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## BEYOND QUESTION AND ANSWER THE CHALLENGE TO FACILITATE FREEDOM

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"Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy Today: Evolution and Challenges"  
International Conference, Athens, 24-28 June 2009

Person-Centered Psychotherapy is ...



- 1 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**
- 2 ESSENTIAL FOUNDATIONS**
- 3 DIALOGUE**
- 4 FREEDOM TO RESPOND**

You only hear the questions  
that you are able to answer.

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

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# DEVELOPMENTS

# The emergence of the relational dimension of PCT

- C. R. Rogers 'therapy as relationship or encounter' (1962)
- P. F. Schmid 'therapy as the art of personal encounter' (1989)
- W. Pfeiffer 'relationship as the central effective factor in PCT' (1989)
- R. van Balen 'Rogers' development towards dialogue' (1990)
- B. Thorne 'intimacy' (1991)
- M. O'Hara 'relational humanism' (1992)
- L. Holdstock 'interdependent, not individuocentric nature of self' (1993)
- U. Binder 'empathy versus cognitive social perspective taking' (1993)
- G. Prouty 'pre-symbolic experiencing, contact & pre-therapy' (1994)
- G. Barrett-Lennard 'client-centered relational psychotherapy' (1998)
- D. Mearns 'dialogical model of self' (2000)
- M. Warner 'contact & fragile and dissociated process' (2000)
- M. Behr 'interactive resonance' (2003)
- A. Bohart 'the client as active self healer' (2004)
- M. Cooper 'relationally-orientated approach to therapy' (2004)

# PCT - a dialogical understanding

Peter F. Schmid

(1989) *Personale Begegnung*

(1991) with Rogers: *Person-zentriert*

(1994) *Autonomie & Solidarität*

(1996) *Die Kunst der Begegnung*

(2001/02) Wyatt series: *Acknowledgment - Authenticity - Comprehension - Presence*

(2006) with Mearns: *Being with and being-counter*, in: PCEP 5, 3 & 4

(2006) *The Challenge of the Other: Towards dialogical person-centered psychotherapy and counseling*, in: PCEP 5,4

(2006) *PCE Conference Potsdam: Psychotherapy is dialogue or it is not psychotherapy*

(2008) *PCE Conference Norwich: How person-centred is dialogical?*

(2008) *World Conference (WCP) Beijing: Active responsiveness: PCT - A dialogical approach*

(2009) *APA Conference Toronto: Freedom to respond: Dialogue - foundation and challenge of humanity (forthcoming)*

INCLUDES WORK BY CARL ROGERS  
PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH FOR THE FIRST TIME

THE HANDBOOK  
OF PERSON-CENTRED  
PSYCHOTHERAPY AND  
COUNSELLING

Edited by  
Mick Cooper,  
Maureen O'Hara,  
Peter F. Schmid  
and Gill Wyatt



Palgrave,  
2007



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# ESSENTIALS

# Some essential foundations and characteristics of PCT

- Person
- Encounter
- Fundamental We
- Presence
- Personalization
- Group

# Essentials

## ■ Person

- substantial-relational nature
- independence & interconnectedness
- image of the human being: personal anthropology, phenomenological, existential



