

# **Editorial**

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As always, it's our pleasure to share with you the contents of the new volume of *The Person-Centered Journal*.

Kim Francis provides a previously unpublished transcript of a two-hour question-and-answer session with Carl Rogers during a 1975 residential workshop. A remarkably spontaneous Rogers provides insights into a number of areas, including his personal and theoretical development, his therapeutic practice, his views on relationship and religion, and even his gardening.

This double issue also features several perspectives on person-centered applications to education. Stephanos Vassilopoulos and Alexandros Kosmopoulos share their relational dynamic education model of education that they have been developing in Greece for decades. Their work builds on the seminal work of Rogers' theory and is concerned with the provision of the core conditions in an educational context.

Leslie Simonfalvi provides a thoughtful description and analysis of The International Language School Group in Budapest, Hungary. Hungary is unique in how many person-centered schools and teachers have been extensively trained in the approach and continue to be connected through regular encounter groups. The International Language School Group is one of the founding schools of this sort, having been developed and influenced by the first Cross Cultural Workshop that occurred 25 years ago in Szeged, Hungary, an event rich with history for both the person-centered approach and its development and influence from Hungary and in international collaborations. PCE Europe, a chapter of the World Association for

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Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling, had its General Assembly at the start of this conference, signifying some of the massive international networking and advocacy that has occurred. One of us (J. C.-W.) was grateful to be able to attend the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Cross Cultural Workshop this summer and to learn much about the well-developed traditions of person-centered education in Hungary.

Maria Hess offers a description of her approach to the provision of the core conditions in an educational context, this time in teaching basic counseling skills. It relies heavily on person-centered principals and is helpful in providing almost step-by-step instructions in how to structure a learning situation in which both the core conditions are present and the provision of these conditions is learned. In reading this, one has the experience of watching a master educator at work.

The last view of person-centered theory and education comes from Joan Test and Jef Cornelius-White. They provide a brief introduction to the work of Lev Vygotsky and compare and contrast his educational concepts with those of Rogers. They find these ideas are both strikingly similar and yet quite distinct from each other.

While the previous authors look at person-centered theory and education, Brian Levitt examines how an aspect of popular culture can clarify both person-centered theory and practice. He deconstructs an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in which Captain Picard attempts to understand an alien who uses language in ways that become increasingly less puzzling to him. Brian uses this process as a metaphor for and teaching device about the therapeutic process in which the therapist tries to understand the mysterious client, as well as a way of understanding failed client-centered research.

Finally, the issue concludes with a memorial to Ferdinand Van der Veen, a colleague who was consistently engaged in ADPCA since its founding and indeed was one of the founding fathers of the person-centered approach. He conducted some of the first research on the approach in the 1950s and was a student and original colleague of Carl Rogers when Rogers was at the University of Chicago. On a personal note (J. C.-W.), Ferd was one of my closest companions during my 10 years of professional involvement in the approach, both in the U.S.

and Europe. We roomed together multiple times, and the loss of his friendship with his passing has been deeply felt. I wish his spirit well.

There are always many people involved in the production of the Journal. We'd like to again acknowledge the support of The Association for the Development of the Person-Centered Approach, its sponsor; and Missouri State University, its printer. Special thanks to Tamara Arthaud, acting head of the Department of Counseling, Leadership and Special Education, and Dennis Kear, dean of the College of Education. We are pleased and grateful that The Person-Centred Therapy Scotland is again receiving the journal in electronic form. Likewise, the *Journal* depends on its editorial team, board of advisors, and especially its reviewers and contributing authors. As always, we welcome questions and manuscripts! We hope there is something for everyone in this volume or in the back issues of the *Journal*.

# **Questions and Answers: Two Hours with Carl Rogers**

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## **Abstract**

This project involved a transcription of a 2-hour community meeting with Carl Rogers and more than 100 participants at the summer 1975 workshop titled "A Person-Centered Approach: The Process of Individual Growth and its Social Implications." During this meeting, Rogers candidly answered questions on a wide range of topics including planning for the workshop, the evolution of the person-centered approach and its meaning to him, partners and "satellite" relationships, encounter groups, therapy issues, how he made personal decisions, and his garden.

The present project represents a transcription of a 2-hour community meeting with Carl Rogers at the summer 1975 residential workshop titled "A Person-Centered Approach: The Process of Individual Growth and its Social Implications." The workshop was held at Mills College in Oakland, California, from August 1 to August 16 and was sponsored by the Center for the Studies of the Person. It was pivotal in the development of the person-centered approach, and this was the first time the phrase "person-centered approach" was used for a workshop (J. K. Wood, personal communication, November 7, 1996).

I was present at this meeting when Rogers candidly answered nearly 50 questions posed by workshop participants. Some of these questions covered familiar ground; some were mildly confronting; and some required that he reveal his feelings about areas that many of us probably know nothing. For example, I suspect that very few people

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are aware of the unique manner in which he made important decisions in his life, and his response may surprise a lot of people. All of his responses were characteristically informal and personal, and often, they were very humorous.

In my view, this transcription of Rogers' answers to a wide range of questions is not only historically important to students of the person-centered approach, but can also serve as an introduction to some of his ideas for beginners and an opportunity to reexamine some of his views for the more experienced through a fairly extemporaneous format. Transcribing this material from the 2-hour audiotape I had saved for 25 years proved to be a difficult project. First, I asked my secretary to transcribe it. She worked on it for over a week and returned with only three pages, and they were missing a lot of the dialogue. The audio was simply not clear, and she could not understand what was being said. I thought that, since I had been present at the workshop, maybe I could more easily ascertain what was being said. This assumption proved to be partly true and partly false. Much of the dialogue was clear, but some of it was nearly impossible to hear. I had to listen to some segments over and over and over again to decipher what was being said. To complicate matters even more, it seemed that when one person coughed, everyone else at the meeting joined in, drowning out what Rogers was saying in a resounding cacophony. Sometimes, I found that if I ran the tape at a very slow speed I could understand the dialogue better.

Eventually I was able to make out what was being said for perhaps 98% of the dialogue. Since Rogers' responses were spontaneous verbal reactions to the questions at hand, many of his sentences were quite informal and included a lot of "ahs," "ums," and other speech elements that one would not normally include in the written medium. I took some editorial license and excluded the majority of these elements. I also took the liberty of eliminating "and" as a word that started many sentences. I made other minor editorial changes, but in no case did any of these changes alter the meaning of what he was saying. My sole purpose in making any editorial changes

was to effectively make a shift from the spoken to the written mode of communication in order to make his presentation readable, clear, and grammatically correct. I know that he usually wanted to keep what he was saying informal and that he took great pains to keep his writings easy to understand (F. N. Roebuck, personal communication, October 6, 1996). I think my work on this project is consistent with his goal.

**Rogers:** I really would like for everyone to get comfortable. I don't know whether this thing [microphone] operates well or not. Talk directly into it. Does this help now?

**Participants:** Yes.

**Rogers:** My voice sounds strange to me, but if it sounds O.K. to you, then it's all right. I really would like for everybody to get comfortable. If you need to get a chair or something, do so. I'm really pleased that the group is so close in together. We'll hope the machine works without buzzing or difficulty. Just before this session someone not in the program was asking me what's going on tonight, and I said, "Well I'm just going to answer questions." [Laughter from the participants.]

For those of you who were here this morning this is kind of a repeat, but I just would like to say that anything goes. I will be happy to comment on any issue or question or idea that you raise. My whole purpose is to really try to make myself as available to you as I can. I'd really like to think you wouldn't be here if you didn't want to know me, and I would like you to get to know me.

**A Participant:** I have a question.

**Rogers:** O.K.

**Question:** I think you must have done some significant planning, and I'd like to know what are your goals and what do you even want to find out or learn from this large group here?

**Rogers:** Not only have I done some planning, but the whole staff did some planning. I've made some notes on that from this workshop because I want some time to try to use it as an example of what it does mean to make a struggle to be person-centered because you're not planning in any ordinary sense. You're trying to predict the unpredictable. You're trying to create conditions where things can

happen without having the slightest notion of what will happen, and you're trying to provide resources when you're not sure of what kind of resources will be desired. One of the first things we did as a staff was try to get to be persons with each other because some of the staff didn't know each other at all and others weren't very well acquainted. We wanted to be ourselves and to be persons to each other so that, insofar as possible, we could be persons to this group. It's so different from the planning that you would ordinarily do for a conference or a seminar. We tried to think through all the initial steps because we felt that often the first impressions, even before anything is said, helps to set the whole tone of a conference. It wasn't accidental that we were all helping at the registration desk at different times. We spent a lot of time passing out food to open the first meeting. If this was a typical conference, there's no question that I would be asked to say the first remarks. I didn't want to do that and no one else was eager to do it. Finally, it really impressed me that the two younger staff members [Jared Kass and Maureen O'Hara (formerly Miller)] volunteered to open up the workshop together, and I thought that was just great. I have told them, and I would be glad to tell the group, they did so much better a job than I could possibly have done if I had tried to open the conference. It's that kind of, sort of backwards planning, you know, just the reverse of what one would ordinarily think about in planning for a conference that often took place.

**Question:** Carl, just now we all sat for a minute or two and reflected about what the person-centered approach means to us, and I'd like to ask you to share your thoughts.

**Rogers:** Well, ah, that's both easy and hard. Um, in one sense it's difficult to try to share a professional lifetime, and in another sense I can try to put it rather briefly and consequently very inadequately. But to me, I think it means, first of all, placing a primary value on the dignity and worth of the person and the fact that each person does have potential. I don't think that's a conviction that one can just adopt like you might adopt legislation or something; it's something that has to grow out of your experience, or it doesn't really mean very much.

But if your experience is such as to make you feel a person does have worth and potential, then there are, I believe, certain conditions that help to bring that about. There is a kind of a climate which helps people to grow and develop and be. I've tried to formulate what I think that climate consists of. I've done it differently at different times, though, and done research on it. Dave Aspy and Flora Roebuck have done a lot of research on it in the schools. To me, probably the most important things which promote growth in the other person are if I can be real with them or real with the group and if I really care. I think that a caring or a prizing or loving, or whatever phrase has the most meaning for you, that something does communicate to the other person that he matters to me or she matters to me. The other thing which is both an attitude and a skill is perhaps, I think, more easily learned than some of the others. These first two you just can't fake. I mean you either have them, either feel them or you don't. But if you do have an attitude of genuinely wanting to understand and trying to capture the meaning of this person's inner world for him at that moment, there's just no question in my mind that is a very helpful third factor in promoting the development of persons. I guess it's that kind of an approach to try to build into a workshop like this or into a counseling relationship or into a class in school, course in college, whatever. Well, I could say more, but that's enough of that.

**Question:** I believe in the importance of trying to provide the right conditions in the counseling situation or any situation. However, I get frustrated if I keep trying to listen and provide this climate and nothing happens, and then I feel like a failure. I was wondering if this ever happens to you and how you deal with it?

**Rogers:** Well, let me respond first to what you have been saying. If frustration begins to take over as being stronger in you than these other attitudes, then obviously frustration is part of the real you at that moment. Perhaps if that can be communicated to the other person, it might help the relationship, because I often think that we forget that realness is a very changing thing. We aren't the same from moment to moment. I'm not saying that we can possibly communicate all the



changes we go through, but it seems to me persistent feelings are best communicated. If you're feeling quite frustrated by this counseling relationship, voicing it might be the very best way of helping it move forward. And yes, I feel frustrated, sure I do. I felt so frustrated during part of the morning session yesterday and part of the afternoon session that I started working on other things so I could let out my frustration. I said this morning, once I had rather a low tolerance for just what seems, "Oh God, let's quit wasting time or something." I'm that much problem-oriented with things I don't like very well. But sure, I feel frustrated, and it's a great learning for me, as in those sessions yesterday, to tell myself, "Wait it out--I'll bet the group will do something." And they do. And that's what's very exciting.

**Question:** I was wondering if you have had any really groovy insights that really struck you as a result of going through this experience with us?

**Rogers:** Yes, I did. I was thinking something the other day and now I can't think of it. [Loud laughter from the participants.] It may come to me. I'm not trying to hold back on you. I don't know that these are major insights, but they are very impressive. Twenty years ago this would have been an absolutely impossible thing to do. If we could have gotten a group similar to this together 20 years ago, the difference in where you start from would have been so incredible to us now that you wouldn't believe it. And that's a very heartening thing to me--that change is taking place to get a group like this together. You don't have to spend hours and hours and hours waiting for them to work through their defensiveness and so on. They are really ready to open up to each other, and that's something that is very, very heartening to me.

**Question:** I'd like to know if there is anything you feel like saying to us?

**Rogers:** (Pause) No, I think not. If I drop any words of wisdom, it's usually in interaction with people. I'll probably pour out plenty, but it really has to come from interaction.

**Question:** Could you explain to me the evolutionary process of how the person-centered approach evolved, or where it came from in your thinking?

**Rogers:** Yes, I can do that. But I would stress that I really think a great many people have been involved in the development of a person-centered approach. And I am not much good at reviewing the history of the whole thing. So, I will simply tell you what it has meant for me and what my evolution in that has been.

I was trained in a thoroughly conventional clinical psychology approach. You give tests. You diagnose the person. You figure out the total personality diagnosis, and then you decide what treatment is indicated. Whether it's environmental change, or whether it should be suggestions to the person, or counseling, or whatever. I was very fortunate in being in Rochester, New York, in a social agency where ideology was totally unimportant. It wasn't an academic setting. People only cared that you get results with the kids you were working with. That was the primary thing. And it began slowly to seem to me that there might be something wrong with that approach. For example, I worked in a department in connection with a juvenile detention home. Sometimes I would have a very good interview with a boy, let's say, in which I was giving him the treatment that I was sure would be most helpful for him; then he wouldn't come back to see me the next day. That sort of gave me pause. Maybe it hadn't been as helpful as I thought it was. So, from that kind of experience, and from dealing with parents who, well, for me particular incidents always stand out as points of learning. There was one particular mother I have written about. It's old stuff in a way, but it's not old to me. She had brought her son to the clinic. One of the other staff members was working with the boy, and I was working with her. I suppose we had a dozen interviews in which we--well, the staff had figured out that the real problem in this case was the mother's rejection of the boy. So, I was trying in every way I could think of to lead her gradually to realize that was the factor that was causing the difficulty, and we just got nowhere. She seemed to want to cooperate, but every lead I could give with that

kind of idea, she would turn down. So, at least I was realistic, and I told her I don't think we are getting anywhere. She agreed that was true. I said that we both tried and let's call it quits; then when she got to the door of the room, she turned around and said, "Do you ever take adults for counseling here?" I said, "Yes," and she came back to the chair and began to pour out a story that was so different from the case history we had gotten from her that I just couldn't believe it. In the first place, in her mind the trouble was not with her son. The trouble was in the relationship with her husband. Well anyway, I was sort of floored and did not know what to do, so I listened. [Laughter from the participants.]

I really look back on that. We continued for quite a while. I think she was the first client who ever kept in touch with me for a long time afterward--telling me about her own situation and that of her boy--how much help she had gotten and so on. I don't want to drag this out too long by getting too anecdotal.

We also had a Rankian-trained social worker who contributed a lot to my understanding of listening for feelings, and that helped. And gradually, I began to incorporate some of these things into my own thinking, which didn't seem to me at all original, until I gave a talk one time at the University of Minnesota and nearly shocked them off their seats by presenting some ideas that I thought were quite commonplace. I began to think that maybe I was saying something new. But it never in the wide, wide world occurred to me that I was saying anything new about anything but the counseling relationship. Thereon, it gradually broadened. Once you get hooked on it, in finding something that was helpful, it begins to eat at you. I couldn't any longer conduct staff meetings in the same way. I could no longer teach classes in the same way. So, I had to begin to experiment in those spheres. And from thereon, it goes on and on.

