

Gene Gendlin at the Advanced and Certifying Weeklong November 2015, Report by Beatrice Blake and Aaffien de Vries



In 2015 the Weeklong took place in Garrison Institute, New York from November 6 to 12, 2015. There were 42 participants from 10 countries spread over 5 continents. The theme of the Weeklong is Connections and Crossings. And this is what we did, lot of connections and crossings were made. We celebrated diversity on many levels and in many ways. Participants encountered a large range of approaches and models of Focusing.

On the day of the certification ceremony we made a timeline of the history of Focusing and invited the new trainers to take their places in the timeline. We honored our teachers and Tomeu Barceló presented an introduction in the philosophy of A Process Model in which Focusing is embedded. We had the great honor to have Gene Gendlin in our midst, by phone, for about an hour. He answered divers questions from the participants. Here are some of the questions and answers from that phone call. The quality of the sound was not perfect, so now and then there are gaps.

With thanks to Anna Hertheimer who recorded the talk!

Catherine welcomed Gene saying how happy we were that he was with us and said: "I am not sure everybody understands your philosophy a hundred percent". (Laughter)

Gene: I don't think there is such a thing in philosophy; it always goes on and on. When you understand it in some way, then you can go on to understand it further."

Catherine: What is the first thing someone wants to learn your philosophy should do if he or does not have a background in philosophy?

Gene: Maybe read Process Model Chapters 1, 2 and 3? Then they can go on from there. But ask a different question, one I can answer more easily.

Participant: Thank you for creating this beautiful work

Gene: Thank you very much, hello, hello .

Question: I am curious - did you ever think of publishing A Process Model more formally? I want the world to know more about it.

Gene: You are so right, I never had it formally published. There is a strong possibility that a university press might publish it.



MAKING CONNECTION BY SKYPE

Participant: first I want to express my appreciation. In Hong Kong we are helping women who are victims of violence and families with low income. Focusing has helped a lot.

Gene: I'm glad, it is important that Focusing is not only for a happy few.

Question: Tomeu said this morning "Life is a process which creates itself and requires nothing external for it to work." In Hong Kong we work also with Christian people. I wonder if there is a place for God, for religion in the Process Model?

Gene: Oh, yeah.....I think it is quite clear that whatever we are thinking in the explicit, there is always more that is implicit. And certainly there is more implicit than in any concepts. If religion means some kind of conceptual thing like that God is this or God is that Anything that can be conceptualized as this or that is not God. We could not live or breathe or walk or look or do anything if we were not part of this very big thing that is not a thing. So yes, if you allow for something that is more than structure, it is what we are walking in, breathing in moving in, looking in. Did I answer the question?

Participant:There is a place for experiencing something beyond the structures in everything that we come in contact with....There is more,

Gene: There is always more. We couldn't be alive if we were not part of the bigger more.

Question: and the not-knowing?

Gene laughs: Yes and the not-knowing

Question: The Process Model is not compatible with the idea of God as a human God?

Gene: What is the word human? What I call a human model is a structure of little parts The human model is something like particles. And I don't think there are particles. There is only the whole.

Question: What is your greatest joy? In terms of bringing Focusing to people?

Gene: I am a little stuck here. Hmm, I don't know ... It seems so simple, and yet I can't find a way to answer it, let's wait a moment.....it's a joy just to be alive, I think. It is a joy just to be able to look out my window and see all the leaves, see all the yellow. (Deep breath) That is for sure.

Question: Tomeu talked about time and space this morning. How does contact with the felt sense transform our sense of our personal past?

Gene: It is a mistake to line up the past, present and future as if they were 3 different spots on a continuum or line. I think that is artificial, it is not what we are living. Space first and then some kind of linear time....The past and the present are in each other. But I don't know if that explains anything.

Question: You mention in A Process Model that when someone has created something it just came together all of a sudden. Please tell us about how you wrote A Process Model.

Gene: I don't know how it came to be. I don't know how I was able to write it.

Question: Can you say something about the process? Which parts came easily or did it take a long time?



