

The following is a chapter that was published in the 2002 issue of **Advances in Personal Construct Psychology** (Edited by Robert Neimeyer and Greg Neimeyer; Westport, Ct: Praeger) (pp. 3-38):

THE PERSON AS A MOTIVATED STORYTELLER:

VALUATION THEORY AND THE SELF-CONFRONTATION METHOD

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As a researcher in the field of personality I started, at the end of the sixties, to construct tests for the measurement of achievement motivation and fear of failure (e.g., Hermans, 1970). Dissatisfaction, however, with the objectifying and impersonal nature of these tests, with the separation between assessment and change, and with the rather limited value range of such instruments, motivated me to search for alternatives. One of the authors who inspired me during this scientific exploration was George Kelly (1955) because in his work I found at least three elements which liberated me from the straitjacket of mainstream trait psychology: the personal and idiographic nature of his work, the relational approach in which the client is considered as a colleague, and his supposition that a multiplicity of building blocks (personal constructs in his case) are organized into a system and could be assessed using a grid methodology.

Now, almost 30 years later, I am still interested in my original field, human motivation, albeit in a quite different way from the period mentioned above. In the meantime, developments in the area of the psychology of the self in the line of William James and the recent upsurge of narrative psychology have stimulated me to investigate the construction of personal meanings or, using a more dynamic term, the process of valuation, in which the person is continuously involved. Moreover, my cooperation with Els Hermans-Jansen, a psychotherapist, and our common experiences with a variety of clients have also had a major impact on the work presented in this chapter. Finally, I came to realize that the most appropriate way to characterize the way in which people give form to their own lives is to phrase it in terms of the metaphor of the motivated storyteller (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995) which provides a fertile starting point for both theory and practice.

The several components of this metaphor, "story," "telling," and "motivation" will be briefly addressed before elaborating on its theoretical, methodological and practical implications.

Stories as the Organization of Events in Time and Space

People of all ages and cultures have used stories or narratives (myth, folklore, fairy tale, legend, epic, opera, motion picture, biography, novel, television play, personal anecdote, etc.) to give meaning to their environment and their own lives. Sarbin (1986), one of the main advocates of a narrative approach, views story as a way of organizing episodes, actions, and accounts of actions

in time and space. He suggests that narrative organizes our fantasies and daydreams, our unvoiced stories, our plans, memories, even our loving and hating.

Narratives or stories are for Sarbin part of the root metaphor of contextualism (Pepper, 1942). The central element of this metaphor is the historical event that can only be understood when it is located in the context of time and space. Sarbin (1986) argues that contextualism presupposes an ongoing texture of elaborated events, each being influenced by preceding and following episodes, and by multiple agents who engage in actions. There is a constant change in the structure of situations and in positions occupied by spatially-located actors who are oriented to the world and toward one another as intentional beings. Often these actors have opposite positions as though performing on a stage as protagonists and antagonists, entertaining relationships of love, hate, agreement, or disagreement. The thoughts, feelings, and actions of the protagonists can only be understood as emerging from their relationships with antagonists who, often unpredictably, co-construct reality.

A large proportion of our experiences and actions receive a narrative structure as McAdams (1993) has extensively argued. A concept that clearly demonstrates this structure is the so-called "Quixote principle" originally formulated by Levin (1970) and further developed by Sarbin (1990). This principle refers to identity shaping through reading or listening to stories. The reader is at first a participant in the story, identifying with one of the main characters. After the role of this character is enacted in the imagination, it is enacted overtly and guides the reader's behavior. The story of Don Quixote illustrates how a person forms an identity from reading fictional or historical tales and then proceeds to validate the newly acquired identity in daily life. Before he named himself Don Quixote, the lonely sixteenth-century Spanish nobleman, Alonso Quesada became impressed by heroic deeds of chivalry, as a result of intensive reading of the adventures of knights-errant. After creating silent fantasies in which he participated vicariously as actor or spectator in the stories he read, he took the step of acting on his imaginations and adopted an appropriately knightly name, Don Quixote. This name symbolized the heroship that he needed to transform the world into something better.

An historical case that exemplifies the Quixote principle is Goethe's novel The Sorrows of Young Werther, published in 1774. The book was written in a time when death, especially death by one's own hands, had a romantic flavor. In the literature of that time there was even an aura of nobility and heroism about death and dying, especially if one composed one's own death scenario. Werther's struggle with rejection and his ultimate suicide was taken as a guiding example by young men of fashion, particularly by those who experienced unrequited love. There was a real Werther epidemic following the publication of the book. The typical suicide was performed in full Werther costume: Blue tailcoat, yellow waistcoat, and boots. The pistol was aimed just above the eye (Sarbin, 1990, p. 55). The Quixote principle not only demonstrates the influence of imagination on action but also the cultural context of narratives.

Telling in Actual and Imaginal Relationships

When there is a story, there is always someone who tells the story to someone else. It is the dialogical reciprocity between teller and listener that makes storytelling a highly dynamic interactional phenomenon.

Two forms of dialogue structure our daily experiences: imaginal and actual dialogues. In the lives of normal people these forms of dialogues are certainly not separated but rather side by side and even interwoven they are part of our narrative construction of the world. In her book, *Invisible Guests*, Watkins (1986) argues that, even when we are outwardly silent, we find ourselves communicating with our critics, our parents, our consciences, our gods, our reflection in the mirror, with the photograph of someone we miss, with a figure from a movie or a dream, with our babies, with our pets and even with our plants and flowers. When we plan to visit our friends we "see" and "hear" them in our imagination before we actually meet them, and when we have left them, we re-enact parts of the conversation. Imaginal interactions certainly have a pervasive influence on real interactions. Before I go to a meeting I imagine the people who will attend the meeting and I have expectations of what they will say. During the meeting I imagine what the participants are thinking even if they are outwardly silent, and after the meeting I re-enact what has been said and I may inwardly criticize myself or others with the intention to act differently next time. In other words, imaginings are important factors influencing actual behavior.

Caughey (1984), a social anthropologist, has also studied the phenomenon of "imaginary social worlds." He did fieldwork on Fáánakker, a pacific island in Micronesia and in the Margalla Hills of Pakistan and compared these cultures with North American culture. Caughey concluded that imaginal interactions are in no way restricted to non-Western cultures. He estimated that the "real" social world of most North-Americans includes between 200 and 300 people (e.g., family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues). Moreover, their worlds are populated by a swarming throng of other beings, with whom no face-to-face contact exists. Caughey divides them into three groups: (a) media figures with whom the individual engages in imaginal interactions (a suburban grandmother is described who had a lifelong "affair" with Frank Sinatra despite forty years of marriage); (b) purely imaginary figures produced in dreams and fantasies; (c) imaginal replicas of parents, friends, or lovers who are treated as if they were really present. Caughey argues, as did Watkins (1986), that imaginal dialogues and interactions exist side by side with actual interactions (e.g., "If my mother could see me now...").

Motivation, Plot Structure, and Story Themes

Stories are populated by motivated actors who are purposefully oriented to the world. The example of a detective story (Hermans and Kempen, 1993) may serve as an example. Confronted with a murder, the detective begins the task of finding the reasons or motives "behind" the deed. When detectives begin their investigations, and not yet know the motive (e.g., revenge) behind the actions of the perpetrator, many observations may seem incoherent or even confusing. In this phase the detective is not yet able to see if a particular observation is "to the point." In the course of time, however, the imaginative detective may find out that observations, hitherto incomprehensible, are part of an elaborate pattern of events that together form an insightful plot. The theme organizes the events so that a coherent plot structure emerges.

The example of the detective story reveals a more general feature of narratives, the dialectic relationship between event and plot. As Polkinghorne (1988) has argued, the meaning of a particular event is produced by the interaction between event and plot. Events do not dictate any plot, and not every plot is appropriate to any given set of events. In order to arrive at a

meaningful plot structure, it is necessary to move back and forth between plot and events. According to the principle of "best fit," a proposed plot structure is compared with the events at hand, and revised accordingly. In this comparative process, a particular theme guides the selection of the events and the organization or revision of the plot. The theme allows the pulling together of the events as interrelated parts of a story.

Novels, movies, fairy tales, myths, program music and other kinds of stories may be organized around a broad variety of themes, such as jealousy, revenge, tragic heroism, injustice, unattainable love, the innocence of a child, inseparable friendship, discrimination, and so forth. This thematic variety, however, does not exclude that culture provides us with a limited amount of basic themes that function as organizing frames for the understanding and interpretation of life events. There are different ways of classifying themes as structuring devices of stories.

Frye (1957) argued that themes in narratives are rooted in the experience of nature, and in the evolution of the seasons in particular. Spring has inspired comedy, expressing people's joy and social harmony after the threatening winter. Summer, representing abundance and richness, gives rise to the romance, which depicts the triumph of good over evil, and of virtue over vice. (Note that for Frye romance is not limited to attraction between people.) Autumn, representing the decline of life and the coming death of the winter, gives rise to tragedy. Finally, in the winter satire is born because in this season comes the awareness of the fact that one is ultimately a captive of the world, rather than its master. In satire, people find an opportunity to criticize their own fate.

