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## The Phenomenology of the Experiential Awareness Field

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1.  Welcome to our study of contemporary awareness field psychotherapy. We will focus on the phenomenology of awareness. Through the practice of the suspension (epoche) of the mind, a person can enter into transitional space or the intermediate area of experience or liminal space. Within this context, the experiential field becomes manifest and the innermost sense of self can be experienced, brought forth and embodied. From within the stability of this inner most base, this intrinsic non-conceptual base, this sense of imminence, this sense of indwelling, the mind itself can be more deeply integrated within this awareness state, within this self.

2.  This way of thinking and understanding reflects the traditions of western phenomenology and traditions of psychoanalytic thinking such as Winnicott, some of the self psychologists such as R. D. Stolorow and certain forms of eastern philosophy such as Dzogchen Tibetan Buddhism.  This way of understanding offers much to both the therapist and the client…By learning to suspend the mind, one can discover the innermost base of experience which is awareness itself.  From within this base of awareness, change and transformation can take place.  Dissociation can be dissolved, negative internalizations assimilated and metabolized, and the mind itself integrated into this inner awareness, this inner self, and this non conceptual dimension of experience.  Most importantly, mind body oneness can be felt through the integrative function of transitional space…which is the oneness of awareness.

3.  But this way of thinking and understanding is not the rational model wherein one is their thoughts and one is their affects and one is their internalized representation, and one is their memory. Rather, in this view, one is their innermost awareness whose qualities are spaciousness, energy, and knowingness that is non-conceptual or prereflective.

4.  So, in our discussion we will utilize these traditions that are experientially based, namely the focus is on experience itself…which always take place in the present, in the here and now. So there is this intimate closeness between western phenomenology and meditative awareness and the meditative arts…both are focused on awareness, both are focused on consciousness itself.

5. The father of phenomenology of awareness is Husserl…both Husserl and Freud where in class with Franz Bretano…the father of the father of phenomenology.  Bretano, an ex priest, taught that the physical world and psyche (awareness) were on two different dimensions of knowing…one informational and the other experiential. Namely, you can not see awareness; awareness is invisible to the eye. This was foundational for his thinking…this influenced both Husserl and Freud...and from both understandings based on human intentionality and cathexis, on meaning, and on experience became the fundamental material of psychological science.

6.  So what is phenomenology of awareness?  And how do you do it?  First, most of the time people are located in their mind…located in thinking function, or feeling function, or memory function, or sensation function or imagination function….so if one is to enter awareness itself, one must temporarily suspend the mind…free awareness so awareness itself can be felt and entered into. To do this one must shift out of the analytic mind and enter awareness itself.  If you or your client is in the analytic mind you and the person will not experience the integrative power of awareness. You will not be in experiential awareness. So by shifting out of the mind, subjectivity is amplified, experience is amplified and experience becomes the focus of your awareness…everything becomes closer and more intimate…less distanced, less objectified, less reified, less fixated.  One can study one’s experience directly about what ever one is focused on……experience becomes experientially near, and thereby more workable and changeable from within…intentions can be felt and touched..

7.  One gazes into experience, gazes into affective states of mind, gazes into thinking, gazes into memories, gazes into the other…one gazes into the mental objects and functions of the mind, one gazes into the external objects…be it faces, or frowns…everything becomes close up and one’s own intention becomes not a mental thing but rather a way of focusing and working within ones own inner experience.  This awareness integrates and utilizes the mind in its service rather then being usurped by the mind…one has a stable base...the base of awareness itself.

8. Now already this change is a lot…namely from being in the mind to the awareness of the mind and the world…experientially near…This is where much experiential work takes place. This is also where many meditations take place...various forms of witness consciousness, vipassana or insight, and Vedic meditations.

9.  But one can go further. Actually, one can go much further, actually one has not really entered through the door of awareness itself…you are only in the doorway. And most will want to stop here since this awareness is contained and is actually a state, a kind of psychological state. But if one wants to go further and wishes to go further and has the capacity to go further one can…by making one more shift and by making one more reduction…by turning the gaze of awareness on to awareness itself…but focusing the light of awareness on the light of awareness itself…by a second suspension of the focus on the mental objects and functions of the mind and a suspension of focus on the real external objects...the world.

10.  One suspends everything and turns within….what does one begin to experience as one focuses on the invisible awareness itself? Awareness itself begins to show herself, manifests herself…to you and in you as you…

11.  What does the gaze reveal? Nothingness, or emptiness or void, or spaciousness even vast unbound spaciousness, and openness just openness of openness….the eastern philosophies use the word sunyata…and the translations of sunyata cover all these experiential meanings. The most useful is spaciousness or openness of openness.

12.  Some immediately think that this means everything is nothingness or emptiness…but actually, whatever awareness focuses on, it becomes...when focusing on itself it becomes itself….and the nature is spaciousness  which is a knowingness that is profoundly non-conceptual….direct perception. And there is energy that eventually appears as this spaciousness.  This knowingness is alive...it moves, it is energy, and finally, this spacious knowing is clear and luminous, even pure radiance.

13.  If one accidentally discovers and falls into this innermost awareness this can be rather stunning or shocking…since it may feel as it is only a void or terrible emptiness…which Winnicott called the capacity and readiness to fill up…SO, if one can stay with this void and if one has a transitional object to help one hold this new and vast space within. In this function, the therapist holds this space with and within the client, inside to inside so to speak. This transitional function is not an external function outside to outside. Then, this space begins to feel like presence rather then absence and begins to feel like a base, a vast base that even goes beyond the body boundaries, a fullness and aliveness within…and even a realness, a sense of realness beyond the thoughts, beyond fluid affects, beyond thin memories, simple minded fantasy wishes and beyond compelling and driving sensations….all this is my own awareness…this inner heart essence….is oneness.  Where this awareness is felt, oneness is felt.