# Essentials

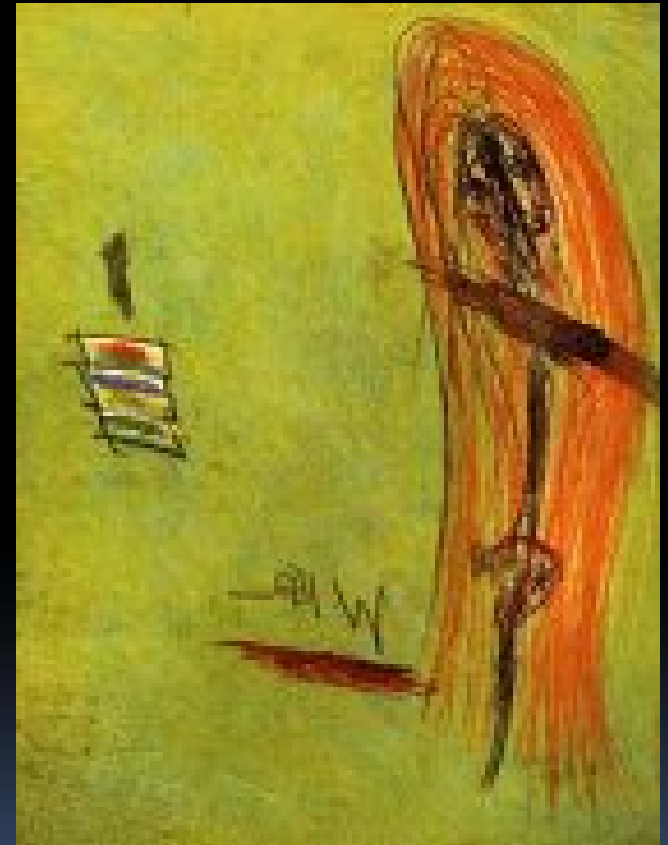
## ■ Encounter

- the Other
- epistemology of alterity
- Thou-I-relationship



# Essentials

- **Fundamental We**
  - co-responding to the existential situation
  - encounter as core of a co-creative process
  - bi-polar model of psychotherapy: agency of the client & presence of the therapist



# Essentials

- **Presence**
  - to be fully there
  - authenticity, acknowledgment, comprehension
  - *the* core condition of being-with and being-counter



# Essentials

- **Actualizing process as personalization**
  - **energeia-dynamis / act-potency**  
efficient cause (*causa efficiens*)
  - **dialectical understanding of the actualizing tendency**
  - **actualizing tendency as *social* construct**  
(no development totally-by-itself)
  - **personalizing tendency: freedom & creativity**



# Essentials

- **Group**
  - „the Third“
  - the primary locus of therapy
  - the interface of individual & society
  - PCA is a group approach





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# DIALOGUE

# Different meanings of 'dialogue' in PCT

- J. Finke & L. Teusch the dialogical must be amended by a functional relationship
- G. Lietaer dialogical working alliance
- K. Tudor & T. Merry dialogue is 'a precondition for therapy & the therapy itself'
- A. Bohart co-constructive dialogue as meeting of minds
- K. Tudor & M. Worrall dialogue is the practice and mutuality is the outcome
- P. Sanders dialogue is the co-created relationship between the helper and the person helped
- not a school of therapy, but the idea that therapy *is* dialogue
- D. Mearns & M. Cooper working at relational depth:  
'state of profound contact and engagement between two people in which each person is fully with the Other ...'  
specific moments of encounter & a particular quality of a relationship

# What does 'dialogue' mean?

\* Greek 'δια-λεγειν'

δια = between (inter)

λεγειν, διαλεγεσθαι

pick up, gather, collect; talk, speak

to put something apart by thinking over it

λογος = word, meaning, significance

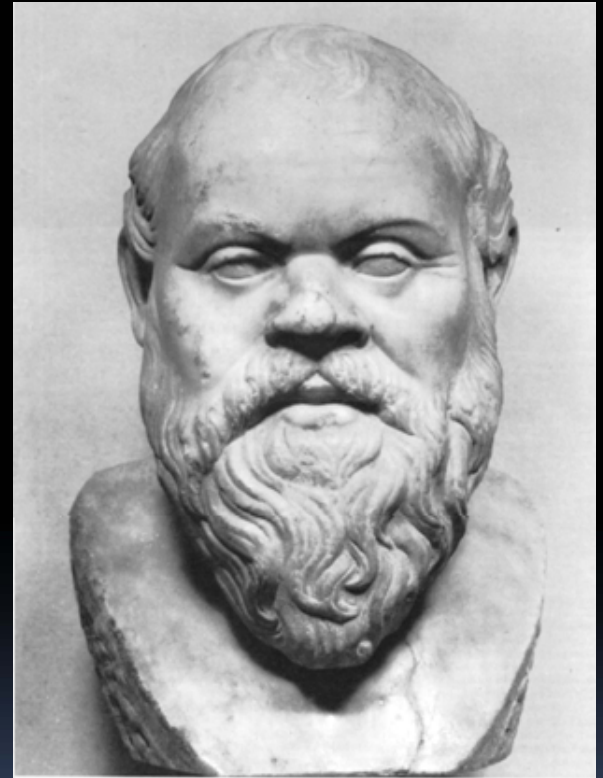
'between words' → flowing of meaning

# Dialogue: the conventional meaning

- human conversation face to face, mutual exchange, discourse, interchange in talking  
v. entre-tien (conversation), inter-course (social communication)
- symmetry and equality
- a meeting of the one with the other