Whereas Frye's classification of story themes is based on the cyclical movements of nature, Gergen and Gergen (1988) have proposed a classification of a more linear type. They consider narratives as changing over time toward a desirable end state. A progressive narrative tells of increments toward an end state. An individual telling such a narrative might say: "I am learning to overcome my shyness and be more open and friendly with people." A regressive narrative is focused on decrements in the orientation toward a desirable end state. An individual might say: "I can't control the events of my life anymore." Finally, in a stable narrative the individual remains essentially unchanged with respect to the valued end point. Somebody involved in such a narrative might say, "I am still as attractive as I used to be."

The psychological motives of the actors may also be taken as a starting point for the classification of narratives. A classic example is Murray's (1938) system of needs and his use of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). A picture may invite subjects to tell stories with different themes (e.g., achievement, affiliation, dominance, sex, etc.). The underlying assumption is that the themes, expressed in the stories, reflect the subjects' more or less unconscious needs. Inspired by Murray later investigators used TAT procedures to assess people's motives or needs: Achievement motive (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953), power (Winter, 1973), affiliation (Boyatzis, 1973), and the opposition of power and intimacy (McAdams, 1985). Such literatures reflect a close relationship between psychological motives and narratives.

In summary, three suppositions underlie the narrative approach presented in this chapter. First, stories acknowledge both the perception of reality and the power of imagination. Whereas stories combine fact and fiction (Sarbin, 1986), the telling of stories runs through real and imaginal

dialogues (Watkins, 1986; Caughey, 1984). Second, space and time are basic components of storytelling. Stories always imply a temporal organization of events, and a plot structure that meaningfully relates past, present, and future. At the same time, stories are organized around actors who, as protagonist and antagonist, have opposite positions in a real or imaginal space (e.g., imagining what my father would say if he were still alive and was with us on the birthday of my child). Third, both the storyteller and the actors in the stories told are intentional beings who are motivated to reach particular goals which function as organizing story themes in their narratives. Story themes and psychological motives bring coherence and direction in events that are otherwise fragmented and dispersed over time and space.

Valuation theory: Personal Meanings in the Self-Narrative

Valuation theory (Hermans, 1987a,b, 1988, 1989; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995;) is based on the metaphor of the motivated storyteller. In this theory the three components (story, telling, and motivation) of the guiding metaphor are brought together as parts of an articulated conceptual system. (For a discussion of this theory and its methodology in the context of recent trends in constructivism see Neimeyer, Hagans & Anderson, 1998.)

Personal Valuation, Self-Narrative, and Self-Reflection

In agreement with such phenomenological thinkers as James (1894) and Merleau-Ponty (1945) the starting point of valuation theory is in the historical nature of human experience and in its spatio-temporal orientation. The individual lives in the present and is, from a specific point in space and time, oriented to past and future and to the surrounding world. The individual not only orients successively to different parts of his or her spatio-temporal situation, but also brings those parts together in an organized story or self-narrative.

The central concept, "valuation" refers both to the process of meaning construction and its product in which the events of a self-narrative are organized. A valuation has a positive (pleasant), negative (unpleasant) or ambivalent connotation in the eyes of the individual. Personal valuations, as subjective constructions of personal experiences, refer to a broad range of phenomena such as: a dear memory, a pleasant activity, a good talk with a friend, a disappointment in the contact with a significant other, a particular source of satisfaction in one's work, a physical handicap, an unreachabeable ideal, etc. During different periods of one's life, different valuations may emerge because one's reference point is constantly changing. As a result of the act of self-reflection different valuations are brought together into an organized valuation system in which one valuation is given a more prominent place than another.

The process term "valuation" is preferred rather than the more static term "value" because telling one's self-narrative requires a process of self-reflection. This process can be traced to James's (1890) classic distinction between I (the self-as-knower) and Me (the self-as-known) as the two main components of the self. The I, or the self-as-knower, continuously organizes and interprets experience in a purely subjective manner. Three features characterize the I: Continuity, distinctness, and volition. The continuity of the self-as-knower is manifested by a "sense of personal identity" and a "sense of sameness" through time (p. 332). A feeling of distinctness, of having an existence separate from others, is also intrinsic to the I. A sense of personal volition is

expressed by the continuous appropriation and rejection of thoughts by which the self-as-knower functions as an active processor of experience. Each of these features (continuity, distinction, volition) imply the awareness of self-reflectivity that is essential for the self-as-knower (Damon and Hart, 1982). In other words, the concept of "valuation" presupposes an I as an active processor of experience.

In defining the Me, or self-as-known, James (1890) was aware that there is a gradual transition between Me and Mine. In a famous statement, he identified the Me as the empirical self that in its broadest sense is described as all that the person can call his or her own, "not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account" (p. 291). These primary elements or constituents indicate for James a basic feature of the self, its extension. The incorporation of the constituents indicates that the self is not an entity, closed off from the world, and having an existence in itself, but, rather, extended toward specific aspects of the environment (Rosenberg, 1979). With this view on the extension of the self, James, in fact, transcends the strict boundaries of a self-contained, essentialistic self. Because the Mine (body, other person) belongs to the (extended) self, the self, in its broadest sense, is part of the environment, and the environment is part of the self. In terms of the present theory: the process of valuation presupposes an extending, spatially-structured self.

Telling one's Self-Narrative

In valuation theory the notion of self-reflection is closely related to the notion of telling. When people narrate the events of their lives, they reflect at the same time upon themselves taking the position of the listener into account. Of crucial importance for the relation between self-narrative and self-reflection is Sarbin's (1986) thesis that James, Mead, Freud and others emphasized the distinction between the I and the Me, and their equivalents in other European languages, because of the narrative nature of the self. The uttered pronoun I stands for the author, the Me for the actor or narrative figure. In this configuration, the I can imaginatively construct a story with the Me as the protagonist. In such narrative construction the self as author can imagine the future and reconstruct the past (Crites, 1986).

Sarbin's (1986) translation of the I-Me distinction into a narrative framework has an important advantage. It presupposes an I which is involved in a process of telling something to someone else. The I is not only bound to the Me (I think about myself) but also to another I with whom the person is involved in a narrative relationship (I tell something about myself to you). The implication of this dialogical view of the self is that the content of the narration is dependent on the nature of the relationship in which the teller is involved. The I as telling or writing author has a public and tells and writes with this audience in mind. The audience then co-constructs the story and its content.

In everyday life the context-dependent nature of one's self-narrative can easily be observed. People tell, at least to some extent, different self-narratives to different people and in different contexts. People may tell things to their friends which they do not tell to a stranger and in their contact with a psychologist they may tell about confidential things, if they feel safe enough to do so. Different professional contacts also evoke different self-narratives. For example, in their

contact with a medical doctor people may "somatize" psychological complaints (e.g., "I have stomach pain") whereas in their contact with a psychotherapist the psychological or social nature of such complaints may receive more attention ("I have a conflict with my wife").

For the present theory the context-dependence implies that there is no such thing as an "inventory of valuations," a supposedly fixed set of concerns which are waiting to be uncovered by the telling client or the examining psychologist. Rather, the psychologist as an active listener or probing interrogator significantly influences both the form and content of what the person tells. In other words, the process of valuation, as a context-dependent activity, is a co-construction of client and psychologist.

The Motivational and Affective Basis of Self-Narrative

People are not simply storytellers, they are passionate storytellers. That is, they tell those parts of their self-narratives in which they are affectively involved. They do not tell their stories like an "objective" historiographer who dispassionately relates events from a detached point of view. Rather, people tell their personal stories selectively and colorfully, placing emphasis on those events or combinations of events which have an affective meaning or which appeal to them emotionally

In valuation theory it is assumed that each valuation, as a unit of meaning in one's self-narrative, carries an affective connotation and that basic motives are reflected in this connotation. That is, each valuation has a certain degree of personal involvement and reflects a particular set of feelings (a particular affective profile). When we know which types of affect are characteristic of a particular valuation, we know something about the valuation itself. This also implies that the affective meaning of a valuation cannot be separated from it. How does this conception of the self originate in James' work?

As already referred to, James defined the self as "...the sum total of all he can call his. . .". Having said this, James immediately went on to say: "All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down, not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all" (p. 291-292). In other words, James conceives of the self as extended to a manifold variety of things, and reacting with the same set of emotions. Similarly, we conceive of valuations as the phenomenological variety of narrative concerns relevant to an individual, associated with the same set of affective states (e.g., one may experience anxiety and anger in relation to both one's father and one's superior).

The phenomenological richness of personal valuations, which may vary not only between individuals but also within a single individual across time and space, represents the manifest level of the self (see Figure 1). At the latent level, however, a limited number of basic motives exist that are reflected in the affective component of the valuation system. Study of the affective component can therefore reveal which particular motive is active in a particular valuation and in the system as a whole. Note that the latent-manifest distinction poses the problem of generativity: How can humans generate on the basis of a finite set of experiences, an almost unlimited set of surface expressions? Both Freud and Chomsky answered this problem, each in

their own ways and each using their specific terminology, by supposing a distinction between a latent and a manifest level (Freud) or between a deep and surface level (Chomsky), the deeper of which constitutes a limited set of basic motives or operations.

