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Psychotherapy is political or it is not psychotherapy

The actualising tendency
as personalizing tendency

BAPCA 3rd National Conference: PCA - Past, Present and Future
Cirencester, Sept 8, 2007



Back to the Client:

A phenomenological approach to the process of understanding and diagnosis

PCEP 3,1 (2004)

The Challenge of the Other:

Towards dialogical person-centered psychotherapy and counseling

PCEP 5,4 (2006)

Psychotherapy is political or it is not psychotherapy

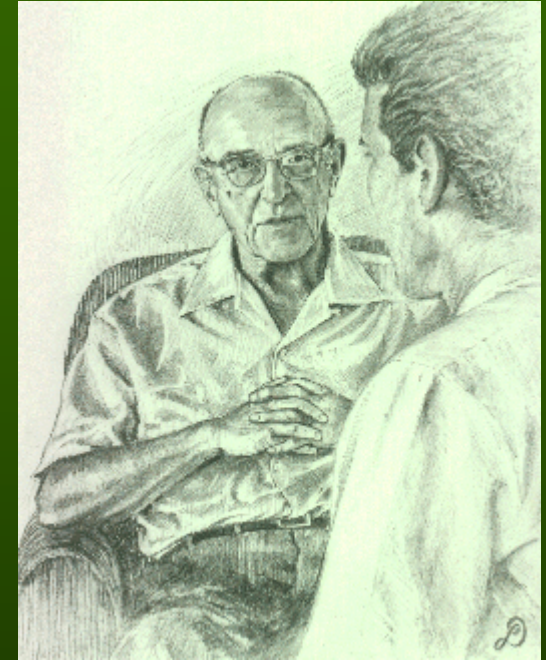
The actualizing tendency as personalizing tendency

- I. Rogers, the PCA & politics
- II. The state of the art of PCT
- III. Politics – what's that supposed to mean?
- IV. Horrible dictu: Psychotherapy is political

What does politics mean?

?

I. Rogers, the PCA & politics



- Carl Rogers, the social revolutionary?
(Richard Farson)
- „The politics of the PCA“
(Rogers, 1977)
 - no control of the client
 - „self ownership“ of the client
 - „locus of decision-making is politically centered in the client“
- Inconsistency: Expertism \leftrightarrow Self responsibility
- Actualizing tendency:
„The nature of the human being itself is political.“
- PCA as a „quiet revolution“ ?

I. Rogers, the PCA & politics

1. A sensitive person, trying to be of help, becomes more pc, no matter what orientation she starts from, because she finds that approach *more effective*.
2. When you are focused on the person, *diagnostic labels* become largely *irrelevant*.
3. The *traditional medical model* in psychotherapy is discovered to be largely *in opposition* to pcness.
4. Those who can create an effective pc relationship do *not necessarily come from the professionally trained group*.
5. The more this pca is implemented and put into practice, the more it is found to *challenge hierarchical models of "treatment"* and hierarchical methods of organization.
6. The very effectiveness of this pca constitutes a *threat to professionals, administrators, and others, and steps are taken* - consciously and unconsciously - *to destroy it*. It is too revolutionary.

I. Rogers, the PCA & politics

■ Political authors

- Peggy Natiello
- Maureen O'Hara
- Gillian Proctor
- Kathida Chantler
- Christoph Fischer
- Mick Cooper
- Pete Sanders and others ...

■ *Politicizing the Person-Centered Approach: An agenda for social change*

edited by Gillian Proctor, Mick Cooper, Pete Sanders & Beryl Malcolm
PCCS Books, 2006

■ Feminist approaches, minorities, gay & lesbian issues etc.

- Gay Barfield, Maureen O'Hara, Carol Gustav Wolterson, Gillian Proctor etc.
- Marietta Winkler, Renata Fuchs, Veronika Prüller-Jagenteufl etc.
- Forthcoming special issue of PCEP re gender issues

I. Rogers, the PCA & politics

- The assertion:

The PCA is essentially a socio-political approach.

- The evidence:

A socially critical review of the essentials of the state of the art of PCT.

