

Focusing: The Body Speaks From the Inside

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Transcript from the audio

Hello. (*Audience responds "Hello."*) I'm glad to be here. I want to thank Rob Parker, whom some of you know already, one of our people who uses focusing with trauma work. He arranged for the three of us to come and didn't arrange for himself up here. So I need to mention him and thank him for all the work and coordinating especially *me*.

Then I want to tell you that focusing, by itself, is not a "method." Focusing deepens everything that we do, unless we don't do it. So I tell people, "Don't do focusing by itself, please." Do it *with* interaction and body work and every other thing. I agree with what was just said here: that we need to pull all the resources we can get together. Focusing comes from *inside*, so it fits in with everything you're doing. It will *deepen* whatever you're doing. It's not something separate. Although when you learn it, then for a little while it seems like something *very* separate. But once you have it, it's no longer separate.

I want to introduce myself all over again, because I'm really a philosopher. My training is in Philosophy. My degree is in the Department of Philosophy, and I've been doing Philosophy all my life. It happens that the practical side of it got well-known. So I have to tell you this right away.

Philosophy is something that's very difficult to read. You have to read everything five or six times, sentence by sentence, like a crossword puzzle that you're solving. So most of what I have put out in print and published is not philosophy. It's coming *off* of philosophy; it's trying to be simple and clear. But a lot of what I have published you already know. So today I want to introduce you to the philosophy part of it.

Philosophy works with...*not even* concepts. It doesn't have *any* content. It's not about anything. (*Laughter*) Philosophy is about the concepts, but *not even the concepts*. Theoretical people work on concepts. Philosophy works on *kinds* of concepts. This is a funny notion to most people. What I need to talk about is the *kind of concept* that we're developing, a *kind* of concept that's really different from all the concepts that we mostly use.

It's a kind of concept that comes from studying *living* things *first*. This is not done. Our concepts ape mathematics, which has been so powerful in making all of our technology. I'm certainly not criticizing it, putting it down or any silly thing like that. I'm talking into a microphone. I write on computers. There are lights here. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for technology. *But*, technology is not a good model for *living* things. Because it has to do with making separate parts and putting these parts together. Living things are not made out of separable parts. I'll get back to that.

There are two main points that I want to make. The first one is that for living things you need a kind of concept where you understand that nothing *is*. Everything we usually think about "is." Nothing "*is*" that lives. It always *is* and also *implies forward*. It *is-and-implies*. It never just *is*. It always *is* and *has an implying* of something that hasn't yet happened. And that something-that-hasn't-yet-happened is not fully structured. It's very, very (what Freud called) "over-determined." It's not indeterminate at all. It's very, very, very finely pre-structured and yet it's also open; it hasn't yet happened. Only things that happened are fixed in structure.

So my main point here is: there is no "is." It's always an *is-and-implies*. Secondly, there is no "body" apart from the environment. The body generates itself *in* the environment, *out of* environment. Between "environment" and "body," only human beings make a distinction. And it's a very important

distinction. It helps us with science and chemistry and neurology, and all those things that are very important and very helpful and *make* things. But *living* things are not *made* things, made-out-of-parts-things. Living things are not made by a separation between us and what we see or what we work on. Living things are always already *both* body *and* environment.

So, no “is.” Always “is-and-implies.” And no “body.” Always “body-and-environment.” It’s some next event in the body-environment interaction, in the body-environment unity. The next event that’s implied is a....look at my hand. (*Gene laughs*) That’s good enough there. It’s forward and it’s out here.

So, we have to both use, respect and also change the notion that we have of the body. It’s *not* a structure that fills space and time. We need to *consider* it that way, so we can analyze it and have medicine and chemistry and neurology and all these very important things. But the body is *not* a structure that just “is” in the environment, in space, like you see me sit here. The body is where I am out here talking to you, where I’m all the way out there, and without this (*gestures*), my body wouldn’t be the way it is right now. The words wouldn’t come out right, if I weren’t a body-environment unity, and if I weren’t implying forward. So my words come.

Sometime you can wonder where your words come from, and how they come. People don’t wonder enough. They open their mouth and the words come out. (*Audience laughs.*) How *is* that? (Laughter and applause.) And then if they don’t come out, what do we do? Well, we say, “Excuse me, I don’t mean that. Wait a second.” And then what do we do? Well, we wait and hope and then some more words come out, and hopefully they are right.

OK, so those are my two points. No “is”, and no “body.” (*Laughter from audience.*) The next thing I want to say is that there has to be an understanding that we are *not only* human. We’re also animals, and not only animals; we’re also plants. We’re *tissue-process*. And it’s the tissue-process that has developed the capacity to be an animal. There are no animals without tissue-process.

But there’s something very mysterious about animals: they *behave*. All the studies of ethology for a hundred years now have shown that the complexity of behavior is what they call “built-in. Animals learn, of course. They learn a lot. But even what they *learn*, like little kittens learn how to jump on mice, but they learn that when the adult cat demonstrates it *once*. So even learning is based on built-in capacities. And if you stimulate certain brain cells, you get the jumping anyway without any adult cat. And so forth.

A squirrel that’s raised in a metal cage will bury nuts in a metal cage at a certain age. If you give it a nut, it’ll scratch the metal cage and put the nut there. The whole complexity of animal behavior is *built-in*.

