

# Circumambulating

## Interpersonal Sensitive Disclosure Therapy

### using rational emotive behaviour therapy

© Dr Ian R. Ridgway 2006

Introduction .....	2
Ground-Motives and Faith .....	3
1. Nature-freedom ground motive of the Renaissance .....	4
2. Nature-freedom dialectical poles in the Enlightenment .....	6
Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy.....	8
1. Ellis' faith .....	8
a) His discussion of religion .....	8
b) Science .....	9
2. Development of REBT .....	10
a) Collapsing the categories .....	10
b) Defeating the self-defeating premises.....	12
3. Criticism .....	12
a) Cognition and emotion .....	12
b) The irrational ideas in REBT .....	13
Interpersonal Sensitive Disclosing Therapy.....	14
1. Case study.....	14
a) How would REBT deal with this therapy situation?.....	14
b) Initial observations and questions .....	15
2. Interpersonal disclosure.....	16
a) Sense of logic .....	16
b) Sense of power .....	17
c) Sense of love-deprivation in past family or in present marriage.....	17
d) Sense of justice/retribution.....	17
e) Sense of loyalty to wife .....	18
f) Sense of firm assurance .....	18
References .....	18
Appendix A .....	21
Appendix B.....	22
Table 1 Four religious ground motives as identified by Dooyeweerd .....	3
Table 2 Dooyeweerd's modal scale of meaning aspects and meaning kernels .....	21
Table 3 Sensitive anticipations.....	22
Figure 1 Freedom motive with personality ideal and nature motive with science ideal .....	6
Figure 2 Ellis' ABC model .....	11
Figure 3 A more detailed REBT model following Froggatt (1990).....	15
Figure 4 Model for sensitive disclosing therapy .....	18

## Introduction

In my second lecture,<sup>1</sup> I tried to understand psychotherapy as focussed on the sensitive aspect of human experience. Specifically, I argued that psychotherapy should aim to disclose, open up, reveal or unfold the **anticipations** latent within the sensitive aspect. I also explored with you the importance of both the historical and the faith aspects in this disclosing process. The disclosure process can only occur through an opened up historical aspect which been disclosed by the last aspect, the faith aspect.

However, we must not forget that disclosure is an interpersonal<sup>2</sup> process in which the faith of others contributes to the disclosing of theirs and others' historical functioning. Thus, because therapy is interpersonal, the content of the subjective faith (Christian or non-Christian, secular or religious) of the therapist has and will continue to open up the historical power of the therapist vis-à-vis the counsellee.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the opening up process taking place in the counsellee will be being done under the ascendancy of the formative influence disclosed by the therapist's faith.

In this lecture, we will explore this interpersonal disclosing process further by investigating the connections between a particular therapist's faith, Albert Ellis, the historical aspect and therapy methods of Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) (1996: 318) hoping to reach a better understanding of the disclosing of the sensitive aspect as a sense of logic within an interpersonal context. To better understand the therapy procedures that could be developed from this approach I have included a case study.

---

<sup>1</sup> The one we probably all found somewhat testing, you as well as me.

<sup>2</sup> An important point noted by Van Belle (1985: 30) for schooling which applies to therapy too.

<sup>3</sup> By this comment, I am not suggesting that any Christian therapist is better than a non-Christian one. For many Christian therapists, in my humble opinion (IMHO), do not understand healing from a Christian point of view at all.

## Ground-Motives and Faith

If the above analysis is correct then we must address the question of faith because of its pivotal connection with history (formation). Dooyeweerd linked faith, culture (another word he used for history) and what he called ‘the religious ground motive’ in the following words,

Ultimately, the faith of the leading cultural powers [therapists in our context] determines the entire direction of the opening process of culture [the direction of therapy, for example]. The religious ground motive behind all cultural development in a phase of history manifests itself within time first in the faith of those who are called to form history (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 90).

These two sentences are extremely importantly for our understanding. In the first sentence, Dooyeweerd is saying that the faith of those people or institutions with culture power (e. g., political, but also artistic, ecclesiastical, legal, educational, media owners, and therapists), that *faith* determines how a particular culture develops. In the second sentence, Dooyeweerd introduces the term *ground motive*. The presence of the ground motive is critical because the ground motive opens up the aspect of faith.

Dooyeweerd has documented four religious ground motives that have been dominant in western<sup>4</sup> history in order of their historical appearance as set out in Table 1.

**Table 1 Four religious ground motives as identified by Dooyeweerd**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. <i>form-matter</i> motive of the ancient classical world;</b></li> <li><b>2. Christian Biblical driving force of <i>creation, fall, and redemption through Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit</i>;</b></li> <li><b>3. medieval-scholastic synthesis motive <i>nature-grace</i>;</b><br/><b>and,</b></li> <li><b>4. modern humanist motive of <i>nature-freedom</i>.</b></li> </ol> |
|---|

---

<sup>4</sup> At least two Asian scholars, working with Dooyeweerd’s ideas, have shown that different types of ground motives have been evident in Asian cultures. One of these scholars is a Korean, Yong Joon Choi (2000).

But, what are these ‘religious ground motives’? For Dooyeweerd, religious and religion is always supratemporal, a central condition showing itself in the temporal. By **religious**, Dooyeweerd means that which rises above the temporal and the relative (1979: 8). Dooyeweerd says a ground motive is a ‘central spiritual driving power of our thinking and acting’ (Dooyeweerd, 1960: 32), a power that will also drive our counselling theory and practice because these are part of western culture.