**Question:** I have two questions. What are your feelings about the amount of time one should spend with a client? The other is, what are your feelings about a fee relative to the client-counselor relationship?

**Rogers:** I think that if I were going back into individual therapy now, I would be far more flexible than I was at the time in regard to time. I don't know what I would do, but I would experiment with various things. I have always worked with a 50-minute hour and met once, twice, three times a week--but that was about it. I think I would try various things depending on the client and try and keep my own time as flexible as possible. I think I would try to have the client share with me the responsibility of determining how much time to spend. I don't know. I think there would be lots of things I would try to do. In other words, I don't think I know the answer to that.

On the matter of a fee, you touched on one of my points of cowardliness. I have never accepted, except perhaps a half a dozen incidences, a fee for therapy. I sympathize with, and look with a critical eye also, on all the people who are charging fees. I have a whole range of feelings on that. It's perfectly justifiable to charge a fee. What you are doing is quite worth doing. On the other hand, I wish we could get to a world where people didn't have to pay for human relationship.

**Question:** Do you see behavior modification having a place within the person-centered approach?

**Rogers:** By and large, I am deeply opposed to philosophy of strict orthodox behaviorism. It seems to me it does not click with respect to the person. On the other hand, I have known people who are definitely person-centered trying to use some behavior modification procedures in dealing with particular special situations. In Louisville, where they were really trying to turn the schools upside down, some of the younger children from the ghetto who had not been in school before, who did not come from a home background that would encourage learning at all--just couldn't even be kept in a classroom together. They were in and out of the windows and out of the school. The teachers just couldn't keep them in one room. Being person-centered in this type of situation really doesn't work unless you can be in some kind of a--at least a simple relationship. So, we began to use behavior mod methods to reward the children for sitting in their seats

for 10 minutes at a time until their behavior was such that they could be reached through a more human approach. That, to me, makes sense. I have no objection to that. I am also much intrigued with the fact that--it seems to me that really orthodox behaviorists, that is, philosophically orthodox behaviorists, believe that there is really nothing from within--that we are all simply shaped from the stimuli that impinge on us and the responses that come out have nothing to do with us as persons. That group, it seems to me, is diminishing. I may be wrong on that. At any rate, there are a great many behaviorists who really have completely changed their philosophy. I was struck by the title of a book (I haven't read it), *Self Control, Power to the Person*, that was written by a behaviorist who is trying to help people control their own behavior by setting their own rewards. Well, it's another possibility in changing one's behavior. It's just very far from the orthodox behaviorist views.

**Question:** I would like to hear you speak to partners having a primary relationship and yet having freedom to have other meaningful relationships. Also, I would like you to address the whole thing of energy expended in a lot of directions, and jealousy, and all those things.

**Rogers:** Well, the first thing I would say is that I have really thought a lot about that and certainly don't have any nice neat conclusions. But there is one thing that has gradually become more clear to me. I believe that a partnership that is person-centered in its relationship in which you have respect for each other, permit each other to make independent decisions, permit each other freedom, and where the desire is for each person to grow--I do think that the persons in that kind of relationship are more likely to develop "satellite" relationships. I like that term best of the various terms that have been used. By that I mean a secondary relationship outside the marriage or partnership bond. I guess it has taken me quite a while to recognize that I really believe that is true. And perhaps like many aspects of the person-centered approach, it is one of the risks one should consider in it. If you are going to permit your partner to grow in a fashion that he or

she finds most enriching, then one of the real possibilities is that they may find you don't meet all my needs. You are important to me, but some of my needs can best be met by others outside the partnership. And that might be anything from a friendship to a continuing sexual relationship or whatever. And to comment on the last part of your question: In our present culture, there seems no doubt that so-called satellite relationships almost inevitably cause jealousy. The question I cannot quite answer for myself is whether that is something innate. Is it kind of a territoriality that we feel a need to possess another person, or is it strictly something that has been engendered by our cultural attitudes? I lean toward the latter. But the evidence is far from conclusive or complete. The fact is, I don't know. I feel that it is possible that individuals could grow to a point of--I hate to use a fabricated term like maturity. Perhaps they could grow to a point where they would not be deeply, deeply threatened by sharing some aspect of their partner with another person. That's a hunch. I don't know.

**Question:** Are there ways for preparing for that?

**Rogers:** Oh, I think this is one of the ways.

**Participants:** Laughter, chatter.

**Question:** I want to hear from you, Carl, what is your understanding of the difference between counseling and therapy? I mean in what sense could counseling be called therapy, and in what sense couldn't it be called therapy?

**Rogers:** When I'm serious, I say that I can see no line of distinction between the two. When I am being a little facetious, I say that if it's a pretty poor relationship, sometimes it's called counseling. If it's a good relationship, it's called therapy.

**Participants:** Laughter, applause.

**Question:** I have been doing a little reading of *On Becoming a Person*, and in it there are several times you mentioned the words "certain lawfulness" which seems to occur as a person emerges and becomes, let's say, their organic whole. I wonder if you could describe what that means to you as you emerged yourself.

**Rogers:** I think it would be easier for me to describe that lawfulness as I observe it in other people, and I'll tell you why. One thing that perhaps hasn't been so evident in me to many people in recent years is that I really am a scientist as well as a therapist and contemplator and so forth. I am often struck by the awesomeness of the predictability of the process of change. I could talk about that a little bit in relationship to this group. I would be quite willing to predict that, starting from the beginning to the end of the workshop, we will become more expressive of deeper feelings. O.K. What deeper feelings, and what is that going to mean to us and all that? I don't know. That will depend. That's what I mean by predicting the unpredictable. I think we do see a lawfulness in the process, and yet cannot (and I hope never will be able to) predict the specifics of it. To me, it's very, very exciting, for example, that we have been able to confirm a number of hypotheses by research as to how change comes about and the conditions that tend to make for change. It's been interesting to me to build what I regard as a very tight theory of the way in which that comes about. That was published a long time ago, and I think not too many people are deeply interested in wading through it. But I spent several years trying to figure out "What am I about?" "Does it make any sense?" "Is there any order to it?" "Can you say if this and this exist, then this will happen?" And I gained a great deal from that. I think, like any theory, it's sometimes helpful and sometimes dangerous. If people tend to adopt a theory, that is a horrible thing. Whereas, it's the creation of a theory that's really valuable. I would much prefer to have people create a theory that has meaning for them than to say, "Oh, yes, I'll adopt Freudian theory, that's the thing I believe in," or "I'll adopt client-centered theory," or whatever. I think that's all I want to say at the moment. It's really the scientific side of me that is coming out.

**Question:** Do you feel now that the research approaches we are using are adequately reflecting the value of what we are doing?

**Rogers:** I have very mixed feelings and very vacillating feelings on the whole topic. I not long ago did a paper, which I am quite pleased with,

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that tries to sum up a lot of the research on empathy. It's not in our library. The reprints have not yet come from our publisher. I am going to try and do something about that in the next day or two. I call it *Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being*. I try to bring together a lot of the research that shows how extremely valuable empathy is as a change agent. So that's the research side of me speaking, saying, "See here are these facts which have been demonstrated in all kinds of different situations." And then if you ask me, "Do we have the research instruments to capture what has gone on thus far in this workshop?" My feeling is, "No, I don't think they are adequate." Our research methods lag way behind where we are experientially. And I've grown (what's the proper word?) more and more reluctant to always be lagging way behind where I think we are experientially. For myself, (this isn't to play down anyone else's research), I would rather try and be on the cutting edge of what's happening in experience and hope that gradually instruments may be developed which would help us to really understand what is going on currently.

**Question:** How do you see Gestalt therapy and client-centered therapy fitting together?

**Rogers:** I would really prefer to have other people answer that. I don't like to. I'm enough of a prejudiced person that I don't like to comment on other points of view in therapy. I'm very pleased that Maureen is (and perhaps some others) are possibly going to offer a group on Gestalt therapy. I'll say this much: I do think that the ultimate aim of Gestalt therapy and client-centered therapy is similar. Namely, to help the person experience what's going on in him at this moment and be guided by that experiencing. The roots are different, and if I thought they were equivalent, it wouldn't make any difference. I don't think they are equivalent. I think they are different. One thing about the client-centered approach is that I think it can utilize many modes from other points of view and yet keep a basically person-centered philosophy.



**Question:** On the same question, I'd like to ask you, do you see any difference between the person-centered approach and the in-between person of I-thou of Martin Buber?

**Rogers:** You were wondering if I saw any similarities or differences between the person-centered approach and Martin Buber's I-thou relationship. A very, very fascinating experience for me was the time that I was able to have a dialogue with Martin Buber. If some of you are not familiar with who he is, he is a famous Jewish philosopher. I felt our thinking was enough alike for the most part. We just struck different notes, but were very much in harmony. But when I said that the best parts of therapy, the most crucial moments of therapy were really described by his description of the I-thou relationship, he was quite shocked and differed with me sharply. It couldn't possibly be true because the therapist was here and the client was here, and it couldn't possibly be the real I-thou relationship he was talking about. I argued with him some on that. Then to clinch the point, he finally said, "But certainly with a schizophrenic you wouldn't believe that was true, that an I-thou relationship was possible." And I said, "Yes, I most assuredly did think that it was possible, that I suspected that the moments of change were the moments in which there was a real I-thou relationship between the therapist and the schizophrenic." And this, I could see, made him feel that I was a little bit off my rocker.

We happened to meet the next morning for breakfast. We were staying at the Michigan Student Union. He told me he had been thinking about our discussion a lot that night. And in order to get to understand each other better, we continued our discussion. It was fascinating to me, and he was very open. It developed that the courses he had taken in psychiatry, I think, were taken in the 1890s, which helped explain our differences. It gave me a better understanding than I had the night before.

**Question:** I'm wondering if the force and the energy that are going on here, of women gathering together and working together, have influenced you in your writings, which I consider to be very masculine and male-oriented?

**Rogers:** I think two chapters in the book I'm working on are available in the library. If you read the one on the "Person-Centered Approach to Marriage," I don't think you will find it male-oriented. I do think you will find some things there that you will like because I really regard the woman's liberation movement, at its best, definitely person-centered. It has its extremists and so on, as any movement does, but it is a respect for the worth of the individual woman that is at the heart of that. So, I even try to be very careful to use him and her, to change my language. That's why I told Jane Dallinger that I was so amused today when she presented the beautiful sketches to us and discussed what use should be made of staff, and how we could have "him" in one room, we could have "him" in another place, and we could have "him" serve another function. If I had said that, I would have been shot down.

**Participants:** Laughter.

**Question:** Now that you have experienced a person-centered approach, can you visualize a world-centered approach?

**Rogers:** I have a good deal of vision, excitement, and regard for the whole world. I don't know how much hope there is, but I can see lots of possibilities. But just as I don't see this experience as being group-centered, neither do I see my world view as being world-centered. I see it rather as a person-centered kind of approach which extends out more broadly, more broadly, more broadly across cultural lines, across racial lines, between Arabs and Jews, Catholics and Protestants in Belfast, all kinds of things like that. But it seems for me, still, the focus would be on helping the individual to communicate and to appreciate others and to encourage growth in others. We have a film that we did here with a mixed group of Protestants and Catholics in Belfast, and it was an exciting experience. The film costs an enormous amount, and our capital was limited, so it was only a weekend group. And that was not enough time to produce harmony between the two, that's certain. But the progress that was made seemed to many of us quite exciting. It could only be termed "some progress," not a resolution of the tremendous feelings that exist there. It was an exciting group.

**Question:** During this workshop, you have talked about the person-centered approach as it relates to education, marriage, and the political area. My question is, what conditions do you envision as being important for the acceleration of this process or relating to this process? And what else could we do to accelerate this process?

**Rogers:** I have many responses to what you are saying. One of them is, yes, I have wandered all over the place in my writings, touching so many different fields that I sometimes feel that I am spreading myself much too thin. And then on the other hand, I feel that there is a real consistent note running through those writings that perhaps I am not spreading myself so thin. But I guess I could perhaps best comment on your question by saying that I feel that we have a sort of test tube solution to a lot of the world's ills. That is, give me sufficient contact, or give you sufficient contact with a group that is at war within itself, and we will find that we know a lot of things that we can do to help that situation. So, we are not lacking in knowledge or skills of what to do with friction, with differences, with underdeveloped people, as well as underdeveloped countries--and I don't mean the two are synonymous. But all of that, so far, is in small compass. And when we ask, can we extend it to all the schools in the country, can we extend it to all the international problems that exist--I don't know. I guess at my age, that's not my bag. I hope the hell it can be.

The next article in the piece we did on empathy was by Dave Aspy. His title is, "Empathy: Let's Get the Hell on With It." I really like to see that kind of thing. I feel that my role, probably, is to try to keep formulating ideas that might be of help in a whole wide variety of situations. In this book I'm working on, one chapter I haven't written yet, but I have some notes on it, is the "Person-Centered Approach in Intercultural, Interracial, and International Issues." There is a lot we don't know in these fields, and I am very much aware of it. As to how we can hasten the development of that point of view, I hope this group comes up with some good answers to this.

**Question:** Have research activities seemed less important to you in your more recent work on small group processes?

**Rogers:** Yes, it has seemed less important to me, which is not to say it is a less important issue. I'm not as excited by that prospect as I was by the prospect of studying individual therapy from a research point of view. I'm not quite sure why. Part of it is the complexity. Part of it is that it is much harder to get the raw data. I operate best viewing the raw data, and to even get a decent recording of a series of small group sessions is a more difficult technical problem than to record two people in a regular therapy situation. If I were to do research on it, it would probably start with getting much more of the raw data. I guess that is just my prejudice. I can make more out of studying the specific interchanges that take place between people and in studying them coolly afterwards than I can out of using measurements that, to me, don't necessarily measure the significant dynamics of what's going on. The other part of it is that I've done my thing on research. I'll leave the rest of it up to you all.

**Question:** Could you comment on what you think the five to ten major specific events or changes that would have to occur for us to have a reasonably successful world in the future?

**Rogers:** I really think that's not something I could answer off the cuff. I hope that's something a lot of people will think about. It's an extremely good question. What comes to mind, to me, I guess, is a dilemma. I think there are ways of trying to train people in a person-centered approach, and therefore, it would be available on a much broader scale, whether we are talking about teachers, or parents, or whatever. And attempts have been made along that line. I grow a little concerned about anything that seems to me to be in the direction of mechanizing a person-centered kind of approach. And yet, over the years, my attitude on that has softened because I have seen a number of people whose attitudes have undoubtedly been helped by just the kind of training I would really be quite critical of. It has kind of opened them up further to what I would call real caring or real experience, or something. So, that's the dilemma I am in. Of course, what I'm saying is that, if we knew a way where we could somehow quickly multiply a hundred fold what we are doing, what we know and so on, there is no

doubt that would move us much closer to some kind of solution. As you see, my thinking on that stays quite close to earth. And for some of the rest of you who have to have a broader perspective on the events, it might help.

