

Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project

Stanley Keleman talks about his connection with Charlotte Selver and Charles Brooks, his understanding of the differences between his and Charlotte's approach, New York City in the 50s, the revolution in the humanistic movement at that time and Charlotte Selver's place in this movement.

Stanley Keleman (SK): I have never done Charlotte Selver's workshop or never been (sic) any of her exercises.

Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt (SL): You have never. That is interesting.

SK: But we knew a lot of the same people.

SL: You must have. 'Cause I just listened from your website this half hour talk / interview you gave, and one of the things you talk about is to increase muscular tension ...

SK: Right.

SL: In order to feel what we're doing.

SK: Right.

SL: And that's something that Charlotte learned from Gindler.

SK: Well I knew that she was she wasn't the only person that I knew that knew Gindler. But Charlotte was sensory, and I'm motor.

SL: Uh-huh.

SK: And I've – just to make a clarity, she was in the sensory-motor business, just to make a metaphor the sensing, the expansion of the sensory apparatus in every sense of it. And I, for whatever reason and I don't want to go into that, the motoric response in the evolutionary cycle is what sets up the sensory feedback. So it's the action that precedes the sensing. So I'm talking about a motoric organization that's primary that has its own feedback mechanism as the way to go. That does not say you know I'm not critical of anybody (laughs) it's a difference. You know?

SL: Yeh, there are differences. Yes.

SK: Uh, I mean you could be critical, but not when you know somebody like Charlotte or Charles Brooks, cause then it's a conversation about how you explore reality. It's different. Nobody's fighting. So I just wanted to make clear.

SL: Yes. Thank you. I appreciate that. Yeh. So can you tell me you told me that you met Charles even before Charlotte. Was that in a Reichian or Lowen circle, or how did that come about?

SK: I don't know whether she was ever in the Reichian circle.

SL: No, Charles.

SK: Oh Charles was in the Reichian circle. Um, I met Charles through a woman that I was seriously dating, I'm thinking of the dates maybe '58, 1958, '59 at the latest. And she invited me to one of Charley Brooks' famous parties.

SL: You call him Charley Brooks. Eh-heh.

SK: His father was a very famous historian.

SL: Yes. A literary critic.

SK: He lived in the Village then, and he was a first class woodworker. These parties were salons; they were top-of-the-line. And they were fun. And Charles was working his way through paying for his therapy with John Pierrakos in the Lowenian movement. By making his desk and chairs and stuff. So that was the connection. I don't actually know how I met Charlotte, but Charlotte was not part of that episode of me knowing Charlotte. So it was Charley and the gang around him, and the dances, and the let's say the rebellious psychological people.

SL: Can you tell me a bit about that? Because we know little about that.

SK: About the party or the group?

SL: Well the party and the group. I know Charlotte did talk about his parties.

SK: Well she must have gone to some of them. Cause I don't know any other way you would meet him. Cause the parties how could you describe these parties? They were not drunk parties. I mean there was liquor, but they were not drunken parties. And there was food. And there was irreverent talk about the nature of life, society, condemnation (?) and the exploration of sexual reality and sense reality, and whatever we want to call the life of the body. As I remember it, Charlotte had a reputation coming through the Korzybski movement, whom I knew people in the Korzybski movement, and Read Herbert Read and Erich Fromm. She ran these sensory workshops, I think Erich Fromm, which I never met him sent people and supported Charlotte. But it was it came from an influence besides Gindler was the Korzybski movement, which at one time was extremely powerful in the States. I don't know if you know that, but a lot of hot shot, upper echelon intellectuals in the social movement were involved in that. So I knew about Charlotte and her workshops through the people that I knew in the Korzybski movement. So otherwise there was a circle. And she did her workshop in a flat on the first floor I've forgotten exactly what neighborhood that was. And her classes, right. Non-Aristotelian experiences. So I would say that there was this group of people, the Korzybskian people, the F. Matthias Alexander gang not him directly but it wasn't F. Matthias, but one of his disciples, I forgot his name, who came to the States, who was also very popular. And one of the Gurdjieffian guys. It may have been Orage, I'm not sure about that. So, it was through the Korzybskian, Orage entourage that one heard about Charlotte. And which, just as a little around the corner, like that, also Feldenkrais was a member of that gang, from the Orage side from the, uh, Gurdjieffian side. And who else was in that package? Uh, Ida Rolf. I was at the session that Ida Rolf used Charlotte as a demonstration, and hurt her and she was hospitalized from that.

SL: Is that story true?

SK: That story is true!

SL: That story is true! I just spoke with Don Johnson yesterday, and we wondered, you know, if that actually happened.

SK: The story is true. It happened in Ida Rolf's apartment on Central Park West I believe. And she used to give demonstrations for people, and I was there, and somebody would volunteer, and Charlotte volunteered. Now this is pure speculation. I thought that injury happened out of rivalry. But you can't prove that. But Charlotte ended up hospitalized after that!

SL: What happened? Do you know?

SK: I think she loosened muscles in the shoulders it was in the shoulder girdle, that she couldn't move (laughs) her shoulders for a while. (Both laugh)

SL: You were in that session. That's amazing.

SK: Well so was Annelies Widman (sp?) and Charlotte Read, Herbert Read's wife was there. There was another woman I can't remember her name. So what I'm saying that there was quite a grouping of people coming from Korzybski and coming from the Gurdjieffian people and Erich Fromm was very strong, and Gindler was involved by reputation she wasn't there.

SL: But you knew about her. People knew about her.

