Contemplative Listening: A Rhetorical-Critical Approach To Facilitate Internal Dialog

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Abstract
This article presents a discussion technique that is tailored to clients needing to reorient their convictions following a critical life event. The technique has three distinctive characteristics. The client’s statements are not classified into categories from conventional layer models that are designed to track the themes or content of talk. Instead, we adopt a rhetorical approach because of the fundamental metaphysical nature of conviction that this article assumes. The primary focus is on how clients talk about themselves and their convictions. This focus allows the professional to support clients in their personal work. The technique is a tool that professionals can use during the discussion to monitor whether they themselves are in fact doing what they promised the client they would do. Finally, the technique is a third way, alongside a kerygmatic and therapeutic approach, in which chaplains can conduct discussions. The terminology it employs can be used as a common language for much of the work carried out by chaplains from different philosophical backgrounds.

Keywords
Existential orientation, internal dialog, pastoral counseling, personal deliberation, rhetoric, spiritual direction

Introduction
Contemplative listening is a discussion technique that facilitates a client’s internal dialog (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). The chaplain can use this technique alongside other discussion techniques in which, in an institutional context and at the client’s request, they also inform or teach (kerygmatic) or provide direction as a coach (therapeutic). The model assumes that there is a metaphysical core to human existence, especially individual existence. Contemplative listening is suitable for everyone, including clients with little or no institutional affiliation or without an explicitly professed belief. However, it is perfectly compatible with any form of faith, religion and philosophy of life. The only people for whom contemplative listening is not suited are those who are of the firm view that human experience is not a place of revelation. The words used in this article to describe the technique enable chaplains from different backgrounds to discuss and examine together their professional interventions within the practice of conducting discussions (Nieuwenhuizen, 2007).

While this discussion technique supports internal dialog, it is also designed to enable professionals to check during the discussion whether they are making it easier for clients to calibrate their picture of their life experience and to translate it into words that they themselves understand and can communicate to others. In this article we refer to the person presenting the discussion technique as the auditor/listener. With the above objectives in mind, the auditor simultaneously applies two rhetorical frames of reference at the meta-level. The auditor identifies the way in which clients talk about themselves to make it easier for them to conduct an internal dialog. At the same time, the auditors monitor themselves in order to ensure complete space for the client. Both aspects are observable, even measurable. This two-pronged instrument works most effectively when it is clear to both client and auditor why and how they are talking to one another. It is best if clients know exactly what this form of discussion entails (contract) and comprehend this in accordance with their own intellectual level. The possibility of following precisely what the auditor is doing and the
transparency about outcomes give third parties an opportunity to monitor both quality and outcomes. This is also an explicit aim. Increasingly, quality control has become an axiomatic professional requirement in northwestern Europe.

This article therefore begins with a description of the discussion outcomes and the client’s assumed motivation. Following a brief account of the anthropological principles, the method is described. The article illustrates an approach in which professionals understand their role first and foremost as facilitators of internal dialog. They consciously step back from the role of shepherd, teacher and care worker. It is all about giving the client ample room and to let them be owner of the discussion.

**The Outcomes Of Supervised Internal Dialog**

The outcomes for clients are: (1) calibrating their picture of their life experience; (2) finding the words in which they understand themselves; and (3) being able to communicate this inner conviction to others.

- The disappearance or lessening of the “unease,” “alienation” and “powerlessness” that the client experiences following a gradual or sudden change. This is the unease affecting the client’s entire life at the time of the discussion, the alienation from the client’s image of themselves that has sufficed until now, and the powerlessness to link the client’s current position to the past and future. These outcomes are not connected with welfare, well-being or coping. The experience of someone who has found clarity and says “Here I am and that’s what I must do” need not be coupled with a feeling of comfort, happiness or knowing how something should be done. These outcomes (convictions) may well correspond to terms such as resolve, care and fairness. What clients may “feel” is calm, peace or justice. These experiences may be accompanied by positive and negative connotations.

- Conducting an internal dialog is an inevitably non-transferable and exclusively personal task in supportive solidarity with another person.

