Experiencing Change: An Existential Perspective

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Preamble

It would be difficult to imagine any approach or model in psychotherapy that did not assume the importance of change in some significant way. Indeed, for many, change is the *sine qua non* of psychotherapy. Change is what clients expect to get out of their therapeutic experience. And change is what psychotherapists seek to provide, either directly (and directively) or indirectly. Nonetheless, as central as this assumption is within psychotherapy, it remains to be asked to what extent psychotherapists have addressed key issues and questions surrounding change.

Experiencing Change: The Constancy Paradox

As has been noted numerous times, and usually ascribed to the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, change is an unvarying constant (Khan 2008). One thing that we can be sure about is that change occurs. Continuously. Regardless of whether it is deemed to be expected or unexpected, desirable or unwanted, or whose impact opens up or closes down possibilities.

With this, psychotherapists are confronted with not only the foundational paradox of change but also with a major challenge. If there can be nothing but change, what then are we offering to clients when we offer the possibility of change through therapy? Clearly, it cannot be change in any general sense as that would be all too akin to the offering of an atmosphere wherein a client can breathe ordinary air. If the constancy of change is a given, then the psychotherapeutic concerns about

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change require some clarification. On reflection, it becomes apparent that psychotherapy is not so much focused change in and of itself, but, rather, that its concerns lie with persons' reflective experience of change.

Even then, the vast majority of change experiences do not generate the sorts of concerns that might lead someone to undertake psychotherapy. Rather, such concerns only arise with particular instances or conditions of experienced change. What is it about these that distinguishes them from more general instances such that, through them, the experience of change can become so threatening that all manner of evasive strategies to off-set its impact are enacted?

Experiencing Change: Variant Change Experiences

As a first step towards addressing the above question, three primary variants related to the experience of change can be identified:

(a) *Non-Reflective Change*: This variant includes the great majority of change events that occur throughout our lives. Non-reflective change events are multiple and constant throughout every moment of our lives. They elicit responses that 'meet' the change event such that its presence and impact upon us is incorporated without reflective awareness, hesitation or attempted deviation or obstruction.

(b) *Reflectively Accepted Change*: This variant is comprised of those change experiences that enter our awareness and which might enthuse, excite, shake, move and/or surprise us whether positively or negatively. Reflectively accepted change experiences may dominate our thoughts, feelings and behaviors for substantial periods of time. They may be experienced as illuminating, enlightening and/or overwhelming. Like non-reflective change events, our response to reflectively accepted change experiences remains that of a willingness to 'meet' and accept their impact upon us. Unlike non-reflective change events, however, we are reflectively attuned to their presence and assess their impact as having anything from minor to 'life-altering' consequences.

(c) *Reflectively Troubling Or Rejected Change*: This variant contains those change experiences that are designated as being unwanted, unfair, unacceptable and/or intolerable such that our focus rests upon attempts to reject, prevent, reduce or deny their occurrence. It also subsumes those experiences linked to the perceived incapacity to bring about desired change since these rely upon instances of change that have occurred at an imaginary level but which fail to be enacted at the lived level. Like reflectively accepted change, reflectively troubling change experiences may dominate our thoughts, feelings and behaviors for substantial periods of time and are seen to have a notable impact upon us. Unlike our responses to both non-reflective change events and reflectively accepted change however, reflectively troubling or rejected change

> experiences generate levels of unease and disturbance which can range from irritating to life-shattering and which arouse defensive reactions whose intent is to minimize, deflect or refute either the existence of the change experience or its impact upon us, or both.

It is important to note the potential experiential plasticity inherent between instances of reflectively accepted change and reflectively troubling or rejected change. Through reflective reconstructions and re-evaluations of change events, reflectively accepted change experiences may be re-construed as instances of reflectively troubling or rejected change, and vice versa.

What is being proposed here is that 'the problem with change' is not with our experience of change in a general sense, but with specific instances of change experiences which predominantly (if not exclusively) fall into the parameters set by the third variant—reflectively troubling or rejected change—as described above. Change experiences identified with this variant stand out for us as being disturbing and unacceptable such that we seek to fend off, diminish or deny their occurrence and impact in any number of ways—including psychotherapy.

If we consider psychotherapy's interest in the experience of change, it becomes evident that psychotherapy in general concerns itself with the undesired, unexpected and unwanted disruptive consequences arising either from clients' experiences of change or their inability to bring it about. Again, it is this third variant of change experience that is of primary concern to psychotherapy in general, including existential therapy.

