FREEDOM TO RESPOND
Dialogue - Foundation and Challenge of Humanity

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Person-Centered Psychotherapy is ...
1. DIALOGUE
2. RESPONDING
3. THE STRANGE
4. FREEDOM
You only hear the questions that you are able to answer.

_Friedrich Nietzsche_
1
DIALOGUE
Essentials

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

The Etruscan god Phersu, whence the term „person“
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

Franz Ringel, Wir (We)
Essentials

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

Le visage de l'autre
(The face of the Other)
Essentials

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

Kairos, Greek god of the fertile moment
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

F. Ringel, Gespräch (Conversation)
Essentials

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

C. Rogers, Journey into Self
THE HANDBOOK
OF PERSON-CENTRED
PSYCHOTHERAPY AND
COUNSELLING

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Dialogue: the conventional meaning

- human conversation face to face, mutual exchange
- symmetry and equality
- a meeting of the one with the other
Dialogue: Martin Buber

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

Buber, 1948

Interpersonality → Dialogue

I-Thou relationship

1878 – 1965
primary occurrence, of original im-media-cy

dissymetry: The Other comes first.
Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas

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

Levinas, 1981

Dialogue → Interpersonality

Thou-I relationship
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 $\rightarrow$ dialogue

Dialogue $\rightarrow$ self-consciousness
The person is dialogue.
A dialogical understanding of PCT

Therapy as „egology“:

Being concerned with the therapist‘s attitudes above all („therapist-centeredness“)
A dialogical understanding of PCT

Genuinely humanistic therapy:

Psychotherapy means to enter dialogue.
Psychotherapy means to enter dialogue.
A dialogical understanding of PCT

- 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”.
Psychotherapy is dialogue or it is not psychotherapy.
2
RESPONDING
The responsive structure of our behavior

- answer vs. the attitude/approach of responding

- Human beings encounter each other by responding to each other and a common world.

- We respond by our behavior to the challenge of a given situation.
The responsive structure of the person

Bernhard Waldenfels

- Responsive phenomenology and ethics

born 1934
3

THE STRANGE
The systems of order and the strange (Xenology)

- *strange* *Latin* extra-neus (extra ordinem)
- The strange is the extra-ordinary.
- 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

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Response - content & attitude

- The given answer vs. the act of responding.
- The act of responding is more than the given answer.
Necessity to respond

- Latin *necessitudo*
  
  * ne + cedere = not + go away, not + give up*

- We are responding un-avoid-ably & ne cess arily.
The responsive difference

- There is a fundamental dissymmetry.
- The circle of question and answer avoids the necessary existential response.
- A response respects the fundamental otherness of the claim of the Other.
To be a person means to be an existential response

- 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.
4
FREEDOM
Responding creates freedom

- To respond breaks an order.
- Freedom originates in response.
- To respond breaks expectations.
„Each experience that really deserves this name, thwarts an expectation.“

H.-G. Gadamer
Responding creates freedom

- C Rogers: „Freedom to learn“ (1969)
- Freedom to respond ...
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.
Responding is a way of speaking and doing that by responding to demands of Others surprises itself.

*Bernhard Waldenfels*
The Person-Centered Website

by Peter F. Schmid