



# HOW PERSON-CENTRED IS DIALOGICAL?

Therapy as encounter  
– an evolutionary improvement?  
an arbitrary deviation? a new paradigm?



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

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

# HOW PERSON-CENTRED IS DIALOGICAL?

- I. What is essential to the PCA?
- II. What does 'dialogical' mean?
- III. What does a 'dialogical understanding of PCT' mean?
- IV. A plea for dialogue

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# What is essential to the PCA?

- Client as sole expert?
- Non-directivity?
- Rogers' conditions necessary *and* sufficient?
- Specific techniques?
- Differential treatment?
- Actualizing tendency as basic axiom?
- Relation to scientific paradigm?
- ***One PCA & nothing else?***

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# Growing relational understanding of therapy

- **Intersubjective psychoanalysis**  
(interplay of transference-countertransference liaison ...)
- **CBT** (relationship as prelude to treatment)
- **Systemic therapies** (negotiating ...)
- **Existential and humanistic therapies**  
Martin Buber et al. → Hans Trüb, Ludwig Binswanger, Viktor v. Weizsäcker, Rollo May, Irving Yalom, James Bugental, Carl Rogers (therapy as relationship)

# 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)

# Different meanings of 'dialogue'

J. Finke & L. Teusch	alter ego relationship vs. dialogical relationship
G. Lietaer	dialogical working alliance
K. Tudor & T. Merry	dialogue = precondition and therapy itself
M. Friedman	self-actualisation as by-product of dialogue
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
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?

## ‘dialogue’

mutual conversation, interchange in talking, discourse

*v.* entre-tien (conversation), inter-course (social communication)

## \* Greek ‘δια-λεγειν’

δια = between (inter)

λεγειν = pick up, gather, collect; talk, speak

to put something apart by thinking over it

λογος = word, meaning, significance

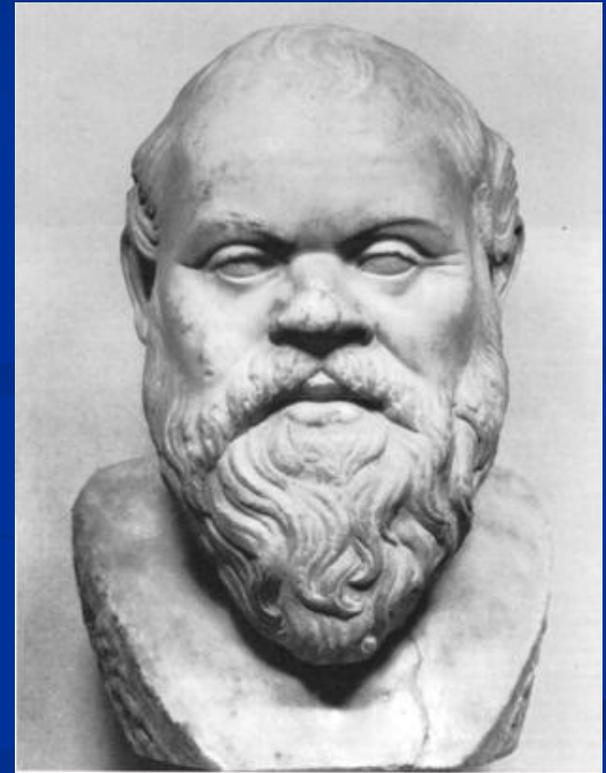
‘between words’ → **flowing of meaning**

# Dialogue: the conventional meaning

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

# Dialogue: Socrates

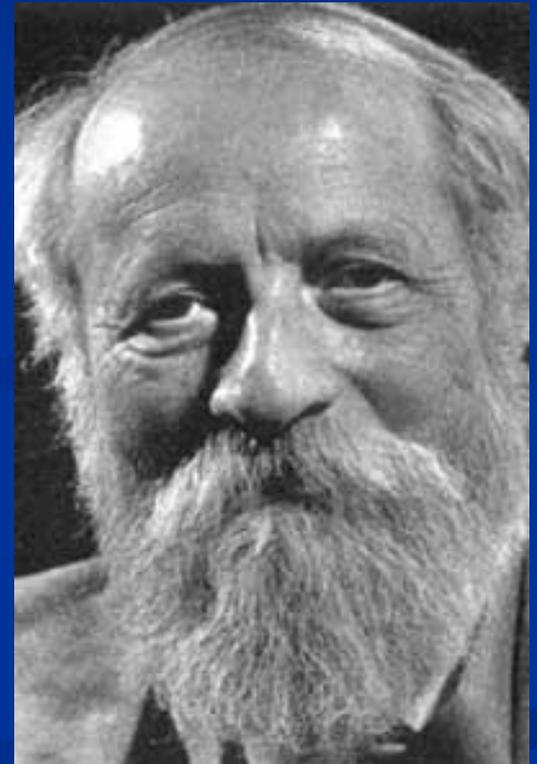
- pro-active **search for wisdom**
- εὖ ζῆν: to live a good and truthful life
- a pedagogical instrument