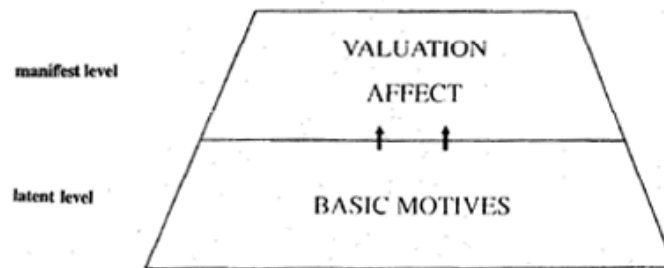


FIGURE 1. Relation between valuation, affect, and basic motives.

Two basic motives, in particular, have been taken into consideration to characterize the affective component of the valuation system: the striving for self-enhancement, or S motive (self-maintenance and self-expansion), and the longing for contact and union with the other, or O motive (participation with other people and the surrounding world). This distinction concerning the basic duality of human experience has been present in the writings of various authors: Bakan (1966) viewed agency and communion as fundamental dynamic principles; Angyal (1965) relied on the concept of autonomy (or self-determination) and homonomy (or self-surrender); Klages (1948) considered Bindung (solidification) and Lösung (dissolution) to be two basic motives; McAdams (1985) has distinguished power and intimacy as basic motives in a narrative context. Recently, the dimensions of individualism-collectivism and idiocentrism-allocentrism, again suggesting the basic character of the S and O motives, have been intensively discussed and investigated (Lau, 1992; Schwarz, 1990; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1998).

In valuation theory, it is assumed that *the basic motives are reflected in the affective component of a valuation*. This can be illustrated using two different valuations:

- "At home I often get my way by pushing just a little bit"
- "I feel fantastic when I paint a good picture"

Assuming that feelings of "strength" and "pride" are general indicators of the self-enhancement motive (S motive), the presence of these feelings in both of the valuations is evidence that they are expressions of the same, underlying motive. Put differently, the valuations pertain to quite different aspects of the self (they differ on the manifest level), although they may be rooted in the same basic motive (they are similar on the latent level). In this theoretical construction the affective component provides the bridge between motivation and valuation. The affect associated with a valuation can be considered as an expression of the basic motives from the latent level.

Some valuations representing the longing for contact and union with the other (O motive) follow:

- "During the stormy weather on the North Sea, I felt a real bond with my brother: I felt lost in the elements, yet still remained standing without having to struggle to be strong." -

- "Singing in a group: The way I express most of my feelings."

Both of the valuations from the same client - although clearly different manifestations of the self - imply strong feelings of intimacy and love. If feelings of intimacy and love are assumed to be indicators of the O motive, then the two valuations can again be seen to differ on the manifest level but not on the latent level.

In close correspondence with S and O feelings, well-being, in the form of the difference between positive and negative feelings, plays a central role in valuation theory. The rationale is that obstacles are met on the path towards fulfillment of basic motives. People are purposefully oriented to the world, but obstacles often prevent the achievement of their goals, resulting in negative feelings. On the other hand, when something is achieved, or obstacles and hindrances successfully overcome, they are rewarded with positive feelings. It is supposed that each valuation is associated with a pattern of positive and negative feelings so that the emphasis of one of the two types of affect may give information about the extent to which basic motives are gratified.

- Generalization and Idealization

Two concepts, generalization and idealization, particularly represent the emphasis on the organization of the valuation system and play a central role in the methodology presented in the following session. The more a particular valuation generalizes as part of the system, the more it determines the "general feeling" of the person under consideration. When one asks a person how he or she feels in general, it is highly probable that particular experiences color this general feeling more than others. For example, if the person is involved in a serious conflict in the work situation, there is a good chance that the feelings associated with this conflict are more likely to determine that person's general feeling in this period than, for example, their favorite sport team playing a winning game. The notion of generalization indicates that not all valuations are equally influential in the system. A valuation with a strong generalization in the system colors the way the person generally feels to a greater extent than a valuation with a weak degree of generalization.

Similarly, valuations may differ in the extent of idealization. The guiding idea is that certain valuations fit more with the way an individual ideally would like to feel than others. Valuations that color the ideal feeling are often different from those that influence the general feeling. In particular, this can be found when people are actually going through a period in which they are faced with personal problems which are associated with a significant degree of negative affect. In this case the ideal feeling typically has an affective modality that is in contrast to the affective modality of the general feeling.

In summary, valuation theory is a narrative theory of the self based on the metaphor of the motivated storyteller. The notion of story is expressed in the central term "valuation" as a process of meaning construction. The concept of telling implies that the person, as an author relating about him- or herself as an actor, is part of a dialogical relationship in which the conversational partner (e.g., the psychologist) co-constructs the person's self-narrative. Clients are considered as experts in their personal meanings, whereas psychologists function as experts on theoretical and methodological issues and, moreover, have experience with a larger group of clients. The concept of motivation is based on the theoretical supposition that people as passionate storytellers focus selectively and colorfully on those events which are relevant from the perspective of basic motives. Two basic motives have received special significance in the theory: The striving for self-enhancement and the longing for contact and union. From a narrative point of view these motives correspond with two main types of stories in novelistic literature: hero and love stories. It is supposed that the basic motives are expressed in the affective component of a valuation and also determine which parts of the self-narrative are emphasized more than others. Two concepts are central in the affective organization of the self-narrative: generalization and idealization. The focus on the content and organization of the valuation system may shed some light on the complexity of the self. More specifically, the content and organization of self-narratives depend on two important influences: the specific context in which the story is told (audience, dialogical partner, setting, institution, culture) and basic motives as general story themes which are presumed to reflect basic psychological orientations present in people from different cultures and times. In this way valuation theory presents a conceptual framework which brings together the particular and the general (for the integration of idiography and nomothesis, see Hermans, 1988).

The Self-Confrontation Method:

Valuations and their Affective Properties

The self-confrontation method presented in this section is based on valuation theory, although it is not the only possible methodological device which can be derived from this theory. The method invites a person (subject or client) to perform a thorough self-investigation consisting of three parts: (a) the construction of a set of valuations; (b) rating each of the valuations using a list of affective terms; and (c) discussion of the results.

The valuations and affects are combined in a matrix, in which the rows represent the valuations and the columns the affect terms (see Table 1 for an example). First, the methodology will be explained and then illustrated with an actual case.

Table 1
Matrix of Valuation x Affect: Raw Ratings of a Subject's Self-Investigation

Valuation Number	Affect Terms															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	1	1	1	5	1	1	5	5	5	4	1	1	5	3	2	0
2	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	5	0
3	1	0	1	5	0	0	5	5	4	5	0	1	5	0	4	0
4	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	4	0	4	0
5	5	1	4	2	1	4	4	5	1	4	3	4	1	4	1	5
6	0	0	1	4	1	0	3	1	5	0	0	0	2	0	4	0
General feeling	1	0	1	4	0	1	4	4	4	1	1	1	5	1	4	0
Ideal feeling	4	5	4	0	4	4	4	5	0	4	4	3	0	2	1	5

Note. Rows represent valuations and columns represent affect terms used for the indices S, O, P, and N, where S = affect referring to self-enhancement, O = affect referring to contact with the other, P = positive affect, and N = negative affect. Affect terms: 1 = Joy (P); 2 = Self-esteem (S); 3 = Happiness (P); 4 = Worry (N); 5 = Strength (S); 6 = Enjoyment (P); 7 = Caring (O); 8 = Love (O); 9 = Unhappiness (N); 10 = Tenderness (O); 11 = Self-confidence (S); 12 = Intimacy (O); 13 = Despondency (N); 14 = Pride (S); 15 = Disappointment (N); 16 = Inner Calm (P). The numbers in the body of the table are the raw scores assigned by the client to each affect with respect to each valuation. The ratings are from the first self-investigation of Ann, the client that will be described in our case study later in this chapter.

Formulation of the Valuations

The valuations are elicited by a series of open-ended questions. The main questions, presented in Table 2, are intended to bring out units of meaning for the past, present, and future that are important in the eyes of the person. The questions are phrased in such a way that they invite individuals to reflect on their life situation and tell significant parts of their self-narratives. They are free to mention those concerns that they see as most relevant to them and to interpret the questions in any way they want. The subjects are instructed to phrase the valuations in their own terms so that the formulations are, as far as possible, in agreement with the intended meaning. The typical form of a valuation is a sentence, which is considered as the basic unit of text (James, 1890). In a sentence the subjects bring together those events that they feel as belonging together as elements of a personal unit of meaning. There is no one-to-one relation between question and answer, and a quick response is not required. Each question leads to more than one valuation, and the subjects may mention as many valuations as come to mind. At the end of the interview subjects are asked whether the survey contains all of the experiences they want to include in the investigation. If something is missing, they can add this. In special cases, the clinician or therapist may formulate additional valuations and propose that the client include these in the valuation system (see Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995, p. 64-67). At the end of the procedure

the number of valuations may vary greatly but in most cases it is between 20 and 40. Each valuation is written by the interviewer on a separate card and, in this concrete form, it is available for the second part of the investigation.