**Question:** What are the kinds of human experiences that you would see a utopian society promoting or providing?

**Rogers:** I really don't like to answer that in the abstract because I feel very, very strongly myself that's exactly what we are working on here. We are trying to learn, at a gut level, hopefully also at an abstract level, but first, perhaps at a gut level, what, if anything, makes it possible for a group to feel unified, to feel respected, to deal with each other in constructive ways and not being afraid to differ, not being afraid of negative feelings, but having a way of dealing with those that the outcome is constructive, not destructive. And so, by the time we get through here, we ought to be able to write a brief essay on "Attempts to Form a Utopia, and How They Succeeded or How They Failed."

**Question:** I'm wondering, regarding encounter groups and freedom to learn, it seems that most people come into encounter groups either by choice or because they were in some kind of required course. If it was a choice made by the teacher to handle it in that way, the students were not free to decide for themselves what they really wanted to do. I'm wondering what your ideas are on what can be done to reach people with encounter-group type of situations while respecting their right to make their decision for themselves without laying any kind of expectations on them on what they would get out of it.

**Rogers:** Well, the best answer I can give is just what we tried to do here at the start. This was one of the kind of "back ass" things that we did in planning. Where instead of wondering, "How can we get through running an encounter group?"--we did ask that, but, we also asked ourselves, "What are we going to do about the people who may not want to be in an encounter group?" And if you will recall, we tried to make that choice just as available to people as the choice to be in encounter groups. And had there been a sizeable number, we were prepared to handle those individuals in helping them find what they

wanted to do, and do it. Now, I realize that for a single teacher, with his own class, perhaps that can present difficulties and all that. But what I think would have happened, yeah, let me carry this scenario a little bit further. What I honestly think would have happened, had there been a group large enough to form a group who said, "No, we don't want to be in these initial, intensive, small groups." If they had been interested in getting together with a facilitating leader, pretty soon their sessions would have begun to take on the flavor of an encounter group. I really don't regard that as manipulation; I just feel that's a fact. If you get people interacting without much fear or threat, without feeling that, "Oh, I have got to be in that encounter group," pretty soon they will be willing to meet each other and talk to each other and be closer to each other. I don't know what the difference is between that and an encounter group.

**Question:** I guess my question is at a more basic level. How do you get high-level kids to participate in intensive groups, and what do you tell them to prepare them for it?

**Rogers:** Well, I don't like to theorize beyond my experience. The last time I had contact with a group of teenagers was with a group of high school girls from Immaculate Heart High School. They had agreed to come to a conference, but if you know what people are like, including you and me, you can't receive a communication of what an intensive group is going to be like because there is no way of communicating it really until you have had some kind of taste of that kind of experience. So, they hadn't been deceived in coming there, but neither were they expecting what they found. I had a fascinating experience with that group of girls. Initially, it was extremely discouraging. I thought, "My god, I have never heard such chitchat in my life." I listened to more stuff about nothing than I had in a long time; then in the midst of a lot of nothing, one girl would say something very deep and very meaningful and almost immediately retreat from it and get back on a superficial level.

You had to keep a very sharp ear for these notes of significance since these girls were, in my judgment, extremely fearful of

bringing out anything sensitive because they thought that an adult wouldn't understand, or would disapprove, or would have some other judgmental attitude that they couldn't take. I think adolescents are terribly sensitive about personal things. So, little by little, over the four-day workshop, it did become a real encounter group. But I had to listen to a lot of stuff first.

**Question:** There are many different kinds of groups: laboratory training groups, sensitivity training groups, developmental groups, small groups, encounter groups, experiential groups, and so forth. Some people divide all of these different kinds of groups into two main types: group-oriented or person-oriented. While other people divide these groups up into interpersonal-growth-oriented and personal-growth-oriented and put encounter groups into the personal-growth-oriented group. Do you agree with that, or do you see any differences in these two kinds of groups?

**Rogers:** I'm terrible about categories because I don't particularly believe in them. I think some group leaders do tend to focus more on what is going on in the group process, and others tend to focus more on what is happening with communication between individual persons or communication of a person with himself. I do feel that there is a gradation there, a continuum.

**Question:** I would like to go back to the high school group. What did you learn from the group?

**Rogers:** I am discouraging to lots of people because I am so unexciting as a group facilitator. But I listen and try to keep alert for those moments of meaning. I even try to pay attention to the chitchat. One story which started out as chitchat still sticks in my mind. One girl said that a fellow had offered to pick her up and take her with him to pick up his girlfriend, and they would all go to the party together. At any rate, the three of them were in the car together. She said she was so concerned about that because what could they talk about?

**Participants:** A lot of laughter.

**Rogers:** But she said this difficult social situation worked out all right because the minute they all three got in the car, they all talked at once,

and nobody heard what the others were saying. And it went perfectly O.K., which was one of the things I learned from them.

**Question:** I am interested in what you have to say about some of the mental health leaders in the world today and how they make decisions regarding resource allocations.

**Rogers:** The effort to make diagnosis of world leaders is probably as ineffective, in my mind, as it is to make psychological diagnosis of other people. I'm not much hooked on that. For example, if you take one instance, I certainly had my psychological judgments about Harry Truman when he took office. He was a weak, frightened man. Scared stiff of all the responsibilities that had fallen on his shoulders all at once and obviously quite incapable of carrying the burden he would have to carry. Now, he looks pretty good. So, I distrust my diagnosis there as much as I do in other cases.

**Question:** What do you think would happen if we had sixteen days with a group of hard hats?

**Rogers:** One question would be whether they came voluntarily. If so, that would make a very real difference. If they came voluntarily, out of curiosity, or because they heard from some friend that something like this might be kind of exciting or interesting or something, I would expect to see process. They wouldn't be starting from the same level that this group did in terms of emotional sophistication, but sometimes you get very rapid movement with people who are relatively naive in the psychological field. They are often not as concerned with defending their feelings as people with a hell of a lot of professional training. So, if they came voluntarily, I really would expect a great deal of movement and a great deal of change in them. If they didn't come voluntarily, then it would be more difficult. I would expect the same kind of process, but probably not as much movement. I would also expect more skepticism. If they didn't come voluntarily, I would hope they were required to stay for the sixteen days. That would work out all right.

**Question:** I am interested in the relationship of the person-centered approach to changing institutions. I am coming to the question from



the point of view of one of our own churches in New Orleans as an illustration only. This situation concerned a racial issue which involved a lot of people. This goes back twenty years ago. The church of my denomination and the Catholic Church, as institutions, went through a considerable struggle before changing its policy about non-exclusion of blacks. There was very little opportunity in those institutions for the client-centered approach to really have an opportunity to show its attar. In our church, for instance, it involved three bombings of a minister's home and two bombings of the church. I'm trying to see the relationship, and I think there is one between the growth movement and the institution of change. What are the dialects on that? Do they both have to happen at the same time? Does one lead to the other?

**Rogers:** Well, that surely is a profound question. Let me sort of sneak around the edges of it and see if I can get anywhere close to your question. I think that part of my difficulty knowing how to respond is that, personally, I feel that all institutions would be better off if they voluntarily disbanded at the end of 10 years and reorganized. Since that seems somewhat unlikely to happen in the near future, I have to face it on a more realistic basis. Still, I don't want to leave that out because I think that institutions are going to rigidify no matter what. Perhaps someday, they will develop the skills to keep them really open, but it's obviously very difficult.

So, now you are talking about how do you deal with an institution already rigid, already knowing just what it is going to do and what it's not going to do. I am sure that what was involved was the same kind of thing. I'm not so acquainted with that field as I am with education, where people are taking risks of trying to open up their classes and teach in a freer fashion. I can name a number of them who have been fired for that reason, or if not fired, just their contract not renewed, which is a much more graceful way of putting it. In other words, risk is involved, by someone, in trying to bring about better communication. I'm sure of that. In school, so far, I don't know of anybody being bombed for that reason. But it could happen.

Perhaps, that is as far as I can go, which is not a real answer.

**Question:** Carl, could you address yourself to Christianity and the humanistic movement?

**Rogers:** I suppose my feeling is that institutional Christianity is not particularly humanistic. I think that many people that hold a religious point of view are definitely humanistic. I don't feel I am a very good person to answer your question because if I have any religious point of view, it is that whatever is going on here at the best moments in our small groups, or at the best moments in our community groups, is some sort of a force in the universe that can be released. I think it is a force in us, not a force somewhere up there, not a force in the past. So, that point of view doesn't lend itself very well to a comparison of Christianity and humanistic psychology.

**Question:** Isn't that point of view a religious point?

**Rogers:** No, I don't like to call it religious because I would prefer to call it lawful. There is something lawful about the fact that a spirit of that kind exists and can be released. The only reason I don't like to call it religious is that term has so many connotations, that which for me, I don't like. But nevertheless, I am quite aware of the fact that the issues that religious people are trying to deal with are also issues that I would like to be able to deal with. And in that sense, I feel close to it.

**Question:** If you were in charge of a counseling program in a typical inner-city high school of about 2,000 students and four counselors and one part-time psychologist, what basic activities would you like to see going on first?

**Rogers:** First, I would stop beating my mother.

**Participants:** A lot of laughter.

**Rogers:** What I'm saying is that seems like a very, very difficult situation, and I am quite aware that any answer would be partial and all that. This off the top of the head, not having ever worked in a high school, one fantasy I might have would be that I would endeavor to get together the real leaders of the high school and form an intensive small group of those individuals because if they could be reached, they might be able to have some impact on others--which means that I

would depart totally from the notion of high school counseling as being to put band aides on the kids who are having problems.

**Question:** It seems to me that the person-centered approach is more directly applicable to healthy functioning personalities as opposed to pathological personalities. Do you still use the nondirective approach in working with the pathological or working with those individuals that have been so brutalized by society as to have adapted an antisocial behavior pattern?

**Rogers:** Yes, we did a whole research project on psychotherapy with schizophrenics, which was too ambitious and not highly conclusive. But based on the personal experiences we had, perhaps the person-centered approach is the only thing that can work. I have been very much interested in the San Francisco outfit, which I think is just now defunct, called Diabesis. Do any of you know of that? Well, anyway, it's led by John Perry and another fellow. It fascinated me because Perry has had loads of experience with psychotics, and he was able to set up the kind of institution that he wanted. It was a very small one. He wished it could be larger. I would describe the approach there as a straight person-centered approach. As staff, he enlisted mostly young people. Many of them were from the counterculture and had often been on drug trips themselves. They weren't scared of bizarre behavior. They weren't afraid of people who were on some other kind of trip; then one of those volunteers, because often they were volunteers, would stay with a new individual. They refused to call them a patient. When an individual came into that system, this volunteer would spend as much time as needed for being with that person, trying to respond to them, trying to be themselves in the relationship. The results they obtained were really very striking. It's true he was dealing with individuals who were having their first psychotic breakdown, which is the most hopeful group of psychotics. But nonetheless, it was very impressive. Another thing that intrigued me was that as the whole staff became more and more imbued with that kind of approach, pretty soon he couldn't tolerate the kind of administration they had where he was the director. And so, the last I knew, the organization

was run by the whole staff together, not by any one director, which bears out what I said earlier, that when you get hooked on something like this, it begins to affect all kinds of things you don't expect.

**Question:** Is there any particular reason you haven't used the term nondirective?

**Rogers:** I very carefully avoided any reference to that term. That's part of the evolution of my own thinking which was, first of all, a protest against the highly directive, advice-giving counseling that was going on at that time, and also against the highly interpretive Freudian thinking, which was characteristic of that period. So it started out, in a way, as a negative statement. Don't do this. Then gradually, I became quite dissatisfied with that and tried to use the term client-centered to indicate that the process was focused in the person, in the client. Client-centered gets a little bit useless when you are talking about students, and international relationships, and what not. Who are the clients? And so, person-centered seemed to me, recently, to be a better term. I suppose that's part of conscious and unconscious strategy. Keep changing labels. Whatever you do, keep changing labels.

**Participants:** Laughter. Applause.

**Rogers:** Earlier, someone asked if there was anything I wanted to say to the group, and I couldn't think of anything at that time. Yes, I do think there is one thing I want to say which somehow really hasn't come out except by implication. And that is, what we are involved in here is subversion of the most powerful sort. This is a revolutionary kind of approach. It has revolutionary effects, and sometimes I think people underestimate both the risks and the impact. I just want to say that because what started as just a way of trying to help a person in trouble turns out to be an approach which undermines institutions, which undermines current education, which is sharply at variance of conventional notions of marriage, and which I think is really revolutionary in all its aspects.

**Question:** Has Jung had any influence on your development?

**Rogers:** I read Jung when I was interning back in 1927-1928. And to tell the honest truth, I thought, "My god, how dull can you get!" And

so, I kind of turned off on him. It was only a year ago that I read his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, and I thought, "Why the hell didn't he write that first?" But of course he couldn't do that because he wrote this at the end of his life. I am turned off by ponderous scholarship in any field, and he has a lot of it in what he has written. It is clear from his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* that he was a very growing person, and that I deeply respect. He was a person of enormous depth. I really have come to have a great deal of respect for Jung. I have a somewhat dim respect for Freud. I liked, perhaps best, (I forgot whether it was in his book, or I learned it from other sources) when they were exchanging dreams and interpreting them, and Freud kind of decided, no, that he had one dream that he was not going to tell because if he told it to Jung, he would probably lose his authority over him and no longer be respected as a teacher. And Jung said that was the last time that he really could learn from Freud. Well, that would turn me off too.

**Question:** What do you think about Sullivan, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, or some of the other neo-Freudians?

**Rogers:** After saying initially that I was not going to comment on other people's points of view, you pretty well sucked me into that one. I'll say something personal first. I don't regard myself as a scholar. I think there is a certain amount of truth to the notion that those who read don't write, and those who write don't read. I don't claim to be an expert in the different fields of therapy. I think the one comment I would make in regard to your question is I have a great deal of respect for Frieda Fromm-Reichmann as a therapist. Beyond that, I feel it would be a little presumptuous for me to say because I don't feel acquainted with all the aspects of her work.

**Question:** What do you think about the purpose of the American Association of Humanistic Psychology at Estes Park?

**Rogers:** It has a good title. I like the AHP as an organization. Maybe some of you would know better than I do whether that conference would be worth a large change in schedule. I really wouldn't hesitate to say. I just don't know.

**Question:** How can I become more accepting?

**Rogers:** I think with the development of any of these attitudes we have been talking about is really a lifetime task. I don't think anyone develops a degree of acceptance of others that they would like. I suppose for me, at times when I have changed from a nonacceptance of a person to a later acceptance of him or her is when I have been quite willing to listen as empathically as I can. Once you get inside the other person, he seems far more understandable and acceptable, and you realize I probably would be like that to if I had the same set of circumstances surrounding me. So, I think that's the only tool I can think of offhand.

**Question:** I wonder about your own personal change in working in a one-to-one therapeutic situation to a group situation, and is that reflected in your ideas about social change?

**Rogers:** Well, like many things in my life, it came about first due to circumstances. When I was in Chicago, I was deeply involved in one-to-one therapy during the 12 years I was there. When I went to Wisconsin, I particularly wanted to get involved with psychotics because that was the group I'd never worked with until I set up an elaborate program of research on psychotherapy with schizophrenics, which was one-to-one. Then when I moved to the West Coast, I realized that my life had changed enough and the demands on it were such that I simply could not do individual therapy anymore because I feel individual therapy demands a time commitment on a regular basis over a long period of time--and that, I was quite unable to give. So, that was part of the reason I began to get more into the group experience kind of thing because I could say I could commit myself for a week, or for a weekend, or something like that. Then as I got more deeply into that (and it was not new to me, as I tried some of that at Chicago and had a very successful workshop or two at Wisconsin), the more I came to feel that it did have more impact in ways that make sense to me but might not to some of you. When you are working with clients who are people in great difficulty, you may be very successful in helping them. Their lives may really have changed a good deal. And

yet, perhaps for many of them, they are doing very well if they can get along just reasonably well in society. That is a big step forward from where they were. When you are dealing with the kind of people who increasingly come to encounter groups, you are dealing with people who are potential leaders. And so, that does have something to do with social change as far as I'm concerned. If some change occurs in people like that, then perhaps the total social impact is much greater than any equivalent amount of time working with individuals. I guess there are a lot of things I am not ambitious for, but I realize that I am ambitious for impact. I've come to recognize that much more as the years have gone by.