# Dialogue: Martin Buber

Interpersonality → Dialogue

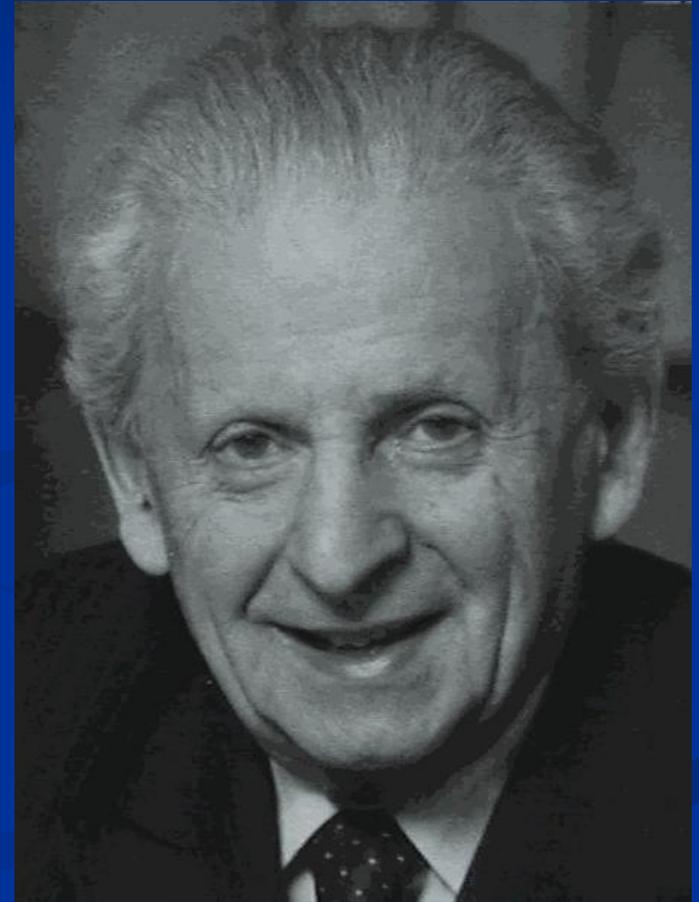
“The sphere of the interpersonal is the opposite-to-each-other; its unfolding is what we call dialogue.” *Buber, 1948*