What is it about this third variant that makes it so 'problematic' for clients? What are the conditions that lead people to identify certain experiences of change as reflectively troubling or demanding rejection? And what is it that existential therapy (perhaps psychotherapy in general) offers, stimulates, removes or provides such that clients' experiences of disturbance, denial and rejection are opened to the possibility of being reconfigured in ways whose direction shifts towards that of reflectively accepted change?

Various existential therapists have argued that what fuels those change events that have been deemed to be so troubling or so intolerable that their denial or rejection is demanded is that they provoke significant challenges and disruptions to the person's very sense of being (Cooper 2003, 2015; van Deurzen and Adams 2011; Langdridge 2013; Spinelli 2005, 2015). More specifically, I have proposed that these challenges provoke existential insecurities in the person's worldview in that they address embodied concerns focused on some aspect or aspects of the self, an other or others, or on the world in general. Broadly, these challenges serve to de-stabilize the worldview in that they are experienced as perceived threats to some aspect of its temporal permanence (e.g., matters of health, unemployment, the ending of a relationship), its dispositional stances (e.g., the values, beliefs, assumptions, meanings, it seeks to maintain) and/or its identity (e.g., identificatory claims as to who I am and am not, who an other/others is/are or is/are not, what the world is or is not) (Spinelli 2015).

Experiencing Change: Sedimentations and the Experience of Change

In common with many other approaches, existential therapy proposes that human beings perceive an object-world (Langdridge 2007; Spinelli 2005). It argues that it is a 'given' of being human to substantiate our reflective experience of being. This reflective ability to 'thing-ify' our lived reality permits us to construe relatively fixed meanings and identities and, in general, provides much of the basis for our felt sense of existential continuity, security, and constancy. In general, all human beings generate reflective sedimentations—fixed, often deeply rigidified, thoughts (including assumptions, biases, beliefs, etc.), feelings and behaviours regarding self, others and the world—that persist over time and which continue to be maintained regardless of their limitations or experiential validity (Langdridge 2007, 2013; Spinelli 2005, 2015). Examples of such sedimentations would include statements such as 'I am Ernesto,' 'All people should always tell the truth' or 'Citizen Kane is the greatest film ever made.' If problems and issues surrounding sedimentations arise, such problems are not so much *that* sedimentations exist (since it is apparent that sedimentations are a necessary condition for structure-based reflective experiencing), but, rather the extent to which the maintained sedimentation is congruent with our actual experience of being.

If, for example, I insist that I am committed to a healthy lifestyle, but avoid any form of exercise and eat only 'junk' food, the sedimentation—I am committed to a healthy lifestyle—is substantially challenged by my lived experience of indolence and unhealthy diet. This challenge might provoke unwanted or unexpected change events such as my becoming dangerously obese or experiencing a heart attack. In order to deal effectively with the unwanted change event, I must face up to the existing incongruence between my sedimentation and my actual experience. In doing so, I might alter the sedimentation (e.g., I would like to commit myself to a healthier lifestyle) or, alternatively, change my lifestyle to one that is healthier and closer in line with the maintained sedimentation. In principle, either strategy is straightforward. However, in cases of reflectively troubling or rejected change it is clearly not. What might it be in such instances that prevents persons from facing up to the experience-based challenges to their sedimentations?

Experiencing Change: A Challenge to Security, Constancy and Continuity

The experienced tension generated by challenges to our sedimentations points us toward the second great paradox of experiencing change: the reflective experience of change also requires the experience of continuity.

If our experience of being held no quality of reflectively sedimented continuity, then we would still be ever-changing, but have no reflective experience of change.

Without continuity, we could never make statements like: 'I have changed' or 'You are different' or 'The world is no longer as interesting as it used to be.' We would just be constantly changing beings with no reflective awareness at any point of who we/others/the world had been or who we/others/the world might become. We would only be experiencing an 'ever-changing now' that might well substantially restrict and impair any sort of reflective experiences and, indeed, might erase all possibility of our reflecting upon any 'thing' or any 'one,' much less upon the experience of change.