Table 2

Main Questions of the Self-Confrontation Method

set 1: The Past

These questions are intended to guide you in reviewing one or more aspects of your life which may have been of great importance to you.

- Has there been anything of major significance in your past life which still continues to exert a strong influence on you?
- Was there in the past any person or persons, experience or circumstance which greatly influenced your life and still appreciably affects your present existence?

set 2: The Present

This set again consists of two questions which will lead you, after a certain amount of reflection, to formulate a response:

- Is there anything in your present existence which is of major importance to you or exerts a significant influence on you?
- Is there in your present existence any person, persons or circumstance which exerts a significant influence on you?

set 3: The Future

The following questions will again guide you to a response:

- Do you foresee anything that will be of great importance for, or exert a major influence on your future life?
- Do you feel that a certain person, persons or circumstance will exert a significant influence on your future life?
- Is there any future goal or object which you expect to play an important role in your life?

You are free to look as far ahead as you wish.

- Affective Properties of the Valuations

In the second part of the investigation, the client is provided with a standard list of affect terms. Concentrating on the first valuation, subjects indicate on a 0-5 scale the extent to which they experience each affect in relation to the valuation (0 = not at all, 1 = a little bit, 2 = to some extent, 3 = rather much, 4 = much, and 5 = very much). In this phase of the investigation, the subjects work alone, rating each valuation with the same list of affect terms. This makes it possible for the different valuations to be compared according to their affective profiles. The list of affect terms are presented at the bottom of Table 1. This list provides a maximum amount of affective information with a minimum number of terms. After the affective rating of the different valuations, a number of indices representing the motivational structure of the valuation system are calculated (for clinical use a more extended list is recommended, see Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995, p. 277).

1. Index S is the total score of four affect terms expressing self-enhancement: Numbers 2, 5, 11, and 14 of Table 1.

2. Index O is the total score of four affect terms expressing contact and union with the other: Numbers 7, 8, 10, and 12 of Table 1. For each valuation, moreover, the S-O difference can be determined. When the experience of self-enhancement is stronger than the experience of contact with the other, $S > O$. When the feeling of contact with the other prevails, $O > S$. When both kinds of experience coexist, $S = O$.

- 3. Index P is the total score of four positive affect terms: Numbers 1, 3, 6, and 16.

4. Index N is the total score of four negative affect terms: Numbers 4, 9, 13, and 15. For each valuation, again, the P-N difference can be determined. This indicates the degree of well-being the person experiences in relation to the specific valuation. Well-being is positive when $P > N$, negative when $N > P$, and ambivalent when $P = N$. (Note that the scores for each of the four indices S, O, P, and N range from 0 to 20 for each valuation).

5. Index r represents the correspondence between the affective profiles for two valuations, calculated as the correlation between any two rows in the matrix. This correlation indicates any similarity between the affective meanings of two valuations expressed by the shape of the two affective profiles. The correlation often shows that valuations referring to quite different events (e.g., a remark by a teacher in the past and the experience of a present project) nevertheless have highly similar affective profiles in the same individual.

Index r is also used for the measurement of the extent of generalization (Gen.) of a certain valuation within the system. This is done by asking the person, at the end of the valuation construction phase: "How do you generally feel these days?" This question does not ask for a specific valuation but is devised to assess "general feeling". The person answers directly with the same list of affect terms as used for

the characterization of the valuations. This pattern of scores is filled in as an additional row in the matrix (see Table 1). The product-moment correlation between the affective profile belonging to a specific valuation (any row in the matrix) and the affective profile of the "general feeling" is a measure of the extent of generalization of this valuation. The more positive the correlation, the more this valuation is expected to generalize within the system. For example, when a student is worrying about his study, then a valuation like "I think about my study all the time" will show an affective pattern that correlates highly with the affective pattern belonging to the "general feeling". The score profile of the general feeling can also be used to assess "general well-being". This is indicated by the P-N difference of the general feeling.

Similarly, the extent of idealization (Id.) of any valuation can be assessed by computing the correlation with the "ideal feeling." The ideal feeling is the affective profile provided as a response to the question "How would you like to feel?" This profile is filled in as the final row in the matrix. The idealization index (Id.) is the correlation of any valuation with the profile characteristic of the ideal feeling.

Finally, index r can be used to compare any valuation with any other valuation. A special technique, called a modality analysis, is used to compare a particular valuation with all other valuations. For a modality analysis a particular valuation is taken as a pivot and correlated with all other valuations in order to search for an underlying theme. (For reliability and validity of the indices S, O, P, N, and r see Hermans, 1987a, p. 166 and pp. 169-171.)

Discussion with the Client

The discussion of the results usually follows one week after the self-investigation. During this week, the interviewer performs a qualitative analysis (studying the formulation of the valuations, with proper attention to their relation) and a quantitative analysis (calculation and interpretation of the indices in their combination).

The discussion aims to deepen the self-exploration of the client, stimulated by a profound dialogue with the interviewer. Their discussion is based on the overall picture provided by the system as an integrative whole. In this system divergent valuations are contracted at one moment in time, so that new relations, hitherto hidden, can become visible. This overall view is very characteristic of a self-investigation. Whereas short talks and interviews are usually dispersed over time and therefore have a momentary quality, the total picture of a self-investigation provides a "birds-eye view" permitting a perspective on the self and its boundaries. Subjects see what they value, and what they do not value. Moreover, they become aware of the lacunae in their valuation system. This confrontation with the content and organization of the valuation system benefits further from the explanation of the basic motives. The person can see in what valuations they are manifest and in what valuations they are lacking.

The discussion aims not only to develop insights but also to generate new ideas and to make plans. This is not necessarily confined to one session. It is even better to maintain it over successive sessions so that daily experiences can be compared with the content and organization of the valuation system. Here it becomes apparent that assessment proceeds gradually into change since a thorough reflexion on the organization of the system is the first step in a reorganization.

Second Self-Investigation

The second self-investigation, typically after some months, consists of the same stages as the first. There is, however, an important difference in the valuation construction phase. This time subjects do not start by formulating valuations. Instead, they are confronted by the statements constructed in Investigation 1. The interviewer re-reads the questions with the person but, after each question, the interviewer now produces the statement that the person regarded as adequate in Investigation 1. Subjects are instructed to consider each valuation separately, whether they can still go along with its content; that is, whether in the new situation they would give the same answer to the questions. If this is not the case, there are various options available: An old valuation may be reformulated (modification); it may be replaced by a new one (substitution); it may be discarded altogether (elimination); or an entirely new valuation may be added (supplementation). This procedure guarantees that subjects have considerable freedom to point to the constant and changing parts of the valuation system.

Ann's Self-Investigation:

Assessment, Change, and Evaluation

Ann, a 40-year old married woman with two adolescent children, contacted a psychotherapist (Els Hermans-Jansen) during a period in which she was having serious difficulties with her work. She had become involved in a conflict between the administration and her colleagues in the school where she taught. As a friend of the managing couple of the school she became an "in-between" person, and, as a result of this position, was often approached both by the administration and by her colleagues in attempts to solve conflicts. When the administration finally left the school, her situation changed from bad to worse because she now had no mitigatory role to play. Moreover, she had to make the difficult decision of whether to stay in a nonsupportive job situation or give up her job. Unresolved past experiences, re-actualized by the present problems in her work, brought this woman to a crisis point.

Ann related the following about her family background. She was raised in a Dutch middle-class family, the oldest of five children. She described her father as a very authoritarian person, who was in complete control of the situation at home. He had a strong normative attitude towards parent-child roles and gender roles. He required immediate obedience on the part of his children and would put them under "house arrest" when they broke any of the strict rules. Ann's mother took a very subordinate role in the family; she was often sick, and she suffered from asthma. As a result of her mother's

physical weakness, Ann became a "second mother" in the family. Her father gave her special social responsibilities with regard to the family as a whole and her younger siblings in particular, often justifying this with the remark "You are the oldest and therefore the wisest." Family relations were further complicated by the parents' rather unhappy marriage. Ann described herself as living with the constant fear that her parents would separate, and as the oldest child she continually tried to "keep the peace" in the family. Her anxiety concerned not only the separation of her parents but also the break up of the family and the danger of having to take sides: she had to avoid taking sides, she felt, because doing this or even giving the impression of doing so would lead to her parents' separation and the disruption of the family as a whole.

Ann performed two self-investigations, 9 months apart. In addition, an intermediate evaluation took place in order to check the direction of the initiated process of change.

First Self-Investigation

In the first session with the psychotherapist, the nature and aims of the self-confrontation procedure were discussed with the client and the expectations of client and therapist were made explicit. In the second session the valuations were formulated (24 in total) and associated with the standardized set of affect terms as previously described. For illustrative purposes six valuations from her system are presented in Table 3, two referring to her past (1 and 2), two to her present (3 and 4), and two to her future (5 and 6).