**I-Thou relationship**

# Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas

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



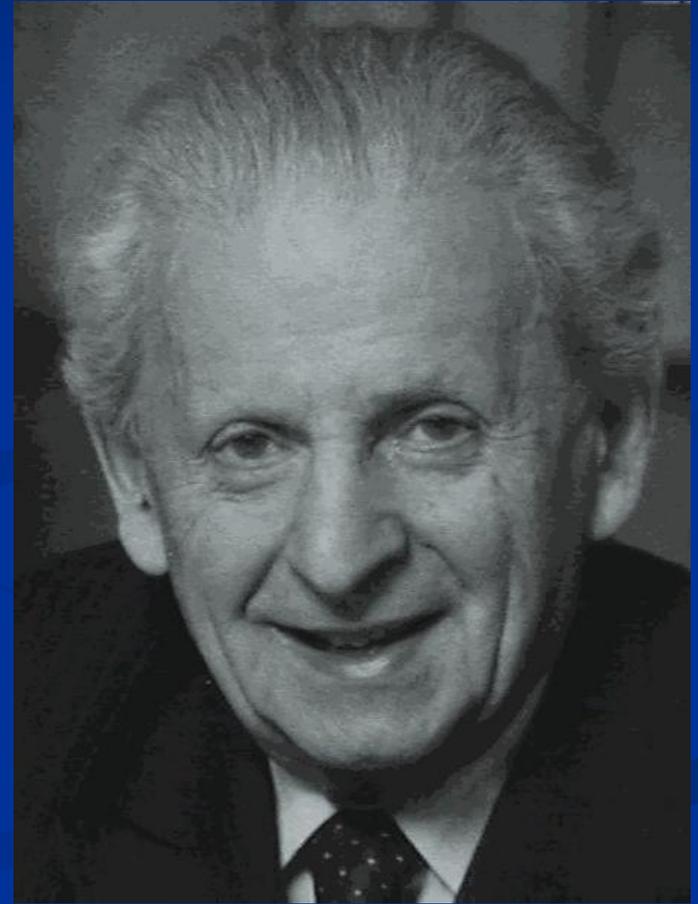
# Dialogue

## Emmanuel Levinas

Dialogue → Interpersonality

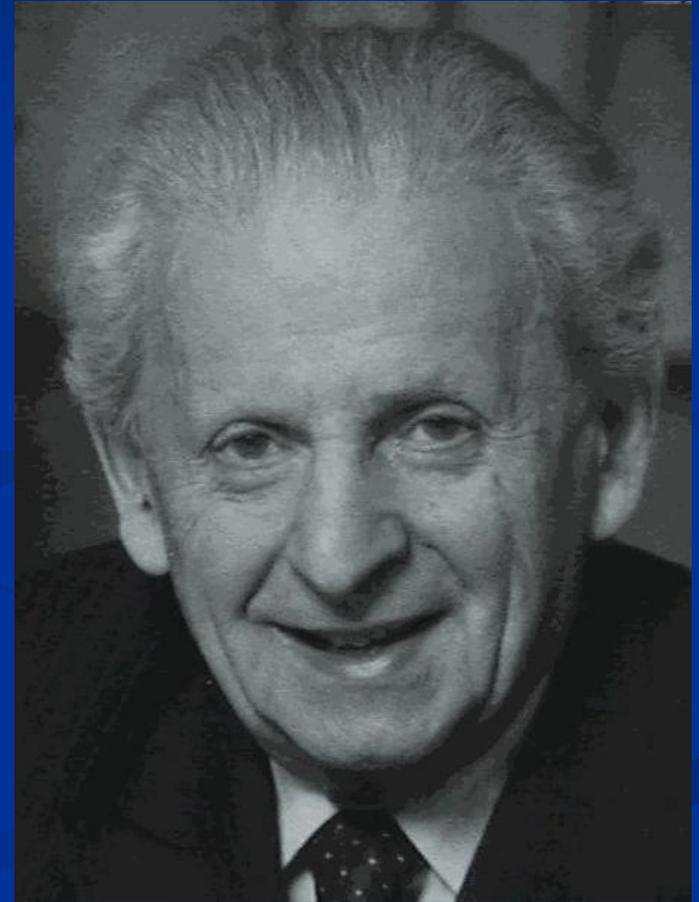
“It is precisely because the Thou is absolutely different from the I that there is - from the one to the other - dialogue.” *Levinas, 1981*

**Thou-I relationship**



# Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas

- Solidarity is a basic human condition.
- It means to say: “Here I am.”



# Dialogue

The human person *is* dialogue.

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# 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.**

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.

# Is there a 'dialogical approach'?

- The dialogical understanding of PCT is a deepening of the comprehension of the its image of the human being: the person.
- This is a *person-centred* approach.

# The dialogical understanding of PCT

- Unfolding Rogers' theory of psychotherapy:
  - Conditions 1 and 6 are about contact & communication.
  - "Therapy as I-Thou, as encounter."
- Unfolding of the pc anthropology of substantiality and interrelatedness.
- Unfolding the pc epistemology of Thou-I.
- Unfolding the pc personality theory & psychopathology of the cruciality of UPR and UPSR.
- Unfolding the pc practice of im-media-te presence.

# The dialogical understanding of PCT

- Sufficiency of six conditions?

The “core conditions” are dimensions of presence.

# The core conditions

- congruence
- **presence**
- unconditional positive regard
- empathy

# Meaning of 'presence'

- presence:
  - \* prae+esse (Latin) = 'really being there'
- 'Gegenwärtigkeit' (German)  
(*'gegen' + '-wärts'*)
  - **Authenticity:** being one's own author
  - **Acknowledgement without conditions:** love
  - **Comprehension:** art of not-knowing
  - **Co-experiencing & co-responding:** without preconceived means

# The dialogical understanding of PCT

- **Sufficiency of the six conditions?**

The “core conditions” are dimensions of presence.

- **Working from the therapist’s frame of reference?**

The therapist is not only an alter ego but a real person.

- **Dismissal of non-directivity?**

Facilitative responsiveness is an expression of the fundamental respect for the client’s autonomy and the trust in the actualising tendency.

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# A plea for 'internal dialogue'

- An open space to find out, express, develop, exchange and discuss our convictions and theories
- without trying to convince each other
- rather develop the own stance further

# Mission statement of PCEP

‘Seeks to create a dialogue among different parts of the person-centered and experiential tradition, to support, inform and challenge each other and to stimulate their creativity and impact in a broader professional, scientific and political context.

The mission of the journal is thus to encourage, and disseminate worldwide, new work on person-centered and experiential therapies, including philosophy, theory, practice, training and research.

The journal will not give preference to any parts of the world, nor to any philosophical or theoretical emphases within these approaches, but will instead seek to increase our awareness and appreciation of each other’s contributions, maintaining a spirit of inclusiveness to the whole person-centered and experiential field of psychotherapy and counseling.’

# Dialogue - a political statement

- To be existentially challenged as a person and as a professional.
- To resist problem- and solution-centeredness.
- To avoid the trap of the customary politics of the helping professions.
- To develop a truly human science, research and practice.

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

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

Without acknowledgement  
of the radical otherness of the Other  
'responding wouldn't be what it is,  
namely a way of speaking and doing  
that – responding to demands of others –  
surprises itself'.

*Bernhard Waldenfels*



welcome to



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## The Person-Centered Website by Peter F. Schmid

Die personzentrierte Homepage

Le site centré sur la personne

De Persoonsgerichte Site

Site da Abordagem Centrada na Pessoa

Página Web Centrada en la Persona