SK: Oh yes. Her and Carola Speads was linked back to that. And Charlotte was a student of Karlfried von D,rckheim.

SL: She was not a student; she was friends with him.

SK: Well, she was also his student in his classes in philosophy, according well I only what Karlfried told me.

SL: Oh, I don't know that.

SK: She was a friend. But she also was a student of him.

SL: Where would that have been, in Leipzig?

SK: Uh, he taught in Leipzig.

SL: Cause she lived in Leipzig in the twenties.

SK: And he was the whole idea of the Lebensraum the living space comes from him. And she took that. According to Karlfried.

SL: OK.

SK: I have to qualify that ...

SL: Lebensraum it's not a term she used when I knew her.

SK: Well it was a term that, yes. cause that term was prevalent the living space of the human. The Lebensraum. Anyway, so then there's the D,rckheim movement. We had Charlotte and I had many convers.... let me backtrack. Through Charlotte, through the connection with D,rckheim, was the strongest connection of personal interaction then. Because I was in Todtmoos and Charlotte showed up. And we were talking about our sessions and who Karlfried was. For her. And she was there for a week, so she wasn't there for a three-minute thing. And I believe Charles was with her. That conversation resurfaced in our relationship when Karlfried died, and this very famous book came

out revealing his Nazi past. Which was high up the ladder. Not even I realized how high up the ladder he was, although he told me stories about his involvement, he never told me and Charlotte and I would talk about that. And how much Karlfried was under the sway of his wife and blah, blah, blah. So that was part of the conversations that we had here in Muir Beach.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

SK: And Charles was part of those conversations. Well that's quite a history I've just taken you through.

SL: Yeah, I'm glad. I know of so many pieces, and it's good to fill in.

SK: Well, you have to see Karlfried was a new Alan Watts. So it's very possible that cause Karlfried was famous in Europe. I don't know if you know the name or know his work, or his reputation.

SL: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SK: So I don't know exactly what the connection was between Alan, whom I knew very personally, and Karlfried and Charlotte, but there was clearly a link there.

SL: Huh. Interesting.

SK: And Charlotte and Alan rented the studio of Annelies Widman their workshops. Annelies Widman was my girlfriend at that point, and she was a Lowenian. But Annelies knew Charlotte, which was I said before. So they rented the studio. So through there Alan Watts and he did the workshops and Alan Watts was the one who did the marriage. So I was in that whole ...

SL: Alan Watts did the marriage?

SK: He married them.

SL: Oh, that is interesting. You also mention you were at a reception, which I had never heard about, the reception. The only story....

SK: It was in Charlotte's apartment, and Alan was sitting there with a big cigar in his mouth drunk out of his mind. (Stefan laughs)

SL: And then there was a ceremony?

SK: The ceremony had already happened. I was not at the ceremony. I was at the reception.

SL: But there was a ceremony.

SK: Oh yes.

SL: Interesting.

SK: Alan was a minister in the Anglican church, so he could do that. I don't know whether he was a Buddhist priest.

SL: Right, I'm not sure. Cause of what I know that Charlotte and Charles got married on the way from the East Coast to the West Coast somewhere in Nevada.

SK: Maybe legally.

SL: They went to a Justice of Peace, I think in 1963.

SK: Well, that's not the story that I heard.

SL: So, they may have done both. More ceremonial wedding ceremony and then the legal ...

SK: And I thought it was an interesting it was an antithetical kind of a marriage because Charles was into the Reichian way Lowenian movement, which was highly sexually organized. So I didn't know that Charlotte was in that world, or how she entered into that world.

SL: I don't think she was.

SK: So I don't really know what the hell that was all about, but Alan was into the sexual world. I don't mean that in any degrading way. I mean it as being involved in a natural process in a healthier way than was organized in the culture... What else you wanna know from me? You have to lead me a little bit.

SL: Yes, please. Yeah, I will do that. So you met her, but in the beginning I guess there wasn't really a personal connection, but was there ever in these early days ...

SK: Well there was a connection because Annelies Widman knew her personally. Annelies Widman was a dancer, a recognized dancer in the dance world, and they were both German.

SL: Oh they were both German.

SK: Yeah, Annelies was German. So that was a whole level of conversation that they would get into.

SL: Well it's something that you probably can't answer, but you just made me curious about that is Charles with all this knowledge that he must have had from his Reichian and Lowen work, where did he go with all of this that there was probably no space in Charlotte's work for that at least

SK: But he taught with Charlotte.

SL: That's right. He did.

SK: And I was rather shocked when I met them up in Muir Beach. I went with my wife and Guy Gale (??) and Charles was a different person than I knew. He the reasons that the parties were he was a bon vivant. I'm not talking about I don't know how sexually active he was, but he was in charge of the party. He was fun. He was an alive person. He was the physicality I mean he did beautiful work. He was a man who was in his work. And there was a vitality in him that did not meet Charlotte I don't think could meet that. And why should she? But when I met him again after a few years, I was taken aback that the two elements of he was acquiescent and compliant, and impatient and noisy if he felt she was wrong and tried to correct her. He you could see he was clearly annoyed. But not boisterously annoyed. I mean he never said ishut-up. He would try to correct her. He was a completely different person, so I really can't answer that question. I thought he died I was surprised that he died, because he was a strong man.

SL: He had some mysterious infection that he may have caught in Mexico when they nearly drowned. And after that he had a lot of troubles with his lungs and was medicated for a long time.

SK: I didn't know that.