Although religiously different, each of these ground motives is related to the others. The first, third and fourth are all directly related. The third tried to synthesise the Scriptural ground motive (2) with the form-matter motive (1) –with disastrous results for the church—and the humanist motive attempted to incorporate all previous ground-motives within its nature-freedom dialectical motive.

Each of the non-scriptural ground-motives (i. e., the first, third, and fourth) has only two terms, which are polar opposites. This fact means that each of these three ground motives is internally unstable because ‘they are torn by an internal dualism which drives this thought to its polar (and therefore opposite) direction’ (Dooyeweerd, 1942: n. p.). In fact, these ground motives are in a *religious* dialectic because each one of the opposites suggests a way of life in itself but is hopelessly wedded to its opposite in an ongoing struggle for dominance.

I want to begin with some of the history of the nature-freedom ground motive in early humanist culture because this ground motive drives present day humanist culture of which Albert Ellis is a self-confessed adherent (Ellis, n. d.: n. p.).

### **1. Nature-freedom ground motive of the Renaissance**

The beginnings of humanist culture lie in the powerful Italian Renaissance (1350-1500)<sup>5</sup>, which sought – rightly in my view – to throw off the bondage of the Church’s control<sup>6</sup> over art. However, the Renaissance not only produced different art it produced a new picture of man himself. Goudswaard, in summarising a number of

---

<sup>5</sup> Dates seem to vary.

<sup>6</sup> The power of the Church, which has been split into the eastern and western branches in 1054 AD, was further undermined by the Lutheran and Calvinistic Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries producing further fragmentation.

writers on the Renaissance says, ‘the earth becomes man’s domain as the platform and instrument with which he can realize himself in the arts, as well as in science, in trade, as well as in his contact with the other sex’ (1979: 13). He quotes Peter Gay, a well-known writer on the Renaissance, as saying ‘man is free, the master of his fortune, not chained to his place in a universal hierarchy but capable of all things’ (p. 13). Pico della Mirandola declares this same sentiment in 1486 with his famous words, ‘we can become whatever we choose to become’ (Brians, Gallwey, Hughes, Hussain, Law, Myers, Neville, Schlesinger, Spitzer, and Swan, 1999: n. p.).

However, these humanists, like Pico della Mirandola were Christians and not secular humanists (Brians et al., 1999). Brians et al. (1999) in commenting on della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* stated that these humanists characterised themselves as humanists because they defined the human in terms of its relationship to the divine! Nevertheless, Carroll (2004: 2-4) understands the Renaissance movement as attempting to adopt man’s free will as the Archimedean point of the universe and places the great battle between the Christian humanist Erasmus and Martin Luther (1524-1525) over free will within this context (Carroll, 2004: 4, 58).

Renaissance man imagines that ‘autonomous personal freedom’ and ‘absolute and rational control over nature’ grow out of each other (Goudswaard, 1979: 14) and will be complementary. However, these two become antagonistic poles: the first, a freedom pole associated with a personality ideal pitted against the second, a nature pole with a science ideal. (See Figure 1 below.) Their antagonism appears in the efforts of humanity to protect its freedom from the efforts of science to exert control over nature, which paradoxically *includes* (autonomous) man.<sup>7</sup> However, if man is also part of nature then what happens to human freedom when absolute, scientific control is exercised over it? And if we are to exercise rational control over nature, how will that be possible if our free creativity is compromised by our own scientific control?<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> We experience this opposition presently in science’s wish to investigate the use of stem cells from discarded embryos to gain greater control over disease. The researchers believe their creativity is being stifled whereas others think certain moral limits should be applied to experimenting with human life or potential human life otherwise, society may lose its freedoms to the inroads of science.

<sup>8</sup> Think of George Orwell’s *1984* with its love affair between Winston Smith and Julia. Absolute control is employed by the System over the inhabitants of Oceania. No personal freedom is given to

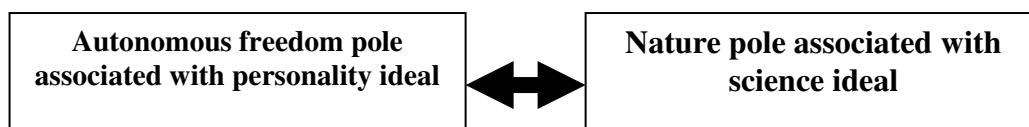


Figure 1 Freedom motive with personality ideal and nature motive with science ideal

## **2. Nature-freedom dialectical poles in the Enlightenment**

The Enlightenment period, from 1650 up to the French Revolution (1789-1799), deifies reason, sought a stronger break from ecclesiastical authority (Carroll, 2004: 135). Reason is the great light that shines upon and illumines all things in a new way. But, Reason is far more than that. Reason is not just a tool; reason is Creator on which Rene Descartes (1596-1650) depended to construct a universe from his own consciousness based on his famous discovery, 'I think, therefore I am'. However, in seeking to construct his own reason-conceived universe, Descartes created a yawning chasm between 'body' and 'mind', each of which he considered 'utterly distinct' (Kemerling, 2001: n. p.). He has 'clear and distinct' ideas of both of these about which God would not deceive him but Descartes is unable to unify them.