**The Client’s Assumed Motivation**

The discussion technique has been developed for clients who, following a critical life event, feel that the change in their life has undermined their familiar self-understanding and who feel unable to simply pick up the thread once more. For example, after a serious trauma, a client may have to live with a permanent disability, as well as discover that business relationships and friendships were less close than he or she thought. If asked to reintegrate, they discover that they have lost not only a particular ability, but also something of themselves. The change makes it necessary for them to reinvent themselves. There are many changes that prompt a need of this kind: hearing that the child you are expecting will require a good deal of ongoing care, the discovery of a life-threatening condition or illness, or being deployed as a soldier to a war zone. Any critical life event can create such a need, although this does not mean that all such changes will prompt everyone to seek internal dialog. Clients who do feel a need for reorientation can ask the auditor for space and time in which to talk about their own core in a multidimensional exploration. This internal dialog simply demands of an auditor that they listen and try to understand. The auditor knows that the client is the sole explorer and expert when it comes to content. The auditor cannot directly observe what the client is talking about. The client knows that they are the only one who will determine the topic, the approach and the frame of reference in the discussion. They know that the auditor will do everything possible to leave the content of the discussion undisturbed and will give them ample space to calibrate their picture of their life experience. The client and auditor agree that the client will not ask for information, advice or interpretation in the discussion.

The client asks the auditor to facilitate the non-transferable internal dialog in a setting of supportive solidarity. Why? In an ordinary situation it is difficult to independently articulate what the core is. This is what many people experience more or less explicitly in the slow but profound change from child to adult. Whereas physical maturity can happen quickly, self-understanding is slow to develop. Thus, someone can have children well before they are ready to say “I’m completely prepared to be a parent.” Articulating your self-understanding is extremely difficult when change happens quickly. This is particularly disadvantageous if you are expected to quickly and clearly communicate your response to the question of who you are and what you think should happen. For example, you may receive bad news, such as the fact that you have a serious heart defect, which affects your self-understanding (as a partner, at work, in relation to your future prospects). Yet in this troubled state you are expected to give a quick answer to the question about what you want from the doctor.

It is essential that these two motives are clear for both client and auditor. At any time in the discussion, both must be reminded of this if necessary. In any discussion confusion may arise if the client experiences feelings of discomfort, alienation or powerlessness. The client may suddenly become aware of the expectation that they will be initiated or reinitiated into a strange new world by someone with special knowledge, or that they must find a solution to a problem with the help of a care professional. It is very frustrating and unsatisfactory for them if they cannot return to the agreement that the auditor must not act as a shepherd, teacher or coach. It is important for client and auditor to share the same expectation and to tailor their
mode of communication accordingly. If a client continues to speak in terms of “save me” or “solve it for me,” the auditor must decide that nothing can be gained from contemplative listening. It is important to keep renewing the agreement. The focus can easily shift in another direction during a one-off discussion, let alone in a series of discussions.

If, after contemplative listening, a client would like to use a different discussion technique with the auditor, such as a brief therapeutic discussion or an explanation of a passage from a holy book, this calls for a new, clear agreement. If the auditor changes the discussion technique without explanation and without the client’s express consent, there is a danger that he or she will use deeply personal information in a didactic way or to exert influence on the client. This is ethically undesirable in view of the agreed contract with the client.

**Anthropological Principle**

The topic of discussion in contemplative listening is the client’s life experience, their current experience. Contemplative listening involves focusing attention on the imaginary center, where everything that the client is, everything that happens to them and everything that motivates them is connected. I see this center as the metaphysical core of existence. The imaginary center exists from the moment of conception. The biological development of human beings is a process of rapid reproduction and functional differentiation. This process and the parallel development of a diverse consciousness are coupled with the preservation of unity and cohesion. The process of expansion and functional differentiation occurs around an imaginary center, which the individual gradually becomes aware of. They keep returning to it, exploring it in more detail. They share with others what they call “I,” “my,” “self” or “soul.” This concept of experience is not the same as a cognitive summary of what has become empirically clear to a client during their life. Nor is it their life view or professed belief that provides the words for what they experience.

The client uses spatio-temporal terms to articulate and listen to what is happening in the imaginary center. Because of their spatio-temporal character, words are not in fact suitable for expressing what has preceded the observation. However, we cannot get around using language when speaking. In figurative language we use spatio-temporal terms as a metaphor for what escapes our observation. The imaginary center can only be explained with the help of metaphors. What we talk about is not the center itself but our picture of it. Again and again, we seek to understand ourselves as cohesive and meaningful entities. Life must be invented as it constantly changes. All conclusions—our convictions—are therefore provisional, incomplete and limited.