Table 3
Ann's Valuations, General Feeling, Ideal Feeling, and Their Scores on the Affective Indices at Time 1

Valuation	S	O	P	N	Gen.	Id.	no. 6
1. I've always had fear of losing people (my parents' marriage was no good; there was always tension); whenever possible I try to avoid conflict situations	6	15	3	17	.83	-.54	.62
2. I wanted to close myself off from the outside world whenever I was approached by my father or mother and didn't know what to do (between two fires)	0	5	0	20	.86	-.78	.92
3. I think it's a shame that my children won't go unaffected, that they also suffer from a problematic mother	0	16	2	18	.86	-.48	.66
4. In the conflict at school I feel like a buffer between two clashing parties	0	0	0	17	.74	-.91	.85
5. I hope I can calm down in the future (in my feelings)	9	17	18	5	-.30	.58	-.55
6. I'd like to appear on the outside as the person that I am on the inside, but have never let anyone see (above all, stronger and clearer)	1	4	1	15	.79	-.73	---
General feeling	2	10	3	17	---	-.67	.79
Ideal feeling	15	16	17	1	-.67	---	-.73

Note. S = affect referring to self-enhancement; O = affect referring to contact with the other; P = positive affect; N = negative affect; gen. = generalization; Id. = idealization.

When we compare the valuations referring to her past with those pertaining to her present situation, we see a re-actualization of her past problems. It is suggested that the problem of being an "in between person" (see valuation no. 4 in Table 3) was a confirmation of her past experience of being "between two parties" (see valuation no. 2 in Table 3).

A conspicuous characteristic of Ann's system is the dominant role of the experience of unfulfilled love (see valuations nos. 1 and 3). Empirical research on this experience (Hermans & Van Gilst, 1991; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995) has shown a specific affective pattern in which this experience is expressed: low S, high O, low P, and high N. Looking at the formal structure of this experience two components can be identified: (a) there is a loving orientation to another person or object (love, indicated by the $O > S$ difference), and (b) there is an obstacle or boundary making this person or object unreachable (unfulfilled, indicated by the $N > P$ difference). In theoretical terms, this structure represents the latent base of a great variety of personal valuations on the manifest level. Depending on the individual's history, the experience of unfulfilled love has various manifestations: the death of a beloved friend, an impossible love affair, an emigrant longing for his native country, an anticipated farewell, a Faustian longing for youth, or feeling close to somebody while at the same time feeling unable to express tenderness and sympathy.

In Ann's case, it can be seen that the affective profiles associated with both valuations 1 and 3 tend toward an affective pattern of unfulfilled love. This affective profile has a relatively strong generalization in the system as a whole. A clear indication of this is the affective pattern of the "general feeling" that also is associated with low S, high O, low P, and high N. Note also the high level of generalization (Gen.) of valuations 1 and 3 (Table 3). The dominance of the theme of unfulfilled love in the affective component of her valuations, indicates that she feels strongly dependent on others.

Reorganizing the valuation system

Although valuations indicative of unfulfilled love are, from a diagnostic point of view, influential in the valuation system, they did not play the primary role in the reorganization of the system. The valuation that played a crucial role in the reorganization of the system as a whole was no. 6: "I'd like to appear on the outside as the person that I am on the inside, but have never let anyone see (above all, stronger and clearer)." Ann explained that she saw really strong and clear behavior in other people but not in herself. For example, she related how her younger brother would talk back to their father and then added "I would never dare to". Because she didn't dare to be such a person," she associated this valuation (no. 6) with a very low level of self-enhancement and a high level of negative affect. At the same time, Ann was fascinated by strength and clarity and felt that such a person with these characteristics was somewhere "deep down inside" herself. The psychotherapist suspected that the above valuation could perhaps function as an "entrance to change" and suggested that Ann concentrate on the affective significance of this valuation in the following session. This concentration was realized by taking valuation no. 6 as pivotal in a modality analysis.

In the modality analysis the pivot valuation was correlated with all other valuations in the system (see the final column in Table 3 for the results). The valuations showing the highest correlations with the pivot were then examined for their common theme. Ann provided the following interpretations (proceeding from higher to lower correlations):

No. 6 x no. 2 ($r = .92$): "When I was asked to do something and thought I was not strong enough, I would shut myself off"

No. 6 x no. 4 ($r = .85$): "The one party [the administration] overestimated me and the other party [colleagues] underestimated me. . .but I didn't show how I really felt. . .When I could have manifested myself more. . ."

After interpreting a number of other pairs of valuations in a similar way, the therapist invited Ann to summarize what she saw as the common theme underlying all of her interpretations. After some trials, Ann came up with the following: "I have never had to fight for something for myself... nearly everything has always been arranged for me by others". In other words, Ann had never had or taken the opportunity to obtain a minimal degree of self-enhancement as an independent person (see also the low level of S affect in Table 3). From a theoretical perspective, it can be concluded that this summary can be seen as a central theme in her self-narrative, and that this theme has been made explicit by taking the latent motivational base of the valuation system into account.

After this summary there was time for concentrated self-reflection and discussion about the pervasive influence of the basic theme. Ann went home in the knowledge that in the self-investigation she had confronted herself with an essential theme in her life. It made sense - for the period immediately following a thorough self-investigation - only to look at what happens; that is, Ann was invited to view from the perspective of the basic theme how her life was lived, and to watch from this perspective what happened between her and her environment.

As many psychotherapists have observed, the best strategy for encouraging change is not to stress the necessity or urgency of change but, rather, concentrate on the nature of one's personal experiences. Many people, eager for change and consciously striving for it, paradoxically fail to change because of increased feelings of stress and hurried disappointments that block the change process rather than promoting it. The change process requires serious self-reflection and concentration, standing still for a while and taking stock of the basic theme(s) in one's valuation system even if it is painful.

Remarkably, the person in this state of concentrated self-reflection often spontaneously starts to take certain initiatives, explore alternatives, and experience a few trials and errors. These small changes are often probed with the awareness that "it can be different," that is, the valuation system as it is currently formulated is not the last word, not a final "personality profile," not a fixed self. Rather, the individual's valuation system is a beginning, and in the context of the supportive relationship with the therapist the client begins the process of change - to retell parts of the self-narrative in a different light. This changing perspective is particularly apparent when some new events

are added to the valuation system by the individual. This alteration of the valuation system indicates, in turn, the self-organizing capacity of the person. (For a more detailed and systematic procedure for stimulating change of the valuation system, see the attending-creating-anchoring cycle, Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995, p. 47-54).

Intermediate Evaluation: Checking the Direction of Change

In accordance with the notion of self-instigated change, Ann began to take new initiatives, which were then discussed with the therapist on a weekly basis in close correspondence with the valuation system from the first self-investigation. These "initiatives" typically related to the assessed "gap" in her system: the low level of self-enhancement in the system. Some of these initiatives were prepared in the sessions with the therapist, while others occurred spontaneously and were later discussed with the psychotherapist. Some examples are as follows. When there was a misunderstanding at her daughter's school, she decided to write a letter to clarify things although previously she would have left this to her husband. Ann heard that a neighbor had accused her of potential dishonesty, so she got in touch with the neighbor to explain her view although previously she would avoid conflict at all costs. Similarly, in a conversation with a representative of an organization that invited her to give a self-description, she mentioned some "strong points" about herself although earlier she would have considered this to be "boasting."

Three months after the first self-investigation, the therapist proposed performing a limited self-investigation in order to check the direction and nature of the change that was taking place. This was done simply by asking Ann what she thought to be the main changes since the initial investigation. These changes were formulated in the form of some valuations and this small set of valuations was then rated with the standard list of affect terms. For evaluative purposes, the sessions with the psychotherapist, her own self-investigation, and the general feeling were also rated with the same set of affect

terms.

Table 4
Ann's Change Valuations, General Feeling, Sessions with the Psychotherapist, and Self-Investigation during Intermediate Evaluation

Valuation	S	O	P	N	Gen.
1. I've become more sure of myself; I dare to do more things	8	12	10	5	.73
2. I am easier with myself; feel less burdened (by the problems of the administration and my mother)	6	11	10	4	.75
3. I do more what I want and don't mind too much about others' expectations; what others think I should do doesn't concern me	9	9	12	1	.65
Sessions with the psychotherapist	11	7	11	1	.19
My self-investigation	8	14	11	3	.69
General feeling	6	12	9	3	---

Note. S = affect referring to self-enhancement; O = affect referring to contact with the other; P = positive affect; N = negative affect; Gen. = generalization.

Table 4 shows what Ann perceives to be the main changes formulated as three valuations (nos. 1, 2, and 3). A relevant feature of these change valuations is their comparative nature. The present is now perceived as different from the past. Although the content of the formulations suggests increased self-enhancement, the affective indices show that the O affect still tends to be higher than the S affect. This is also true rther valuation changes and a strengthening of the S motive.

To summarize, this intermediate evaluation shows the beginnings of change in the desired direction, namely characteristics of the strong and clear-minded individual represented in valuation no. 6 (Table 3). The contours of increased self-enhancement are beginning to appear, although most of the change valuations themselves still show a predominance of affect referring to the contact motive.

Second Self-Investigation: Further Reorganization of the System

Nine months after the initial self-investigation, both Ann and psychotherapist felt that so much had changed in Ann's view of herself and the world that they decided to perform a second self-investigation. The results are presented in Table 5, and the major changes are summarized

below.