If I say 'I have changed,' I am implicitly invoking a connection between 'who I was' and 'who I am now being or becoming.' But I can only make such a connection if I recognise that the experience of change always expresses an interaction between disruption and continuity. The reflective experience of change disrupts the current trajectory of my life experience in that not only does it generate questions as to the person I was (or, perhaps more accurately, the person I claimed to be), it also threatens the person I want to become in that it challenges assumptions, expectations, hopes, and aspirations that form the future-oriented aspects of being. The temporal aspects contained within all experiences of change clarify the continuity that must be part of the experience.

All three variants of change discussed above highlight that the experience of change is always an interaction between disruption and continuity. This interaction and its impact may be 'met' non-reflectively as in those instances expressed via the first variant. Alternatively, with regard to the second and third variants, change is reflectively experienced as a disruption to some sedimented aspect or aspects of our currently-maintained worldview. The major difference between these two reflectively-attuned variants is that the former values those disruptions as 'opening' possibilities through which the worldview is willing to de-stabilize or re-structure the challenged sedimentation and thereby 'meet' the change event and embrace its unknown possibilities and consequences, whereas the latter seeks to protect and maintain the threatened sedimentation by deflecting, rejecting or denying the impact of the change event upon it.

Experiencing Change: A Movement-Towards-Death

From an existential perspective, experiences of either the second or third variant of change enkindle a felt sense of a movement-towards-death. This movement-towards-death is much more extensive than the 'death' of that which is the immediate content or focus point of change—be it the end, loss, closing down or re-direction of a relationship, a hope, a dream or a set of possibilities and options. Much more all-encompassing, this movement-towards-death expresses the disruption to the continuity of one or more sedimentations that serve to stabilize, define and identify the currently maintained worldview.

As an existential therapist, I have come to the conclusion (along with many others) that, because every aspect and facet of our worldview is relationally and inseparably entwined and inter-connected with every other facet, a change in any particular facet will impact upon, and, therefore, in some way change *the whole* of the worldview (Spinelli 2015). As such, the reflective acceptance of a change event signals the 'death' of the currently maintained worldview.

This idea of change as a movement-towards-death provides the means with which to reconsider and broaden the existential notion of death anxiety. In my view, when it is discussed conceptually, death anxiety is typically presented from an unnecessarily all-too-literal perspective. Of course, an existential understanding of death anxiety addresses both the person's awareness of the inevitability of death (be it personal, or that of others or of the world) as well as the unpredictability of his or her moment of ceasing to be (Cooper 2015; van Deurzen and Adams 2011; Langdridge 2007, 2013). But this tension between the certain and the uncertain upon which death anxiety hinges can also be seen to be apparent in the interplay between continuity and disruption in all variants of change experience. As with death anxiety, change is experienced as provoking a disruption whose impact upon our worldview continuity remains both certain (in its inevitability) and uncertain (in its experiential consequences). Considered in this way, every moment of change connects us to our death anxiety. Like (or, perhaps, through) change in general, death anxiety permeates our every moment of being (Spinelli 2015).

Of course, each potential change-generated 'death' also provides the possibility of a 'resurrection'—the emergence of a new worldview. But what sedimentations will this novel worldview retain? And what sedimentations will have become untenable? How will it identify itself and be identified by others and the world? What will it feel like to embody this novel worldview? Will it be experienced as owned or alien? Will the person connect to the embodied thoughts, feelings, affects and behaviors it provokes or will he or she experience a sense of disconnection from them? No one of these questions can be answered in advance. They require an openness to an uncertainty which, if embraced, must also embrace its irreversible, and as yet unknown, consequences.

In those instances of reflectively accepted change, we embrace the existential possibilities that change brings forth, even if we cannot know what they will be or who we will become or how we—or others, or the world in general—will experience them.

However, in those instances of reflectively troubling change we seek to reject or deny the existential death that the change event has already provoked so that we can claim to have withstood the wider, unpredictable and de-stabilising impact of change upon us. In short, in our attempts to reject change, we seek to elude death—the death of the worldview that has existed up until the moment of reflectively troubling change.

Experiencing Change: In-Between (New) Life and Death

It is not uncommon for those persons who seek to reject or deny the impact of change events to express their experience as a felt sense of being 'pulled and torn apart'. In this way, they give expression to their lived experience of the persistent tension between two opposing demands—one that insists that they resist the challenge of change and the other that dares them to embrace that self-same challenge.