According to Kemerling (2001: n. p.), Descartes is unable to explain adequately how body (nature) and mind (freedom) interact. However, his dualism can underpin belief in the immortality of the human mind after death which is important for church and state. Importantly for science,

the distinction of mind from body establishes the absolute independence of the material realm from the spiritual, securing the freedom of scientists to rely exclusively on observation for their development of mechanistic explanations of physical events (Kemerling, 2001: n. p.).

The behaviourist-cognitivist therapies may be said to trace their ancestry from the 'material body' side of Rene Descartes' dualism of body and mind. From that distinction, two research traditions were spawned (Peters, 2003: 217): First, research into physiology and second, research into how consciousness and mind operate. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both these traditions are firmly embedded in scholarly practice but

---

have an affair because one cannot have absolute control over others and still have freedom. *Big Brother's* 'freedom' is just not freedom by any definition.

had nothing to do with each other. The first makes careful observation of outward actions and the second relies on introspection.

The behavioural-cognitivist school is caught within the religious, humanist dialectical movement of the nature pole and its science ideal, and freedom pole and its personality ideal. It is trapped because it has chosen an aspect of creation and imagined it to be supratemporal in meaning. Behaviourist and cognitivist therapies are dominated by the nature pole and its science ideal.

Behaviourists and behaviour therapists trace their direct ancestry from the first behaviourist proper who was undoubtedly, J. B. Watson (1878-1958) (Peters, 2003: n. p.). Watson would have nothing to do with introspective data. He wanted only observable, 'objective', mechanical data that can be measured in some way. Watson was a psychologist but not a therapist and it is not until the 1950s that behaviour *therapists* become active.

Albert Ellis first trained as a Rogerian counsellor rejecting Rogerianism because of its 'g--@%d--\*\$ passivity' (Psychotherapy.net, 2001: n. p.). He changed to psychoanalysis but after much experimentation and frustration moved towards the learning theory of the behavioural tradition. (He even looked forward to some integration between neo-psychoanalysis and behaviour therapy.) (Ellis, 1962: 10.) He found that psychoanalytic *insight* was not enough and that clients needed to take action when controlled by their fears. He got the idea that *deconditioning* oneself from one's fears would work: that is, that if one kept approaching the fearful situation and did not experience the feared consequence then the fear would cease to control one's life.

But, Ellis took a step beyond Pavlovian conditioning agreeing with those who said that humans are *symbolising* creatures that communicate with their fellows and also, most importantly, *with themselves* (Ellis, 1962: 14). Ellis came to believe that verbal behaviour was largely responsible for both the creation and maintenance of neurosis and that both 'Freudians and conditionists' were wrong in over-emphasising the part that nonverbal influences played (p. 19). Neurosis is created and maintained by irrational beliefs repeated in sentences by sufferers.

The irrationality, said Ellis, stems from the inflating of ‘psychological *desires* –such as the desires for love, approval, success, and leisure – into *definitional needs*’ (p. 21). Ellis believed that no *evidence* could be produced for such definitions. Hence, to insist that a preference be a ‘dire need’ was to court distress because reality refuses to guarantee that ‘dire’ needs will be satisfied.

## **Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy**

### **1. Ellis’ faith**

#### **a) His discussion of religion**

Albert Ellis (b. 1913) tries to escape any charge of his being religious by definition. Religionists, he says, are those who have ‘some kind of faith unfounded on fact, or dependency on some assumed superhuman entities’ (Ellis, n. d.: n. p.). This definition does not apply to him because a ‘nonsupernatural system of beliefs can more accurately be described as a philosophy of life or a code of ethics, and it is misleading to confuse a believer in this general kind of philosophy or ethical code with a true religionist’ (Ellis, n. d.: n. p.).

However, Ellis’ attempt to avoid tainting his belief in some thing ‘unconditionally nondependent’ (Clouser, 1999: 24) as religion is unconvincing. Ellis’ discusses a number of healthy ‘personality traits’<sup>9</sup> that the non-religionist wants to encourage which are headed by self-interest. He rightly argues that *self*-interest cannot be foremost for religion, [at least the Christian religion], because ‘first of all, [religion] is not self-interest; it is god-interest’ (Ellis, n. d.: n. p.).

The religious person must, by virtual definition, be so concerned with whether or not his hypothesized god loves him, and whether he is doing the right thing to continue to in this god's good graces, that he must, at very best, put himself self second and must sacrifice some of his most cherished interests to appease this god. If, moreover, he is a member of any organized religion, then he must choose his god’s precepts first, those of this church and it’s [sic] clergy second, and his own views and preferences third (Ellis, n. d.: n. p.).

---

<sup>9</sup> Namely, self interest, self-direction, tolerance, acceptance of uncertainty, flexibility, scientific thinking, commitment, risk-taking, and self acceptance. He claims that religion ‘in most respects . . . seriously sabotages mental health’ (Ellis, n. d.: n. p.; Ellis, Abrams, & Abrams, 2005).



Leaving aside the fact that Ellis gives a description of a religious person that would not fit many Christian<sup>10</sup> believers, Ellis has rightly identified the difference between a humanist worldview and a Christian one. In the former, the humanist ascribes autonomy to himself: 'I set the law for my own self. I construct my relation to reality for myself'. (The Christian says, 'We discover the law for ourselves because it has been given by God'.)

