



The Carl Rogers Award Address

FREEDOM TO RESPOND

Dialogue - Foundation and Challenge of Humanity

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Vienna, 1981

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

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DIALOGUE

■ Person

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



The Etruscan god Phersu, whence the term „person“

- **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)

■ Encounter

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



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

■ 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

INCLUDES WORK BY CARL ROGERS
PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH FOR THE FIRST TIME

THE HANDBOOK OF PERSON-CENTRED PSYCHOTHERAPY AND COUNSELLING

Edited by
Mick Cooper,
Maureen O'Hara,
Peter F. Schmid
and Gill Wyatt



Palgrave,
2007

Dialogue: the conventional meaning

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

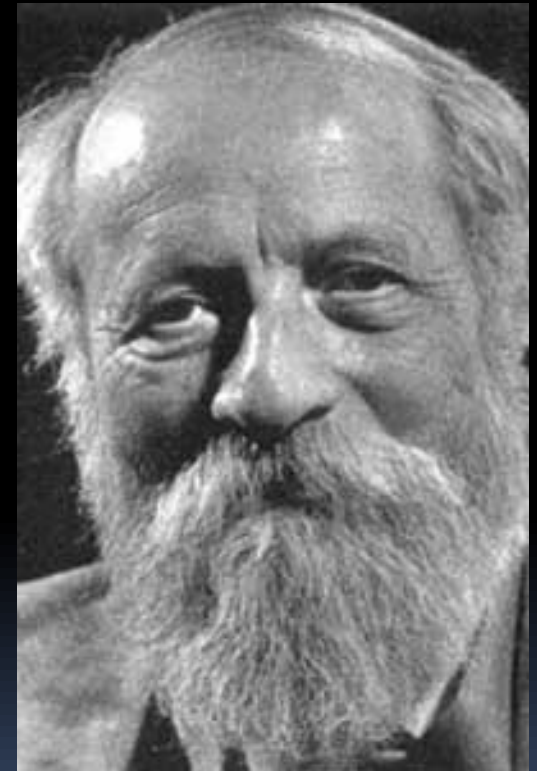
Dialogue: Martin Buber

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

Buber, 1948

Interpersonality → Dialogue

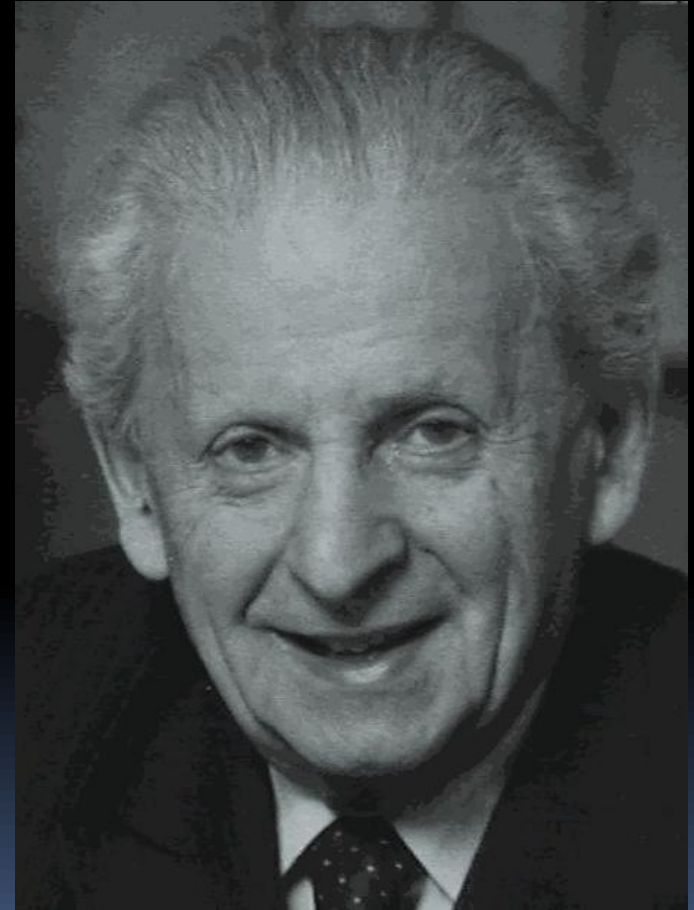
I-Thou relationship



1878 – 1965

Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas

- primary occurrence,
of original im-media-cy
- dissymetry:
The Other comes first.



