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# PERSONAL GROWTH AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

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Growth and the Person-Centred Approach: A system for individual and social change  
Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, UK



- 1 SOCIO THERAPY ?**
- 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

# SOCIOTHERAPY

?

- 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*.

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Maureen O'Hara  
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Arthur Bohart

# The Handbook of Person-Centred Psychotherapy & Counselling

Second Edition



Palgrave,  
2013

## 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.*



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

## 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*



Franz Ringel, Wir (We)

# 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?

## 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 ?



危机

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 extraordinary
- 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.



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

# The Person-Centered Website

by Peter F. Schmid



welcome to | willkommen auf  
bienvenue à | bienvenido a

**pca-online.net**

# The Person-Centered Website

by Peter F. Schmid



## THE PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH

### THE PCA

What is the PCA?  
Carl Rogers  
Resources  
Links

### EVENTS

- BAPCA Conference 2013
  - 'PCA in Europe' Prague 2014
  - C.Rogers Birthday Conf. 2014
  - PCE World Congress 2014
- All Conferences

### INSTITUTIONS

WAPCEPC  
PCE World Association  
PCE Europe  
PCE Institutions &  
Associations  
Person-Centered Association  
in Austria (PCA)  
[www.personzentriert.at](http://www.personzentriert.at)



IPS/APG

Institute for  
Person-Centered Studies Austria



### BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Carl Rogers Bibliography Online  
(English & German)  
Rogers: Bibliographie  
francophone  
The PCE Online Bibliography  
Bibliography Gendlin  
Bibliography Peter F. Schmid

### JOURNALS

Journal PCEP  
Journal PERSON

### PAPERS

Papers P.F.Schmid download  
Links to other papers online

### TOPICAL PUBLICATION



Cooper, O'Hara, Schmid, Bohart  
**Handbook of PCT**  
Second edition 2013  
completely revised & enlarged



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### PERSON-CENTERED WORKSHOPS

Living and living together	28-29.9
What is a psychological disease?	19.-20.10
Competition	8.-9.11
Mindfulness	14.12.
The spiritual dimension ...	17.-18.1.
My hopes – my fears	7.-8.3.

*Register online*



Person-Centered Psychotherapy Science  
Sigmund Freud University, Vienna  
Carl Rogers Institute

### PFS: TOPICAL PUBLICATIONS

The person and evil  
Psychotherapy is political  
The Handbook of PCT  
(2nd edition 2012)

FAUST III, Vol. 1  
FAUST III, Vol. 2  
Life Management  
Missa Jahwe



Περα απο ερωτησεις και  
απαντησεις.

### RECENT DOWNLOAD MATERIAL

Peter F. Schmid  
**on anxiety  
on death**

PowerPoint slides from  
presentations at the  
10th PCE World Conference  
in Antwerp, July 8-12, 2012

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