It is important to make a distinction between the imaginary center and the picture we have of it. The center is the enduring point of reference for our convictions (Ricoeur, 1992). By “listening” to this center, we are able to revise or adjust (calibrate) the picture. Those who forget this distinction, or who even believe that the picture is more real than the core, fall victim to self-alienation. The center deserves constant attention because without that the spatio-temporal aspect loses its meaning.

In everyday practice it has proven a major challenge in this discussion technique to keep focusing on the client’s talk as “creative language.” Instead, the auditor starts listening in particular to the client’s assertions, to the course of the story, or to psychosocial aspects of the client. Auditors may then feel they are being asked for their own truths, their personal view of what is happening, or their appraisal of the client’s personality. There are three characteristics of creative speaking that deserve attention in order to support internal dialog. These are: using several approaches rather than just one when speaking from insights based on experience; speaking in which these different points of view are relativized by viewing them as parts of the picture we have of experience; speaking that seeks to be honest and appropriate. As clients speak, they test whether the words and experience match. They speak as a painter paints: they look, add a brushstroke, step back, check to see whether it’s right, and continue.

**Method**

The discussion technique aims to enable auditors to monitor whether they are making it easier for the client during the discussion to calibrate their picture of their life experience and to translate it into words that they themselves can understand and can communicate to others. Contemplative listening is characterized methodologically by the attention given to the language used during the discussion by both client and auditor. The auditor listens to the creative speaking dynamic in the client’s language. The auditor also listens to their own language in order to give full space to the client’s process.

The dynamics of creative speaking are monitored by continually identifying the objectum formale within the talk. The auditor listens to what the client says, but focuses primarily on how the client talks about their conviction. Auditors are not concerned with content and are not interested in the conclusion; instead, they are interested in how this is arrived at. The auditor remains at a distance, but is fully engaged. During the discussion the conclusion is approached as a product that need only be meaningful and satisfactory for the client. At the end of the discussion the client decides whether this knowledge will be shared, and with whom. The auditor is aware that they are witness to a deliberation on the forum internum of the client’s personal conscience. There must be complete discretion. The
auditor must be aware that they have shared an intimacy in the discussion—an intimacy of which the client is the sole owner. In practice, it may certainly be possible that clients never—or only much later—entrust the truth they have discovered about themselves to someone else.

The auditor seeks to maximize the space offered to the client by identifying his or her own verbal responses. Using a carefully chosen verbal response (according to their abilities), auditors seek to avoid influencing the client when it comes to broaching topics, choosing perspectives and introducing a frame of reference. At the same time, the auditor seeks, through the careful choice of responses, to encourage the client to take advantage of the space, to talk about the core in a multidimensional way, and to articulate their current assumptions about cohesion and unity.

Auditors thus make distinctions in the quality of their listening. They are not concerned with what they think about their client’s statements based on their own expertise. As selflessly as possible, they place their communicative and hermeneutic competencies at the client’s disposal. These competencies have been acquired through their professional studies. They only transfer their specialist knowledge if expressly requested and not until the client has completed their own path. Contemplative listening is not about the goal reached by the auditor, but about their ability to walk the client’s path and to cope with difficulties that this entails.

**Identifying The Objectum Formale During The Talk**

In the context of contemplative listening, all client talk is understood as current creative speaking and never as repetition. The auditor listens to how the client talks about themselves in the present and how they define it in a metaphor. It makes no difference to the auditor whether the client tells the same story every week or three times in the space of an hour. They continue to listen to the client’s need to say it in a particular way at this particular time. They do not focus on the topic, approach or frame of reference that the client introduces—that is reserved for the client alone. The auditor listens attentively to how the client uses the space given to them, follows their movement explicitly and invites them to summarize. It involves communicating within the ethical framework of a dance: “your partner is a flower who you accompany without pushing or pulling.”

The auditor identifies and tracks the way the client talks about themselves, based on a wide range of positions, and summarizes this center—the self—in a metaphor or series of metaphors. The auditor also tries to offer genuine support to the client so that they needn’t walk the path alone.

Clients calibrate their picture of their life experience against the center. How they do so is identical to making assumptions about the unity of a structure. For example, to arrive at a conjecture about the unity of a huge statue or building, we wander through and around it. In our minds we synthesize all the “photos” that we take on our walk into “a conjecture of unity.” In our minds, we can’t really test that picture against reality. It is the product of the gazing subject and the object of the gaze.