1906 – 1995

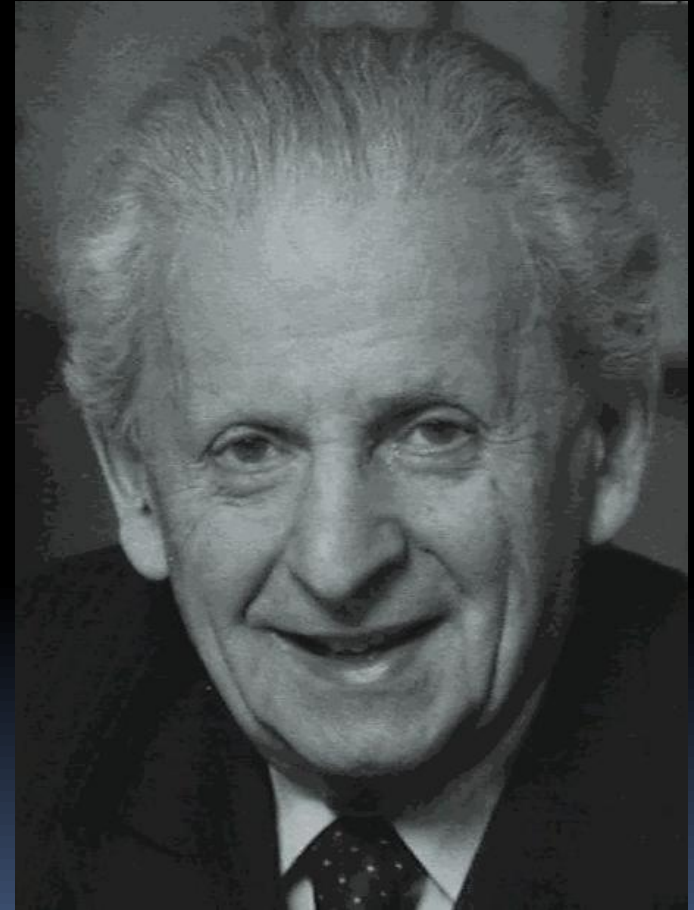
Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas

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

Levinas, 1981

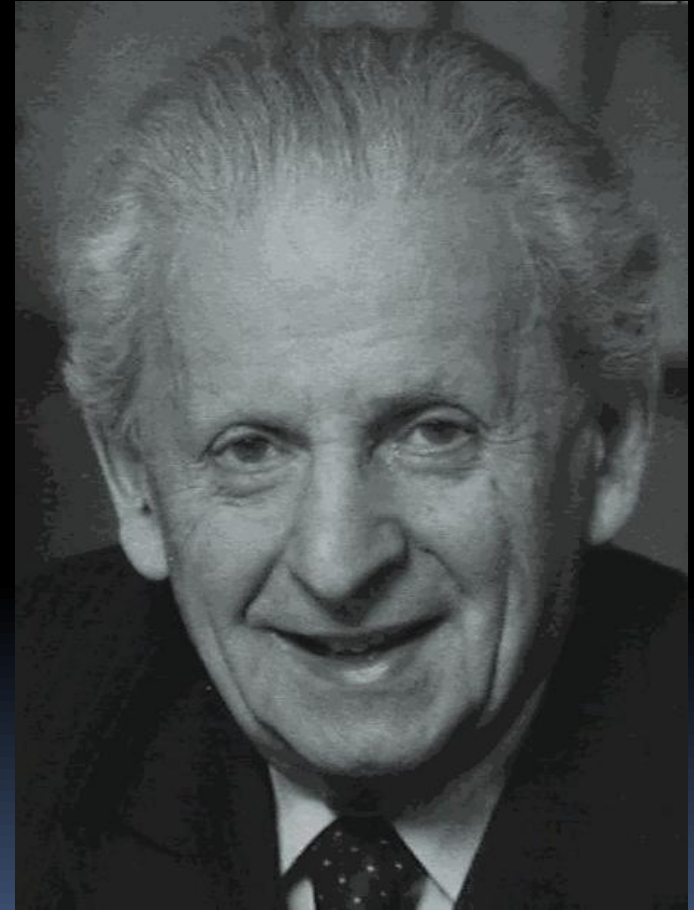
Dialogue → Interpersonality

Thou-I relationship



Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas

- 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.



~~Self-consciousness > dialogue~~

Dialogue → self-consciousness



Dialogue

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.



A dialogical understanding of PCT

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

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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



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.



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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



pca-online.net

The Person-Centered Website

by Peter F. Schmid