But why willingly choose such an option? What possible value is there in adopting such a divisive stance? An existential proposal would argue that in remaining with this tension, persons permit an 'in-between' experience of being wherein they are no longer the being who existed prior to the reflectively troubling change event *and* they are also not yet that unknown being who emerges from the unpredictable consequence of the change event. It is an 'in-between' strategy that, on the one hand, acknowledges the 'death' of the maintained worldview while at the same time insists upon that same worldview's continuing existence. In the same way, this strategy protects and maintains those sedimentations that the change experience is challenging via displacement, denial or dis-ownership. However, such strategies, even at their most successful, place the person in an 'in-between' mode of existing, a sort of zombified or vampiric form of 'living death' or 'deathly living.'

For example, Victor is suffering because his relationship with Joanne has ended. He experiences the event as being unwanted, painful and terrifying and speaks of his feeling of being torn apart. He comes to therapy because he wants to end this pain by coming to terms with what has happened and get on with his life but, somehow, finds himself unable to achieve this. Victor accepts that change has occurred. What he does not accept are the consequences of that change which threaten any number of sedimentations he continues to maintain. So, for example, he tells me that when he goes out food shopping, he knows that he is now shopping only for himself but buys enough food to feed two; or he continues to buy food which he personally does not like but which he knows that Joanne does. When he realizes what he does, Victor feels miserable, wretched, overwhelmed by the pain of memory and loss. If he partially accepts, equally he partially rejects the change event. As a consequence, he is being 'ripped in two' by the experience. He and I explore descriptively just how it is for him to experience this felt sense of being pulled apart. In doing so, Victor realizes that the maintenance of this painful experience has its pay-off: As long as he remains 'in-between' disruption and continuity he can claim to be both 'Victor who is no longer in a relationship with Joanne' *and* 'Victor who is still the same as he was when he was in a relationship with Joanne.' In this way, incongruences appear to vanish, everything is different and yet exactly the same. The problem with this solution is that its price is the incessant experience of that unpleasant, at times overwhelming and unbearable, pressure and tension required to maintain his dissonance. Under such conditions,

Victor's experience of being is that of 'not-quite-being' and 'not-quite-not-being,' a lifeless sort of life, a perpetual verging-on-death.

But why turn to this solution when, seemingly, it would be so much the better or simpler—or possibly even more rational—to shift towards reflectively accepted change? While most other psychotherapeutic models and approaches tend to view the question from the perspective of exclusively negative, destructively-tinged tendencies such as, for example, 'irrational beliefs,' 'unconsciously-derived eradicative instincts' or 'manifestations of false self deviations in living,' existential therapy reminds us that as limiting, debilitating and divisive as it may be as a solution, the 'in-between' strategy is, nonetheless, still a solution. And what does it solve? Nothing less than the problem of maintaining those sedimentations that are challenged by the change experience and, by doing so, maintaining the known worldview as a whole.

How? By offering a means with which to neutralise the impact and effects of change such that it prevents the necessity to embrace the unknown and unknowable consequences that any fully-committed reflective acceptance of change would impose. By remaining 'in-between' disruption and continuity the most troubling consequences of experienced change can be denied, diluted, or dissociated.

It works. At a price. Nonetheless, it is a price that many conclude is still worth paying. What convinces them of that?

Experiencing Change: Evading the Polarities of Change and Continuity

For years, in a semi-jokey fashion, I have been suggesting to trainees that the definition of a client is that of someone who both wants to change and to remain the same and who, as a result, continues to experience all manner of instances of dividedness in his or her relations with self, others and the world.

As with clients in general, Victor would be far more willing to embrace change were it the case that its consequences were predictable and guaranteed sufficient worldview stability, security and continuity. Again, like clients in general, Victor wants to know beforehand that the option before him will lead to something positive, perhaps make him a better or happier or more fulfilled person. More to the point, like clients in general, Victor wants to be reassured beforehand that any experiential embrace of change will be limited in that its impact will *only be* upon that sedimentation that is under challenge and that it will leave the rest of his worldview pretty much unaffected and, hence, still sufficiently secure and recognizable despite disruption. Unfortunately, he can be given no such guarantee. Existentially speaking, the worldview's inter-relational make-up is such that any change to the particular will alter the whole.