SL: He had to take steroids, which really made him crazy. So he was going back between taking them and being sick until finally he decided you know this is enough. This is not how I want to live.

SK: But he was a different person.

SL: I think it was very hard for him. He could not really find to his own for a long time next to Charlotte.

SK: That was in my opinion, he was more organized than Charlotte. In my way, intellectually, he was more informed than Charlotte.

SL: Yeah, I'm sure that was so.

SK: He could you know Alan Watts I don't know if you really know how incredibly intellectual this man was. He had a first class intellect, and Charles could hang out in that. So, I just think that for comparisons ... But obviously (laughs) they were married quite a while!

SL: (Laughs) They were, yeah. And they did beautiful work together. And he wrote a beautiful book about their work.

SK: Yes. Well, you could see he was in how he wrote that book. Well he may have had a whole following that could lead people intellectually into the realms of experiencing. So I could see that. And it may be that cause I think after the party, after the wedding I should say, there were no more parties that I remember. They were sort of I think maybe he just into the _____ with her.

SL: I guess he gave up his apartment probably at some point and they moved in together.

SK: He lived in a loft, a beautiful loft.

SL: Right, she talks about that

SK: A gigantic and it was a big place we're talking about.

SL: Uh-huh. And didn't he have Haitian musicians? Did you remember that?

SK: I don't remember that.

SL: There would be a lot of dancing.

SK: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: And live music, do you remember that?

SK: Yeah. The place was a very big place. So in that sense Charlotte was an enigma.

SL: So you might have met her first at this Ida Rolf event, or maybe before.

SK: Oh no, no, no, I met her before that, cause she rented Anneliese's studio. And I was living there.

SL: That surprises me because I thought she always had her own apartment-studio where she'd give the classes.

SK: But if you had 35 or 40 people, her apartment-studio held only a small number of people. Alan Watts, when he wrote that book, uh, the first book he wrote, uh, Immature Adult (??) or something, I forgot the name of it, became very popular. He even had an article, even a cover in Life Magazine.

SL: Mm-hmm. I have seen that article.

SK: Right, and he was the darling of a small part of the avant-garde psychological movement. So the workshops were quite large. So I don't think her studio was a big dance studio. So they rented her place.

SL: I'm just transcribing interviews I did almost ten years ago with her, and she said that she she claims that she helped him get established in New York that she had a role in that him being, you know, getting an audience.

SK: Alan.

SL: Alan. Yeah. I mean she knew him I think she first met him in California in '52, an then they started working together and he came to New York.

SK: That may be possible. But he was married to the daughter of D. T. Suzuki.

SL: I think he was married several times. I didn't know ...

SK: Oh no, he was a philosopher.

SK: One of the marriages was to D. T... .

SL: Because there's this story and I have to dig it up that she talks about maybe his wife or his family and there is something about the Trans-Siberian Railroad that his family helped to build.

SL: Oh, I don't know.

SK: Well that may be _____, but as far as I know, I thought I knew him well, he was not an engineer. It took a long time for him to get his PhD.

SK: _____ so I think all that zen transmission came that way.

SL: Oh, I didn't know that.

SK: And I know that Charlotte and Karlfried had a connection.

SL: And then he taught in Leipzig. Well that makes sense because that's where she must have met him. Cause she also worked at the University of Leipzig then in the late twenties and early thirties.

SL: Yeah.

SK: But he was Karlfried was part of you know Gindler and all those people they were part of a Hindu-Yogi movement. Let's say it was Indian philosophy.

SK: I think you would have to say you know, Karlfried was a count.

SL: Yeah. There was a very obscure German man whose name I can't think of.

SL: Right. Graf D,rckheim, yeah.

SK: Muller. I think it was Muller. Well, it doesn't matter. But they were all but that was sort of like an avant-garde thing. So I just place it within the context of a group of people who are entering the age of modernity, and not just dilettantes. I think it was in Japan that Karlfried got into zen.

SK: It was a very well-known name. It was not possible he emigrated from Germany in 1938 or 9. Cause they said to him he had Jewish grandmother that he better leave cause they had taken a witch hunt. And the people who signed one of the people that signed recommending that he be given a place in Japan was Hess.

SL: Mm-hmm. That's what I understand too. Yeah. But she knew him before the war, and then probably long after the war they connect again.

SL: Right. I do remember that.

SK: Well I met Karlfried in 1962 or 3, so it was '64 when I ran into her.

SK: So you could remember you can then think how high up the scale he was he worked for, I think, von Ribbentrop in the Propaganda Department. He had a hundred men under him.

SL: Oh, so early. In Germany.

SL: There is a letter exchange that we have between Charlotte and Erich Fromm in which she defends him, your know, and maybe tries to belittle his role that he was not a Nazi, he was just like living his life and happened to be you know, it was his way going to Japan was his way of avoiding getting in trouble.

SK: Yeah. In Germany.

SK: Well, I knew the guy who wrote the book, cause we were on the same lecture platform.

SL: Oh, that's interesting. Did she go back then to ...

SL: Yeah, I've never read the book.

SK: Oh yeah. I can't tell you how often, cause I don't know that.

SK: He wrote a biography of Jung. Charlotte she blamed the wife. That it was the wife that was political.

SL: She went back in the fifties when Gindler was alive, and Jacoby, and then she had a big falling out with them. And then, you know, then I don't know if she went back, but she probably did. Then she would have met D,rckheim again, or visited him. Interesting.

SL: OK.