Ellis' recognition of self-interested autonomy as being superior to other types of interest is the identification of some thing as ultimately more important than other things. Autonomy, in this context, fits Clouser's definition of a divinity belief as something 'non-dependent' and 'unconditional' (1999: 24).

Whenever humanity attempts to regard creaturely reality as autonomous or sufficient in itself for existence and meaning, it ends by absolutising some chosen aspect of creation and fancying it a source of transcendent meaning. Friesen describes this absolutising as trying to 'elevate that [chosen] aspect of meaning to the [status of the] totality of meaning. This is the source of all -isms in theoretical thought' (2003-2006: n. p.). Ellis, it appears to me, has chosen human autonomy which, as we will observe, is expressed in scientific rationality.

## **b) Science**

Ellis always had a commitment to logical positivism (Wilber, n. d.: 1), although more questioning is occurring as to whether he has moved from this point lately Shaver (1998: n. p.). Man's freedom from supernatural interference is found in the fact that he adheres to science and its empirical basis. Ellis' espousal of scientific method is well captured in the comment he wrote in 1950 while still within the neo-psychoanalytical school:

With advocates of unscientific psychoanalysis there can be essentially no argument—as long as they frankly admit that science is not their goal, and that faith, religion, mental healing, or some other non-scientific object is in all frankness, to espouse some other kinds of analytic viewpoints, that is their democratic right—as long as they do not call their views scientific...

---

<sup>10</sup> In fact, Ellis first three ideas of concern about God's love, doing the right thing to remain in God's good graces and appeasement do not fit the Christian religion.

Most contemporary psychologists and psychiatrists agree, however, that *thorough going scientific knowledge is the only valid basis for analytic (and other) therapy*, and that rigorous criticism of non-scientific psychological methods is quite justified (Ellis, Abrams & Abrams, 2005: n. p., italics mine).

However, logical positivism and its ‘verification principle’ that meaning is defined in terms of what can be empirically determined was found to be incoherent. The principle was unable to satisfy its own terms of meaningfulness; no empirical evidence could be adduced in support of the principle itself. Ellis seems to have moved on to postmodernism.<sup>11</sup>

## **2. Development of REBT**

### **a) Collapsing the categories**

Ellis first labelled his work *rational* therapy, which was misunderstood because Ellis is not a (philosophical) *rationalist*.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, Ellis changed the title of his therapy to *rational-emotive* therapy (RET) (Ellis, 1962: 122). He claimed this term best described his therapy because the name focussed on its double-orientation. As to its first orientation, RET emphasized

the cognitive-persuasive-didactic-reasoning method of showing a patient what his basic irrational philosophies are, and then of demonstrating how these illogical or groundless or [simply] definitional premises must lead to emotionally disturbed behaviour and must be concertedly attacked and changed if this behaviour is to be improved (Ellis, 1962: 122).

However, Ellis pointed to an important second orientation:

the primary aim of [Ellis’] therapy is to change the patient’s most intensely and deeply held emotions as well as, and along with, his thoughts. In fact, the term (rational-emotive) implies that rational-emotive psychotherapy holds, that human emotion and human thinking *are* in some of their essences, *the same thing* [my italics], and that by changing the former one *does* change the latter (Ellis, 1962: 122, italics Ellis', unless designated mine).

I hope you notice that Ellis has virtually collapsed the categories of feeling and thinking into one. This conflation is central for his therapy: for him,

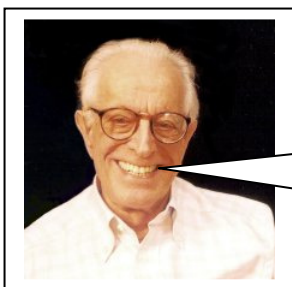
---

<sup>11</sup> According to Shower (1998: n. p.), Ellis has been cited as saying that, ‘Although I was formerly in the logical positivist camp, I now consider myself largely a postmodernist and constructionist’.

<sup>12</sup> Ellis claimed to have an ‘empirical’ attitude to life, which philosophically would be opposed to rationalism (Ellis, 1962: 123-124).

human thinking and emotion are *not* two disparate or different processes, but that they significantly overlap and are in some respects, for all practical purposes, essentially *the same thing* [my italics] (Ellis, 1962: 38, italics Ellis' unless otherwise designated).

Ellis will even allege that emotions are: 'largely a form of thinking or result from thinking' (Ellis, 1962: 53).



The RT approach especially emphasizes the idea that human emotion does not exist as a thing in itself . . . [and] cannot for the most part be clearly differentiated from ideation, and is largely controllable by thinking processes (Ellis, 1962: 125)

But, Ellis goes further in quoting with approval Rokeach's notion that the phrases, 'I believe', 'I think' and 'I feel' are interchangeable in everyday speech and 'all say pretty much the same thing' (Rokeach, cited in Ellis, 1962: 42). In this way, Ellis, not only ignores the differences that might occur between 'I think' and the other two but also the differences implied between 'I believe' and the other two.

Ellis believed that 'illogical or groundless' premises 'must lead to'<sup>13</sup> emotionally disturbed behaviour because life events activate beliefs, or more importantly, our repeating of our core beliefs in our minds using self-talk (See Fig. 1 below). If the events [A] activate irrational beliefs [B] then we feel more pain than is appropriate [C]. If the events activate rational beliefs then we feel pleasure. For Ellis, we are what we think and we disturb ourselves when we tell ourselves repeatedly irrational sentences that we have learned from our backgrounds or devised ourselves.