# Dialogue: Socrates

- pro-active search for wisdom
- εὖ ζῆν: to live a good and truthful life
- μαϊευτικη – a pedagogical instrument



469 – 399 v. Chr

# Dialogue: Martin Buber

Interpersonality → Dialogue

“The sphere of the interpersonal is the opposite-to-each-other; its unfolding is what we call dialogue.” *Buber, 1948*

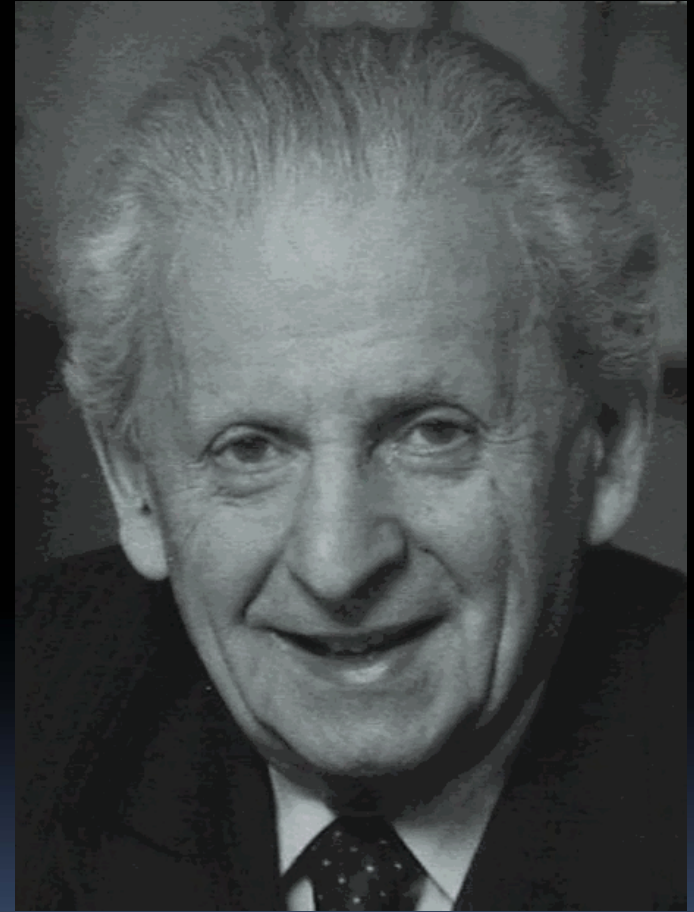
I-Thou relationship



469 – 399 v. Chr

# Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas

- of original im-media-cy
- not a consequence of experience
- primary occurrence
- dissymmetric:  
The other comes first.



469 – 399 v. Chr

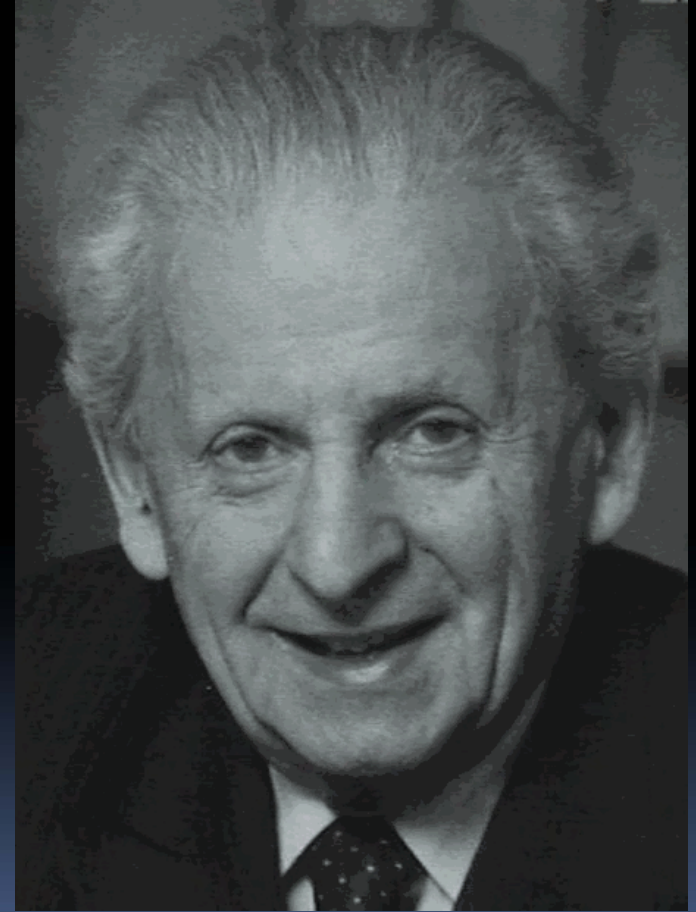
# Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas

Dialogue → Interpersonality

“It is precisely because the Thou is absolutely different from the I that there is - from the one to the other - dialogue.”

