Psychotherapy is dialogue
or it is not psychotherapy

The personal and political challenge
of being a person-centered psychotherapist

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What we have in common is that we are all different from each other.

*Proverb*
The coconut trap
The second grip

- pre-hensile hand
- ap-prehend
- com-prehend
The trap of understanding

- NEW = OLD + DIFFERENCE

THE OTHER = I + DIFFERENCE

Facing the otherness

- THE OTHER = ESSENTIALLY DIFFERENT, NOT-I
The Challenge of the Other
Towards Dialogic Psychotherapy & Counselling

I. Alterity:
The need for a genuinely pc epistemology

II. Dialogue:
The occurrence of the original We

III. Co-presence:
The essential dialogical nature of therapy
I. Alterity:
The need for a pc epistemology

... a theory of understanding that is congruent with our experience in therapy ...
Cogito …

- ap-prehend: * ad
- com-prehend: * cum
Cogito ...

- ap-prehend: * ad
- com-prehend: * con
- con-cept: * con+capere (“to take’’)
- term: * terminus (“boundary stone, finishing post’’)

... the trap of the same
Epistemology of transcendence

- Ulysses
- homecoming
- TOTALLY
- sameness
- I - THOU
- egology
- Abraham
- mouvement sans retour
- INFINITY
- otherness
- THOU - I
- alterity
What we have in common is that we are all different from each other.
Epistemology of transcendence

As a consequence of the paradigm change from egology to alterity, as opposed to the epistemology of understanding oneself by oneself,

we need an epistemology of dialogue.
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II. Dialogue: The occurrence of the original We

“dialogue”
mutual conversation, interchange in talking, discourse

* Greek “δια-λέγειν”
to put something apart by thinking over it
(λέγειν = pick up, gather, collect; talk, speak)
Dialogue
conventional meaning

“dialogue”
= human conversation face to face,
  mutual exchange,
  message and contradiction

→ symmetry and equality

a meeting of the one with the other
Interpersonality → Dialogue

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

*Buber, 1948*
Dialogue
Emmanuel Levinas

- where transcendence happens
  - of original immediae
  - not a consequence of experience
- primary occurrence
- original sociality occurs in dialogue
- dissymetric: The other comes first
Dialogue

Emmanuel Levinas

Dialogue \(\rightarrow\) 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
Dialogue
Emmanuel Levinas

**Subject:**

“I am sub-jected to the Other.”

*Levinas, 1986*

- Subjectivity itself is relational.
- Subjectivity is I-for-Thou.
- Substantiality and relationality coincide.
- Subjectivity is Being-for-the-Other.
Solidarity is a basic human condition.

It means to say: “Here I am.”

The dissymmetry is the origin of ethics.

The I is constituted by his/her responsibility to the call of the Other.
Dialogue

Self-consciousness $\rightarrow$ dialogue

Dialogue $\rightarrow$ self-consciousness
Dialogue

The human person *is* dialogue.
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Psychotherapy:
the challenge to deal with the contradictory phenomena of togetherness and separateness.
What does dialogue in therapy actually mean?
Therapy as dialogue?

- Martin Buber ➔ Hans Trüb, Ludwig Binwanger, Viktor von Weizsäcker, Rollo May, Irving Yalom, James Bugental, Carl Rogers: Existential and humanistic therapies

- Intersubjective psychoanalysis (interplay of transference-countertransference liaison . . .)

- Systemic therapies (negotiating . . .)
Therapy as dialogue?

- W. Pfeiffer: therapy as a basically dialogic process
- R. van Balen: Rogers’ development towards dialogue
- D. Brazier: the person is other-oriented, not self-oriented
- Bohart & Tallman: therapy as co-constructive dialogue
- D. Mearns: dialogical model of the Self
- Mearns & Cooper: meeting at relational depth
Therapy as dialogue?

- The persons engaged in therapy are dialogue.
- Dialog is in the very beginning of therapy.
Therapy as dialogue?

- Psychotherapy → dialogue
- Dialogue → psychotherapy
Therapy as realization of the fundamental We

- Therapeutic dialogue is not about making community, it is about realizing the preceding We.

- To encounter a person is to realize to be in dialogue.

- Psychotherapy substantially is dialogue.
Therapy as realization of the fundamental We

- The therapeutic is the transcendence of the same.

- “Here I am.” (Presence)

- In the beginning there is dialogue.

- This is a political statement.
A political statement

- To be existentially challenged as a professional and as a person.

- To resist problem- and solution-centeredness.

- To avoid the trap of the customary politics of the helping professions.
Psychotherapy is dialogue or it is not psychotherapy.
Therapy as realization of the fundamental We

- In the beginning there is dialogue.
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The Person-Centered Website
by Peter F. Schmid

Die personzentrierte Site
Le site centré sur la personne
De Persoonsgerichte Site
Site da Abordagem Centrada na Pessoa
Página Web Centrada en la Persona