**Figure 2 Ellis' ABC model**

<sup>13</sup> Ellis is actually 'begging the question' because he should be demonstrating that this illogical thought leads to that emotional problem, not simply assuming its truth and then using it as if its truth had been proven.

### **b) Defeating the self-defeating premises**

Significantly, Ellis believed that ‘all people have strong tendencies to escalate . . . desires and preferences into dogmatic, *absolutist* “shoulds”, “musts”, “oughts”, demands and commands’. Ellis believes our tendency to create absolutes and hang onto them produces human misery. His tough stand against absolutes<sup>14</sup> reflected in his reply to an interviewer who had said to him, ‘It sounds as if you're really absolutely in touch with what Albert Ellis wants to do and that's it’, was ‘Don't use "absolutely." That's a human sickness. There are no absolutes’ (Psychotherapy.net, 2001: n. p.).

However, fortunately, humans also have tendencies, Ellis believes, ‘to think rationally’ (Corey, 1996: 321). The way to reduce disturbed feelings and behaviours is to find the illogical premises and combat them with logical thoughts (Ridgway, 2006: n. p.).<sup>15</sup> Hence, because cognitions (beliefs and thoughts) are the same as emotions or longer sustained feelings, if we can change patients’ cognitions then their emotions will change automatically. This change will occur because the two areas overlap to such an extent as to be the same.

## **3. Criticism**

### **a) Cognition and emotion**

Ellis’ conflating of cognition and emotion is hardly a surprise. When autonomy through rational cognition is understood to be the defining characteristic of man then one can find it difficult being able to discern important distinctions in human functioning. Ellis ignores an important distinction in merging the meanings of emotion and cognition which does not stand up to close analysis. No one disputes that these two functions are always (often) found together but that is no proof that they are synonymous or even similar. However, Ellis may be interpreted as correctly drawing attention to the close connection between what I would call the sensitive and the logical aspects and sensitive and logical functioning.

---

<sup>14</sup> He appears not to understand the contradiction between requiring this absolute and denying the existence of any absolutes.

<sup>15</sup> The common-sense view of the cause of human feeling and behaviour is that the latter are caused by events. For example, if I were to fail an important assignment, or not reach an important goal then my resultant determination to do better next time, is caused by the failure episode. Hence, commonsensically, we would say, ‘I’m down because I did not do well at my exam but tomorrow is a new day’.

*Contra* Ellis, neither cognition nor anything else is necessary to *create* emotion. Feeling is already present in some form in all our acts hence no *formation* of emotion is necessary, as Ellis seems to believe. (In my opinion, he is influenced by mechanistic ideas of causation derived from the cognitive-behavioural tradition that require the production of emotion by some activating force.) However, humans and animals feel and emote continuously as part of living. Nevertheless, logical and language involvement do deepen, disclose, open up and unfold human emotion. In the case of REBT, the process of sensitive disclosure takes place as the sensitive aspect anticipates the logical, the historical, the lingual (symbolising) and the belief aspects.

### **b) The irrational ideas in REBT**

The essence of the change process in REBT is the cognitive technique of **DISPUTING** the validity of the basic ideas that the counsellee holds at **B** above. These irrational or self-defeating ideas are causing inappropriate emotions/behaviours to be evident and consequently, have to be extirpated.

However, this disputation process depends on the therapist knowing certain ‘irrational’ or self-defeating<sup>16</sup> ideas (Froggatt, 1990: n. p.). Ellis (1962: 60-88) listed 11 irrational ideas, which will bring unhappiness if believed. For example, irrational idea number five is the ‘idea that certain people are bad, wicked, or villainous and that they should be severely blamed and punished for their villainy’ (Ellis, 1962: 65). However, although further analysis of this idea and other of his ideas would show a definite bias against the Christian faith<sup>17</sup> among others, Ellis has never hidden the fact that he was attempting to indoctrinate his patients into a new philosophy of life. To be involved in ‘elegant’ REBT (Jones & Butman, 1991: 179), the counsellee must accept the hedonistic-stoic philosophy that lies behind the therapy (Ellis, 1962: 124); that is, the counsellee, must change his basic beliefs about life. In this manner, Ellis shows that REBT is influenced by beliefs (which he does not distinguish from

---

<sup>16</sup> The preferred term in later REBT.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Ellis is completely opposed to any idea of sin (Ellis, 1962: ch 7)

thoughts), which deal with ‘ultimate concerns’ of relationships with fellowman, with basic ideas of the nature of man, with human life, with sin and with human destiny.<sup>18</sup>

### **Interpersonal Sensitive Disclosing Therapy**

Because of the nature of faith, a faith that looks towards the eternal, the Christian subjective content of faith will be different from that of the humanist. In turn, that will mean that the disclosing of the historical aspect will be different from that of the humanist and hence, the disclosing of the sensitive aspect will be different.

#### **1. Case study**

Young married man, late 20s. Christian. Very confused over ‘love’ feelings he has for a young, single woman he has met. Wonders how he could feel like this for another woman when he loves his wife. Was not successful with relationships with girls at school. Married at 21. His mother was perhaps distant though he does not admit to this.