In our minds we are in a position to look at reality—and within that ourselves—from different positions, as we would a statue. I identify five basic positions that are expressed through language. These include two positions from which the picture is gauged in the space of the moment and two positions from which the picture is positioned in time. The fifth, the original position and in that sense the first, is the imaginary center in which the conjecture of unity is expressed.

The four spatio-temporal points of view offer pictures to the speaker, which are synthesized into a concept of the center. This conjecture of the experience of life is normally expressed in a metaphor. In contemplative listening, the use of figurative language is seen as a sublime way of expressing oneself. When using metaphors, the speaker takes the fifth possible point of view, which touches the center. The other ways of using language are considered to be more or less abstract. In their attempt to express the center, they tend to become less ambiguous in meaning but they lose some of their substance. We will illustrate this phenomenon and speak about degrees of abstraction in each viewpoint.

In every point of view the client can gradually talk about themselves: (1) very personally; (2) within the solidarity of “we” (as a family member, church member, nationality); and (3) as a representative of the human race as a whole. The three levels or kinds of talk have rhetorically different characteristics. In the first degree of abstraction it is clear that clients are expressing their own reality (e.g. in speaking about “my mother”—extended I). In the second degree, clients suggest that the reality under discussion is owned by a group. In the third, reality is expressed as if it were independent of the individual. Unlike the first two, this last kind of talk makes a claim to general validity or irrebutability.

Clients who talk about themselves very personally from all points of view are moving close to the center. In a proverbial sense, they are staying “close to home.” What they say “applies to” or “counts for” themselves. They talk about their own observations and beliefs. The picture in which they summarize these two dimensions is their own picture and need not satisfy any requirement other than their own feeling of integrity. Clients who speak in very abstract terms find it much harder to arrive at a synthesis. Take the example of a pregnant woman who, after a prenatal diagnosis, talks like a neurologist about the baby she is carrying, while at the same time she talks about her experiences in the terms provided to her by the traditional ethics of the conservative church to which she belongs. In such
situations, it is difficult to make a synthesis. At the highest degree of abstraction, both types of talk are usually very adamant and claim to offer the last word.

By identifying and tracking the positions and the degrees of abstraction in which clients talk about themselves, the auditor can invite the client to take all the space they need to calibrate their picture of their life experience and to translate it into words and images in which they can understand themselves and can communicate to others.

**Point Of View Nearest To The Center**

While speaking from different points of view, the client forms a current picture of their experience. This picture can be summarized in imagery, which clients use in accordance with their language and speech abilities. In the case of a highly developed ability to speak metaphorically, the outcome is different than in cases of limited ability. Clients also speak from the different positions in accordance with their abilities. All clients should qualify for contemplative listening, including people with limited intellectual training or a disorder. The outcome that listening brings to the client is important, irrespective of whether the auditor understands it or not. More than that, the auditor’s assumption that the client has been understood can be a trap because it’s the picture they have understood, not the experience.

**Point Of View: Speaking From Observation**

Moving away from our center, the first position from which we talk about ourselves is as the bearer of knowledge. This position, and the next, can be clarified using the image of a sporting competition. In this position, clients are “spectators,” who use their senses to create a picture. Everything that is presented as a fact or process can be talked about. For example, you can talk about yourself in terms of a medical history, as someone who is depressed, or who shows social promise. There are many possible kinds of logical and rhetorical schemes within this talk. Examples of logical schemes are alphabetical or chronological lists; examples of a rhetorical scheme are stories or a series of logical schemes are lists; examples of a rhetorical scheme are stories or a series of logical schemes or processes.

When identifying the position from which a statement is made during contemplative listening, we always assume the first position unless the statement is clearly an example of one of the other positions. Statements made from the first position are statements from the source of observing/knowing. In this first position, empirical language is a clear example of the third degree of abstraction (universal). Here there is a tendency to confuse oneself to statements that can be labeled as true/not true or reliable/not reliable. Ideally, the statements should be arranged in a logical order. There are clear agreements about the form that statements should take in order to qualify as true and not true (Seiffert, 2006).