FORMULATING QUESTIONS

Gene: I don't think I can say something about that. It took a long time to write that thing. I had to write each chapter or topic where it came. Makes for no compromising. Each came out and then the next and then the next.

Question: Something that puzzles me. Life carries forward and there is always more, and life wants to live.

Gene: Yeah.

Question: How about death? How is carrying forward related to death? I can understand it is implied.

Gene: (Laughs) I'm looking at death and I don't understand it either. (Laughter)

Question: When we symbolize our implying it is carried forward.

Gene: ...For a long time scientists didn't want to believe that anything was real, unless it was a machine. Carrying forward isn't a matter of first you have this and then you carry it forward. Once you understand that there is such a thing as carrying forward and that carrying forward is not any old change, not any old something else but more something that is inherently related to what it was before. It's like food comes after hunger. Once that is the nature of carrying forward.It is related to what it developed from. So it is kind of a natural development. Trees are also carrying forward.

Participant: I am grateful for all that you have given us.

Gene: Thank you, thank you.

Question: How are you feeling lately?

Gene: I am surprised that I am still here. I say I am not really here anymore, but I am only *still* here. But I'm doing fine. Hello! And I am grateful for being here, without pain and To be here is great.

Participant: Looking at the outside world and listening to the world and symbolizing what we see, we change the world.

Gene: Sure.

Question: Why did humans look outside first and now we are going inside with Focusing changing from the inside? What is the difference between the inside and the outside?

Gene: I want to say right away: don't believe that there is an outside world without the right process. I don't believe that is a good concept, an outside world that is just outside. What would it be to exist just as an outside? It would only be a specter..... To exist, it has to be both things, the inside and the outside. I don't think that we are only the skin envelope, we are always already the outside and the inside. There is no outside except as part of the inside and there is no inside except as part of the outside. And what you are sitting in when you feel a chair is not only the skin envelope but also the chair! Does that make sense somewhat?

Participant: I wonder if we can have a felt sense of the outside and of the inside



FELT SENSING LISTENING

Gene: Why does there have to be a difference?

Participant: Well, most people think there is.

Gene: Oh yeah, but most people forget. (laughter) I mean that seriously. You can't go by most of the vocabulary of the atomic school, that we only have our five senses, and we have no inside, and there are all these little pieces that are supposed to be part of us floating around. The inside and the outside can't be separated.

Question: Have you had a client that you could not work with and if so, how did you handle that?

Gene: What a good question. Certainly.

Question: How did you deal with it? What was that like, not being able to work with that person?

Gene: I have dealt with many people over the years. The question is very good but the answer is not going to be very good. Right now I don't remember specifically. But if the question is have I had the experience where I have not been able to work with somebody, that I have failed, surely, yes, absolutely. But then I would like to say one thing: These days it seems to work very well to work with someone until I get some feeling of empathy or knowing, or thinking I know what they are feeling. And then at that point I will say, "I think you are feeling thus and thus and thus and thus." And then very importantly I will add, "Is that right?" expecting them to say "No, that is not right, it's more like this and this and this."

Question: I have worked with clients with whom it has been very difficult for them to find a felt sense. One client finds it taxing and doesn't want to do it. I want to ask where is there a balance? How to deal with people who don't want to learn Focusing?

Gene: That is what I was trying to say.

I simply reflect how I am picking up my sense of that person. It is not just repeating, it is my sense of that person there, and often I can be quite wrong, but then I say "Is that right?" and they say "No, it's da-da-da-da." But if you teach them to do Focusing then it becomes difficult and they don't understand..... But if you say "Is that right?" and they say "Yes, exactly" or "No, that's not it", then they are coming from their insides and it at least gets them started. Am I making sense?

Then the connection got too bad to continue with the call. We ended with a big THANK YOU and a loud applause.

It was wonderful to have Gene with us. It was beautiful to be with each other and to go home enriched and different from how we came. As Gene said. ***"...by crossing we create in each other what neither of us was before."***

