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PERSON AND SOCIETY TOWARDS A PERSON-CENTERED SOCIO THERAPY

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“So that I may perceive whatever holds
the world together in its inmost folds.”

Goethe, Faust I, vv.382-383



- 1 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
& PC ESSENTIALS**
- 2 SOCIO THERAPY**
- 3 CHALLENGES**

1

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT & PC ESSENTIALS

- **Relationship** *is* therapy (not a pre-condition).
- The client is **the Other** (not an alter ego).
- The challenge is to **encounter** (not to observe, diagnose, check ...).

“Encounter is an amazing meeting
with the reality of the Other.”

Romano Guardini, 1955

“Encountering a human being means
being kept awake by an enigma.”

Emmanuel Levinas, 1983, p.120

- “en-counter”:
to be surprised by the Other
openness
to meet the unexpected
 - appreciate the otherness
of the Other
 - person to person:
Thou-I-relationship
fundamental dialogical view
- *The basic epistemological stance of the PCA rests on a social relationship.*



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

- **Relationship** *is* therapy (not a pre-condition).
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- The challenge is to **encounter** (not to observe).
- The **client's agency** brings about development (not the therapist's skills).
- The therapist's task is to be **present** (not to guide).

- 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

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- We are in **dialogue** from the very beginning (not only sometimes mutually exchanging).

- the human person is dialogue, from the very outset
- a primary occurrence
- of original im-media-cy
- the call of the Other demands a response

→ *Dialogue reveals the original sociality.*



F. Ringel, Gespräch
(Conversation)

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- We are in **dialogue** from the very beginning (not only sometimes mutually exchanging).
- The human being is a **person** (not an individual).



Essentials

Person

- relational-substantial nature
 - independence & interdependence
 - self-responsibility & solidarity
- *Even “individual therapy” is embedded in society.*



The Etruscan god Phersu, whence the term “person”

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- We are in **dialogue** (not only mutually exchanging).
- The human being is a **person** (not an individual).
- As persons we **are** (not *have*) **relationship**.
- The human being is a **person** (not an individual).
- Persons are characterized by **responsivity**.

- To respond = “to give a counter-promise”
 - Human beings encounter each other by responding to each other and a common world existentially out of their response-ability.
 - The person is response.
- *We respond by our behavior to the challenge of a given social situation.*



Arnulf Rainer,
Fingerschmiere



The responsive structure

- Responding is *addressing* a person.
Give an answer means filling a gap in one's knowledge.
 - The circle of question and answer avoids the necessary existential response.
In contrast, a response is more than a given answer; it respects the fundamental otherness of the Other.
 - To respond means to confirm somebody in his/her personhood.
 - A responding being is a therapeutic being („facilitative responsiveness“ = non-directiveness).
- *The responsive structure of the person is another proof of the primary social condition of the human.*

Responding is a way
of speaking and doing
that by responding
to demands of Others
surprises itself.

Bernhard Waldenfels

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- Persons are characterized by **responsivity**.
- Persons spring from a **fundamental We**.



Essentials

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 stems from society.*



Franz Ringel, Wir (We)



Essentials

- Relationship *is* therapy
- The Other
- Encounter
- Client's agency
- Presence
- Dialogue
- Person
- *We are* relationship
- Responsivity
- Fundamental We

- The person-centered essentials are highly relevant social psychological terms (*relationship*).
- They are social terms (*We, group*).
- They are social ethical terms (*responsibility*).
- They are political terms.
(“conscious renunciation and avoidance by the therapist of all control over, or decision-making for, the client.” Rogers 1977,p.14).

*If the social, the We
is fundamental,
why not start with it
in understanding
society & person?*

- The PCA is a *social* psychological approach.
- The PCA is a practice of *social ethics*.
- The PCA is a *political* endeavour.

What can it contribute to society ?

Psychotherapy must not only address the individual, but also social entities, e.g. families, groups, institutions, organizations, ...

... even society itself ?
i.e. sociotherapy



Person-centered politics

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 a large degree to understand

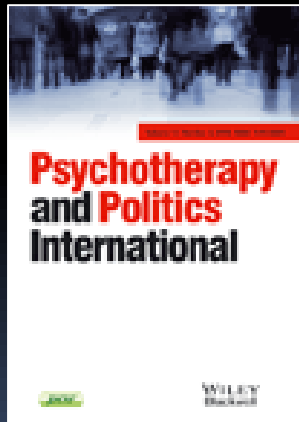
its inherent power to facilitate change in society.



Person-centered politics



Schmid, P. F.
Psychotherapy is political or it is not
psychotherapy:
The person-centred approach as an
essentially political venture



*Person-Centered and Experiential
Psychotherapies, 11(2), 2012*

*Psychotherapy and Politics International,
12(1), 2014 (special issue)*



Person-centered politics

The approach by its very nature is *a socially critical* and thus *socio-political approach*,
a fundamental program for a “*therapy*” of the *society*

- *psychotherapy* and *sociotherapy*.

The approach by its very nature is a program for radical societal transformation and thus (socio-)political change.

Schmid (2007/2012/2014)



2

PERSON-CENTERED SOCIOTHERAPY



Sociotherapy

“a therapy for society”

“a therapy of society”

“a therapy for/of social relations”

A therapy of society *by* society?

Sociotherapy

is a (multidisciplinary) practical social science and a form of therapeutic social work that deals with theory, research and practice

- of the person in his/her environment
- and this environment.

In practical work, it includes work with individuals, groups, large groups, communities, institutions, larger social entities and society as a whole.