SK: Well it was obviously a very powerful movement in that circle of which she was involved in. And then all of that transformed itself into the Germanic philosophy that represented some bad news for the world.

SK: That was Charlotte's story on that... . I could see that you could say he wasn't a Nazi. But you could not say that he did not play the Nazi game. And he did that. Now, I could make a distinction between being a Nazi and wanting to be a German patriot, but ...

SL: Right. Yes.

SL: Was he an engineer originally?

SK: So I am not in way, shape or form saying that her association with Karlfried was an association with the Nazi movement. I'm not implying that.

SL: To make a bit of a jump you say you were aware of Gindler in New York, and maybe you knew other Gindler students also? You mentioned Carola Speads.

SK: Carola Speads. I would have to think of other hands, but off-hand, no. But she was a name that was known as a reference.

SL: And her ideas, or her work, did that play in at all into what you were doing, or the Reichians or Lowen was there a connection that you know of?

SK: ... My recollection is that Charlotte and some of the other people like did not they mentioned her as the resource of movement and sensing and how to sense yourself and blah, blah, blah, but I don't remember if they discussed it in detail that would've influenced me. What influenced me was the life of the body, and the Reichian stuff I should say, I never was a Reichian. I came at this thing in a completely different way.

SL: Oh you did. wing his horn, I don't know.

SL: I want to find out more about that. It's very interesting. Because she so fully and exclusively credits Gindler for her work.

SK: Yes, but the philosophical concept may not have come from Gindler. I don't know if she had a philosophical concept as much as a work concept how to sense, how to move.

SL: I'm still I'm a bit curious about this distinction between I think you called it action versus sensing. Because I don't think Gindler used these terms, but certainly she was interested in how people function in the world. In other words, how they act. It wasn't just sensing. But through their sensory experience they connect with the world ...

SK: That's where the difference is. Right there. It's not through the senses. Maybe a good way to explain it I had, years and years ago, a psychiatrist who was a _____ mind who was a paraplegic. He was crippled when he was an adult, so he has experience. And he said he can feel nothing in the lower half of his body. Having him do specific instinctual exercises, like kicking, which would be children kick and extend themselves, right? And then they kick to feel where they are in space, and then they kick when they're angry or hurt or whatever. So it's a reflex action that generates sensation. It is not provoked by sensation.

SL: But how can you move without sensation?

SK: How? Well let's take somebody who loses their injury to the spinal cord, and there's no motor control, and they are moving, just as an ongoing reflex.

SL: Right, but a conscious movement or a voluntary movement.

SK: Well, a voluntary movement is a muscular movement that constructed on an involuntary movement. An involuntary movement is a programmed behavior that doesn't need to be triggered by anything other than itself. It then can come under control. First it's a reflex from within itself.

SL: There's no consciousness or sensing.

SK: That's right.

SL: Interesting.

SK: And if you take it, the way I put it is I don't want to get too much into this, this is about Charlotte if you start with the body wall as a primary act of making an organism, first comes the body wall, the separating link that turns on itself which is nothing more than lipid cells in a tension pattern that can replicate itself. That makes an exclusion/inclusion process by how it separates and connects itself, to let things in and out. That is the beginning of the whole action mechanism.

And that is an evolutionary process of the exclusion/inclusion at the body wall level becoming more and more sophisticated in making differentiated movements about what it lets in, keeps in and so forth and so on. And then fee systems develop a feedback mechanism to its own action, which is the correction mechanism. But it's maintaining their tension from within. Later on you have a motoric-sensory continuum, but it's coming from within its own embryological early structures. Then you have a development a very strong development of the sensory mechanism, which is really a cortical mechanism, which then begins to have an autonomous role in how an action is commanded. But that is an evolutionary process.

So you say that the basic process of movement before there's any voluntary act or any need for a direct sensory stimulus is the movement pattern that has to do with extending the wall and maintaining the contraction. It's the reflex act. And then you have a development. So you could get at it through the sensory system in a voluntary way, but that is a developmental, learned process that takes place mostly during childhood. So there's some of it in the womb. So that's how I make that difference.

SL: Right.

SK: So then it depends upon what kind of movements are you asking a person to mimic in a voluntary way. And

then you have to fall back on the inherited patterns. The first ones are gathering together and extending myself, cause that's the movement of the body wall, to gather together and extend yourself. And it is from asking somebody to voluntarily mimic that that you intensify that, and you see the whole feedback mechanism. And then you get the program where the pattern of response becomes coded, being repetitive. The sensory mechanism then becomes a shorthand of invoking it without going through the whole pattern. So that's how it happens.

SL: Mm-hmm. I am very interested in that, and I will have to think about it. That distinction.

SK: You could put it this way. There is no pattern of action in the human repertoire that is not based on a genetically programmed action. It's not a sensation. It's a programmed action that generates sensation.

SL: Interesting.

SK: And then, through differentiation, you get the dominance or the evolution of the sensory mechanism, which I tell you is the basis of more and more cortical control over muscular action. But it's a linked system. Voluntary muscular effort and you say muscular effort, involuntary muscular effort develops voluntary muscular effort, develops voluntary muscular-cortical effort, develops voluntary cortical-mus ... and it reverses the process, and you get _____. OK, so somebody wants to explore their action. I would say something like, 'Show me how you pressure yourself.' How you make pressure for yourself. Now that is a deeply inherited movement. The body wall is a pressure-exerting mechanism to keep the external environment from crashing through. That's a natural pattern. You could say that how I push back, I have developed a way to do that. But if you pursue that far enough with the person, you will see that that's the pattern that it's that simple and then it's differentiated. And it's the same thing in tool-making, and it's the same thing in tool-making and how you transmit actions from one person to another without words. Making tools. And then how making tools is a link to sequencing sounds, which is now coming from the sound patterns generated by laryngeal muscles. OK, so I'm just creating a little picture of the difference we had.

