experience and symbolic events is conjugated, that permits experience to be implied as an experiential river, the becoming, stated by Heraclitus two thousand and five hundred years ago, only that just now had been said by a philosopher that, being a therapist, has lived the change and has made possible an understanding of becoming in the micro cosmos.
3. The body as a unit that concentrates the most sublime capacities of our species, being able to feel with complexity, symbolizing en the experience of life and in the experiencing of the human happening. Body and environment are only one, just as body and soul as sole unit.
4. What moves change is a phenomenon known today as **carrying forward**, that is the footprint and the experiential energy able to move the internal mountains that make possible change recognizable in four steps, able to determine the path of a true experiential map of change.
5. Our authenticity, guided by carrying forward, conduces experience so that the accurate symbols of empathy allow experiential opening and resonance.

It is the first time in the history of psychotherapy that a focus emerges that not only makes it possible to understand change as a consequence of discovering authenticity itself, but in addition, sustains that it is not possible for it to occur nor open up but with the language of empathy, quality that the species has inherited from its previous hominids.

Gendlin has condensed for us the new concepts that realize new phenomenon that make it possible to have a different and new paradigmatic view in his master piece known as A Process Model. An unlimited number of new concepts that allow the understanding of us as human beings are described in this completed work of the gendlinian thought.

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