Socioterapy

„the therapy of social relations“

Association of Socioterapy
and Psychotherapy (ASP),
Slovakia

Sociotherapy

encompasses

- a *practical philosophy* (including *social ethics*) of society, its communities and their constituent persons
- *theories* of the interconnection of personal and social development
- *studies* of and *research* on the socialization dynamics of social entities and their impact on the person
- the *practice* of promoting constructive growth and living in communities, personal relationships and peer culture (including the facilitation of therapeutic and facilitative communities)
- *prevention and therapy* of pathological developments of social entities and persons



Sociotherapy

philosophy, theory, research, practice in a wide range of fields

- social work
 - psychotherapy
 - counselling
 - care management
 - pedagogy
 - medicine including psychiatry
 - practical theology
 - jurisdiction & criminology
 - recreational professional work
- etc.

Sociotherapy

- a discipline of social ethics
- clients are persons *and* communities *
- identify sources and resources of „functioning“ / „a life worth living“ and obstacles to constructive development
e.g. equal chances for unequal people,
against exclusion,
for having a say of patients in treatments
etc. etc.
- best done in multi-professional teams

* difference to psychotherapy: not only persons or families ... also communities as such are clients.



Sociotherapy

Sociotherapy according to this meaning is NOT

- a special method for helping people to cope with social circumstances
- a special method for communities to become accepted by their members
- psychotherapeutic intervention to change the social behavior
- an upgrading of psychotherapy to include social issues
- limited to milieu therapy (i.e. interventions in the environment of the client)
- „foreign policy“ (given psychotherapy deals with „domestic affairs“)
- limited to non-medical, social & work-related components of the care process (= definition in Germany)
- an attempt to heal the world

Person-Centered Sociotherapy

builds upon pc principles, particularly

- the image of the human being as **person** and the anthropological and societal consequences thereof
- the fundamental We and therefore a non-reductionistic/**holistic view of society**
- **personal social ethics** (e.g. empowerment vs. control)
- the **epistemology of encounter** and dialogue
- a **salutogenetic view**, not a pathological perspective
- the powerful therapeutic impact of **(small) groups** (on person & society)

Person-Centered Sociotherapy (ctd.)

builds upon pc principles, particularly

- constant questioning of ideologies and the explicit and implicit norms and rules in the light of both self-determination and co-operation aiming at mutual personalization and socialization
- multiprofessionality and co-operation
- the conviction that both persons and society must change for the development of each
- therefore the necessity to do both psychotherapy & sociotherapy

3

SOME CHALLENGES FOR A PC APPROACH TO SOCIETY

We need a new approach to the world:
to encounter it.

- encounter the global challenges we are facing, not approach them “in order to”
- think in terms of being challenged to existentially respond
- think in terms of resources and opportunities, not in terms of answers and solutions
- learn that the responses are already there albeit not yet realized

We need a new approach to society,
as a fundamental We.

- take seriously that society is there first, we are born into it
- think from society “down” to the individual, not the other way round
- to understand us human individuals from the fundamental We

We need a new approach to our fellow humans

– *as Others.*

- change the epistemology
- respond in an existential way
- The responsive structure requires to deal with the strange in an existential way, to look at **the extra-ordinary**, at the strange, the unfamiliar and the disturbing.

“With every responding that really deserves this name we break an order.”

We need a new approach to ourselves
– *as part of the fundamental We.*

- change ourselves, if we want to change something in the world
- change our self-understanding as part of an interconnected, global whole
- value the fundamental We

We need a new approach to the strange
— *as a chance to question our order and appreciate diversity*

- instead of subordinating to an existing order, be curious and **look at the extra-ordinary**, at the strange, the unfamiliar, the diverse and the disturbing
- instead of mobilizing defense, rejecting or denying, **face the strange** and deal with it **in an existential way**
- **respond** not in order to give an answer to a question, but to the **challenge of being questioned**

“With every responding that really deserves this name we break an order.”

We need to see both persons and communities as clients.

- the PCA is not only an approach to persons, but also to groups and other social entities
- we are part of the client (i.e. the community)
- understand the person-society-relationship and its inherent power to facilitate change in society

We need to further groups & their societal impact.

- the group is the interface of individual & society
- it is a most powerful “instrument” for change
- PCA is a group approach
- the group is a primary fact
- it is the interface between person and society
- the group is the “personal” element in society
- the group is the primary locus of both individual and social therapy

We need to understand the power and dynamics of larger social entities.

Larger entities tend to preserve themselves ...

- ... if they don't value their inner opposition & critics
- any attempt to relate "in order to" disturbs the emancipatory forces
- the *pc* way is to *encounter* these societal entities.
- the *pc conditions* apply analogously
- "*facilitators*" (*persons or groups*) need to be interested in being surprised

We need to engage politically.

- be aware that pc work is always political
- pay attention to power issues
- question ideologies
- further face-to-face groups as “encounter groups” and interface of society and person
- be aware that there are multiple ways of being political
- co-operate with others who share the same values
- still value the person above all

We do NOT need to heal the world.

But we need to

- understand the PCA as a socio-political approach, not as a set of instructions
- not introduce solutions (as with our individual clients) but trust — under facilitative circumstances
- take care for person-centered conditions
- trust that the answers are already there albeit not yet realized, if we really approach them with an encounter attitude interested in being surprised

HOPE

Thank you for listening.
Muchas gracias.

Space for discussion:

Workshop

**“The political challenges of being
a person-centered
psychotherapist”**

Wednesday, 9 a.m.

Room 1



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



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

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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.

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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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