Table 5
Ann's Valuations, General Feeling, Ideal Feeling, and Their Scores on the Affective Indices at Time 2

Valuation	S	O	P	N	Gen.	Id.	no. 6
1. I feel more sure of myself and accepted by others as being that way; I don't avoid conflict as much	11	13	16	5	.79	.76	.31
2. I fight more for my own interests	13	9	16	3	.68	.73	.57
3. We have all learned something from my difficult period; the fear that I would repel my children has not become a reality; in fact the opposite is true	14	16	9	1	.70	.68	.01
4. I'll quit my job; giving up my financial independence is better than going back to the old work environment where nothing is discussed	18	0	14	1	.21	.35	.75
5. I've gained some calmness	8	0	11	2	.11	.23	.81
6. I am in the process of coming out as the person that I am on the inside, but simply haven't let anyone see (above all, stronger and clearer)	13	2	16	4	.13	.26	---
General feeling	12	18	15	2	---	.96	.13
Ideal feeling	15	18	16	3	.96	---	.26

Note: S = affect referring to self-enhancement; O = affect referring to contact with the other; P = positive affect; N = negative affect; Gen. = generalization; Id. = idealization.

In the second investigation a break-through of self-enhancing valuations in the system can be seen. Valuations 1 and 2 at Time 1 have been modified, now expressing more self-confidence (no. 1) and more fighting spirit (no.2) than at Time 1. This is also visible in the high levels of S affect. Some other valuations (nos. 4, 5, and 6) show clearly higher levels of S affect than O affect. This suggests that she feels able to put her interests before those of others when necessary (note that this type of valuation, $S > O$, was completely absent at Time 1). This reorganization implies that she has largely resolved her personal problems by finding strength within herself, and this increased strength and self-confidence has allowed her to decide to quit her job (no. 4). This removes a major burden from the valuation system and some stressful experiences that could be seen as reactualizations of her past in particular (e.g., no. 4 in Table3).

The valuation that at Time 1 referred to her wish to be strong on the outside (no. 6) has assumed more realistic proportions at Time 2. When this valuation is correlated with all the other valuations (see final column in Table 5), high correlations with valuations mainly of type $S > O$ are found (noctive values (her education as a woman) and partly on the basis of her individual history (oldest in a family with a sick mother; her parents' unhappy marriage), she developed the identity of an "in-between person," a person constantly caring for others and striving to maintain every relationship. As a consequence, she had no opportunities, or simply was not permitted, to develop an independent self. Nevertheless, Ann could clearly imagine herself as a strong, decisive, and assertive individual. This person was hidden "deep down inside" her but not, in her view, part of her actual behavior. Drawing on the possibilities she felt within herself and the support of a psychotherapist, however, she finally emerged of her crisis. Moreover, Ann's case shows that a crisis implies dangers and chances: she compensated for the

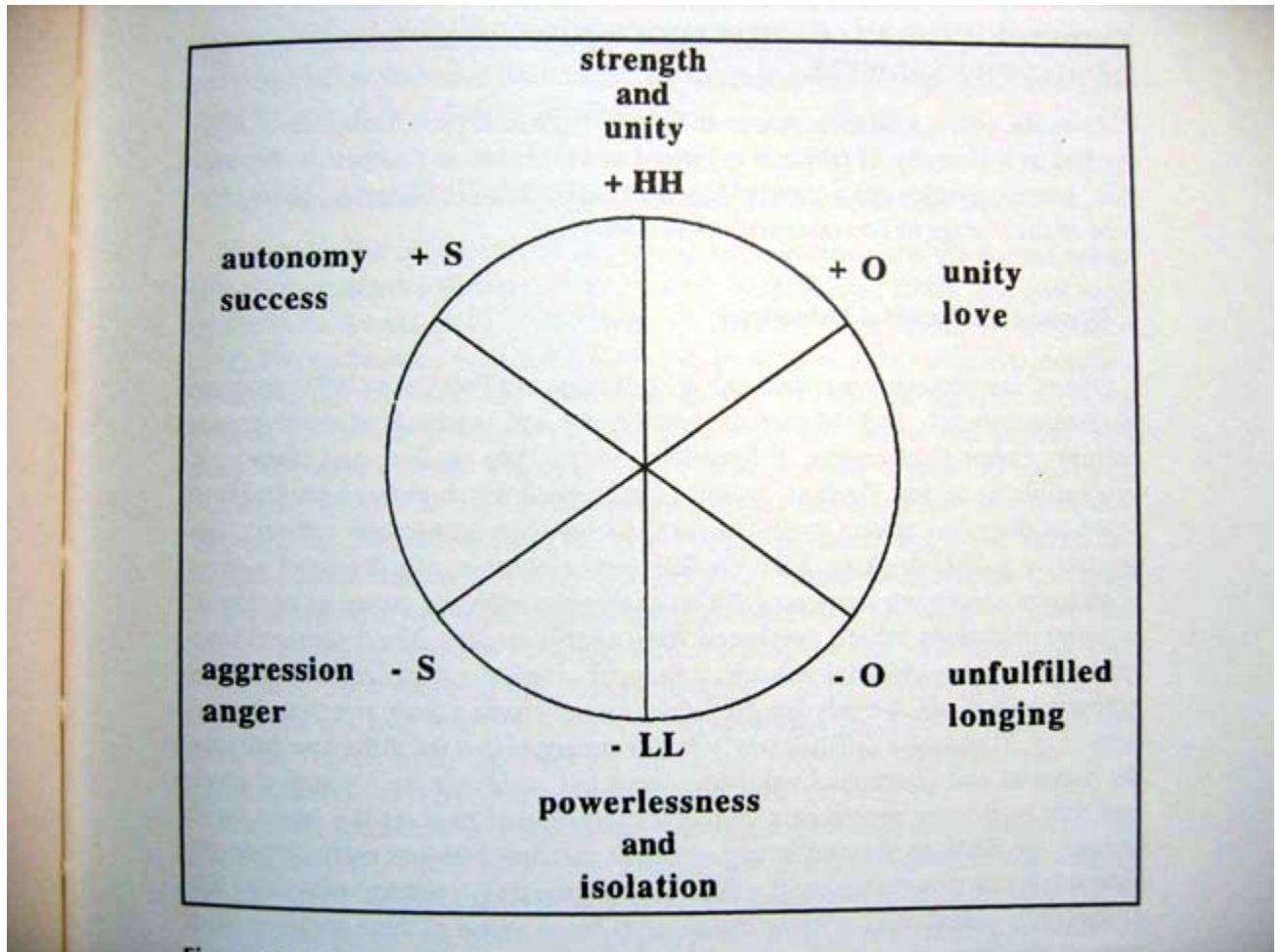
original omission in her valuation system with her strength, which had been hidden until then. This resulted in a more extended and flexible valuation system and also allowed her to stop the recurrent cycle of imposed and normative caring.

This case study was presented in order to demonstrate how the assessment, change, and evaluative aspects of the self-confrontation procedure work in an optimal case. In this example the three functions of the method (assessment, process promotion, and evaluation) were combined to realize a smooth transition between assessment and change. However, this is not always the case, and the transition may not always be so spontaneous and smooth. The transition is highly dependent on the (remaining) capacities and opportunities on the part of the person to reorganize the valuation system. For example, a client in a depressive state characterized by hopelessness and helplessness often feels unable to take the smallest initiatives, and even when such an initiative is taken it may be quickly swallowed up by the dominant and highly generalized feelings of hopelessness or apathy. In such a case there may be no spontaneous transition from assessment to change. A longer period may be needed to arrive at the point where reorganization can be attempted, and the patience, support, and engagement of the psychotherapist - perhaps using a broader array of techniques than those described in this chapter - may be crucial.

- Types of Valuations

In the preceding sections it was argued that the rich phenomenological variation of valuations is - on a more latent level - rooted in a limited set of basic motives. The self-confrontation method shows that these basic motives are typically expressed in the affective component of a valuation. Figure 2 summarizes the main types of valuation which can be found in the application of the self-confrontation method in research and practice (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). They can be conceived of as major themes (though not the only ones) from the perspective of the basic motives. These themes can be compared with those formulated by the client as a result of the modality analysis. In Ann's case, her theme was phrased as "I have never had to fight for something for myself..." and in the following process her valuation system changes in the direction of valuations with a high degree of self-enhancement affect in combination with a high degree of positive affect. In fact, she made a movement from an emphasis on negative longing for contact and union with the other (- O in Figure 2) at the first investigation toward a positive experience of self-enhancement (+ S in Figure 2). In this way changes in the valuation system of a particular client can be depicted as movement of valuations on the circle. The localization of the main types of valuation and their frequencies helps psychologist and client to assess the biases of a valuation system at a particular moment and to clarify the direction the valuation process could take in the

future.



- Figure 2: Types of Valuation

Enriching the Valuation Process: Research Examples

Over the years valuation theory and the self-confrontation method have been applied to a diversity of research questions and problems in practice. In this section some examples are presented which give, in Kelly's (1955) terms, an impression of the "range of convenience" of the theory.