#### **a) How would REBT deal with this therapy situation?**

REBT would say that for this man to be disturbed like this he must have been saying to himself something like, ‘To be feeling this way about another woman is terrible and I am a wicked, sinful person to be feeling like this! Furthermore, I must stop myself thinking these thoughts about her because it will be horrible for me if I do not.’ REBT would argue that he has inferred (see Figure 3 below for a more detailed REBT model) from his feelings that he is a terrible person and has evaluated his personhood in that light. These evaluations may have been derived from believing that he should always be constant in his feelings for his wife and that he is not, it is terrible. As long as he keeps disturbing himself with these thoughts he will go on feeling bad.

---

<sup>18</sup> For example, Ellis said in an interview that he believes that death is the same experience as before conception (Psychotherapy.net, 2001: n. p.)

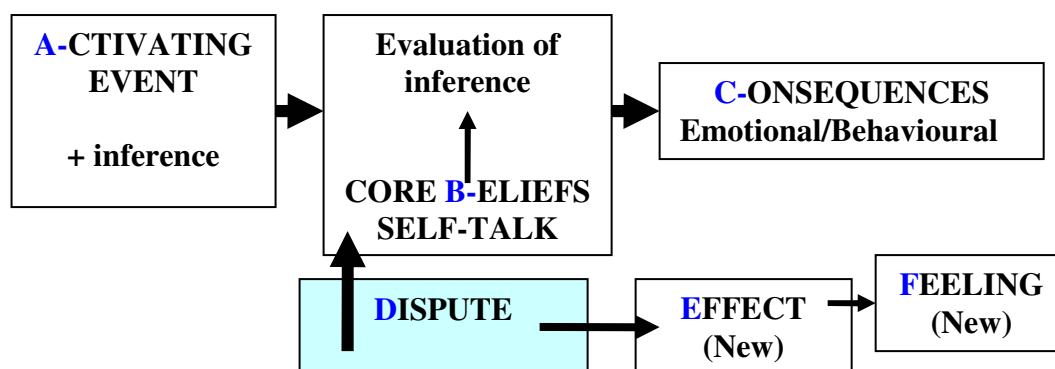


Figure 3 A more detailed REBT model following Froggatt (1990)

Therefore, he must be taught to *dispute* these irrational and self-defeating thoughts. And, according to Ellis, hard work is required to keep disputing such thoughts. One could counsel the man using REBT by saying, ‘You may not want to feel this way and it may be darn inconvenient and annoying but it is not the end of the world’. ‘What is so terrible about feeling this way?’

In my terms, REBT is pointing to the fact that this feeling of desire/liking can be opened up (with the thought of ‘how terrible I am to be feeling like this’) in a way that REBT then regards as ‘self-defeating’ or irrational because of the emotional/behavioural consequences.

REBT focuses on the logical anticipation in the feeling of liking and subjects that to its ‘rational’ or self-defeating criterion which is determined by its empirical faith.

### **b) Initial observations and questions**

- This young man is struggling with ‘love’ feelings for another woman.<sup>19</sup> As he understands it, this feeling imperils his marriage or his image about what a good husband *should* be. To have such feelings calls into question his sense of love for his wife. Is this true?
- What else could these feelings mean? Might they have a past referent?

<sup>19</sup> I am assuming for the present that he has a crush on her and that it is not reciprocated or known about by her. If it is, we have a more complicated situation depending on her reaction!

- What happens to feelings that are not disclosed or unfolded? Can he choose not to allow these feelings to develop? *How* can he do that? Will that solve the problem?
- As Christians, we would not favour trying to promote these feelings for this other woman if they are to be understood as in competition with those he has for his wife. However, a feeling of attraction for others of both sexes is normal. Friendship is based on mutual interests along with feelings of attraction combined with loyalty. (In fact, we can find that with a closer association with someone we are initially attracted to, feelings will sometimes wane because mutual interests are lacking.)
- We note that this man did not have a history of good, secure friendships with girls (and maybe boys as well) during his adolescence. Implications?

## **2. Interpersonal disclosure**

Disclosure takes place in an *interpersonal* context of therapist and counsellee. This context means that whatever the content of the faith of the therapist will be that which opens up the historical aspect of the therapist and counsellee. The greater the opening up of the counsellee's historical aspect, the greater will be his ability to take greater charge of the unfolding of his own sensitive aspect.

The maturity and experience of the therapist are important in this situation. If the therapist has been faced with this situation before and has successfully seen it through then this experience will contribute greatly to the help he can render. Supervision is obviously important.

### **a) Sense of logic**

In the above observations and questions, we have begun to sense distinctions among various important matters. *Feelings* for another person as opposed to *actions* taken which compromise one's own loyalty to one's spouse. Feelings of *attraction* for another person as opposed to *covenant relationship* with spouse. In consideration of these matters, counsellee may begin to gain a sense of proportion (aesthetic anticipation) regarding his present situation.



Counselling should aim to open anticipation of the logical (distinction) aspect in the sensitive with regard to this specific case.

### **b) Sense of power**

At the moment, the counsellee feels powerless because of these unruly feelings. What are the ways that the feelings of attraction will be heightened as opposed to reduced (granted that part of him wants them to reduce)? Getting to know the one he is attracted to may in fact reduce his stronger feelings because another's actuality can decrease the part our fantasy plays.