SL: Right, right. I'll have to listen to this a couple of times to really understand.

SK: It's on my website. This explanation is _____, but it's I mean, so my feeling was that people like Charlotte were sensational pioneers in opening the door to the sensory apparatus of the action system of the human being, and in that sense were able to make available experiences from the sensory-motor apparatus. So there is an enormous contribution to laying

the foundation for another step. And that other step is to see that it isn't sensory-motor, it's motor-sensory-sensory-motor. So you could make a very interesting I'm gonna do it in my you could say if a person, however they mimic an action, holds still, if you ask them to mobilize and mimic holding still, which is part of the startle mechanism, OK? It's a response pattern that's just there either from within, changing pressure, or by light (??) or whatever, if you ask him to hold it, you'll see that they have the pattern by muscular effort they hold it and they generate sensation. You change the tension of the pattern, you change the sensation.

SL: Mmm. Yeah.

SK: So the thing that I was able to see, is that anatomy is the key to experience. Changing anatomy changes experiences, no matter how you change the anatomy, you're changing experience. And you could come from the sensory side, but you will end up in the motoric side.

SL: Right. Now of course – and I was curious about that because I listened to something on your website about that conscious voluntary action ...

SK: I use the word 'involuntary' not conscious. We can get into that.

SL: 'Involuntary' action, and that changes perception. Now of course Charlotte would always make sure that a movement, actually she would put it a movement happens 'by itself.' And she was very wary of people consciously making changes. Like, I don't know, you know, if they stand bent backwards, that was an expression of something, and she would not ask them to go forward.

SK: That's the submission pattern.

SL: Yeah.

SK: That ___ into how deeply what does an animal do when it feels it's defeated? That. What does an animal do an animal or an infant do when it feels helpless? It goes back. And then you could see the social implication is first it displays helplessness. And then it's a social message for another person to respond to that. Oh, it's helpless. Right? So then you see that a posture is in-built, and it generates experiences in another person and themselves. And a lot of times when somebody is just used to doing that, they don't feel anything.

SL: I know. I work with a person like that.

SK: But you do.

SL: Yeah.

SK: Now that's an interesting thing, right? And then if you ask them to hold that pattern, but stiffen it, you'll see they will generate sensations, of _____.

SL: Right, yeah.

SK: That's the voluntary effort, which then dramatizes the posture and generates feedback.

SL: Mm-hmm.

SK: So that's what I'm saying.

SL: Yeah, right, right. Cause I've always been curious about it's the word I change, how we change or how we develop or how we stay the same. And Charlotte never wanted, you know, she wanted people to be very conscious of where they were in their holding patterns. But she didn't want them to go out of that holding pattern unless, as she would call it, it happens by itself.

SK: That's a very complicated discussion. I agree with Charlotte about that. To stay with the pattern, cause you would say that a pattern is a structure.

SL: Mm-hmm.

SK: Meaning is has an anatomical organization. It's by anatomical organization, you have to take that really materialistically cells in relationship to themselves OK? Setting up a pattern of either sustaining a pattern of action or inhibiting it. So that's an anatomy. If you get a shot of adrenaline coming out of the contractions, at the top of the kidneys, that shot of adrenaline changes the shape of all the organs that it touches. And then when the adrenaline wears off, the hyper-motile contracted state of the organ returns to its former organization. Now in that is an interesting opportunity for the organism to learn to mimic both ends of the spectrum the exaggerated one and the minimalized one and create a voluntary set of actions. So that extending can grab a piece of food. Or to move yourself can be voluntary effort, minimized, so that it's simply touching, not grabbing. Every child has to learn that. So it's the differentiating of an inherited pattern. So anyway. So you would then say how a person voluntarily influences an act creates a cortical pattern, synaptic connections, the growth of axons, which means protein metabolism, and stabilizing that growth so that it becomes a living, wired piece of anatomy, is sustaining the excitatory pattern in an anatomical way of something that has already happened but it is passed. And in that, the motor pattern that has already happened and past is sustained as an ongoing entity in the present. Gerald Edelman calls that the remembered present. The remembered present.

SL: Interesting.

SK: And it's not a sensory pattern. It's a motor pattern. How to assemble or repeat an action. So that makes the link.

SL: Very interesting.

SK: But I thought that Charlotte and all the people associated with her were on the way of laying down a kind of protocol and set of insights like stay with the pattern until it happens by itself because they didn't quite understand how it could happen, and they were relying on the intelligence of the body. And then, if you say you could call it conscious just for the sake of argument, I would call it a cortical reality if you say what is the function of consciousness at its most elemental level? It's not being aware; it's regulating behavior. And awareness is the mechanism by which it does that. But the function is to regulate a behavior. So that changes everything.

SL: Yes.

SK: So therefore I say, well OK, it's not conscious. It's the development of a voluntary cortical effort to sustain a behavior pattern and maybe differentiate its extremes, which then becomes part of a memory structure about how to act in situations. Proof of the pudding? They have simulation classes now. You want to be a fireman? They want to teach you how to act in an emergency. They don't want you to think. They want you to be able to act. The train you to act. You're a pilot. They put you in training chamber. What do they want from you? They want you to be able to react to situations by being trained so the motoric patterns of what to do are in place. So you see that they have ...