Dreams as Pictorial Valuations

One of our projects combined valuation theory and Foulkes' (1978) program on dream research. In Foulkes' conception the achievements of dreaming are ordinary rather than exotic, differentiated rather than unified, and, above all, expressible in words. Foulkes, therefore, suggested that it may be profitable to focus on the many strong structural parallels between dreams and ordinary, linguistically-guided thinking. Like Foulkes, who conceived of a dream as a series of pictorial sentences, Hermans (1987a) analyzed a subject's dream as a series of pictorial valuations which, combined, form a self-narrative.

The dream was studied by comparing pictorial valuations (e.g., "I climbed a high ladder") with the ordinary valuations of everyday life, which usually have a more conceptual character (e.g., "I passed a difficult test"). It was supposed that the difference between the pictorial and conceptual valuations were but variations on a manifest level, and that both were rooted in a common motivational base on the latent level. Indeed, the findings showed strong affective parallels between particular dream symbols (central in the pictorial valuations) and the daily concerns of waking life (conceptual valuations), without the subjects being aware of these parallels. One person, for example, vividly described that she was walking quietly along a sandy wall in a small Dutch town, but suddenly: "The sand of the wall started to shift; I was not able to stop it and I became buried." When this sentence was included in her valuation system, the affective profile associated with this sentence showed a very high correlation with the affective profile of a conceptual valuation referring to the contact with her husband: "John is always able to let me know, nastily and pointedly, what he expects me to do, and I am not able to let him know that I can't or don't want to." Apparently, the two valuations had the same meaning from the perspective of the latent level.

It was found, moreover, that the dream symbols (e.g., "the burying sand"), that were initially separated from the waking valuations in the eyes of the client herself, were, after a period of self-reflection, meaningfully incorporated as parts of the waking valuation system, in a second self-investigation about 12 months later. In this self-investigation the client metaphorically described the relationship with her husband in this way: "Literally and figuratively, I don't have enough space with John." In fact, she used the metaphor of being buried by an external force in her dream (at Time 1) to express the lack of space in the contact with her husband (at Time 2). In general terms, dreams were found to be providers of symbols that were useful for the metaphorical expression of significant aspects of the subjects' life situation.

Themes in Collective and Individual Stories: Struggle and Love

In the tradition of research on psychological motivation and the storied nature of human experience (Murray, 1938; Sarbin, 1986; Bruner, 1986), our own work relates basic themes in collective stories to psychological motives in individual lives. The assumption is that there are two basic themes in collective stories, heroism and love, and that these themes are reflected in the psychological motives of individual people (self-enhancement and contact and union). In a study of Goya's serial painting The Capture of the Bandit El Maragato (Hermans, 1988), it was observed that this painting expressed the polarity of winning vs. losing, representing the theme of self-enhancement. It was found that the same theme was present in the self-narratives of individual clients: The experience of winning was expressed in such statements as "My status is acceptable but not enough; I want to go a few steps further," or "My achievements were mine; they were valued (piano, sport, studying)." (type + S in Figure 2). The experience of losing was expressed in statements like, "I have the feeling that John can be strong by keeping me weak" or "Violence and aggression have knocked me down" (type - LL valuations in Figure 2).

A similar procedure was followed in an investigation of the Narcissus myth (Hermans & Van Gilst, 1991). The central part of the myth, Narcissus looking into the water, was found to represent the experience of unfulfilled love (to be distinguished from the psychoanalytic dysfunction of narcissism), and can be considered as an expression of an existential longing for contact and union with other people and with oneself (expressed as valuations of type - O in Figure 2). On the basis of affective profiles derived from the central part of the myth, we explored whether similar profiles exist in the valuations of individual clients. It was found that the theme of unfulfilled longing was also present in specific statements like "I think it's a shame that I couldn't remove some of my mother's loneliness with my cheerfulness" or "First, I meant everything to him; now he means everything to me; the roles are now reversed." The Goya study and the Narcissus study suggest that basic themes, expressed in collective stories, are also present in the self-narratives of individuals.

The Personal Meaning of Psychosomatic Problems

Over the course of time, we have studied a variety of psychosomatic complaints as parts of an organized valuation system. A typical finding has been that clients often have no idea about the psychological significance or origin of their complaints. One viable strategy, therefore, is to propose that the client include the complaint as a separate valuation so that it can be studied in the context of the valuation system as a whole. Clients then simply mention the existence of a problem (e.g., "pain in my stomach"), or they formulate a sentence that indicates nothing more than the frequency or degree of seriousness of their complaint (e.g., "I suffer from terrible pain in my neck"). In a further stage, the valuation referring to the psychosomatic complaint is correlated with the other valuations so that the affective commonality with other valuations can be made visible. The rationale is to actively link the "isolated valuation" with other parts of the system so that it becomes invested with personal meaning.

In one of our studies (Hermans, 1995), Alice, a 54-year-old woman, performed a self-investigation during a period of serious difficulties in her marriage relationship. Her husband, a playwright, had published a play in which his wife could be recognized as one of the main characters. This resulted in an irresolvable conflict for which they asked therapeutic assistance. Both partners performed a self-investigation as a starting point for a number of sessions in which they discussed their situation with a psychotherapist.

In one of her valuations Alice referred to "a pain in my neck and back of my head". In order to study the psychosomatic complaint in close relation with the other parts of the valuation system, the affective profile associated with the complaint was correlated successively with the affective profiles of all the other valuations of the system. In this analysis (called modality analysis, see preceding description of the self-confrontation method), it is supposed that the highest correlating valuations are of particular significance, because they have affective profiles similar to the complaint, and, therefore, share a similar affective meaning. By taking these highest correlating valuations into account, the personal meaning of a psychosomatic complaint (or any clinical problem) can be enlarged. In Alice's first self-investigation, two valuations showed very high

correlations with the psychosomatic problem. One referred to her past: "My father: He avoided problems and used his children in his struggle against against my mother: he always conformed to her authority and so he enforced our powerlessness as children." The second valuation referred to a problem in the contact with her husband: "In my husband's play, I don't recognize myself in the way he depicts me." Although correlations may not be interpreted in terms of causal relations, they suggest the existence of a common meaning in the pain and the problematic relationship with her father and husband.

The second self-investigation, eight months after the first, again showed a high correlation between the same psychosomatic complaint and the modified valuation referring to the contact with her husband: "I regret that my husband has disclosed our problems in public before we had a chance to discuss them privately." As this formulation suggests, Alice's objections were more directly formulated against her husband. This formulation then led to a more articulated explicitness of the meaning of the complaint. After focusing on the highest correlating valuations in the first and second investigations, Alice was invited to phrase in her own terms the common meaning of the psychosomatic problem and the valuations with the highest correlations. This resulted in the following formulation which reflects as a significant theme in her self-narrative:

My pain may be suppressed anger or resistance (the basic pattern of my behavior). I express my dissatisfaction in an indirect and, therefore, powerless manner. This means that a more direct resistance may relieve my pain.

Note that in this interpretation Alice not only interprets the affective commonality between her pain and the relationship with her husband, she also reflects on the direction in which her behavior should be changed. In this way she gradually moves from assessment to change. (For more extensive treatments of the personal meaning of psychosomatic complaints and other clinical problems, see and Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995.)

Imaginal Figures as Contrasting Positions

Valuation theory is not a final theory, fixed forever. On the contrary, it is devised as an open framework in development, that enables the researcher and clinician to investigate a diversity of psychological phenomena as a process of organization, disorganization, or reorganization of the valuation system. After the initial formulation of the theory, the notion of the multivoiced, dialogical self (Hermans, 1996a,b; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992) stimulated its further extension. The essence of this extension is threefold. First, it is supposed that the self is composed of a multiplicity of voices, each able to formulate a specific valuation system. That is, different voices may reflect different memories about the past, different concerns about the present, and different goals and plans for the future. Second, it is supposed that the different voices and their corresponding valuation systems are on the manifest level of self functioning, and that these systems are influenced by the same basic motives on the latent level. Third, the different voices, producing different valuation systems from their specific

perspectives, may exchange information and so influence one another in a dialogical fashion. Two examples which originate from the extended version of the theory are presented in the following: the contact with imaginal figures, and the phenomenon of multiple personality disorder.

In one of our recent research projects (Hermans, Rijks, & Kempen, 1993), the concept of the dialogical self was applied to the self-investigations of two women, each having had a long lasting contact with an imaginal figure with a pervasive impact on their lives. One subject, Kathy, was a 31 year-old divorcee and had been brought up in a lower-class family. She had not graduated from high school, worked as a graphic designer, and had no psychiatric history. She participated in the self-investigation project because she was interested in exploring the role that her imaginal figure played in her life. She described this figure as "a guide who helps me to find my way in life," and said that she had been in touch with this figure since her early nursery school years. Kathy was invited to formulate, on the basis of open questions about her past, present, and future (see Table 1) a set of valuations from the perspective of her usual I position. Next, she was invited to formulate, on the basis of the same questions, a set of valuations from the perspective of her imaginal figure. The idea behind this investigation was that the guide had an own story to tell and could do so in terms of a specific valuation system. It was found that the valuation systems for the two positions (Kathy and her guide) were quite different but not unrelated. For example, from her usual position, Kathy said about her past: "When I was alone, I constructed a fantasy world where I made myself a very strong person". From the perspective of her guide, she said: "As a child Kathy was quiet and reserved: I played with her in her own world". In addition, the guide said: "sometimes I had to protect Kathy from her fantasies." As this example suggests, the guide was not only concerned about Kathy, but also corrected her when Kathy herself went too far in her fantasies. In this case the guide is not simply a product of a dysfunctional mind, but, on the contrary, a constraint on Kathy's fantasy and a productive force in her self-organization.