**Question:** Carl, the question I ask has a great deal of conflict for me, and it deals with the issues of acceptance and confrontation and attempting to reconcile those two things. Specifically, I work with people who are very often involved with extremely destructive behavior for themselves and for other persons. They are also very suspicious and regard acceptance as weakness. Yet, there is the danger to themselves and other people that if their behavior is not confronted, it could lead to a life and death situation. I have a lot of difficulty with this because sometimes in the process of confrontation the person becomes alienated and it seems that the whole communication process breaks down.

**Rogers:** I guess that I am beginning to feel that I am not King Solomon.

**Participants:** Laughter.

**Rogers:** I can certainly appreciate your situation, and I'm sure I would have as tough a time with it if I were in your spot that you are having. I think that often a caring confrontation is helpful. I think that's one of the things I've learned from Synanon. The Synanon groups always strike me as being incredibly attacking. I think when they carry this approach outside of Synanon and try to deal with other groups, I doubt that they do much good. I think they perhaps often do a lot of damage. But in Synanon, they are dealing with people who have been putting up a phony front all of their lives to get by at one level or

another. It is helpful, not just because their defenses are attacked, it's helpful because that occurs in a 24-hour context of caring. They are supported; they are helped; they are encouraged; they are given responsibility at their own level, and so on. And so, that makes sense to me. But I would not know how to translate it into your situation. I'm just saying that where confrontation is helpful and real, and even strong confrontation, it can be helpful if it exists in a total atmosphere of a real caring situation.

**Question:** I'm starting to feel a little restless and I was wondering if we could take a 10-minute break so that we could move our bodies around.

**Rogers:** Well, let me ask what you would like to do. It's now 10 minutes to nine. So, if we took a 10-minute break, actually, the time would be over.

**A Participant:** I didn't know that.

**Rogers:** Well, there is a certain amount of limit for me. I feel I begin to run down and get not so smart as I really am.

**Participants:** Laughter and then a lot of applause.

**A Participant:** That's fine. I can sit for 10 minutes.

**Rogers:** O.K.

**Question:** I would like to know if you would share a little bit about your personal life and your own spiritual life or religious convictions, if any, and how you have evolved and grown in that process. Further, could you point out and give some advice that could suit the attitude toward life for an adolescent, or a young adult, and for a mature person.

**Rogers:** So, this is just a minor question of reviewing my life and the spiritual part of me and also the attitudes that would be useful for an adolescent, a young adult, and a mature person.

Let me answer 10 percent of that question. I was brought up in a religious home quite fundamentalist in nature. I rebelled against that, but in a very constructive way. I have often thought how fortunate I was that it was on a trip to China for a world student Christian Federation conference that I left my adolescent religion behind and



moved into a whole new field. I was gone for six months, and by the time I got back, the fight was all over. I had come to a new orientation for myself, and I never really had to struggle it out with my family; then I was religious in a new way and went to Union Theological Seminary for a year. And during the second year, I was moving across the street to Teachers College, Columbia. I've never regretted the year I spent at Union Theological Seminary. That was a marvelous chance to think through my own philosophy of life and sort of come to terms with a lot of important issues. From there on, some of the things I said earlier apply. I suppose this will be taken badly too, perhaps. I really don't think of myself as having a spiritual life. I think that my spirit is nourished by the deepest of human contacts. I always feel nourished when something really deep happens between me and another person in therapy, or in a group, or something like that. I feel just renewed by that, and that is terribly important to me. That's why it's a real need of mine to do something like this, for example. I couldn't stay home and write all year. I have to touch base. I have to feel this all over again. I have to experience things again to somehow be confirmed in what I'm thinking.

Then somehow, I want to say something else. I didn't quite answer that question. I have often been interested in the way in which I make choices and decisions--because I don't. Oftentimes, I really find myself groping in a number of different directions at once, then some of those directions feel unsatisfying and not good, and some feel surprisingly good that I had not expected to be so. So, I grope toward the next move in my life. I sometimes liken myself to an amoeba. I put out a pseudopod in one direction. If it senses something rough, or acrid, or something, then it pulls back; then I move out in another direction, and if that feels good, I tend to flow in that direction. I have long, long ago given up much of any attempt to make conscious decisions on important issues. I will make a decision as to whether I will give a talk or something like that. But on important issues, I really don't make decisions; I eventually feel them. I finally realize, "Oh yeah, that's the direction I want to move in." For example, this book that I

have put in a lot of effort on now started out to be a short paper just touching on a number of issues of interpersonal politics; then the paper grew, and grew, and grew, and grew. Writing this book had a strange origin. I had agreed to do a book for junior college students. I still wish I could have completed that. I signed a contract and everything. Being of a thrifty sort, since I had written a number of chapters I thought, "I can't throw those away." I had the most fun writing a chapter or two on marriage. I thought that's something I could cull. And so, I groped along in that direction and out of it came the book *Becoming Partners*, which kind of shocked a lot of people because they probably thought, "What does he know about that? That's a new topic for him." I'm not sure that I do know much about it, but I could at least listen to other people and put down what they told me.

So, now I'm way away from the question that was asked, but anyway, it seems to me that's how I moved through life. I found it a nice way. I really liked that way of going through life.

**Question:** I am speaking now as a kind of "plant freak." Could you tell us a little bit about your garden?

**Rogers:** Ha! Ha! All right. That would be a good closing note. Well, I could say--but, it wouldn't be quite the truth, that it got its start when I studied agriculture for two years in college. I was going to be a scientific farmer. Well, that's another issue. I would be a despair of any vocational counselor. I knew I wanted to be a scientific farmer, so I took two years of agriculture, then I got sort of stirred up by a religious conference and decided, no, I shouldn't do any religious work, somehow agriculture didn't seem like the best foundation for that, so I switched to a history major. I majored mostly in mediaeval history, then I went to Union Seminary for a year. Next, I went to Teachers College, and I began to go into clinical psychology, so that's part of my own gardening.

Now, as to my garden, I've really become a gardener, in any intensive sense, in the last twelve years since we've been down here on the West Coast. It's so nice to have things grow the year 'round. I had

my fill of practical agriculture years ago, so what I grow are succulents. And when I wasn't quite so troubled by arthritis, I grew some damn good tuberous begonias. It really takes a lot of care to do them right. I have some now, but I'm not too proud of them. I also have some roses.

I like to go for unusual things, I guess. A student of mine from South Africa sent me some olives through the mail. When he learned I was interested in gardening, he sent me some South African olives. Now, I've got a bunch of those growing. My latest gardening hobby is a nutty one. I question whether I will live long enough to see the fruits of it. I got interested in Proteas. I don't know whether any of you know what Proteas are. They have very exotic blooms. Some of them as big as that [raising his arm to indicate they were several feet high] and some smaller, but all of them are very, very different. At supper someone was asking me about them, and I was trying to describe what some of them are like. One of them is shaped sort of like that, [demonstrating their shape with his hands] with either pink or white petals. But the end of each petal is--O.K. Let's just call it quits for tonight.

**Participants:** A great deal of applause.

# **Education as Relationship Between Persons**

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“The person of the educator is what counts more than his/her  
knowledge, more than the methods used.”

C. R. Rogers (1984)

“We are going to seriously take into consideration an educational reform,  
only when we see that the training of the educator is its first article.”

Ardoino (1963)

## **Abstract**

*Relational dynamic education and counseling* is a developing approach that views education as (1) a process that targets the emergence and establishment in the individual of a unique identity and (2) an act, not static but dynamic and fluid, greatly influenced by the quality of the relationships. The fruits of this pedagogy depend heavily on the transformation of the educational relationship into a genuine, person-centered one. It has application in every field of human endeavor where the healthy psychological and spiritual growth of the individual is a goal. In this article, the basic concepts and tenets of this approach are presented. A new teaching model is put forward, based on the quality of person-centered relationships between the student and the teacher.

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### **The Need for a Relational Approach to Education**

It is becoming widely acknowledged that the educational system in its current form is failing to meet the real needs of modern societies, let alone the real needs of the students (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010; Kosmopoulos, 1990; Moffet, 1994; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). Despite the various social changes and the major progress made in the human sciences during the previous century, which generated the “movement of new (or progressive) education” and the “school of action” (e.g., Dewey, Kerschensteiner), our schools worldwide appear to be the least affected by these new ideas. As Rogers and Freiberg observe, they still “...constitute the most traditional, conservative, rigid, bureaucratic institution of our time” (1994, p. xxi), and the power of inertness seems too difficult to overcome. But how much progress would have taken place if contemporary principles and accumulated scientific evidence were seriously considered by reformers and policy makers?

In our view, our schools are increasingly becoming isolated islands surrounded by indifference. Our future generation of children represent a dwindling population of healthy, happy, self-motivated individuals who are willing to learn and develop within the school system. If educators or policy makers attempt to investigate the prime causes of the students’ reluctance to learn, they might identify the lack of coherence, connection or relation between the student and the school process. Fifty years ago, it was home and families, culture, religion, and the community that supported the education of students. Nowadays, the high rate of divorce, multiculturalism and community destabilization has made this support problematic (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). But if this is the case, what is it that could connect students with schools today? We believe that the only effective and permanent solution to the problem with schooling today is the development of personal motives, which could internally connect the school learning environment with the students’ deep interests and needs. It is the abolition of the “nonrelational” attitude that reigns over schools today, replaced with an immediate and functional “relationship” between the students and their school

community. Such a relationship could give meaning to their studies and aid the developmental trajectory of the child or adolescent.

It is important to point that voices from inside schools themselves appear to stress this need for meaningful and authentic relationships. For example, Cornelius-White (2007) reports a powerful qualitative study carried out by Poplin and Weeres (1994) that attempted to investigate the question “What is the problem with schooling?” According to their research, the main problem identified was relationships. The authors conclude, “Students desire authentic relationships where they are trusted, given responsibility, spoken to honestly and warmly, and treated with dignity” (Poplin & Weeres, 1994, cited in Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 116). Other studies carried out in Greek schools appear to have arrived at similar results (e.g., Kaila, 1999).

The educator as a person has a major role to play here. According to a recent meta-analysis (Cornelius-White, 2007), person-centered teacher variables (e.g., empathy, genuineness, nondirectivity) were found to have above-average association with positive student outcomes. Additionally, regarding the link between the educator’s personality and the development of self-perception or social attitudes in students, a report by UNESCO (1997) says that the poorer the self-image teachers have and convey, the less favorable seems to be the students’ trust in the authorities or confidence in their own sense of political ability. Furthermore, in this climate, the students’ attitude toward the values of multiculturalism, active involvement in community life, and confrontation of every authority with personal freedom and autonomy, appears to be restricted. In his first public speech in Paris in 1966, which influenced the way many French intellectuals thought, Rogers said, “It is urgent to devote as much money to the liberation of the person, as we do to nuclear power.” This statement emphasizes the empowerment of an educational system that promotes the development of persons who will create the societies of the third millennium.

In the present article, a relational pedagogy is proposed, called *relational dynamic education (RD education)*, which meets the real needs of young people and modern societies. This approach to educative relationships was developed by A. Kosmopoulos in the 1960s

(Kosmopoulos, 1967, 1983, 2000). Within common European practice, it supports a school that does not simply conform to the various *curricula*, but targets the development of a “fully functioning” (Rogers, 1961) student. In such a school, the students (as well as the teachers) are trusted and assisted to assume full responsibility for their own learning. This is realistic only if the educational system fully accepts and reinforces the tendency toward *self-actualization* as part of each person’s *organismic* nature. “This is the inherent tendency of the organism to develop all its capacities in ways which serve to maintain and enhance the organism,” defined Rogers (1959, p. 196). Additionally, in a school that adopts the RD approach, students’ (and teachers’) personal development is enhanced by the establishment of genuine, person-centered relationships, which need time to be established, as well as a fertile climate of trust, caring, and positive self-regard. Finally, in such a school, teachers feel free and secure to relate to their students in a person-centered way. Both teachers and students are creative in their relationships with each other as well as in their relationships to their individual selves and to the subject matter.

It should be stressed on this point that, although the synthesized theory presented in this paper may share common aspects with other humanistic and holistic approaches to education (e.g., holistic education: Palmer, 1993; Miller, 1993), we believe that it is unique in the synthesis it provides as well as in the emphasis it places on the authentic and educative person-centered teacher-student relationship. This emphasis stems from a core assumption of the RD education that the essence and core of education lies not in the teacher’s personality, neither in the subject matter, but in the high-quality relationship developed as a third entity between the student and the pedagogue. This positive teacher-student relationship can further develop students as persons by facilitating the establishment of an inner relationship between the student and the student’s self as well as with the essence of the teaching subject, which we believe is the ultimate goal of the education. This can only be accomplished by a teaching approach that involves the whole presence of the educator as well as the facilitation of an experiential, meaningful type of learning.

But what are the qualitative characteristics of a genuine, educative, dynamic, and person-centered relationship? We hope that

they will soon become evident after a brief introduction of the basic concepts and tenets of the RD approach, which follows.

### **The “Person” and the “Relationship”**

#### *The “person”*

According to the RD education, the current educational system has (or should have) as its primary mission facilitating the development of students as persons. First, the concept of “person” includes elements that have been attributed to the concept of personality by Caruso (1964), Allport (1968), Frankl (1985), and Sullivan (1954). It also includes the characteristics assigned to it by the French philosophical-psychological school of the journal *Esprit* (Mounier, 1952) and phenomenology (Merleau Ponty, 1976). Most importantly, it includes the characteristics of the “fully functioning person” as defined by Maslow (1987) and Rogers (1961) and further analyzed by Schmid (1998) as well as Patterson and Hidore (1997). The most basic of these characteristics are the belief in the uniqueness of the individual, a sense of personal continuity and purpose in life, and a feeling of inner freedom and personal power.

Further, the term “fully functioning person” also refers to the qualitative characteristics of a healthy and effectively functioning individual, and thus the term appears to be close to G. Allport’s “personality.” However, it seems that the “person” is beyond the mere functions and expressions of “personality” and constitutes a core of bottomless depth, which is not further analyzable. “Person” is the source of originality, sociability, and inner freedom, offering inner information about “Who am I?” and “Where am I going?” Thus the “person” feeds the individual’s self-image and self-esteem—an image that may not necessarily be consistent with other people’s opinion of that person. We assert that “person” is the core of personality, which, as a “hypostasis,” has touched the outmost boundaries of being. It is exactly that psychological (and spiritual) entity through which the Rogers “person” is able to function properly. Finally, the “person” is the being who feels and handles the ineffable existential freedom and goes beyond and above the mere egocentrism and the logic of self-conservation. The “person” consists of potentiality, which is often



hidden and sometimes unrealized. It emerges in the first years of life and needs the welcoming and accepting behavior to be actualized and safeguarded. Therefore, an emotionally supportive family, as well as a person-centered school, may help find a way to successfully navigate the opposing forces of “freedom” and “law” through a nondirective, person-centered climate, which respects and reinforces the emergence of the “person” in the young child.