*Levinas, 1981*

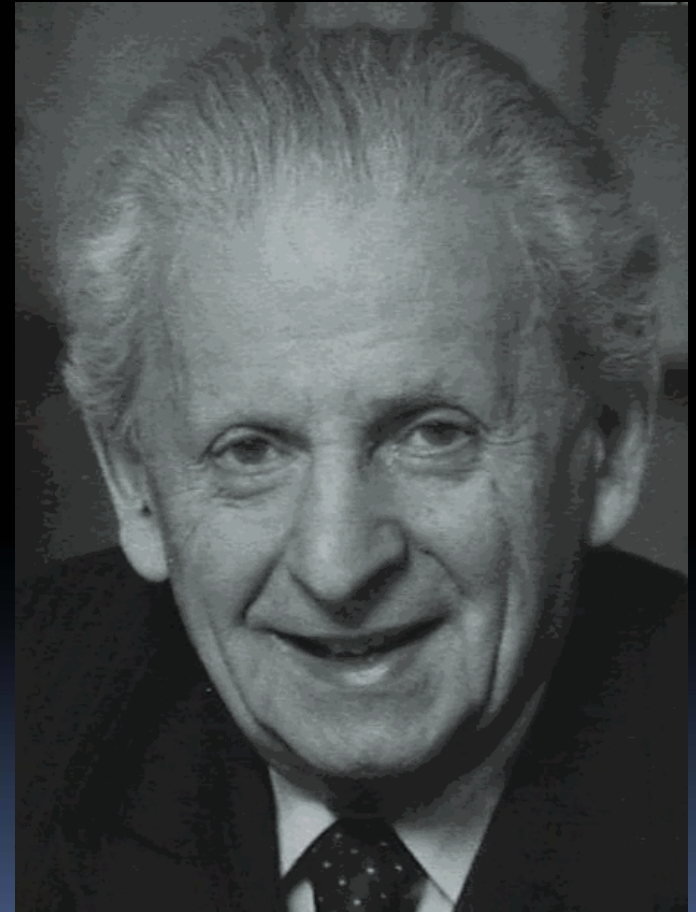
Thou-I relationship





# Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas

- Solidarity is a basic human condition.
- It means to say:  
"Here I am."
- This dissymmetry is the origin of ethics.
- The I is constituted by his/her responsibility.



# Dialogue

~~Self-consciousness → dialogue~~

Dialogue → self-consciousness

# Dialogue

The human person *is* dialogue.

# What does a dialogical understanding of PCT mean?

- A true humanistic therapy is not „egology“.
- Being concerned with the therapist attitudes above all = „therapist-centredness“.
- The client comes first.

What does a dialogical understanding  
of PCT mean?

Psychotherapy means  
to enter dialogue.

*enter - inter - entrer - intrare - unter (zwischen) - δια*

What does a dialogical understanding of PCT mean?

Psychotherapy means to enter dialogue.

# What does a dialogical understanding of PCT mean?

- Dialogue is in the very beginning of therapy.
- The persons engaged in therapy *are* dialogue.

# Therapy as dialogue?

~~Psychotherapy → dialogue~~

Dialogue → psychotherapy



# What does a dialogical understanding of PCT mean?

- Dialogue is in the very beginning of therapy.
- The persons engaged in therapy *are* dialogue.
- Therapy is the unfolding of dialogue.
- Presence is an expression of the fundamental “Here I am”.
- Encounter is the realization of dialogue.
- Ethically therapy is a way of “being for” the client.

**Psychotherapy is dialogue  
or it is not psychotherapy.**

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RESPOND

# Freedom to respond

- Psychotherapy is the freedom to respond.
- Call  $\Leftrightarrow$  Response

# Traditional definitions of „answer“

„Filling a gap in one’s knowledge.“

“A reply to a question or is a solution, a retaliation, or a response.”