SL: Right.

SK: And that we could take it on and on and on, and then say that there must have been an uninformed that people, maybe like Charlotte, maybe, that they don't recognize that we're building a scenario of experience references. It's not innate. Letting it happen wait til it happens. If you analyze that statement I've been through this, so I'm if you recognize you're hoping the body as an organizing process will know how to change this pattern and create a situation that is different. Then answer the question, why do we need doctors?

SL: Because somehow we have lost that connection.

SK: Oh is that a fact? Or never learned it.

SL: Or never learned it. Interesting.

SK: So, and you see it's a question aimed at the philosophy of let it the body knows best. No. The body doesn't know best. Sometimes somebody else's body knows best, and it's transmitted.

SL: That is so interesting. Yeah.

SK: So, anyway, in the way we're having this discussion, I would say in my relationship with the circle around Charlotte, they what I would call them as secular mystics. Having the urge to find a practical solution to an unknown rather than laying a philosophy on how it should be. Waiting for more discoveries. So in that sense, that's where I see Charlotte. At least in my view of our and the gang that I was ...

SL: And was that a discussion back then?

SK: ... You know Korzybski, and his non-Aristotelian logic was the closest to it. I'm not so sure that it was close to people like Lowen and Reich. I don't know about Gindler (?). I think they had a closed system.

SL: They had ...?

SK: A closed system about what a human being really was. It was a fixed system that had deviated from normal. That doesn't stand up. The Garden of Eden does not stand up. Cause everything that we know is that we're living in a changing world. And if you don't have the adaptability to change you die. And you would ask the same thing if you don't have the ability to change in the organism, you keep having the same feelings. And the fact that you have generated experiences does not mean that you change.

SL: Right. So Charlotte's understanding, and maybe also Gindler's understanding was that maybe what you call the Garden of Eden, there is a what the Buddhists might call an original nature, or an original being which is whole and grounded and happy and connected and able to function, but then something happens which disturbs that, you know, through upbringing or education or so. And then by being aware and becoming increasingly aware of connection and disconnect, that can come back into its natural state. But you seem to disagree with that.

SK: I would disagree with that. I would think that there is an essential, primordial process, which I would call the animating process. The thing that makes a stone different than a human being. They have similarities, but the ability to replicate itself, and in some way grow itself over time is an animating principle. I would say that that's the original nature. It's a process; it's not a state. I don't know well something could go wrong it could be poisoned but it doesn't have to be poisoned by toxic materials from automobile engines; it could be poisoned by a comet flying by, and too much radiation. So in that sense, yes. So original nature is a process that is able to reorganize its form to maintain an original process in a different way. Like a very good example of this would be that the oxygen/solar system H₂O/CO₂ combination does not hold up at the bottom of the ocean, cause there's

no light. They're operating at a different cycle. A different kind of acidic cycle, down there. It's not photosynthesis. I hardly understand that. Those are animals, living creatures, down there. So it's an animating process using a different form than photosynthesis. But it's the animating process that is a procedural process. And the reason I say that is because everything that exists down there in very primitive forms, I think, has a form. It's not just that form. And every form down there has a developmental sequence. So therefore there's a process that unfolds inside itself, and it changes form. So if that's original nature, then I agree.

SL: Then you also question Charlotte used a term like innate, organic wisdom, or something like that, and that, you know, the organism can heal itself. And you say sometimes it needs intervention, or that one organism can heal the other I'm not sure of the words you used.

SK: Well that's close enough.

SL: And I think Charlotte was like if you would really be conscious and really connected with we could heal from within, so to say, without outside intervention, besides of course the gravity, the field of gravity we live in, the earth holding us and supporting us. That connection was very important for healing.

SK: If I listen to your language ... I would say, if you'll forgive me, so this is the language of Christianity. Something went wrong. If we could only, it's believe me that I was and I'm in still in it myself, but I have enough, yes, be careful Stanley. All organisms construct themselves as best that they can given the conditions of their development and the environment that it's in, and they form their connections as best as they can. Better to explore how they're connected, however flimsy it is, than to say something is wrong. Cause it may be something that can never be corrected. But how it's connected is a more fruitful statement about how we exist than if only we could get back to something.

SL: Right.

SK: So it's listening well, how does an organism function? Does it function because it's full of committed errors, or does it function because we can only function this way? So, that I just say I just follow this inquiry as a way of freeing myself from what I think are assumptions that we take for granted, like there's an innate intelligence, that if we really could listen to ourselves we would really be healthy. Well ... I don't know. It boils down to and I would let you and Charlotte answer the question: what is a human life about on its most primary level? What is it really about? And I don't have an answer, but that's the question.

SL: Right.

SK: Okay? And what is my shape, how I'm constituted to be in the world, how I have grown into the world, how I make connections with the world not how I should make connections, is the important question for generating the narratives that give me a meaning about what at least I think being in the world is. And then we have social roles. ____ And we all agree, up to a point we like them. But I want to say again I'm hoping in my conversation with you that I'm telling you that although I make differentiations from the Charlotte that I knew and what I think Charlotte represented, we're on the same wavelength. Different ways of looking at it. So I think that is the important contribution.

SL: Yeah. And may I ask again you've probably answered it in some ways, what is that same wavelength?