*The relationship*

When two or more people establish a sharing, genuine affective bond between them, this bond has the potential to further develop into a deep and intimate relationship. As a result, persons who form a relationship of such a high quality tend to share a common frame of reference called the *relational dynamics context (RD context)*. According to the theory presented here, the “relationship” indicates first of all the sharing of a psychic “topos” (“place,” “lieu”) of deep knowledge and empathic understanding that functions as a common frame of reference (Kosmopoulos, 1999; 2001).

What actually does this psychic topos or RD context contain? On an affective and intellectual level, the RD context serves as the place of semantic references and is decodable and interpretative in a similar—but not identical—way by the persons in a relationship. This context remains “present,” “alive,” dynamic, and intervening in the communication between the persons involved. The RD context, which in the first stages of the interpersonal relationship is continuously being explored and decoded by the participants, is now expanding itself more and more and contributes to the further deepening of the relationship.

The RD context involves the sharing, not only of experiences and affective life events, but also of other elements of life. All these experiences constitute the common place of semantic references, which allows the accurate understanding and interpretation of the social/relational occurrences and contributes to the establishment and deepening of the relationship. Furthermore, this context is so powerful that it can make verbal communication unnecessary or redundant. Therefore, it could be held responsible for the phenomenon we sometimes observe when persons—in relationship—manage to communicate effectively in the absence of verbal exchange, in silence.

In this case, it is possible to watch silence becoming a form of communication during discussions of sensitive issues or at high levels of the relationship.

Other elements of the context are, according to person-centered theory (Rogers, 1961), the positive and unconditional regard and trust in the person as an organismic being moving toward growth and self-actualization.

Preliminary evidence supports the existence of this shared frame of reference in persons in a relationship. In one psychometric study, the authors of this study and a colleague (Vassilopoulos, Kosmopoulos, & Konstantinidis, 2004) found that persons in relationships they considered as intimate (a) share unique things with their relationship partners, (b) have deep, personal and direct knowledge of their partners, (c) are more capable of empathic understanding regarding their relationship partners, (d) find the relationships with them developing, deepening more and more, (e) are always conscious of these relationships, and (f) feel emotionally secure in the relationships. In another study, we investigated the link between the RD context and the meanings ascribed to hypothetical interpersonal interactions (Vassilopoulos & Kosmopoulos, 2003a). We found that this shared frame of reference influences the interpretations of ambiguous or apparently negative social events. Specifically, participants in intimate relationships (scoring high on the Relational Dynamic Context Inventory developed by Vassilopoulos, Kosmopoulos & Konstantinidis, 2004) tended to produce more positive and less negative interpretations of ambiguous social events and interpreted negative events in a less negative or offensive way. For example, they were less likely to interpret a conversation partner's yawn as indicating boredom (negative interpretation) and/or more likely to interpret it as indicating exhaustion (benign interpretation). Similar results have been reported in another study (Vassilopoulos & Kosmopoulos, 2003b). Therefore, there is indirect and preliminary evidence suggesting that the context of the relationship is intervening in the communication between the relationship partners.

### **The helping, educative relationship**

The educative relationship, in order to help students develop, should be characterized by:

(a) Psychological health, a core characteristic of which is *genuineness*. The “relational health” refers to the maturity, a readiness of the person to develop relationships that are life-enriching and creative (for both the person and the other). The interpersonal relationship is also psychologically healthy when the individual has the ability to develop and create without oppressing or manipulating the other. Finally, the relationship is healthy when the individual is not distancing himself or herself from the other by resorting to mechanisms of defense or manipulation due to hidden motives, as we will see below.

“Relational genuineness,” on the other hand, refers to the intentions and attitudes of the individual, which are not only congruent with his inner experience, but are transparent to the relationship partner. No doubt, this transparency, harmony, and consistency with one’s inward experiencing can become the catalyst for the further development of the relationship. However, these interpersonal qualities presuppose the function of a relational climate that leads the educator to advanced levels of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and positive self-esteem.

b) “Pedagogical” quality. Ancient Greeks first conceived education as a relationship. According to Marrou, education in ancient Greece was more than teaching; it was actually the efforts of an older man, who took care of a younger man in order to facilitate his development (Marrou, 1965, p. 68). However, it is J. H. Pestalozzi (1746-1827), the great Swiss educator and forerunner of the “I’ Education Nouvelle” and “Arbeitschule” educational movements, who should be regarded as the “father” of the relational dynamic education. His contribution to the field of pedagogical sciences was innovative because, for the first time, pedagogical conception and practice was based on his warm and authentic pedagogical relationships with the children in his institutes.

Nevertheless, this innovative conception of education as a qualitative interpersonal relationship, highlighted in both Pestalozzi’s work and the child-centered pedagogical movements of the “new

school” or the “school of action,” was not given the consideration it deserved by the scientific community until the appearance of C. R. Rogers. In the middle of the previous century, Carl Rogers revolutionized the field of psychology by suggesting that the outcome in psychotherapy depends on the quality of the relationship developed between the therapist and the client. The RD education draws on Rogers’ clinical and research work, especially with regard to the conception of the person-centered dimension. However, Rogers did not further analyze the helping relationship (Sanders, 2006, p. 33), especially the educative relationship. Fortunately, other colleagues have undertaken this line of research (e.g., Aspy & Roebuck, 1976; Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010; Hargreaves, 1972; de Peretti, 1972; Palmer, 1993; Postic, 1995; Tausch, 1978) and shed light on the phenomenon from different perspectives (psychoanalysis, sociology, social psychology, holistic and person-centred education).

According to the RD education, the “pedagogical relationship” is not simply a powerful tool for motivating and effectively educating students, but rather an end in itself. However, the pedagogical relationship differs from other, equally healthy interpersonal relationships, in two ways. First, the educative relationship has a double mission: facilitate the healthy development of the student’s personality and provide educational benefits. The educator must be his or her “real” self in interaction but not deny or forget for a moment the pedagogical role to facilitate and simultaneously guide indirectly the student to self-actualization.

### **The contrasting, pathological relationship**

It is not easy for anyone to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. The relationships developed in schools run the risk of turning out to be corrupted. Below we present four broad categories of pathological interpersonal relationships that can be found in school environments and other social milieus. These types of relationships relate to the teacher, the student, or both. The intent is to help the reader conceive, *a contrario*, the elements of purity and genuineness we seek in every educational relationship.

*a) The relationships of escape*

The title encompasses a variety of *defensive relationships*, that is, those established out of fear of the interpersonal relationship. These are the “negative-passive” relationships, where the individual “withdraws” from the social environment because he is afraid of it. This individual (student, teacher, or both) either resorts to communications that are simply monologues (with himself or herself, since that person is unable to “listen” to the other) or, in the individual’s relationships, surrenders himself or herself totally to his imaginative world and avoids any contact with reality. Social phobia, defined as the person’s inability to relate to others due to the extreme fear of negative evaluation (Alden & Taylor, 2004), belongs in this category.

We also encounter “negative-active” relationships or relationships of hostility and aggression, which conceal deep feelings of weakness and inferiority (Bauduin, 1956) as well as feelings of rejection and abandonment by others. The individual does not feel at ease in relationships and escapes the situation by resorting to an aggressive behavior. This aggression may be expressed directly or indirectly. It can also be generalized or circumscribed. Thus, the individual may direct aggression against the world, against certain individuals, or against certain elements of a single individual’s behavior.

*b) Oppressive relationships*

These are established by a person who has a *great need* for dominance and manifests it by imposing himself or herself on others (Fromm, 1966) by exercising power over others. The motives could be several: narcissism, where feelings of omnipotence give pleasure to the individual; shame, where the individual attempts to hide feelings of loneliness or compensate for perceived inferiority; and/or low awareness, where the individual is not in contact with his or her inner experiencing. In schools, there is a great chance of coming across this particular type of relationship due to the great differences that exist in such an environment (differences in age, status, social power, and knowledge between teachers and students).

*c) Relationships where the other is treated as an object*

This type of relationship is the most frequent and dangerous to pedagogy and actualization and is not to be confused with psychoanalytic “object relations.” The individual who establishes

object relationships appears “relational” to others but, in fact, is not actually responding to other people’s needs, is not genuinely other-centered, but is a prisoner of egocentrism. Additionally, the person is not genuinely accepting the relationship partner, nor sincerely believing in the mutual growth that the establishment of a healthy relationship could bring. In fact, the person exploits the other, having only the person’s own “trivial” interests in view. Therefore, the other serves simply as an object for that person, a mere “tool” the person utilizes to achieve his or her purpose.

*d) Relationships of dependence*

Relationships of dependence are generally established among parents and young children and are biologically necessary. However, such relationships become less healthy in older children or in adults. As Fromm (1956) and Horney (1945) point out, it is the weak and vulnerable persons who prefer to establish “relationships of love” with others since they are *unable* to hate them. In other words, these neurotic and masochistic personalities resort to relationships of dependence because they fear direct confrontation. They literally become part of the other person (or an institution) in order to escape from the unbearable feeling of isolation and separation. In school relationships, it is the student who is usually psychologically dependent on the teacher. However, we can observe teachers becoming dependent on the educational authorities, or teachers being (almost unconsciously) dependent on their students, not because they love them but because they dread to confront them.

**The two fundamental catalysts for authentic, educative relationships**

“The connection among souls is ultimately what education is about. There is no single right way to do it, no blueprint. But there are paths to the souls of students that are open to every teacher, in every classroom, in every school.”

R. Kessler (2000)

At the “heart” of the relational dynamic being of the teacher is his or her *dialogical* ability and establishment of “*agapetic*” relationships

with the students. What follows is a brief description of these two key concepts that shape the teacher's relational attitude.

*The dialogue*

The "dialogue" is more than a verbal exchange or discussion; it is the movement of one soul to meet the other, an attitude of the soul, the highest expression of the relational quality in human beings. If we closely observe the pedagogical process, we will realize that dialogical effectiveness depends on the personality, mental state, and culture of the interacting persons, but mainly on the person of the teacher. The person's readiness is a product not only of the person's mental health, sociability, and maturity, but also of the person's humanistic cultivation and philosophical armament.

Dialogue without motion cannot be considered as such, since it constitutes a movement initially toward the depth of one's self and, next, toward the other, the co-speaker, or the fellow human being. The person "submerges" into the depths of his or her soul and attempts to "in-dwell." The person then becomes aware of his or her deep needs, of his or her need for extensionality (Cornelius-White, 2007), completion of the distance that separates persons from their fellow human beings and the truth. Such a person cannot stand this separation and is motivated to decrease distance through authentic dialogue. Therefore, dialogue is born and maintained by the existing differences between persons and represents an attempt to overcome differences and reach a synthesis, which is often a superior truth. Dialogue is also maintained by communication breakdowns.

Dialogue is actually an exit from the "I," our egocentrism and direction toward "You," which is multidimensional, united, and continuous. It is a movement toward persons, objects, ideas, or facts. The motion that is observed in authentic dialogue has deep roots in the internal, the "basement" of each person. Our personal, deep cultivation as human beings and frequent in-dwelling are basic conditions of productive dialogical motion.

*The agape (Love)*

"What is hell? The inability to love."  
Dostojevsky

But, what else mobilizes a person's dialogical movement, apart from the person's need for completion? We cannot find a better term to describe this fire burning deep inside the educator than the word "agape." Unfortunately, the word "agape" is rarely mentioned in educational circles. As Miller correctly observes, "The word (love) seems out of place in a world of outcome, accountability, and standardized tests .... At the very least, our culture doesn't seem comfortable with the word" (2000, p. 31).

Agape is a dynamic psychological state that expresses the person's strong tendency to enter in reciprocal, sharing, and positive relationships with everything. In this pedagogical agape, which manifests itself in many ways according to each particular case, we find immersed the whole personality of the educator. Agape has its origin not only in the individual's attained sociability, but also in cultural and spiritual cultivation. The *pedagogue of agape* lives in direct relation and solidarity to everything; one is a deeply "political" being (with the meaning that ancient Greeks ascribed to the word, i.e., a public-spirited person) and is continuously concerned about the societal and social problems, as well as about the students.

Agape is surely a personal sentiment, but as Buber highlights when he describes the meaning of love, it is not a sentiment that clings to an "I," as if the "You" were merely its "content" or object. In reality, love exists *between* I and You; "Whoever does not know this, know this with his being, does not know love, even if he should ascribe to it the feelings that he lives through" (Buber, 1996, p. 66). The pedagogue who finds himself or herself in this condition of agape is characterized by a positive perception of the world. Moore claims that "love allows a person to see the true angelic nature of another person, the halo, the aureole of divinity" (1992, p. 122).

The person's perception (active and passive at the same time) is transformed, purified, and "baptized" in the unmediated, personal relationship the person establishes with persons, objects, or ideas. Furthermore, this pedagogue of agape is also characterized by "voluntary weakness" (but he is not a weak personality), i.e., being so convinced of the value of love's tranquil and transforming power that the pedagogue does not have to resort to violence or exercise authority in order to be accepted by the students. On the contrary, he or she



deeply believes in the pedagogical and therapeutic effectiveness of the authentic relationships established between the teacher and the student. Relational dynamic teachers are particularly characterized by their nonviolent, nonauthoritarian, tranquil, and *silent* attitude or way of being.

The practice of RD approach demands that the teacher is in constant relationship with self, with the surrounding conditions or persons, and with the students. The latter need the discrete but integral “presence” of the educator in their lives. “Present” is therefore proved to be the educator who becomes conscious of and is affected by the students’ presence in his or her life. “Only as the You becomes present does presence come into being,” says Buber (1996, p. 63). And he adds, “Love is responsibility of an I for a You: In this consists what cannot consist in any feeling—the equality of lovers...” (Buber, 1996, p. 66).

Regarding the various manifestations of agape, we could also say that the “agapetic” relationships have an extremely active character indeed. They are not characterized by passivity and immobility; on the contrary, the establishment of these active, multifaceted, and deep relationships touches the present of the student and positively influences his future. These agapetic relationships constitute an action, born deep inside us, which benefits society as a whole and in the end returns to us. In practice, it is difficult to distinguish the actions of dialogue from the actions of agape, since both functions appear to have common origin, are closely interconnected, and feed one into the other.

Agape, in order to be pedagogically fruitful, has to spring from a person with maturity and balance, a fully functioning person who has accomplished a high level of “asceticism” and deep personal refinement. The educator who accomplishes this is free from various dependencies, passions, or obsessions. Educators achieve this when they have some beneficial experiences, and especially when they have lived through various “death experiences” (i.e., the experience of relational failures and the subsequent pain they entail). Because of these experiences, the educator or counselor becomes capable of being deeply calm, serene, and “distant” (i.e., affectively detached in order to rescue his or her pedagogical perspective and role) but always in

relation to the other. This relationship, which in our opinion is largely the relationship that the counselor or therapist also ought to establish with clients, is potentially teachable and practicable, thus, attainable. We are talking of course about a teacher's education developed in accordance with relational dynamic and person-centered philosophy and methodology, an education that closely follows the steps of the psychotherapists' and counselors' training. For we believe that, without the former qualitative characteristics, the interpersonal relationship, sooner or later, becomes degenerated and its pedagogical and therapeutic outcome is often canceled. We are talking about a form of education which, unfortunately, is not in line with the prevailing training in our schools of education.