If this were not provocative of unease in itself, it is also the case that, at present, no one, and certainly no model of psychotherapy, has the ability to predict with any

degree of accuracy how and to what extent any particular experience of change will affect the person as a whole. Regardless of how seemingly insignificant or minor is the 'tweaking' of one facet of our experience of being, the change to the whole being can be subtle or hardly noticeable or can be dramatic and wide-ranging. In similar, if opposite fashion, major alterations to a single facet may have either enormous or barely notable effects. Currently, we have no way of predicting the impact, focus or direction of any instance of experienced change. Our openness to the experience of change reflects an openness to the unknown and uncertain. It risks 'the death' of all that we currently hold as being meaningful, stable, continuous and secure about our experience of being. Indeed, seen from this perspective, it would seem that if there is anything truly surprising about our responses to the experience of change, it is the extent and frequency to which we seem to be so open to it rather than seek to avoid it.

In contrast to our broader stance toward change and its consequences, evasive, rejecting 'in-between' responses to change dominate the issues and concerns brought to psychotherapy by clients. As far as our clients are concerned, those instances of change which they present in psychotherapy are deemed to be so threatening to their worldview stability, constancy and continuity that they are experienced as being unwanted, dangerous and/or intolerable. Understanding that, it becomes somewhat obvious to realize that clients are likely to make attempts to off-set, reject or deny those disruptions, even if those attempts manifest themselves as experiences of a perpetual, lingering tension which threatens to erupt into something far more painful and debilitating. Nonetheless, as awful as this 'in-between' existence can be, viewed from the standpoint of the attempt to off-set the unknown consequences of uncontainable disruption and to maintain stability, security and continuity, it makes a good deal of sense. Just as the therapeutic encouragement to 'go with' change and, hence, risk whatever stability, security and continuity one has and desires might well make very little, if any, sense at all—at least initially.

But what might provoke clients to be courageous enough to willingly take that step into unknown possibilities and consequences?

Experiencing Change: Embracing the Polarities of Change and Continuity

In an attempt to respond to the above question, let me return to my example of my client, Victor.

Eventually, in some manner or other, Victor decides that the pain and misery required to maintain his in-between position is to some degree worse than that of embracing the uncertain and unknown consequences of change. What could have possibly convinced him to take such a step? Perhaps a moment of illuminating therapeutically-informed insight. Perhaps exhaustion. Perhaps his own—or

others'—growing irritation or boredom with the stance being maintained. Perhaps something that he experienced or gleaned from his encounters with me. Perhaps something I said, or that he heard me say. So many 'perhapses' that we, as psychotherapists, might prefer to label as 'factors' both shared (or common) across all models of psychotherapy and specific to any particular model and which, while deemed to be the basis to the effectiveness of psychotherapy, currently remain a mystery as to *why* they are so (Cooper 2008; Duncan et al. 2010; Norcross and Wampold 2011). So many uncertain possibilities that became Victor's means to take the step. What seems clear, however, is that whichever 'perhaps,' or combination thereof, served as catalyst, what was required of him was an attitude or stance of acceptance.

Yes, but acceptance of what?

I would suggest that it is the acceptance of both polarities inherent in change, namely disruption and continuity. Further, it is necessary for this acceptance to occur in a manner that simultaneously bequeaths each polarity with equal value and co-presence. This reflective embracing of polarity from a 'both/and' rather than 'either/or' stance and, through it, the attempt to balance contradictory demands as being equal in value and sharing a co-presence in relation to one another, allows a shift away from the reflective rejection of change and towards that of reflective acceptance.

In Victor's case, this acceptance requires him to acknowledge himself as a 'new' Victor who exists reflectively through his acceptance that he is 'the Victor who once lived with Joanne but now no longer does so.' In accepting this, Victor embraces both disruption and continuity and opens his experience to the potential discovery of novel possibilities, meanings, interactions with self and others, and so forth.

This turn towards reflective acceptance reveals yet another paradox: Rather than seek to 'erase,' resolve or impose hierarchies of validity, meaning and import upon the contradictory demands being expressed through existential polarities such as continuity/disruption, security/uncertainty and identity/alterity our openness to change emerges through the willingness to hold the polarities in such a way so that the tension created between them attempts the achievement of an 'owned balance.' Of course, any such attempt will ultimately succumb to subsequent change events and, hence, ultimately fail. But, as Samuel Beckett's refrain reminds and entreats us, our enterprise is not one that leads to success but rather to the on-going experience of 'failing better' (Beckett 1983).