### **c) Sense of love-deprivation in past family or in present marriage**

This aspect may be a factor and should be investigated but perhaps not too early. Bound to be painful and embarrassing. Attractions –particularly multiple ones – may be related to love deprivation, often in the past, but sometimes, being reenacted, in present relationships. If the therapist is female in this case, then this sense may come to the fore in the therapeutic relationship where it needs to be handled sensitively. Therapist must not become romantically attached.<sup>20</sup> But, neither should therapist become distant, which would also be antitherapeutic. Stay warm and friendly but not seductive. In supervision, specifically mention this case, and be candid about own feelings because it is OK to have the feelings. That is the problem the counsellee is struggling with!

### **d) Sense of justice/retribution**

The latter issue may be further complicated by a deep sense of injustice because of the deprivation. You may be on the receiving end if you are a female! A male therapist will tend to get stories of how bad women are and that they are not to be trusted et cetera. In terms of this person's life, that's the conclusion his feelings have led him to. However, the feeling may also be hiding. Males may also be his target.

---

<sup>20</sup> However, good supervision can get you even through that with benefit to you and counsellee.

### e) Sense of loyalty to wife

Marriage may be distant for reasons related to the above. The man gets married to get the love he missed out on in his family but cannot give love so the marriage becomes frustrating for both partners. A sense of loyalty to the wife does not open up and grow as it should. Therapy will need to monitor this aspect. The fact that this young man has come for help is a very good sign and indicates a positive prognosis *if he stays the course*. For those who are older, 40s or 50s the path will be harder but change can still if we are willing to be changed.

### f) Sense of firm assurance

If what has been said above has any validity, this area of the counsellee's sense of firm assurance that things will work out for good in the end will invite attention. This sense anticipates the eschaton of new heavens and new earth.

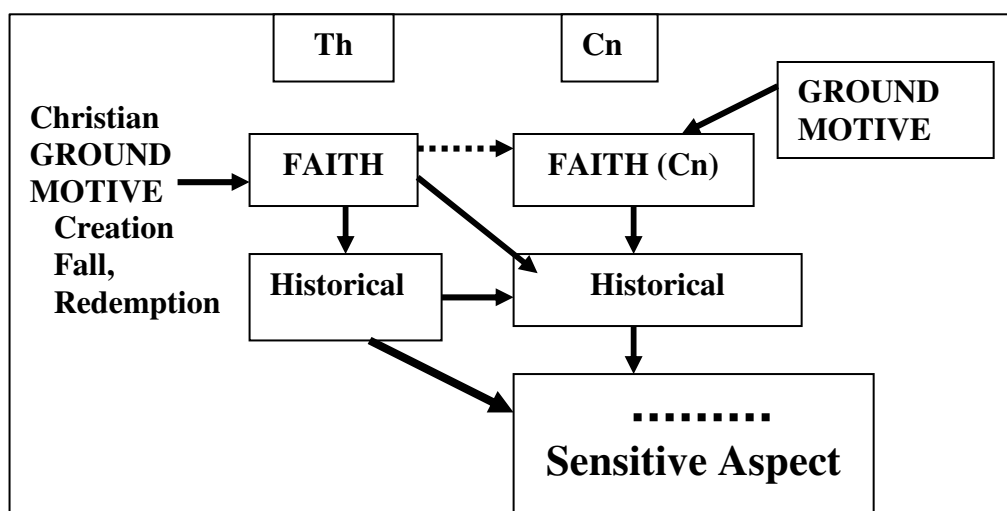


Figure 4 Model for sensitive disclosing therapy

### References

- Brians, P., Gallwey, M., Hughes, D., Hussain, A., Law, R., Myers, M., et al. (Eds.). (1999). *Reading About the World*. Vol 1. (3rd ed.). NY: Harcourt Brace Custom Publishing. Available Internet: ([http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world\\_civ\\_reader/world\\_civ\\_reader\\_1/pi\\_co.html](http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/pi_co.html)) (9th August).
- Carroll, J. (2004). *The wreck of western culture: Humanism revisited*. Carlton Nth, Vic, Australia: Scribe Publications.