SK: The experience generated by how we act in the world. It is first involuntary, going from conception to let's arbitrarily say 12 years of age. But on its way up to thirty, meaning a full-grown adult, it's all, almost all, given. Just get out of the way. The organism wants to grow an adult body. So and then, starting at a particular age, and going throughout your whole life, it's the ability to refine, adapt and reorganize what has been formed to give you another form. And to increase the library of actions. And if you ask yourself in the history that we have of the human race in the Western world I don't know about the Eastern world the single most important thing about any philosophy is not what it means, it's about how to act. How you should behave. All mythology is about how to behave. And I don't mean there's a rule of how to behave, but that the behavior is what is demonstrated. We might call it heroic, we might call it compliant, whatever. But that's what it _____. So that's what I think. Charlotte is telling you experience your world.

SL: Right. Absolutely. And how we function, how we behave in the world, Verhalten.

SK: Right. So that we agree on.

SL: Right. Right. But how to get to that. You might have different angles.

SK: My question to everybody who I work with, how did you do it? That's my question. How did you get to be aware? How do you organize awareness? You tell me you want to sense that how did you do it?

SL: You ask that question ...

SK: Oh yeah. And I ask them to show it to me. And that's the question. And that changes the awareness thing.

SL: Uh-huh. Yes.

SK: Right?

SL: Yeah.

SK: When I say it changes the awareness thing, it changes the consciousness thing. Cause consciousness is then an action. OK? So tell me how. And you could say, il don't know. And then you could say, il do this. And you've made a chink in the il don't know. And it's not, il am aware of, it's il did this. I'm aware. Oh, I did this. So now what does that say about the human being? I did this. And you could make the split between il did this and il'm given life. One is passive; one is an agency. And then I would say some people feel better with let it happen, and some people feel better with il played a part.

SL: Mm-hmm.

SK: OK! They're both true.

SL: They're both true, and I think they're not so clear-cut.

SK: No, they're not that clear-cut.

SL: Letting it happen is, in a way, is not such a clear statement.

SK: Well it has to do with, in the end, how you die. Let it happen. You have no choice. But how you let it happen? You have a choice.

SL: Right. Beautifully said, yes.

SK: So, I mean, well, do you need more from me?

SL: (Laughs) Well, I don't want to hold you up, but I thoroughly enjoy this.

SK: I mean if you need things to we have fifteen minutes more.

SL: We have fifteen minutes more.

SK: Or twenty. I have to be someplace at 3:30.

SL: Yeah. I do want to ask a question that's come up now that doesn't have directly to do with Charlotte, but I seem to remember it has certainly to do with my work, our work, that one of my early mentors in Switzerland, he must have done a workshop or something with you at one point, and I wonder if that was you, but he said, and I think he talked about you, it was a workshop, and one of the first things you ask is 'Who wants to change in here? Will you raise your hand?' Would you have asked that question?

SK: Yes, I would have asked that question.

SL: And some people raised their yes, I want to change, and you would have said ...

SK: I would have asked that.

SL: ... please leave, or, I cannot work with you, or something ...

SK: Well, I wouldn't say that. But I would know did you come to gain knowledge or did you come to change? OK? Do you want to know about your life, or do you want to change your life? Do you want to be an agent of it, or do you want to be a library? So that's where that question would come from. And you're a Schweizer from where?

SL: Berne.

SK: The city of bears.

SL: Right. I grew up right outside the city.

SK: I went to school in Zurich.

SL: Yes, that's what he mentioned on the phone, yeah.

SK: _____. I love Switzerland. I go there a lot! (laughs)

SL: You still do?

SK: Oh yeah. I was just there.

SL: And I think Charlotte would agree with that that it is an exploration of who we are, but also of the potential of who we could be, or how we could be more fully who we are.

SK: Take the word 'fully' out.

SL: Mm-hmm.

SK: Say the same sentence without the word 'fully'.

SL: How we could be more who we are?

SK: How we could be ...

SL: ... who we are.

SK: Yes. We don't need the 'fully'. Because that implies I'm not.

SL: Right.

SK: It's a helluva place to work with somebody from a deficit.

SL: Yeah. But it is language that we apparently use in our work, and maybe it gets in the way of something. Namely, we say we are not who we are now.

SK: Yeah, why do we do that?

SL: I guess it's a sense of lack or not being enough. Certainly a statement of dissatisfaction.

SK: Yes. Of what?

SL: Of our experience, of our life, with our life ...

SK: Yeah. But, you know, people want more from their life as they live it without thinking something is wrong. And that's what happens. If you take I did a workshop on maturity, and how you define how would you define maturity, and I would say, well, maturity is the ability to deal with the intensity, the force and the duration of any event that you find yourself in. The ability to have multiple amplitudes of experience that we need to act, or to give duration of different times, different durations of being present, _____, is all about maturing yourself. And in that sense the organism is growing into itself. Rather than getting bigger. And that's a normal process. So it has to do with how you engage how you use yourself to do something. So, I mean, we're on the same thing, right?

SL: Yes. Yeah. My questions have more to do with Charlotte than it may appear on the surface because I am trying to understand who she was as I write about her. Who she was through her work, and why this work was so important to her, what kind of an expression that was of her understanding or life and living.

SK: You know Gindler and others she wasn't the only one come out of a certain group at a certain time, and I would say she represented that beautifully at it's best for the life of the individual in the world. And I would the same as I did with Karlfried, and I did it with Lowen and people will do it with me. Who Stanley was and who Charlotte (?) was and who Karlfried was, was a man who was born in 1890, just at the edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and a particular kind of movement away from Germanic and European romanticism. Knocking on the door of modernity. And they had ideas about what the animating force or God God was still a force in science. So I would put it in a context of who this woman was. If I went to see Charlotte toward the end of her life, she was a very small, shrunken woman who had become frail and used her hearing to the best advantage I'd ever seen anybody use themselves without hearing, and that the sensory modality was paramount in her life in trying to understand the communication from another person. You would have to say that the development of her sensory system may have been a lifetime of work that had prepared her for being deaf. You could say that.