**Point Of View: Speaking From Perception**

The second position from which we talk about ourselves is from our perception while speaking, which tells us how we relate to what we are saying. In the analogy of a sporting competition, the previous position was that of “spectator.” This second position is that of “player.” It means that there is explicit reference to temporary or lasting sensations, associations and behavior during the talk. For example, “As I say this, my heart freezes.” This perception can also be expressed implicitly in the form of an adjective: “This is a good book that makes me happy.” Here, the word “good” is interesting because it says something about the client’s relationship to the book. It’s not clear whether good relates to the client’s joy or to the book as a literary product. We label this explicit articulation of what happens during talk as speaking from the second position. We label implicit speaking as a preliminary movement, in this case to the second position. The statement is still classified as speaking from the senses. When the auditor mentions this movement in a reflection, it may entice the client to explain this aspect. The client then speaks in the second position. The focus of interest in speaking from perception lies in articulating the personal relationship to what happens to the client when speaking. With regard to the highest abstraction for this talk, we can cite deontological talk as an example. Here, the experienced relationship to a particular action is turned into a behavioral norm (“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”). Here too, there is a constraint: this talk is not about “moral” action in general but about moral action that is required. As in the example of empirical talk, there are clear agreements about language use in the academic world.

**Point Of View: Speaking To Evaluate**

The third position from which we talk about ourselves is from that of evaluating changes to the picture as we talk. This is the position of “commentator.” The change is the link (continuity, break) between what is being said and what the client would normally say. The change can be implicitly observed when the client searches for the right words and is clearly entering new territory. The client can also explicitly articulate the change. The change is expressed in the comparison between the pictures that the client had and the picture that emerges during the
talk. The evaluation can relate to different dimensions of the self: body image ("I don't feel comfortable in my skin"), identity ("That's me!"), tradition ("That's not how we Corsicans do it!"), religiosity ("Having my child aborted would be committing a sin"), morality ("That's exactly what should happen now") and lifestyle ("I don't do it like that because you only live once"). The reflection can be about changes in observation ("I see it differently all of a sudden") and meaning ("I feel better when I talk about stopping working").

**Point Of View: Speaking To Predict**

The fourth position from which we talk about ourselves is that of "forecaster." From the picture that their mind's eye sees based on observation and meaning, the client articulates the light in which the future appears ("While I say this and feel relieved, I know I can go further"). They articulate the direction of the expected change in the picture ("I have no right to hope for a solution"). As in evaluative talk, the expectation can be expressed as a reference to body image, identity, tradition, religiosity, morality and lifestyle.

**Special Features**

Speaking from a specific position does not mean ignoring the others. Particularly within the formal language used in the third degree, the other positions are included within their own conditions. This can be illustrated by the terms "practical life" and "moral life," which thematize two dimensions of "life."

Empirical science deals with the "practical life," part of the catch-all term "life." Classical empirical science confines itself to facts and processes that can be investigated through experiments. In the key terms of this language, we discover traces of the different positions. The practical life is articulated from the position of "spectator" as "function" (=effect), from the position of "player" as "feasible" (=relationship to reality), from that of "commentator" as "efficient," and from that of "forecaster" as "effect."

Ethics reflects on action based on an interest in the "moral life." This too is part of "life" as a whole. In the professional jargon, the "moral life" is articulated from the position of "spectator" as "usefulness," from that of "player" as "norm," from that of "commentator" as "virtue," and from that of "forecaster" as "value" (Groot & Hoek, 2017).

In principle, the same topic can be discussed from these two positions, while staying within one's own language and having an impression of multidimensionality. In general, it has proven difficult to unite both positions under a single heading. The insight that scientific or institutional jargon says a lot about the position from which people speak and by definition does not address the whole topic helps us to share, from an overarching position, with people who are speaking from a different position. The same applies when someone within the internal dialog identifies more voices within themselves.

**Identifying The Auditor's Contribution**

In contemplative listening the client is the expert when it comes to local knowledge. The counselor tries to be as non-invasive as possible with regard to how clients express themselves. The client is the sole protagonist when it comes to choosing topics, points of view and knowledge. The auditor is a specialist in comforting the client. As professionals, they can offer knowledge about how clients can explore themselves when speaking. They offer modest assistance to comfort clients who are speaking. Their behavior encourages three important activities.

- All the space is taken up by the client
- The client uses as many points of view as possible
- The client personalizes their conclusions into a current personal conviction

In contemplative listening, as well as promising to do so, auditors choose their verbal and nonverbal responses carefully in order to show maximum respect to the client as protagonist. Just as they are aware of rhetorical characteristics of client talk, auditors are also aware of the implications of their own language use.