### **The Relational Dynamic Teaching Model**

In order to transform RD education into everyday action in school settings, a teaching model is needed relevant to application within an hour, a week, or a semester. In this model, the positive relationship established between the teacher and the student functions as a *bridge* that leads the student to the development of a better relationship with the subject matter. Although it is a teaching model, it is important to remember that the teacher functions mainly as a "facilitator of learning" (Rogers, 1983; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). The charts below represent the *relational dynamic teaching model*. This article has aimed to describe the background and rationale for the model. The following depiction of the model may create additional questions for the reader, which the authors hope lead to further engagement and/or articulation with the model in the future.

### **Concluding Remarks**

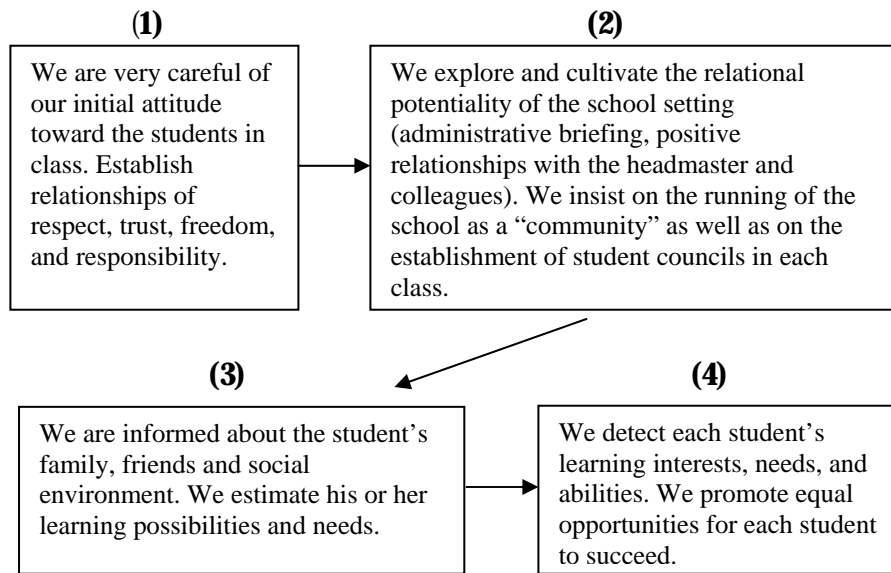
We hope that the importance of "relationship" in the teaching practice and educational process in general has become obvious in this paper. It is essential to define schoolwork as the voluntary, genuine, and educational relationship between equally honored persons who decide and function together complementarily to achieve mutually accepted aims. This kind of pedagogy defines "education" as the

*The Relational Dynamic Teaching Model*

Phase A:

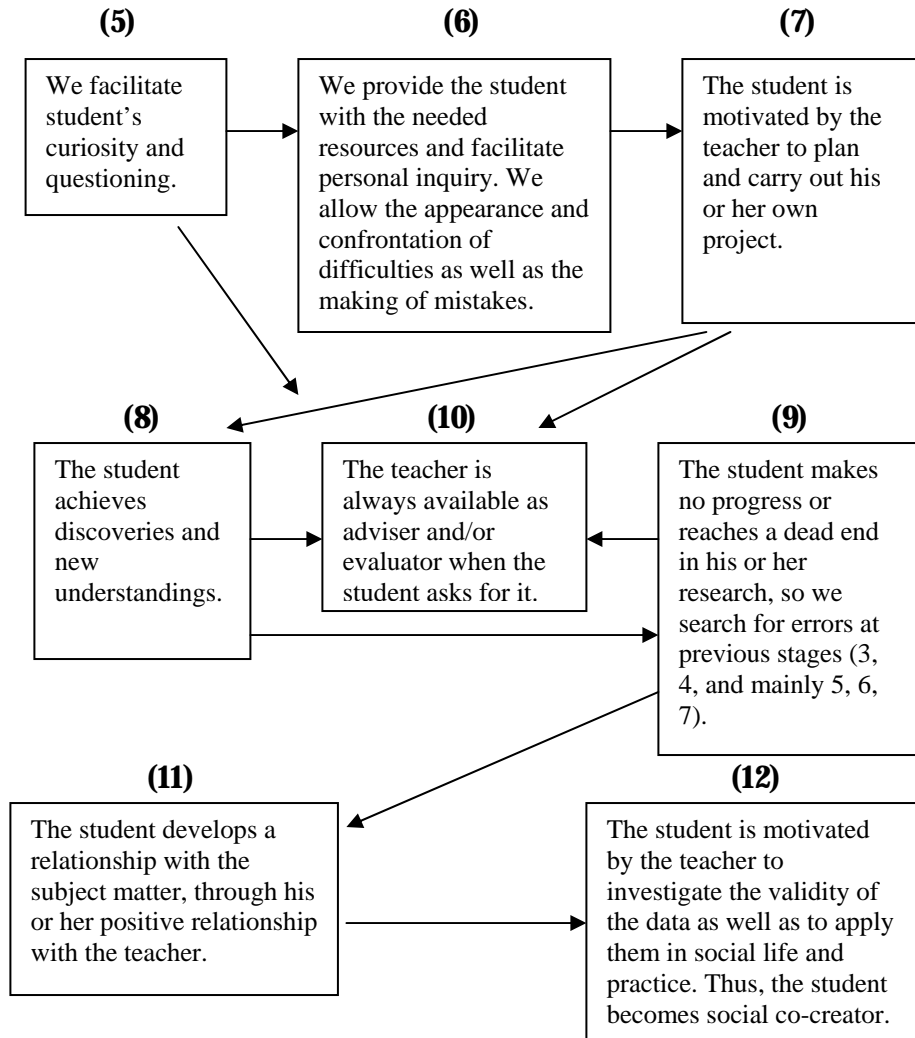
PREPARATION – THE TEACHER IS ADAPTING HIMSELF  
TO THE CLASSROOM AS A WHOLE, AS WELL AS TO  
EVERY STUDENT INDIVIDUALLY

(Climate of “frugality” and acceptance)



Phase B:

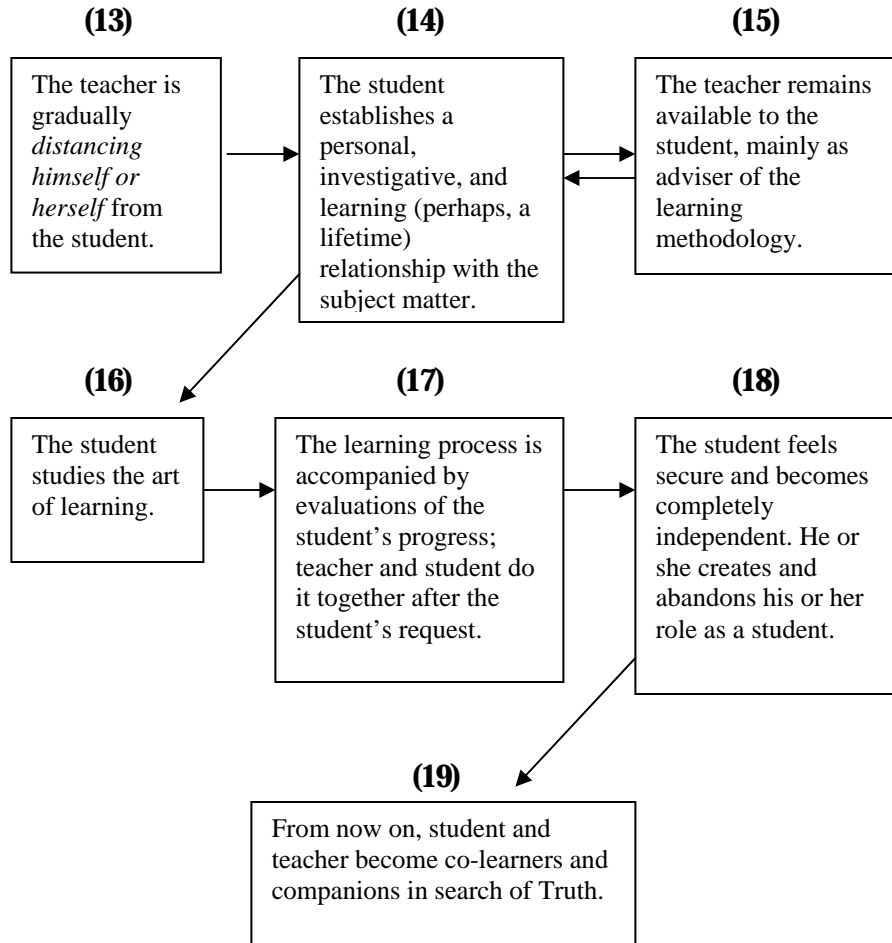
THE TEACHER FACILITATES THE STUDENT'S EFFORT TO COME IN DIRECT EDUCATING RELATIONSHIP TO THE SUBJECT MATTER



Phase C:

THE STUDENT REMAINS IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE SUBJECT MATTER.

THE TEACHER WITHDRAWS



developmental achievement of the individual who comes into a creative, personal “relationship” with the subject matter.

For this to become reality, modern society needs to realize that the basic and prevailing problem in education today is the low quotient of the affective involvement in school, not only among the students, but also among the educators. A reform worthy of its name is the one that does not turn a blind eye to this problem but studies it and plans an educational policy that gives effective, long-lasting solutions. This is an educational policy that foresees the future and envisages the school of tomorrow. It is a policy that considers the problem in its totality and pursues the constitution of a dialogical school, resulting in many other reformatory consequences.

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# **Teaching Person-Centered Counseling Using a Co-Counseling Experience**

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## **Abstract**

Rogerian attributes of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathic understanding are at the core of person-centered counseling. The author presents a training model for undergraduates based on these seminal ideals. Included are how to create an emotionally safe environment for acquiring clinical skills, the importance of developing in-class community, how to facilitate choosing co-counselors, and the impact of supervision and feedback. The use of didactic exercises, required papers and reading, co-counseling triads, discussions, relevant self-disclosure, and high student and instructor engagement promotes an interactive, inclusive, clinically challenging course. Teachers and students report high satisfaction with this classroom experience.

Carl Rogers' person-centered therapy provides a solid theoretical and practical foundation for beginning students in counseling. Rogers believed that creating a "growth-promoting climate" rests on three primary counselor attributes: congruence (e.g. genuineness, honesty, and realness), unconditional positive regard (e.g. acceptance, caring, and respect), and accurate empathic understanding (e.g. attending, listening, and paraphrasing) (Rogers, 1983). The core of the course for undergraduate psychology majors discussed in this paper revolves around these seminal humanistic ideals.

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Over the past 25 years, I have taught hundreds of graduate and undergraduate students both beginning and advanced counseling skills. Several components have been consistently reliable in creating, maintaining, and encouraging a productive and successful experiential preparation for entree into the counseling profession. They include creating a safe learning community that will foster personal sharing, supporting appropriate risk-taking, engaging in important in-class exercises that develop empathy and trust, experiencing outside-of-class co-counseling, relevant self-disclosure by the teacher (professional and personal), role-playing in classroom fishbowls, and lastly, ending therapeutic relationships well.

This academically, personally, and clinically challenging learning environment exposes new clinical hopefuls to the near-real-life experience that a co-counseling model can provide. Some of the rewards of facilitating such a class have been the excitement of group learning, the in-class intimacy, risk-taking, creativity, genuine caring, deep learning, great warmth and humor, and the impressiveness of the wealth of talent in the room.

Although the class is usually filled with psychology majors, students from many majors have benefited from this course. The class is limited to 24 participants to allow for an even number of triad groups. On several occasions, the number was not conducive to an even number of groupings, which has necessitated one dyad or a quartet.

The following is a description of how to teach an Introduction to Counseling course to undergraduates using a person-centered, co-counseling model. It will outline the individual aspects of course pedagogy and praxis, integral to teaching a Rogerian-based co-counseling learning experience. Students (and teachers) have reported tremendous personal benefit from the experiential learning of this class. In this growth-promoting climate, the class becomes the laboratory for developing genuineness, acceptance, caring, compassion, and empathic understanding. Throughout this paper, the importance of these humanistic tenets and person-centered co-counseling practices will be demonstrated as a viable and effective model for teaching beginning counselors.

### **Creating a Container**

Sonoma State students look forward to taking Introduction to Counseling. For decades it has had a reputation as an important class. A screening interview is used to inform the student of the class workload (reading and writing assignments and eight weeks of taped, outside-class, co-counseling sessions), as well as the responsibilities of confidentiality and descriptions of the in-class role-plays and exercises. In addition, this interview screens out students who are inappropriate for the class because they lack prerequisites, have ongoing stressors and are in need of professional counseling, have work schedules that do not accommodate co-counseling times, or have other concerns that would compromise their learning or the learning group overall. The excitement of a hands-on learning experience with a like-minded community ignites the commitment of the group before the class begins. Strong ground rules explained in the syllabus aid in the development of security and safety students need to engage in a self-revealing learning environment.

It has been my experience that person-centered counseling taught in a student-centered classroom contributes to significant personal and clinical learning. I echo Rogers (1983) when he said, "The significant learnings are the more personal ones--independence, self-initiated and responsible learning, release of creativity, a tendency to become more of a person" (p.129). Students often report how the class has changed their lives and helped deepen them as people. One student commented, "Knowing my co-counselor trusted me with her deepest pain changed me. I felt like I had something to offer her that mattered to her. It was an awesome experience and one that I want more of."

Clear boundaries are vital to building trust in the classroom. A safe environment is established through stressing confidentiality, personal and professional disclosure, storytelling, introductory exercises, and teacher transparency.

On the first day of class, the syllabus is explained as a contract, and those who return after the first 10-minute class break agree to the conditions of the course. Maintaining confidentiality is a major aspect of the success of this learning experience. Any violation of confidence of the co-counseling triads or of personal sharing done during group

work results in being dropped from the class. In more than 20 years of teaching this course, I have asked three students to leave because of a breach in confidentiality.

My teaching style is interactive, and I use personal and professional disclosure to help create an environment of honest discovery within a nonjudgmental atmosphere. As a clinician for 25 years, I have treatment stories of every ilk. I have experienced the successes and the less-than-noble moments that come with honest, contactful interaction. Using my experience to help identify and reduce the fears that come up in this class is one way to begin initiating trust.

A good deal of energy is expended at the beginning to help students develop belief and confidence in themselves and each other. As Parker Palmer (1998) says,

I should have remembered from my own experience that students, too, are afraid: afraid of failing, of not understanding, of being drawn into issues they would rather avoid, of having their ignorance exposed or their prejudices challenged, of looking foolish in front of their friends. When my students' fears mix with mine, fear multiplies geometrically – and education is paralyzed. (p. 37)

Storytelling; congruent, in-the-moment check-ins; and humorous anecdotes from my own professional development have been effective in breaking the ice and helping to normalize fear and to avoid educational or personal paralysis.

Authentic transparency of the teacher as well as his or her availability during office hours, via e-mail, over the phone, and in the 30-minute supervision sessions with each co-counseling triad are important additional components. For a solid clinical learning community that supports and encourages self-disclosure and trust to emerge or develop, it is important for the teacher to be a role model who takes the risks she or he is asking the students to take.

### **Developing Community**

Developing a clinical learning community is the beginning phase of the course and is the crucial foundation for the entire classroom experience. Around-the-circle check-ins in which students share what is

currently relevant to them bring a sense of connection from the onset of the first class. Icebreaker exercises, questions often asked by beginning counselors, issues of diversity and countertransference, and humorous anecdotes from my own clinical experience pepper the facilitated discussion of the first few classes.