- Clouser, R. (1999). *Knowing with the heart: Religious experience and belief in God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.
- Corey, G. (1996). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy*. (5th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.
- Dooyeweerd, H. (1942). De leer van den mensch in de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee. Stellingen voor het referaat van prof Dr H Dooyeweerd op de komende Jaarvergadering onzer Vereeniging. [The Theory of Man: Thirty-Two propositions on anthropology: Propositions for consideration from Prof Dr H Dooyeweerd at our Association's upcoming Annual Meeting.] First appeared in the *Correspondentiebladen* 7(5): 134-143 and then later published in 1954, *Sola Fide* 7(2): 8-18.
- Dooyeweerd, H. (1960). *In the twilight of western thought: Studies in the pretended autonomy of theoretical thought*. Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.
- Dooyeweerd, H. (1979). *Roots of western culture: Pagan, secular and Christian options* (J. Kray, Trans.). Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation.
- Ellis, A. (1962). *Reason and emotion in psychotherapy*. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press.
- Ellis, A. (n. d.). The case against religion. Available Internet: (<http://www.geocities.com/bororissa/rel.html>) (11th August 2006).
- Ellis, A., Abrams, M., & Abrams, L. (2005). A brief biography of Dr Albert Ellis. Available Internet: (<http://www.rebt.ws/albertellisbiography.html>) (9th August 2006).
- Friesen, J. G. (2003-2006). Studies relating to Herman Dooyeweerd. Linked glossary of terms: Hypostasis. Available Internet: (<http://members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Hypostasis.html>) (24th June 2006).
- Froggatt, W. (1990). A brief introduction to Rational Emotive Behaviour therapy. . Available Internet: (<http://www.anapsys.co.uk/files/Brief%20Introduction%20to%20REBT.htm>) (17th July 2006).
- Goudswaard, B. (1979). *Capitalism and progress: A diagnosis of western society*. (Trans. & Ed. J. Van Nuis Zylstra). Toronto: Wedge Publishing.
- Jones, S. L., & Butman, R. E. (1991). *Modern psychotherapies: A comprehensive Christian appraisal*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Kemerling, G. (2001). Major figures in Western philosophy: Rene Descartes. Available Internet: (<http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/4d.htm#dual>) (13th August 2006).
- Peters, R. S. (2003). "Behaviorism" in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, University of Virginia Library (Vol. 1). Available Internet: (<http://etext.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhi.cgi?id=dv1-30>) (9th August 2006).
- Psychotherapy.net. (2001). An interview with Albert Ellis, Ph.D by Myrtle Heery: Available Internet: (<http://www.psychotherapy.net/cgi/framesmaker.cgi?mainframe=totm&subframe=ellis>) (11th August 2006).
- Ridgway, I. R. (2006). 2221: Theory & Practice 1. Lecture 7. Rational emotive behaviour therapy. Albert Ellis. (b. 1913.) course notes. Unpublished paper. Tabor College Victoria.

- Shawer, L. (1998). Postmodern therapies news. Is Albert Ellis postmodern?  
Available Internet: (<http://users.california.com/~rathbone/pmthold.htm>) (14th August 2006).
- Van Belle, H. (1985). Relational anthropology and education. *Pro Rege* XIV(1): 19-37.
- Wilber, K. (n. d.). Let's nuke the transpersonalists. A reponse to Albert Ellis.  
Available Internet: (<http://www.kenwilber.com/editor/lnhttp.pdf>) (13th August 2006).
- Yong Joon Choi. (2000). Dialogue and antithesis. PhD thesis. Available Internet: (<http://www.isi.salford.ac.uk/dooy/papers/choi/index.html>) (30th July 2006).

## Appendix A

**Table 2 Dooyeweerd's modal scale of meaning aspects and meaning kernels**

(Meaning aspects shaded and in red [1-6] are known as 'natural' aspects. The natural aspects are related to lower realms of individuality structures [such as the inorganic, organic, animal]. Meaning aspects unshaded and in blue [7-15] are known as 'normative' or 'spiritual' aspects.)

<b>MEANING ASPECT</b>	<b>MEANING NUCLEUS</b>
<b>15. Faith or belief</b>	<b>Faith, firm assurance</b>
<b>14. Moral</b>	<b>Love<sup>21</sup> in temporal relationships</b>
<b>13. Juridical</b>	<b>Retribution (recompensing)</b>
<b>12. Aesthetic</b>	<b>Beauty and Harmony</b>
<b>11. Economic</b>	<b>Saving</b>
<b>10. Social intercourse</b>	<b>Courtesy, politeness</b>
<b>9. Lingual</b>	<b>Symbolic meaning</b>
<b>8. Historical</b>	<b>Formative power</b>
<b>7. Logical</b>	<b>Distinction</b>
<b>6. Sensitive</b>	<b>Feeling and sensory perception</b>
<b>5. Biotic</b>	<b>Organic life</b>
<b>4. Physical</b>	<b>Energy</b>
<b>3. Kinematic</b>	<b>Motion</b>
<b>2. Spatial</b>	<b>Continuous extension</b>
<b>1. Numerical</b>	<b>Discrete quantity</b>

<sup>21</sup> Love in this modal sense does not mean the love referred to the two great commandments, which are supratemporal and particularised in all the above aspects of creation.

## Appendix B

**Table 3 Sensitive anticipations**

ASPECT	NUCLEUS	ANTICIPATIONS <i>of</i> other aspects <i>in</i> Sensitive Aspect
<b>15. Faith or belief</b>	<b>Faith, firm assurance</b>	<b>feeling of firm assurance</b>
<b>14. Moral</b>	<b>Love<sup>22</sup> in temporal relationships</b>	<b>moral feeling</b>
<b>13. Juridical</b>	<b>Retribution (recompensing)</b>	<b>jural feeling</b>
<b>12. Aesthetic</b>	<b>Harmony</b>	<b>aesthetic feeling</b>
<b>11. Economic</b>	<b>Saving</b>	<b>economic feeling</b>
<b>10. Social intercourse</b>	<b>Courtesy, politeness</b>	<b>social feeling</b>
<b>9. Lingual</b>	<b>Symbolic meaning</b>	<b>linguistic feeling</b>
<b>8. Historical</b>	<b>Formative power</b>	<b>historico-cultural feeling</b>
<b>7. Logical</b>	<b>Distinction</b>	<b>feeling for logical coherence</b>
<b>6. Sensitive</b>	<b>Feeling and sensory perception</b>	

<sup>22</sup> Love in this modal sense does not mean the love referred to the two great commandments which are supratemporal and particularised in all the above aspects of creation.