Auditors can use the taxonomy of verbal response modes to identify their own responses (Stiles, 1992). Stiles has described the roles that auditors can adopt. In contemplative listening, the role that he labels "acquiescence" is seen as the most appropriate role to give the other an optimum opportunity to be the protagonist. This means that, going from more to less desirable, auditors intentionally form their verbal response as: reflection, acknowledgment, confirmation and edification. The client's choice of topic, point of view and knowledge is undisputed in these four modes. Reflection reigns supreme here because it respects all three. In particular, auditors avoid interpretation and question, as these two modes disturb the client's personal thought process.

We can, of course, point out that a reflection is also a choice that can influence the client. This is undeniable. It is therefore important to constantly monitor whether the reflection is a sign of trying to listen or whether the client feels that they are being subtly directed. A good reflection is one in which the other person feels confirmed in their ownership of the discussion. The presence of someone who is obviously taking pains to avoid hijacking the discussion will be experienced as support, provided the
auditor has agreed only to monitor the client in the calibration of their self-image and their choice of words. Verbal response modes can be used to encourage the client’s mobility without hijacking the content of the discussion. Good reflections also pick up preliminary movement so that the auditor can then invite the client to take different viewpoints. The reflection is first and foremost a sign of “seeking to understand.” At the same time it invites the client to say more about content or to speak from a different perspective (exploratory and mobilizing reflection).

We couldn’t possibly refer to Stiles without mentioning the name of Rogers and his followers. Although it has much in common with the latter, contemplative listening isn’t therapy. Contemplative listening is characterized by a focus on talk as a means by which to arrive to conviction.

Conclusion

In contemplative listening, clients are invited to take the lead and are facilitated in doing so. As they are given every freedom to talk about themselves, a conjecture of unity and cohesion constantly arises. In our view, this conjecture constitutes a solid foundation for action, even far-reaching action. It can also provide reasons for whether or not to adhere fully to a shared group conviction.

It is fairly rare for people to request contemplative listening of their own accord—not even if they are well aware that their problem does not involve a lack of knowledge, or emotions or behavior that have become derailed, and not even if they have long since tired of explanations and good advice. Why do people tend to articulate their unease as “save me” or “solve it for me” rather than as “help me to reorient myself?” We are sometimes confronted with the paradox that most people over the past century have been emancipated from philosophical and scientific institutions but when their unease increases (alienation or powerlessness), they still look up or elsewhere for help: “Where will my salvation come from?” It is as though they haven’t yet lost their “slave mentality.” Perhaps these comments are much too severe and this behavior should primarily be seen as voicing a need for consolation. Not automatically responding to a request for salvation or a solution is the first gift we can give to someone who discovers, to their shock, that they feel powerless. It is this confidence shown in the client that can offer consolation.

It is also rare for chaplains to offer contemplative listening—even if they are well aware that there is no inability on the part of the client, and that the client was in a position until a short time ago to understand themselves and to plot their own path, and even if they know full well from experience that someone who has found themselves again will know almost at once which path they should take. Like the “slave mentality” among clients, there is a “master mentality” among chaplains, who are seduced by the status of helper or teacher, like the status of the clergy in the past.

In contemplative listening the professional is the listener who excels in tracking a client who is listening to themselves. They encourage clients along the path that only they can take. The professional is therefore the leader at following. In my view, therefore, the systematic discussion technique outlined here is not new. It has its roots in the broad monastic tradition common to many religions, in which people listen with great respect to the word of God, to religious tradition, to their fellow human beings, as well as to their own heart. In historical terms, as a religious form of communication, this kind of listening has credentials that are just as strong as those of kerygma and catechesis (didache). Each time that religions became mired in what they already knew, they were revitalized through selfless listening. This is not to suggest that professionals should abandon kerygmatic and therapeutic discussions. These have their own value. They are appropriate where necessary, against the background of the concept of personal conviction that is outlined here. Based on their newly acquired self-knowledge, a client may ask for help.

Contemplative listening is a skill that is often acquired with great difficulty and through lots of practice. The hardest aspect is achieving the basic attitude of “acquiescence.” Learning to listen properly requires immense discipline and can take a lifetime. It is a form of listening in which everyone involved respects the wonder of the individual who does not take their own existence for granted.

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