The importance of warmth and humor cannot be underplayed. As Thomas Kulman mentions in *Humor and Psychotherapy* (1994), there are several beneficial psychological consequences of laughter and humor evident in studies of educational processes. Kulman has noted that studies have shown humor aids in acquisition of new information, maximization of attention, stimulation of imaginative play, and positive correlations to measures of intelligence and empathy, as well as varied measures of creative behavior. Rogers and many others endorsed humor as a cardinal trait of the fully functional human (Hickson, 1977). Humor fosters intimacy and intra/interpersonal confidence and helps the medicine of feedback and self-disclosure go down in a way that feels uplifting and inclusive.

Building community is intertwined with laying the groundwork for students' choosing their co-counselors and beginning dyads. Didactic exercises, theoretical lectures and small- and large-group discussions prepare students for becoming co-counselors. Several handouts, given during the first three weeks, examine individual behavior in groups, including when one self-discloses and how much. For example, I have used Egan's *The Skill of Self Disclosure* (1976) for years because of his direct, humanistic, and clear-cut orientation. Although more than three decades old, Egan's material remains relevant and helpful to students in group training.

Reading, writing inventories, and interpersonal in-class exercises introduce students to accurate empathy, transference awareness, confrontation, attending, aspirational and mandated ethics, listening, transparency, authenticity, compassion, and paraphrasing. Having read and practiced these skills, students are better prepared to use them in their triads. As students practice listening, attending, paraphrasing, and empathic attunement, they develop a sense of mutual respect as the group members begin to understand that they are in a shared situation. Everyone practices on each other, and each values

doing a good job. At this point of skill development, students choose each other as co-counselors.

### **Choosing Co-Counseling Triads**

For eight weeks, students meet weekly outside of class as co-counselors with an observer and practice what they are learning in class while being audio recorded. The co-counseling experience is the fundamental aspect of the success of the course. Students put considerable attention into the triads. How the co-counselors navigate the frustrations of learning beginning counseling skills while simultaneously developing a therapeutic relationship contributes to the depth and scope of the learning in this course.

The day of choosing partners usually produces a great deal of excitement and tension. Before choosing, students have prepared their autobiographies. These are written, two-page, bullet-point outlines of their major life experiences, their personal strengths and weaknesses, and the hours they are available for counseling. These papers are shared in silence until each group member has read them all. There is a noticeable energy shift after this exchange. It is as Maureen O'Hara (2003) says, "Through intimate meetings with people struggling to find their way, we encounter the seemingly boundless capacity for learning and healing even of those who have lived through unspeakable horror" (p. 67). Learning about classmates beyond the initial exterior deepens class members' level of intimacy. Upon checking in after the readings, students often are moved to tears, feel speechless, or say they feel overwhelmed or privileged to have been entrusted with the glimpses of their peer's life. Many wish they had been more courageous in their own sharing, and several have openly committed to the group to take risks more often as the class continues.

Check-ins precede the choosing process. During this time, feelings of inferiority typically emerge for students (i.e. memories of not being chosen on the play yard for sports or for other social membership). Personal experience has shown that outwardly addressing the trepidation of the group and linking it to how clients often feel when they begin (or deliberate about beginning) treatment aids in normalizing group anxiety.

Over the years I have tried varied methods of dividing the class into co-counseling triads. Random assignment, teacher assignment, and computer-generated assignments have all been employed to create the three-person learning groups; none has been as effective as student selection.

I explain ground rules for choosing the triad and give a brief lecture supporting honest exploration when selecting persons for the co-counseling experience. Encouragement is given to find those who feel like a “good fit,” to avoid joining up with friends or grouping out of fear they won’t be chosen, to say “no” when it does not feel right, to trust themselves and take a risk to pursue the people they want, and to not be attached to the outcome. Instructions also include the suggestion that if there is a specific class member with whom they are interested in working, they need to approach that person first.

Students stand in the center of the room while interviewing each other and clustering into co-counseling triads. To signal that they are grouped and unavailable, the students sit together and begin to schedule their first co-counseling appointment. The primary purpose of the initial negotiation is to determine who will be whose counselor. After that decision is made, each student will maintain the same role for the entire eight weeks. I then instruct students to think of the triad as a professional training ground. They are asked to avoid fraternizing outside of class and to complete in-class exercises with students not in their own triad in order to protect the integrity of the co-counseling container.

A debriefing exercise to release the remaining tension from the choosing process is done. One of my favorites is for each person to stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder, then taking a half turn to the right, the person behind gives the person in front of them a shoulder rub. After one or two minutes, instructions are given to turn around and return the favor. Amid the sighs and giggles of relief, brief statements are made out loud regarding the current subjective experience of the class members. I often hear, “I’m glad that’s over,” “That was harder (or easier) than I thought,” “I didn’t like that,” or “I was surprised that people wanted me to be with them.” After a 15-minute break, students check in, each person taking time to more fully share the experience of choosing and being chosen.



At this time I explain the triad ground rules (see appendix) and answer questions, such as: “What if I am tired, should I still try to see my client?” (Yes, see your client and examine self-care and other personal issues that might arise as a result of the role.); “If I feel like my counselor is not understanding me, can I tell him?” (Experiment with taking risks to state your perceptions and experience and see what happens.). I offer the students genuine reassurance and support and remind them of my availability for consultation if need be.

### **Developing Counseling Skills**

In addition to the outside co-counseling experience, in class students review theories and watch clinical training videos of “master” therapists, such as Carl Rogers, Fritz Perls, Albert Ellis, James Bugental, Virginia Satir, and others. Many theoretical orientations of counseling and therapy are explored, discussed, and practiced in small groups or in a written format.

To answer students’ individual and personal questions as well as to monitor their progress in overall learning, I require frequent, brief integration papers. Integration papers are short academic explorations of the course material and in-class experiences punctuated with the students’ personal insights and awareness. In a great integration paper, the student discusses the significant learning from class and the triad and elaborates the discourse with lessons from his or her own personal life.

The themes that emerge in the group through the papers then become the topic of the weekly lectures on practice. These papers also provide an opportunity for teacher and student to connect more personally and allow the teacher to address individual challenges noted in the classroom or in the writing assignments. The co-counseling experience stimulates thoughts and feelings for everyone, and these informal papers provide an arena for students to more fully explore the issues that are relevant to them.

I model open, honest relationship with my students through the integration papers, supervision, in-class lectures, and exercises. The modeling of congruence is essential to the training of effective counselors. Through the process of student reflection and the teacher’s

candid feedback, each becomes more known to the other. This honest interaction, what Sherry Kessler (1991) calls the “teaching presence,” can facilitate an experience similar to the working alliance found in counseling. When the teacher can appropriately share vulnerability and is “willing to feel deeply, to be moved or stirred by what a student expresses or by what comes up for the teacher in the presence of these students or the themes being raised” (Kessler, 1991, p. 10), trust and intimacy develop. Relationship is fundamental to all good counseling (Kottler, 2004).

In-class exercises reflect the content under examination and bring the material alive while deepening student relationships. A combination of humorous and playful assignments combined with more serious investigation into oneself and one’s family seems to work well. For example, when studying the psychoanalytic theory, the class is divided into groups of four and each person characterizes himself or herself as a color, an event, a flower, a food, and a car. Using the same categories, they then describe each other. After listening to how the others perceived them, they share what they assigned as representative of themselves. The students are instructed to share with each other the rationale for the choices made for himself or herself and for each other and to discuss the similarities and differences. During the large-group discussion afterward, students typically guess the exercise as an example of perspective and how the unconscious works. By highlighting the discrepancy between how we see ourselves and how we are seen by others, the class becomes aware of previously unknown parts of themselves. The idea that one is perceived as a red Porsche while self-identified as a station wagon allows new possibilities of self-perception to emerge and become conscious.

An important in-class exercise is co-counseling using a fishbowl format. The fishbowl experiences inspire, encourage, and support the students to take academic and clinical risks, to test individual counseling responses, and to receive feedback regarding effectiveness from their peers. I usually do the first counseling demonstration with a student volunteer as the client, following up with my own self-critique of the 15-minute example session. I then ask two students to volunteer, one as the counselor and the other as the client. The client is asked to bring up a current concern to which the counselor will give 15 minutes’

attention. The rest of the class and the instructor sit in a circle and act as a group observer for the dyad, giving feedback to the counselor as to his or her effectiveness. After the self-critique, we ask the student counselor if she or he wants peer feedback, and if so, the class then tells him or her what they saw and what questions they had. Peer feedback from the group or the individual observer in the triad helps the student counselors stay current with their learning and helps denote the areas where improvement is needed.

As the clinical focus is person-centered, most of the skills focus on genuineness, caring, and empathic understanding using attending, listening, and paraphrasing. The deeper component of the course involves how the student's intrapersonal discovery and insight interfaces with the class as a learning community and then expands out to the world as a whole. O'Hara (2003) captures it by saying,

When individuals find that their own personal and authentic expression provides some unique and vital element in the life of the group, and where there is coherence between their inner world and the community in which they live, they experience a deep sense of fulfillment and joy. (p. 73)

Students often mention the happiness that accompanies personal growth while learning to serve others. There are many comments on trying new ways to communicate with roommates, family, and friends and having success with their attempts. Group members often write about and share in their check-ins how much their co-counseling experience facilitated their learning the concepts experientially and how happy they were to have had the experience with their triad members and the class at large. It is my belief that learning counseling skills is best facilitated by practice and feedback. This feedback, along with supervision, is imperative for the beginning counselor to reflect and learn from the weekly sessions.

### **Providing Supervision**

Five forms of clinical supervision are provided in this course: (1) the triad observer offers peer supervision, (2) the teacher provides

professional supervision during the required half-hour session with each triad, (3) the class breaks into small supervision groups (not with their triad members), in which students share what they are learning in the counselor role, what they are finding most challenging, and what questions they have about counseling, and (4) the use of the audio recordings for adjunctive supervision with the instructor and for writing the final co-counseling paper. I direct students at the beginning of the semester that the counseling sessions may only occur with a recording device present. In circumstances where there is a discrepancy of memory, these tapes can be invaluable.

Finally, peer feedback in the fishbowl exercise is the fifth modality used to provide supervision. Peer feedback also facilitates an interactive, interpersonal learning experience. Self-empowerment, confidence building, improved competency, and enhanced commitment to the co-counseling process are positive results of supportive, student-centered, honest feedback from the teacher and the observer in the triad. Trust is deepened by students' attempts to understand and help each other learn and by increasing risks in self-disclosure during the fishbowl feedback, teacher supervision, and in-class supervision groups.

The exploration of meaningful feedback consists of four components: (1) curiosity and exploration of counseling responses, (2) internal dialogues that are disruptive to the counseling relationships, (3) fears of failure and success, and (4) questions about technique and process. For example, one male student was unaware that while responding to a peer in a fishbowl role-play, he kept addressing the client as "Buddy." "OK Buddy, what's going on with you?" and "Well Buddy, your girlfriend doesn't seem to like what you are doing." One student watching the interchange was angry and frustrated with her classmate because his language felt disrespectful and "one-up" to her. The client echoed some of this feeling as well. The counselor student asked the rest of the class for our perceptions. With honest feedback, deep awareness broke through for the counselor, who was then willing to speak about his fears of being "too soft" if he outwardly showed empathy. His dad had called him a "sissy" if he ever cried or was tender toward his parents or siblings. The influence of the past on the present was profound to observe, and everyone learned something that day.

By midterm, student relations are strong, the level of intimacy in the triads is noticeable, and there is a high level of risk-taking and candid disclosure among the group. In-class check-ins and exercises, supervision groups, and fishbowls support safety and trust among the members and with the teacher. Feeling encouraged and confident, students are more congruent, compassionate, immediate and patient with one another in their observing and counseling. They are “lifted beyond their own personal best” (O’Hara, 2003, p. 66 ) through their co-counseling experience individually and the class overall.

### **Experiencing Closure**

The last crucial component in the course is the group closure exercise. We devote the last two classes to each student’s taking center stage and being recognized by their classmates and instructor. One at a time, each student receives positive feedback regarding aspects of himself or herself that their peers have noted and appreciated. While receiving feedback, the student is instructed not to speak and to only say “thank you” at the end. Students report enjoying the experience of both giving and receiving acknowledgment, and many are moved by the comments of their peers. The exercise is an upbeat ending to the class each semester, and students feel touched and appreciated.

### **Conclusion**

Challenging students to grow and learn through exercises, written assignments, classroom fishbowls, and co-counseling experience is a rewarding pedagogical pursuit. Creating a classroom container by building trust and establishing clear boundaries helps develop community and provide a strong foundation for a meaningful, interactive learning experience. The co-counseling sessions, along with various modes of supervision and support, provide students with an immediate opportunity to practice congruence, authenticity, and genuine positive regard with other like-minded individuals.

By the end of the course, students have a strong sense about whether the field of counseling is something they wish to pursue

further with advanced education or training. They also have a direct experience of the beginning skills of attending, listening, paraphrasing, and authentic self-disclosure. Person-centered counseling taught in a growth-promoting climate stimulates the students' release of creativity and genuine caring about others. In addition, it facilitates students' taking interpersonal risks and helps develop trust and mutual respect. All of this promotes psychological and academic growth, encouraging students to develop further those attributes learned in class and supporting emerging humanistic counselors.

Training students in this interactive and dynamic way makes for a rich teaching experience. As an instructor, I have appreciated the teachers my students become as they deepen and are more visible through this joined learning opportunity. Blending study and practice becomes a foundational influence for continued success in all aspects of our students' lives.

Lastly, I hope what students learn in my classroom supports them to be the best parents, teachers, politicians, doctors, persons, lawyers, therapists, and global participants in an ever-changing world that they can possibly be. It is my belief that a rigorous, grounded, holistic education can impact people to pursue and actualize their greatest potential. Fundamentally, it is to that end that I do what I do, in and out of the classroom.

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### **Appendix: Co-Counseling Triad Ground Rules**

1. Do not do all three weekly sessions back-to-back.
2. All co-counseling sessions are to be kept confidential.
3. Every session is to be audio-recorded. Please check that you have batteries and tape before your client arrives. If you have no recorder you must reschedule your session.
4. All audio recording is to be treated as an extension of your sessions. Make sure the tapes are identified in a way to keep the client's identity anonymous, and keep the tapes in a safe place to assure confidentiality at all times.
5. The students are to keep the same roles with the same persons throughout the entire semester, i.e.; you are always the same person's counselor, the same person's client, and observer.
6. To develop continuity, make all efforts to meet at the same time, the same day of the week, in the same place on campus. Do not meet at people's homes, outdoors, in a public place, or a place that might be interrupted. The library has rooms you can reserve weekly that work well for your sessions. Make reservations in advance and bring a timepiece.
7. Counseling sessions are fifty minutes long.
8. If one person of the triad cannot meet, the session must be cancelled and rescheduled.
9. No socializing or small talk outside of co-counseling sessions, or class, during the eight weeks of co-counseling. Email is to be used to reschedule an appointment only. Any communication outside of your sessions must include all members of the triad. Keep your therapeutic container as solid as you can.
10. Avoid collusion; do not break rules in an effort to be friendly.