SL: And of course she started losing her hearing in her twenties, very early on.

SK: Because look at that. That's who Charlotte was, and

the contributions, OK? You could look at the Korzybski influence, which was telling you life is not a symbolic and sequential series of events. It doesn't work that way. Let's get the hell _____. Charlotte, whatever system she used, that's who she was, OK? So then where do you get to when you reorganize that in you? Nobody knows. It's not going back to the Greek world. So that world has to be defined. By those who sing a song, make a poem, have a method and work with people... . Charlotte is one of the eggs that gave birth to the people who ___ to what she does. And there are other people who want to say, it is what she meant. Rather than, it is where she led us. (both laugh)

SL: So did you see her towards the very end of her life? I mentioned that in my email. You ...

SK: Well, we were at the same place in Garmisch. And we were both sitting in business class. I mention that because it's normal for me to sit there, but I didn't think she would sit there. But she was.

SL: (Laughs) Somebody must have put her there.

SK: Right. She was sitting behind me. And all of a sudden there was an emergency on the plane. I'll tell you the story. It's a beautiful story. And they came for her and they put her on the floor by the exit door, cause there's a lot of room there.

SL: In front ?

SK: With a little kitchen. One of the exist doors; it wasn't in the front. It was in ...

SL: Right. OK.

SK: Not in the front. Up a little ways. And I see that they were talking loud to her. And I got up and said to the stewardess, you know she's deaf, so she's not hearing you. And then they understood that, and then I said, you know, she's very scared now, maybe we should talk to her in German. Funny, she quieted down when they ...

SL: So she was conscious ...

SK: Yeah, she was conscious ...

SL: ... panicking or scared.

SK: And after about a half an hour or an hour or an hour and this is a very human story what I want to say now I went over to her and I said, Charlotte, won't you go back in your seat. _____ lay down there. And she said, il can't do it Stanley. I said, iwhy not? She says, il'm so ashamed that people would see me in a place like that. I tell you, to have respect for a person is one thing, but to be involved in a human situation like that, where somebody says that, especially an older person,

it's very touching. It's the essence of being human it's not bravado. It's just being who you are. So anyway, after a while, she did get up and go. But I think I saw her afterwards and up at the house where she lived. In any case, she was an extraordinarily interesting woman. I'm glad she was in part of my life. Well, I mean, I was in her world and she was in my world.

SL: Right. Yeah, yeah. But you never worked with her. You never took a workshop.

SK: Or she with me!

SL: (Laughs) Of course she would probably not have with you.

SK: Right. Oh, I was a bull. I was this powerful force in the life of the body and what it meant to be instinctually alive, and the hell with this awareness stuff. I mean I had that would have that attitude. Just we are a force in existence and we have to do that, and to be emotionally involved but not to be the victim of your emotions. Would be something that I would have at that time. So ...

SL: (Laughs) Thank you for sharing that.

SK: (Laughing) Well that's two different worlds.

SL: That was two different worlds. Yeah. Yeah... .

SK: In those years, nineteen sixtyish '58, '60, there was a tremendous revolution in the humanistic movement. Those were the years when there was a revolution, and it was not in Esalen; it was in places like New York. That gave birth to all these immigrants that flooded the world and changed the humanistic dynamics. And she was part of that movement.

SL: Right. And I'm very interested in that New York immigrant scene. She came in 1938, and there were all these immigrants from Germany and from Europe.

SK: Right. Well my father and mother were immigrants.

SL: But you grew up in the States.

SK: I grew up in the States. But in an immigrant environment.

SL: Oh yeah? So where did your parents come from?

SK: Hungary.

SL: Hungary, yeah. But you were born in the States?

SK: I was born in the States.

SL: So yeah, you were very well aware of that.

SK: Yeah. Heavy duty. We had a big family. But that world was I'll tell you you could say when I was aware of it, let's say 1957 I really knew it, with iMain Currents and Thought, and that's a whole other history, I don't know if you that magazine and Charlotte knew that magazine. She ...

SL: Say that again?

SK: Main Currents in Modern Thought.

SL: Mm-mm.

SK: You know, I think Charlotte appeared in that through Herbert Read and his wife. That was a they had a Hindu belief system and a yoga belief system. But anyway, my main point is that was the seat of an enormous revolution. I would just have to remind everybody that if the streaming light (??) was the humanistic movement defined at that time through the eyes of Abe Maslow and Carl Rogers, and you would have to say Alan Watts through that book of his. That was the w____. And then there was Alan Korzybski Count Korzybski and even the Reichian followers, not that I'm giving them much credit, they were there. And F. Matthias Alexander, these were the pioneers. And in that sense, Carola Speads and Gindler were transplanted here from

SL: Charlotte.

SK: Yeah. So, maybe that's something you could give a really She was part of that _____ of that world.

SL: Well, maybe we end here. Thank you so much. I really enjoyed this.

SK: I hope contribute a little bit to the life of Charlotte in an historical context.

SL: Yes, absolutely, and then you're giving me food for further inquiry.

SK: Good!

SL: Yeah. Very much so. So thank you.

SK: My pleasure.