“Replies act as a way of conveying relevant information and continuing a conversational exchange.“

*Wikipedia*

# „Antwort“ (German)

- „Gegenrede“ – „counter-statement“
- *ant-* + *Wort* (\* lat. *verbum* = word)
- *Antwort* = encounter face to face

# „Answer“

- *anti-* + *swear*
  - „solemn affirmation in rebutting a charge“
  - v. *answerable*
  - *ant-* = „opposite, against“
    - \* Greek *αντι* = „facing“  
Latin *ante* = „before“
    - \* Indo-Germ. *ant-s* = „front, forehead, **face**“
- answer = to encounter somebody face to face

# „Response“

- French *répondre*
- „to answer an engagement, a promise; to give a solemn counter-promise, **take up a challenge**“
- \* Lat. *respondere* = orig. „correspond, being reliable“
- \* *spondēre* = „to solemnly promise, commit oneself, bind oneself by contract“
- v. *sponsus / sponsa* = „spouse“
- → *responsible* (for a promise)

→ *respond* = make a solemn engagement, promise



# „Reply“

- French *repliquer*; German *Replik*
- „un-fold, dis-cover, re-flect“
- \* Lat. *replicare* = *re* + *plicare* (\**πλεκω*)  
„back + fold = unfold“

→ *reply* = unfold, open up, discover

# Answer / respond / reply

- face, encounter
- be a counterpart
- promise & engage
- discover, open up

# The responsive structure of our behavior

... RSVP...

The responsive structure of our behavior

→ the attitude/approach of responding

# The responsive structure of the person

## Bernhard Waldenfels

- Responsive phenomenology and ethics



born 1934

# The responsive structure of the person

- We respond by our behavior to the challenge of a given situation.
- Human beings encounter each other by responding to each other and a common world.
- Facing our situation we encounter the strange. (“Das Fremde”)

*\*extraneus, extra ordinem: extra-ordinary*

# The systems of order and the strange (xenology)

- The strange is the extra-ordinary.
- The strange  $\leftrightarrow$  the own.
- Unaccessible, not only unknown.
- We are strangers to ourselves.
- Horror alieni: The strange frightens us!
- The stranger disturbs us, because they question our order.

**CHAOS ALARM !**



# Dealing with the strange

Either:

**mobilise defense**

monopolise

reject

distort

deny

Or:

**respond existentially**

# Response - content and attitude

- The given answer – the act of responding.
- The act of responding is more than the given response (answer).
- „Facilitative responsiveness“.
- To respond is a creative act: to respond means to invent.

# The responsive difference

- There is a fundamental dissymmetry.
- A response respects the fundamental otherness of the claim of the Other.
- The circle of question and answer avoids the necessary existential response.

# To be a person means to be an existential response

- To respond means to confirm somebody in their personhood.
- The human being is addressed and responding from the very beginning of his/her life.
- In the beginning he/she is in dialogue.
- To respond means: To be a person to a fellow person.

The demand of the Other is disarming,  
because it precedes all intentions and models;  
by questioning the Self it opens  
the freedom to respond.

*Bernhard Waldenfels*

# Responding creates freedom

- To respond brakes an order.
- Freedom originates in response.
- To respond thwarts expectations.
- To respond means to acknowledge.
- „Freedom to learn“ – „Freedom to respond“

# Freedom

Freedom as independence

*versus*

Freedom as intersubjective practice

# Freedom

- *free*

- \* Indo-German. *prāi-*  
= protect, take care of, love

- related to *friend* and *Friede* (=peace)



# Freedom

- Freedom as intersubjective practice is founded in the preceding We.
- It is a way of *giving* freedom.

# Therapy as freedom to respond

- Psychotherapy is the practice of freedom.
- To be a therapist means to be an existential response.

# Homo respondens

- „The human being is a responding being.“  
*B. Waldenfels*
- Each responding human being is a therapeutic human being.
- The realization of dialogue is creation of freedom.

Psychotherapy is dialogue  
— the freedom to respond.

**BARACK  
OBAMA  
2008**

**YES WE  
CAN.**

Psychotherapy is dialogue  
— the freedom to respond  
as a human being.

Responding is a way of speaking and doing  
that by responding to demands of Others  
surprises itself.

*Bernhard Waldenfels*



[pca-online.net](http://pca-online.net)

# The Person-Centered Website

by Peter F. Schmid