14.   As one begins to rest in this awareness of awareness then a most wonderful and amazing phenomena begins to appear….that ones own awareness is a field….the field begins to manifest itself and one begins to discover that ones own awareness is not a state like other psychological states but is in fact a field vast and infinite in its horizons, and it is completely multidimensional….knowingness is multidimensional. At its deepest level and most primordial level this awareness has no appearances…it is simply space vast and silent…stillness….stillness and oneness. Then as this awareness manifests itself, this field feels like energy and luminosity, energy and light or energy and clarity. And at times the therapist can work with the energy and light….through extension and resonance.

15.  The third dimension of this awareness is the sense of embodiment…embodied awareness and the feeling of the awareness field in and through the human body…and the resonance of this embodied awareness field.

16. One becomes stronger and stronger in the sense of awareness field as one learns to hold the field, and enter the field and one becomes the field….in becoming aware of awareness itself, one becomes awareness itself…one becomes the base and one can more easily integrate the mind and functions of the mind into the base of awareness which is this multidimensional field. Extension is a method for learning to expand the sense of the awareness field first through the body and then to and with others, to and with situations. ..couples and groups…One begins to live and think and feel and sense and love and hate, feel pleasure and pain all within and through the field…Such living gives one a sense of liberation...just as one is.

17.   The word intersubjective is easily used in psychology but it often means intrapsychic talking to intrapsychic…actually mind taking to another mind. But in phenomenology intersubjective means one persons field penetrates the others field, inside to inside, and a base is mutually formed so that all kinds of experience and work can take place. In this way, the intersubjective is completely healing. Healing does not lead to oneness but rather oneness leads to healing...both in psychotherapy and in the life of couples and in the life of groups.

18. The capacity to extend the field or more accurately to extend ones perceptions of the field can not be underestimated. Through the extension of the field, mutual states of oneness can be made and these states are not fusion states or shall we say confusion states…rather, oneness take place in a differentiated context….individuated context. Through being in the field together and one person holding the field with and for the other then the sense of awareness is strengthened and heightened and much work can be done in and through the field.

19.  When the intersubjective context is formed, the mutually held field greatly supports the participant in dissolving negative states of mind and body.  This intersubjectivity greatly enhances and activates the awareness field so that metabolism of experience moves effectively and memories can be dissolved and transformed.  New states of being become possible. More over, the mutually held field facilitates integration of the various functions of the mind that are so often dissociated and lack integration.

20.  The mutually held field can greatly facilitate the mind/body splits as there is an over focus in the mind and under focus in the body or  an over focus in the body and under focus in the mind….the mutually held field of awareness greatly enhances the sense of oneness between the body and the mind.

21.  In the creative vacuum of the void of potential space, new and possible translations of experience into new representations can be more readily made; as the spaciousness of awareness creates a flexibleness of fixated ideation and loosens fixed representations and internalized object relations.  The field is fluid so compact sequences of mind and bodily responses can be more easily dissolved or interrupted in the void of potential space.

22.  Being in the mutually held awareness field can help both the therapist and client grow in direct perception. The mind is a function of relational history. And, as the base of the person shifts from mind to the awareness field, the field itself infuses the mind of thinking, feeling, sensation and memory…and perception itself is freed somewhat although never completely from the historical schemas that organized thinking and feeling and sensation and memory...and one begins to have the pleasure of unmediated experience both within and without…Directness of perception is neither magical nor whimsical...But through awareness itself, which is knowingness, the person more easily sees into situation, sees into affective states and sees into pain, and sees into the other…

23. The knowing of awareness, of this direct awareness, is called gnosis.  This knowingness is actually for some a feeling, a bhave and for some it is an actually seeing and for some it is simply knowing.

24. Touch has power when one is in the field.  When touch is experienced in the field one touches not simply the flesh but, through the extension of the field, one touches the field within the other…the field touches the field.  And in this touch, the self smoothening function is greatly enhanced.  Energy is transferred from one to the other out of resonance…flat depressive states become activated….

25. As one becomes aware of awareness and begins embodying awareness becoming awareness, one embodies direct perception and experiences the immanence of ones own beingness of Being. This sense of the immanence of the beingness of being itself is a source of great pleasure and happiness…as one feels the on going continuity of beingness…this ongoing continuity protects one from fragmentation, protects one from states of psychological collapse and even the fear of death lessens…coming and going, absence and separation, oneness and separateness no longer have the same existential drama and trauma that these experiences once invoked. As the sense of the beingness of ones own being grows, the sense of the beingness of being in others becomes more apparent, more real and more visible.  And so, a oneness and sense of non-duality begins to arise….this oneness is not a function of sameness in the sense of same likes or dislikes, same beliefs or disbeliefs, some tribe or customs, the sameness of history, the sameness of attraction, but this sense of oneness reflects the oneness of the beingness of being….that the same beingness of being is within all beings …all of the beings that ones sees, touches.

26.  As this oneness of beingness of being arises, the knowledge that awareness is beingness and beingness is awareness becomes vivid even for the most ordinary of persons. And a great sense of freedom and completeness arises from within as one realizes out of ones own experience that ones own awareness, ones own consciousness is the beingness of being itself…and, in these moments, one becomes much less of a psychological person and more of a cosmological human being…the  view is much wider and of much more depth and breath then that of our own historically based psychological viewpoint.