The second subject, Liza, an unmarried woman of 32 years of age, was brought up in a lower-class family. After the completion of her university studies one year prior, she was unemployed. She suffered from a mild, but chronic depression and for that reason had attended some sessions with a psychiatrist. She participated in the self-investigation because she was interested in getting to know her imaginal figure, which she described as "a protecting father" who loved her and took care of her when she had serious problems. She said that she first became aware of this figure when she was 8-years-old and sitting in a church. From her usual position Liza said, for example: "I never got protection from my [actual] father; I often had to protect him". The imaginal father seemed to have a compensatory function for Liza, and said: "I wanted to feel like she belonged and was of value". The two valuation systems (from Liza and her imaginal father) contrasted very strongly from an affective point of view. Liza herself formulated valuations which were very negative (more unpleasant than pleasant feelings), whereas the valuations from the imaginal father were very positive, that is, associated with much more pleasant than unpleasant feelings. This suggests that the imaginal figure was compensating for a felt deficiency.

Six months after the initial self-investigations both Kathy and Liza performed a second investigation, so that changes could be studied. The results of the second investigations suggested that Kathy had in the meantime increased her contact with her guide, and strengthened the interactonal quality of the contact. Liza, however, did not profit very much from the contact with her imaginal father, and the valuations from her usual position did not show any improvement. These results suggest that there may be considerable individual differences between people in the quality of the contact with an imaginal figure, and that for the one person this contact may have a more beneficial influence on mental health than for the other.

Splitting of the Self: The Case of the Witch

The notions of "multiple personality," "dissociative disorders" and the recent notion of "dissociative identity disorder" (for reviews see Kihlstrom, Glisky, & Angiulo, 1994; Carson, Butcher, & Mineka, 1996; Putnam, 1993; Roberts & Donahue, 1994) are particularly relevant to our discussion, because they imply a serious reduction of the integration of the self which has become fragmented. As Watkins (1986) has argued, the main difference between (normal) imaginal dialogues and (abnormal) multiple personality is that in the latter there is a sequential monologue, rather than a simultaneous dialogue. In the former there is a simultaneity of positions among which the I is moving back and forth so that question and answer, agreement and disagreement, and an active process of negotiation between the several positions becomes possible. In the dysfunctional case, there are also several positions (e.g., "Eve White" and "Eve Black" in the famous case of Thigpen and Cleckly, 1954). However, a dialogical interaction between these positions is severely constrained or almost impossible. The client with a multiple personality can often tell something about the person in the other position, but does so in a rather objectifying manner. One example is the frivolous Eve Black who said about the decent Eve White: "When I go out and get drunk, she wakes up with the hangover" (Thigpen & Cleckly, 1954, p. 141). As the example suggests, there is little cooperation and interaction among the several positions, so that the person is doing in the one position things that are often beyond the control of the person in the other position.

As part of a comprehensive study on dysfunctional valuations (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995), we presented a detailed description of a client, Mary, who was, during the period of treatment, very close to suffering from a dissociative disorder. She had bad memories about her father who was an alcoholic and she was overwhelmed by disgust and panic when she saw any man who was drunk. In her adolescent years she joined a drug scene, which she remembered with the same panic and disgust, because she was sexually abused. She had great difficulties in telling how she was forced to have sex, sometimes even under armed threat. As a reaction to these experiences, she "protected" herself by always wearing a tampon. Moreover, she bathed excessively in order "to clean herself." The problems became acute when she married a man whom she loved very much. In strong contrast to her intimate feelings for this man, there were moments that she felt a strong disgust and aggression toward him that were entirely beyond her control. When her husband was sleeping, she felt an almost uncontrollable urge to murder him. There were times when she felt like a witch, an alien experience that frightened her,

particularly because there were moments when the witch took almost total possession of her. She was scared to death, and felt sometimes literally strangled, by a power that was stronger than "herself."

After extensive discussion of her case, Els Hermans, a psychotherapist, and I, a personality psychologist, decided to propose to her that she perform a self-investigation from the perspective of two positions, one from her usual position as "Mary," and the other from the position of "the witch." The rationale behind this proposal was that, given the split between the two positions (Mary and the witch), an improvement of her fragmented self was expected if (a) the two positions were to be clearly distinguished with regard to their specific wishes, aims, and feelings, and (b) a process of dialogical interchange could be established between the two positions, so that the witch could have the opportunity to say what she wanted. In this way, Mary could take the needs of the witch into account, without losing control of her vehement impulses.

We decided to invite not only Mary to rate the affective meaning of her own valuations, but also the witch to give her affective experience of Mary's valuations. For example, Mary said: "I want to try to see what my mother gives me: There is only one of me". This valuation was experienced by Mary in a very positive way. The witch, however, experienced the same valuation in a negative way and felt a fierce aggression toward the mother. The witch, on the other hand, said: "With my bland pussycat qualities I have vulnerable things under my control, from which I can derive power at a later moment (somebody tells me things that I can use later to get what I want)." For the witch this valuation was associated with a large amount of self-enhancement affect and with a great deal of positive feelings. In relation to the same valuation, however, Mary felt a rather low degree of self-enhancement affect and a high amount of negative feelings. In other words, Mary and the witch demonstrated strongly contrasting affective responses regarding the same valuation.

On the basis of this self-investigation, we discussed with Mary two ideas that were based on our analysis of her two-fold self-investigation. First, she was advised to exercise (e.g., by sport, cycling, or walking), in order to expand her imaginal space and to express the dammed up energy of the witch. Second, we proposed that she keep a diary in which she could write her daily observations, in order to sharpen her perception. In a later phase, she started to try out new actions. We give here, in her own words, an example of the type of strategy she developed to cope with the witch:

A few days ago Fred was sick in bed, with 104 degrees temperature, he even had blisters on his lips. I made breakfast for him and brought it upstairs. When I entered the room, and saw him lying on the bed, I loathed him, and I thought: "Don't think that I'm staying at home for you!" (I was planning to leave for a visit to friends in Amsterdam and to stay the night there). Standing by the bed I was thinking about this (with increasing venom), and became aware that the witch was coming up again. I left the tray with Fred, and left the house for a walk. During this walk I felt that I could discharge a part of the energy of the witch. At the same time I had the time to quietly reflect on the situation as it was: "He is sick, he needs me, and I want to care for him." I decided to buy a newspaper for him.

When I came home, I explained to him that I would stay the night at home, and would go to Amsterdam the next morning. (So, I did not leave the decision up to him, but proposed it myself). Fred accepted this and the next morning I went out to visit my friends (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995, p. 191)

As this passage suggests, Mary has not only made a clear perceptual distinction between the position of herself and the witch, but also develops a concrete strategy to deal with her opponent. This strategy includes that Mary does not split away from or suppress the witch, but rather tries to be as alert as possible to her appearance: When she comes, Mary decides to take a break, walks first (movement is important for the witch), and then makes a more balanced decision.

One year after the first self-investigation, Mary performed a second one in order to evaluate the changes. In the meantime, there were a limited number of sessions, in which Mary discussed her daily experiences with the psychotherapist. In this second investigation we found an increased similarity between the affective responses from Mary and the witch. Strikingly, the valuations that in the first investigation were formulated by the witch a more integrative valuation system.

Conclusion

Valuation theory is devised as an open and flexible theory for the study of a vast array of human experiences. The theory has been recently developed by taking into account the multivoicedness of the self and the possibility of dialogical relationships between its subparts. The theory provides not only a conceptual framework for distinguishing different positions in the self, it also offers a concrete strategy for assessment and change of the valuation systems associated with these positions. Instead of neglecting, suppressing or splitting off incompatible positions, a procedure is followed in which the positions are taken up into a dialogical process. As part of this strategy, an incompatible position is not simply "cured" or treated as an undesirable symptom, but taken seriously as a partner with whom it is possible to meet "on speaking terms." The dialogical process, with dominance and struggle implied, is then a road to the integration of incompatible positions as part of a multivoiced self. Indeed, as a storyteller the person is motivated to keep the different voices together.

Author Note

In this chapter parts of the following publications are included or adapted: Hermans, H.J.M. (1996), El sí mismo ampliado y diseminado: introducción a la teoría de la valoración. Revista de Psicopatología y Psicología Clínica, 1, 205-221; Hermans, H.J.M. (1996). El método de auto-confrontación: evaluación, cambio y valoración de los sistemas de significado personal. Revista de Psicopatología y Psicología Clínica, 1, 269-282. Hermans, H.J.M. & Hermans-Jansen (1995). Self-narratives: The construction of meaning in psychotherapy. New York: Guilford Press. Hermans, H.J.M. (1996). From assessment to change: The personal meaning of clinical problems in the context of self-

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