But by what mechanism, or through what step-by-step manualized set of interventions do we, and our clients, find the means to attempt this paradoxical balance? Here, like everyone else, I have no single, satisfactory all-inclusive answer. However, there do exist some 'hints' as to what might some day become an answer.

When, as psychotherapists, we are curious—or foolhardy—enough to ask our clients: What allowed you to take that change-accepting step? Often, they will answer: you, the therapist, did. Or: the effect of your presence upon my presence did. Or: the relationship we co-created did. Or, if Lesley Farber is correct, the step

was taken because clients take pity on their therapist who keeps trying so hard to understand/meet/be-with/be-for them, and continually fails in this endeavor (Farber 2000).

Or, if I and numerous other existential therapists are correct, the client notes and becomes encouraged enough to try out for him or her self that which we, as therapists, are seen to be willing to attempt.

Which is what, exactly?

One term might be that of 'un-knowing'—which is to say: that as existential therapists (perhaps even psychotherapists in general), we attempt to remain as open as possible to that which presents itself, in the way it presents itself, in the current and on-going encounter; that we attempt to treat the seemingly familiar, assumed to be understood or understandable, as novel, unfixed in meaning, and, hence, accessible to previously un-examined lived possibilities; that we attempt to demonstrate our willingness to explore the world of the client in a fashion that not only seeks to remain respectful of the client's unique experience of being, but also by attempting to remain receptive to the challenges that this unique way of being elicits upon our own beliefs, biases and assumptions—be they personal or professional or both (Spinelli 1997).

Or put it another way: that, as existential therapists, we commit ourselves to an enterprise that urges us to express and embody that person who attempts to embrace, work-with and work-through the experience of reflectively accepted change in all its relationally-attuned, uncertain and anxiety-provoking ever-presence. And that we are willing to attempt this in the presence of another, the client, in an open-minded and open-hearted manner which both meets and is receptive to the 'I,' the 'you,' and the 'we' experiences that make up our encounter. This requires a cock-eyed sort of courage, which is in equal measure arrogance and humility, and which asks nothing more—or less—of the therapist than is being asked of the client.

Experiencing Change: A Summary

Paradoxically, change is a constant of lived experience. Also paradoxically, the reflective experience of change requires reflective continuity. Our lived experiences of change reveal a polarity of disruption and continuity. The reflective acceptance or attempted rejection of our experiences of change rest upon the degree to which we are willing to embrace both polarities as co-present and equally valid.

The majority of change experiences rest upon either a pre-reflective or reflective existential 'openness' through which we are willing 'to meet' the event and embrace its unknown possibilities and consequences. The dilemma of change is not with such instances of change, but rather with a particular variant of change experience. Namely, those reflective change experiences whose impact is deemed to be too threatening or too dangerous or too undesirable to the maintenance of existing sedimentations and to the worldview as a whole. Alternatively, this same

dilemma is encountered when a desired change cannot be enacted. In this latter instance, the focus rests upon preferred and desirable, yet still imaginary, change experiences that alter, amend or remove a particular sedimentation in isolation and, hence, do not impact upon the whole of the worldview in unforeseen and unpredictable ways.

Rather than the change events in themselves, the dilemmas faced by change focus upon issues regarding their consequences upon the experienced worldview that remain both certain (in their inevitability) and uncertain (in their experiential impact, focus and magnitude).

Experiences of reflective change can be understood existentially as movements-towards-death that accompany the disruption to the stability, identifiability and continuity of the worldview that existed prior to the change event. Viewed in this way, one can note significant parallels and points of convergence between the reflective experience of change and the key existential notion of death anxiety.

Accepting change in any particular aspect of a person's worldview will affect the whole of that worldview in ways that, at least currently, cannot be predicted beforehand. In those instances of reflectively accepted change, our focus rests upon the novel potential of the event and we look forward to the possibilities of the newly-emerging, if still unknown and unpredictable, possibilities of being. In instances of reflectively troubling change, however, we acknowledge the presence of change but seek to reject or deny its unpredictable and destabilising impact upon the whole worldview. This 'in-between' strategy has its value: it goes a long way toward maintaining the person's worldview experience of stability and continuity—but at a price which is typically experienced as disturbing, dissociative and debilitating.

The courage to embrace threatening and undesired change demands a fundamental willingness to risk everything that we claim to be, know and value about and expect from our selves, others and the world. It is precisely that courage which permits us to leap into and accept the uncertain and unknown possibility which is a constant throughout our lives.

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