But *what* is “built-in”? What does it mean? A physiological understanding of the body does not *permit* behavioral complexity to be built-in the body. *You* have to *think* it, with a different kind of concept. You have to think that the tissues are not just structure and space, the tissues imply forward. And they are not just tissues within the skin; they’re tissues in the environment that it makes itself out of, to have even a skin. You have to understand that the body, our body, *your* body sitting there, is tissues that have the animal behavior complexity.

You can read that human beings don’t have instinct anymore, but that’s ridiculous. “Instinct” is just a word for this “built-in.” “Instinct” is just like “built-in.” Somebody says, “Yes, I recognize that there’s this *huge* animal complexity, but I don’t know how it’s “out of the body.” These animals don’t have concepts and all that. So how do they do this?” Well, “By instinct,” we all learned in school. And then they didn’t *tell* us what that is. Right?

Well, the tissues develop this extra capacity to have an external environment in which they behave. And *then* only come human beings. And we are *completely continuous* with that. Just our *science* of human beings is separate. We study culture and history and all these wonderful things as if they came down from the sky. But obviously they came up from the earth through us, into where we are now. So the human level of culture and patterns and making and technology, *all that* comes as a *bodily* process.

Where does a scientist get a new hypothesis? They *never* tell you. (*Audience laughter.*) Once in a while someone will write, “Oh, I developed the double helix from a dream.” Or somebody will say, “I got this in the shower.” (*Audience laughter.*)

So those three levels you’re sitting there being. And they’re familiar; just the concepts are new. We need a new kind of concept. I worked these out over the last forty years. It’s not easy to read, but I invite you to look at it. It’s on the web; you can find it. It’s called “The Process Model” and you might like the first few pages, even though it might take you a while to read them. (*Audience laughter.*)

Now, what I’m really here to say is that there’s a fourth level, on top of the plants and the animals and the human beings with culture. Not the *emotions*...the emotions are *within* the cultural patterns. When you get mad, when you are disappointed, all these things are within *cultural stories*. You don’t get mad unless you are treated in some way that the culture teaches shouldn’t happen. As long as everything runs routinely, you don’t get mad. In another culture, you *would*, being treated like that. But in *that* culture, they have different stories.

So emotions are always *within* the stories that we learn. Culturally, we’re *made out of* stories. That’s why we *dream* them at night, you know. Stories are not just told. Stories are very deeply culturally patterned. Human beings are not only cells, they’re not only animals, they’re also cultural stories.

But there is now another level. The other level is where *focusing* comes from. The other level is that *the body* is capable of giving itself still another kind of object. I should have mentioned objects, but it’s too complicated. At each level there are different objects. The world is not made of objects. The world is made of living interaction. And it has living things in it. They tell you the world is just burning gas, but that’s only from the outside, observed by mathematics. From the inside, the world has *us* in it. The universe has *us* in it. And the universe is *at least* as much as a dog or a horse or you and I. It *includes* us, since we’re here. They can’t tell us we’re not here, you know that much. (*Audience laughter.*)

Since we’re here, there are these capacities of the living thing. And there is one more. The body can *give itself* an object that is in a different space and in a different time. It can give itself an object of a situation, of a whole situation. But this happens in a funny, different space. It’s a different space where that happens. A person usually starts with a discomfort that’s diffuse. Like, I’m angry and “Aaargh, gr-r-r-r-r.” You know. And it’s hard to do anything *with* that.

But there *is* a place where a person can say, “Oh!” Once you’ve learned that place, then the *object* changes. It’s no longer an emotion in a story. It’s the whole damn thing together, the story and what happened and how I am and everything else that ever happened, all of my background and my animal-ness and my tissues. All of that together becomes an “Oh!” Becomes a “that.” And then *I* am different. Then *I* am somehow changed. I’m in this larger space and I *have* this “that” here.

So, as you will see in the two demonstrations that I bring you, a person will say -- in Afghanistan language, a person will say, “Oh, I’m uncomfortable. I’m angry. I think I’m furious. I’m about to go out and kill people. But I *think* I have a “guest.” Oh, I think I have a “guest.”” And instead of rushing out with the guns, which he’s already gotten, he puts those down and he sits down and he says, “I think I have a “guest.”” He goes, or she goes, to a *place* that, with a little focusing training, the person has learned.

“Go to a place” means “get quiet, sit there and go to where the “guest” would be. This is a distinct action, an internal action. The guest isn’t already there, just this diffuse “Aa-aa-rr-rr” fury is there. But the “guest” is not there. Or the anxiety is there but the “guest” isn’t there. So what’s the “guest”? Well, the “guest” is a “that.” You say, “O-o-oh.” It takes a few seconds or a minute or two minutes for this “that” to *form*, because it isn’t there as a “that.”

Emotions are already there, you know. You feel them and you say, “Oh, I’m furious. Yeah, that’s right.” But this we call the “*felt sense*.” And there’s a fair amount of literature about the felt sense. But you can call it anything you want. I call it a “that,” because when it forms, then it’s so

distinct. It's in a different space. And time slows down there also. It's in a different space. It's "Oh, I have *that*." The person is *actively* looking for it, *actively* inviting it. *Not* inviting the *anger*. That's a *different* thing. Inviting the "guest." Inviting the "that." And then *it comes*. The person is still actively interrogating this "that." "What *are* you?" Thereby the person is a much larger person, and the space is a much larger space.

And that's what these people are now going to demonstrate. Thank you.

(Transcribed from the audio by Jill Drummond)