PERSONAL GROWTH AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

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Overview

1. SOCIOTHERAPY?
2. PC ESSENTIALS
3. BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL
4. PROPOSITONS
• The PCA is a social psychological approach.
• The PCA is a political endeavour.
• The PCA is a practice of social ethics.

What can it contribute to society?
1

SOCIO THERAPY

?
- We experience limits to the impact of individual therapy.
- Doesn’t society need therapy?
- We face substantial global challenges.
- What can the PCA contribute to a change?
  - Change self-understanding.
  - Change the epistemology.
- We need another ‘approach’ to society.
The PCA is an approach developed from experience with people in need that much too often has been limited to different applications and thus failed to understand its inherent power to facilitate change in society.
2
PC ESSENTIALS
Essential foundations of PCT

- Person
- Encounter
- Presence
- Dialogue
- Responsive structure
- The fundamental We
The person-centered *essentials are highly relevant social terms.*
They are *social ethical terms.*
The Handbook of Person-Centred Psychotherapy & Counselling

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Essentials

Person

- relational-substantial nature
- independence & interdependence
- self-responsibility & solidarity

→ Individual therapy always has an impact on society.

The Etruscan god Phersu, whence the term „person“
Encounter

- the relationship person to person
- ‘en-counter’: openness to be surprised by the Other
- Thou-I-relationship

→ The basic epistemological stance of the PCA rests on a social relationship.
Essentials

Presence

- to be fully there

- authenticity (congruence), acknowledgment (upr), comprehension (empathy)

- the core condition of being-with

→ A fundamental openness for the social reality

Kairos, Greek god of the fertile moment
Dialogue

- of original im-media-cy
- a primary occurrence
- The call of the Other demands a response.

→ Dialogue reveals the original sociality.

F. Ringel, Gespräch (Conversation)
Responsive structure

- To respond = ‘to give a counter-promise’
- Encounter the strange that disturbs our orders
- The task is to respond existentially and to look at the extra-ordinary

→ The primary social condition of the human being marks a social ethical stance.

Arnulf Rainer, Fingerschmiere
„Response“

- „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
The responsive structure of the person

Bernhard Waldenfels

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

- Responsive phenomenology and ethics

born 1934
The systems of order and the strange (xenology)

- *strange* * Latin *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
‘With every responding that really deserves this name we break an order.’

The only appropriate way to deal with the strange is to encounter it.

The task is to respond not in order to give an answer to a question, but to the challenge of being questioned.
‘Each experience that really deserves this name, thwarts an expectation.’

H.-G. Gadamer
The fundamental We

- co-responding to the existential situation
- intersubjective, co-creative process
- bi-polar model: agency of the client & presence of the therapist

→ understanding persons from society
Essential foundations of PCT

- Person
- Encounter
- Presence
- Dialogue
- Responsive structure
- The fundamental We
3 BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL
Beyond the individual

- Can the PCA ‘directly’ contribute to society?
- Do pc principles work with social entities?
Beyond the individual

Groups

- Rogers believed in the ‘wisdom of the group’.
- ‘The individual creates the group that creates the individual.’ (John Wood)
- Groups are primary facts.
- Groups are the interface between person and society. They have an impact on both.
- Groups are the personal element in society.
Beyond the individual

Communities, organizations, institutions, society ...

- Larger entities tend to preserve themselves...
- ... if they don’t value their inner opposition.
- Any attempt to relate ‘in order to’ disturbs the emancipatory forces.
- The pc way is to encounter these societal entities.
- ‘Facilitators’ (persons or groups) need to be interested in being surprised.
4 SOME PROPOSITIONS
- Save the world?
- How to approach situations?
- What is your image of the human being and of society?
- Crises as opportunities?
Some propositions / 1

We need to

- change the human self-understanding to value the fundamental We
- *encounter* societal issues instead of trying to approach them purposefully, in ‘order to’
- think in terms of being challenged to existentially respond, not in terms of solutions
- actively be open to the strange
- question orders and appreciate the extra-ordinary
- value the critics and heretics
Some propositions / 2

- pay attention to power issues
- think in terms of resources and opportunities instead of problems
- learn that the answers are already there albeit not yet realized
- further face-to-face groups as ‘encounter groups’
- co-operate with others who share the same values.
- regard pc work also always as political work
- still value the person above all
Thank you for listening.
The Person-Centered Website

by Peter F. Schmid