II. The state of the art of PCT

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



II. The state of the art of PCT

1 Person

- independence & interconnectedness
- substantial-relational nature
- personal anthropology, phenomenological, existential



II. The state of the art of PCT

2 Encounter

- the Other
- epistemology of alterity
- Thou-I-relationship
- presence:
being with & being counter
- fundamental We (co-responding)
- bi-(multi-)polar model of psychotherapy



II. The state of the art of PCT

3 Actualizing process as personalization



A personalizing tendency:

Philosophical perspectives on the actualizing tendency axiom and its dialogical and therapeutic consequences.

In Levitt, B. (Ed.), *A positive psychology of human potential: The person-centred approach*.

Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books, 2007

II. The state of the art of PCT

3 Actualizing process as personalization

- **energeia-dynamis / act-potency**
efficient cause (*causa efficiens*)
- **dialectical understanding of the actualising tendency**
- **actualising tendency as *social* construct**
(no development totally-by-itself)
- **personalising tendency: freedom & creativity**



II. The state of the art of PCT

4 Dialogue

- asymmetrical:
to be called to respond
- primary occurrence
- psychotherapy is realization
of the dialogue that is already
there from the outset



II. The state of the art of PCT

5 Group

- „the Third“
- the group is the primary locus of therapy
- the group is the interface of individual & society
- PCA is a group approach



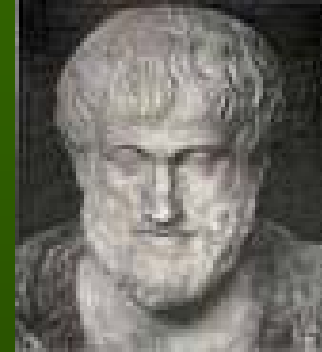
And all that is political.

What does politics mean?

?

III. Politics – what does that mean?

- πολίς [polis]: city-state community
 - Aristotle (384-322 v. Chr.):
„ανθρωπος ζων πολιτικων“
„the human is a being oriented toward the polis“
 - „Only in the community is the human being fully human.“
 - Politics is the creation of an order that serves the goal of being fully human.
- Everybody is a politician.



III. Politics – what does that mean?

- Machiavelli, Hobbes, Weber:
understanding reduced to power issues



- „free of value judgement“, „political realism“:
politics „freed“ from the person.

→ Such politics is the business of politicians,
not a task fo everybody.

IV. Psychotherapy as politics

- Politics is the consequence of an image of the human being.
- To act politically means to act according to an image of the human being.

IV. Psychotherapy as politics

- **Psychotherapy is political or it is not psychotherapy ...**
- Both, therapy & politics are about understanding & change.
- Discourse among different paradigms
→ political argument !

IV. Psychotherapy as politics

■ Political discourse

- Authenticity vs. alienation
- Dialogue vs. suppression
- Empowerment vs. control
- Creativity & spontaneity vs. structural constraints
- Co-creation vs. diagnosing
- We versus Self: solidarity vs. discrimination
- Group: self-determination & emancipation vs. dependency
- Participation & democracy vs. steering
- Thou-I vs. fear of the Other
- Personalization vs. adaptation to structures

IV. Psychotherapy as politics

- Psychotherapy implies the ethical demand to act politically.
 - Patient or person?
- **Notification of dispute !**
Argument instead of stabilization of the system

IV. Psychotherapy as politics

- The „ political way of being“
 - Observation – Judgement - Action
 - Political education
 - Social criticism in theory, practice, training
 - Work with media
 - Voice your opinion
 - Engagement in institutions
 - Co-operation & dispute with other orientations
 - Co-operation with other disciplines and professions
 - Steadfastness
- and much more ...

IV. Psychotherapy as politics

■ Discourse among the schools

Take a stand !

- Against resistance through ignorance
- Against resistance through watering down and playing down the radicalism
- Against destruction through playing down oneself

IV. Psychotherapy as politics

- **"What is most personal
is most general" ...**

(Rogers, 1961)

---> is most political !

**Psychotherapy is politics
or
it is not psychotherapy ...**



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pca-online.net

The Person-Centered
Website
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