11. Don't sit next to triad members or participate with them in classroom exercises.
12. Taking notes after each session in every role will make writing your co-counseling paper easier.
13. The observer is there for the counselor; avoid making comments on the client's process or content.
14. The counselor has the right to solicit or refuse feedback from the observer. The client remains in the room during the feedback, but does not participate in giving it.
15. As the observer focus on the counselor and the verbal and non-verbal interplay between the counselor and the client. Try to be out of the direct line of sight of the other two triad members. You are not to be a distraction to the co-counseling.
16. You can always talk about your triad goings-on with your counselor. No matter what role you need to address, the triad is a good place to process your experience of any of the roles.
17. Remember this is a learning experience. There is no expectation that you "should know" what to do. Everyone is in the same boat. You are all practicing on one another. Treat each other the way you'd like to be treated and you are half way there.
18. No fancy footwork. There is a fine line between taking risks and breaking out of counseling form. I expect you will practice listening, attending, paraphrasing, and begin to develop accurate empathy. You will not be trained to do counseling at the end of this semester, but you will have a "taste" of the counseling experience.
19. I am available to you for any reason. Do not hesitate to see me personally, or with your triad if problems or questions arise. There is no need to suffer silently. The teaching assistant and myself are here to help in any way we can.



# **Our Freedom to Learn in Practice: A Description and Analysis of the International Language School Group**

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## **Abstract**

The author introduces his orientation to the person-centered approach and describes his experience of founding and serving as director of the International Language School Group with its person-centered style. He explores how Rogers' (1961) personal thoughts on teaching and learning are fulfilled within this context. The author suggests that the school represents a unique, mature example of a Rogerian educational institution and way of being.

## **Introduction of the Person to the Person-Centered Approach**

I am Leslie Simonfalvi, founder and director of the International Language School Group. I teach English for speakers of other languages and train teachers to do the same. I have to tell you sincerely that up till the summer of 1984 I had never heard of Carl Rogers or humanistic psychology. It was at that time when the organizers of the first Cross-Cultural Communication Conference invited me to Szeged in southeastern Hungary. They wanted me to help in the translation and interpretation and offered me a place as a participant.

The topic itself, i.e., "The Person-Centered Approach" neither attracted nor repulsed me since I could not associate anything to it from my earlier studies. In the end, my curiosity triumphed and I accepted the offer. As I soon learned, this decision changed my own life a great deal, as well as the lives of many people around me.

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At the beginning of the conference, I fell into the trap that quite a few newcomers fall into when they first meet the Rogerian principles in operation within a group. I came from the private sector, from a very competitive field where time is money and where money can buy time. I first felt very uneasy and then nervous because “nothing was happening” for a long time. My focus was zoomed in on how many useful things I could have done instead of just sitting here.

I had no preconceived ideas about the unique quality of time, i.e., the notion that besides its length we are all very conscious of, time has an unquantifiable quality, as well. I had no idea, either, about the great number of very important happenings there and then under the surface, since I did not have eyes and ears for them. I had to wait for all these, and a great deal more, till the small-group sessions where our facilitator, Dave Buck, gave us a very sketchy overview of the most important ideas and principles mentioned repeatedly in the big group and in private conversations. It was nothing more than an attempt to create a conceptual framework, and he did it as an answer to the request of many teachers in the small group.

I founded my school in Budapest largely as an antithesis to the British Teacher Training Institute in which I was trained. There I first did not like, and then later came to despise, the star-trainer attitude that reduced trainees into untalented imitators of the great star. One step further, it resulted in newly trained teachers' attempts to reduce intelligent, albeit beginner, students into slugs. In my new school, I wanted to get rid of all these and wished to apply a different approach to the language, to teaching, to learning, to students, to colleagues, and to myself. It was so different from my earlier experiences that I could not even name it.

During the conference I consciously chose Dave Buck's small group simply because it was most geared to education. I was looking for something I had no direct experiences of before, and I could only vaguely define it through its opposites.

When we talked about the basic principles in the small group, I had serious difficulties with the translation. The language itself did not pose any problems. The real problem came from becoming and being involved. My involvement produced a lot of thoughts, and the thoughts brought in an uncontrollable number of associations. My

mind turned into a human ROM – read-only memory – meaning, “Leave me free of your thoughts. I have enough myself.” My job was, or would have been, to translate the thoughts of others.

Instead of translating, I wished to transmit the message to anybody and everybody: “This is exactly what we want to do! This is almost exactly what we have been doing!”

Instead of translating, I also wished to transmute the dirt — our successful practice that has not been proved by theory, and has not thus far been approved by Hungarian academia — into gold. Our practice proves Rogers’ theory.

It was difficult to translate others’ thoughts and opinions and to keep out my own thoughts. It was almost impossible not to try to “help” some group members who aired a high number of killer phrases of the “not here,” “not now,” “not with them,” and “not me” type. I wanted to dissolve their doubts on the basis of my experiences, and I wanted to answer their questions instead of translating them, thinking that “these are topics we have been through and we know some of the answers.”

Luckily, these storms were mostly in me, and the members of the group did not recognize much of my problem till later when I told them in detail. These storms made an otherwise enjoyable job extremely hard work. Almost 20 years later, I found myself in a very similar situation when I translated Carl Rogers’ “On Becoming a Person” into Hungarian. I needed a higher-than-average level of conscious attention so as not to filter my own associations into the translation. If possible, this task was even more difficult than the first because I had 20 years more experience, coupled with 20 years of conscious learning, in putting Carl Rogers’ ideas into the daily practice of language teaching and teacher training.

In many books and articles, Carl Rogers gives us enough ideas through which the person-centered approach can be applied to education, teaching, and teacher training. He stresses repeatedly that these are his views that have proved to be true for him, and he also warns us from overgeneralization. He does not give a closed set of rigid dogma but rather a very logically built up set of criteria. When we go at it, however, we may realize with a shock that the practical

realization of Rogers' system is on the borderline of the very difficult and the impossible.

### **Description in Light of Rogerian Assertions**

In what follows, I will attempt to describe my school and its teacher training college in the light of the Rogerian criteria. There are some we have managed to apply and apply well. There are others that have not been, or have not as yet been applied successfully. In a Rogerian manner, I have to state that this is the way we operate, but it is not a model for anybody else to operate by. There might be a number of other ways to apply Rogers' ideas to education, and those ways might as well be called Rogerian.

The International Language School Group operates as a symbiosis of the International Language School and the International Teacher Training & Development College. We do not train masses, we do not want to be big, and we do not take part in "the-big-fish-have-eaten-the-small-fish-and-now-the-sharks-are-eating-the-big-fish-and-the-barracuda-has-already-started-to-taste-some-of-the-sharks" popular movement.

#### *Integration of Pupils*

We are ready to teach the "problem child" and difficult, or difficult-looking, adults, but only when integrated into normal groups. In this way, the "special cases" have a chance to learn how to integrate themselves, and the group also has a chance to learn how to integrate differences. Here are some examples to these special cases:

- Students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, or dyscalculia, or students who are stigmatized by their schools as dyslexiac, dysgraphiac, or dyscalculiac, are very often exempted from language learning, and some of them come to learn with us if the parents are caring enough not to accept the stigmas on their children and try to find a way out;
- Students with hyperactivity, hypoactivity, or attention deficit, or students who are stigmatized as such, are very often sent to us

by their schools if their teachers are caring enough not to accept the stigmas as final;

- Drop-out students who are given a “second chance” are very often sent to us by their school where teachers do not quite know what to do with them;
- Roma or Gypsy students, who come to us and stay if the family can tolerate the great deal of changes in attitudes and daily routines these students will show in a short time;
- Students with mild cases of autism, Asperger’s syndrome, or semantic-pragmatic disorder who can only come to us if their doctors or psychologists do not ill-advise them to stay away from language learning;
- The concrete child and the concrete-thinker adult student.

In the teaching of the more difficult cases, the teacher’s mentor role is very strong, so our teacher training includes the mentor training, as well.

### *Symbiotic Elements*

The International Language School is a symbiotic element in the relationship if we can provide an ideal field for the teaching practice of the teacher training. It is a basic interest of the language school, since teachers who meet Rogers’ definition of a teacher can only be trained through very conscious and concerted efforts. Without such teachers, a school that meets Rogers’ definition of a school is not possible.

The optimal size of the language school is such that it contains all sorts of students whose teaching and learning we teach at the college. In such a school, we can show everything in practice, including the teaching of students with different levels of motivation, different attitudes, and different kinds of difficulties in learning. If the language school cannot fulfill this role, we are a parasite in the relationship. The International Teacher Training & Development College is also a symbiotic element in the relationship if we can serve all sorts of needs that are felt in the language school and if we find pedagogical answers to all sorts of difficulties. In other words, the trainees will learn how to

teach real groups of real students and find real solutions to real problems. If the teacher training college cannot fulfill this role, we are a parasite in the relationship. The entire operation functions within Rogerian principles in all its activities, processes and relationships.

*Point-by-Point Consideration of Rogers' "Tentative Meanings"*

Now I will consider Rogers' "tentative meanings" one by one as they are applied to the International Language School Group. They are quoted from "Personal Thoughts on Teaching and Learning" from *On Becoming a Person* (Rogers, 1961, p. 276-277) [italics Rogers].

(1) *"In my experience, I cannot teach another person how to teach."*

This principle is totally fulfilled, since we do not want to teach our trainees how to teach. Instead, we show them how we teach, and through this we want to suggest that a certain pedagogical problem is not impossible to solve. We let them be different; what is more, we suggest to all trainees to find their individual ways. There are no suggested answers to any one of the questions.

We teach persons rather than books or languages.

(2) *"Anything that can be taught to another person is relatively inconsequential, and has little or no significant influence on behavior."*

This principle is totally fulfilled for the transmission of information. What we do teach is beyond the information and will only be useful for any student or trainee if they can realize and formulate the rules themselves. We teach in an indirect way that the students or trainees and the teacher who learns with them are not the objects of someone's teaching, but the subjects of their own learning. The worth of the teacher and the teaching is not, or is not primarily, related to the information-giving, but more to the quality of the attention they can give to the students or trainees. All these mainly act upon the behavior of the students we learn together with.

(3) *"I realize increasingly that I am only interested in learnings which significantly influence behavior."*

Here are a few examples for the learning, induced in the other, significantly influencing behavior:

- I dare to learn in the presence of, and very often from, my student;
- I radiate that for me learning together, or as they see it my teaching, gives me a lot of joy, and this is an absolute precondition for their joyful learning;
- Exactly the same way, I radiate that for me learning together, or as they see it my teacher training, gives me a lot of joy, and joyful teacher training is an absolute precondition of their joyful teaching;
- I show assertive behavior, and avoid by all means to be seen as a martyr, or to be felt as an aggressor;
- I do my best to get rid of both anger and fear in our learning space for our whole learning time, and this is an absolute precondition of feeling joy;
- If either anger or fear is present, getting rid of this is the next most important job, rather than trying to learn and seeing what happens;
- Joyful language learning, or joyful learning of anything, has therapeutic force and therapeutic value;
- I only deal with the students or trainees who are present and avoid pouring the frustration I may feel about the persons who stay away onto the persons who are present;
- I do not spend time on trying to “mend the past” if at the same time I ruin the future.

When dealing with very difficult cases, I often act upon the other by not doing something, e.g.:

- The others would secretly back out of doing their tasks, or even out of our relationship, and would do everything and say everything that would result in an attack in their other relationships according to common rituals;

- They want me to do the same, to attack them, but I am prepared and I do not do that;
- I accept them unconditionally, show unconditional positive regard, and they are not prepared for that and fall out of their usual choreography, or;
- In a similar manner, the other persons would like to clam in self-pity and want me to shame them;
- Instead of shaming them I show empathy, and they are not prepared for that and fall out of their usual choreography, or;
- The others would secretly give themselves up and would like to be dependent on me and want me to manipulate them;
- Instead of manipulating them, I show unaffected, coherent behavior, and they are not prepared for that and fall out of their usual choreography, or;
- The others would like to feel isolated and rejected, and toward this end they do everything that would result in their total annihilation according to their common rituals;
- They want me to totally neglect them, too, but instead I show unaffected, coherent behavior.

Overall, they are not prepared for these facilitative efforts and fall out of their usual choreography, thereby learning and growing more whole.

(4) *“I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning.”*

Here are a few examples of learning that significantly influences behavior:

- horizontal learning – only acquired if it is accepted as equally valuable;
- learning that is comprehension-based rather than knowledge-based;
- learning in which comprehension is an advantage but not a source for pride;



- learning in which lack of understanding is a disadvantage but not a sin;
- learning in which we can supportively wait for the comprehension if the lack of understanding is obvious;
- learning in which we do not test the comprehension if the lack of understanding is obvious;
- learning in which nothing is taught or defined with itself, i.e., every new bit of learning is made comprehensible by previously learned and digested bits;
- learning for which the teaching is micro, or pico, or nano, so as to be able to bridge the gap from knowledge to comprehension rather than the risky jump;
- learning that can be different for each and every student induced by the same teaching;
- learning that can be similar or the same for more students due to the different teaching styles applied, depending on the learning strategies;
- learning for which the teacher uses only methods the teacher can learn by.

(5) *“Such self-discovered learning, truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, cannot be directly communicated to another.”*

This point is realized from the entrance exam onward, which is two-way and mutual. All new applicants, both potential students and potential teacher trainees, are invited to spend a day with us and see what we understand by learning together. When working together, they also show how they learn, their strengths as well as their weaknesses. They can experience how we learn, and they have the right to know why we learn in the way we do, to what extent it can be different, and for what other reasons it cannot be totally different. In the end, the applicant can decide whether they want what we offer and whether it is our offer they really want.

(6) *“As a consequence of the above, I realize that I have lost interest in being a teacher.”*

As a consequence of the above, I realize that I only want to be a teacher if both the freedom to teach and the freedom to learn are assured and only in a teaching-learning environment where these are assured both for myself and for my students.

(7) *"I have come to feel that the outcomes of teaching are either unimportant or hurtful."*

The outcomes of teaching, i.e., learning together with my students, can be important and useful. When it is like this, it proves the truth of Carl Rogers' opinion rather than questioning it.

(8) *"When I look back at the results of my past teaching, the real results seem the same — either damage was done, or nothing significant occurred. This is frankly troubling."*

If I look back at the results of my past sessions of learning together, some of them were useful and a few of them were very important. This fact proves Carl Rogers' point rather than questioning it. When it is like this, it is the result of what we have learned from Rogers. At this point, Carl Rogers was seriously handicapped since he did not have a mentor who was called Carl Rogers.

(9) *"As a consequence, I realize that I am only interested in being a learner, preferably learning things that matter, that have some significant influence on my own behavior."*

It is totally realized at the International Language School Group since our sessions of learning together are very often full of "aha!" or eureka experiences, and the accompanying joy we feel today is the basis of the motivation for learning tomorrow.

(10) *"I find it very rewarding to learn, in groups, in relationships with one as in therapy, or by myself."*

In our case, joyful learning and mentoring have, or may have, therapeutic value.

Autonomous learning needs a self-directed learner. In Hungary, self-directedness is generally only on the wish-list for both teachers and students because we are a very unassertive society. Slowly but surely, we are learning the skill and our students can learn it fast from us as role-models.

(11) *“I find that one of the best, but most difficult, ways for me to learn is to drop my own defensiveness, at least temporarily, and to try to understand the way in which his experience seems and feels to the other person.”*

This point is especially important in our teacher training, and toward this end we have included emotional intelligence and social intelligence in our training program.

(12) *“I find that another way of learning for me is to state my own uncertainties, to try to clarify my puzzlements, and thus get closer to the meaning that my experience actually seems to have.”*

At this point the greatest help is to follow the listening > speaking > reading > writing routine for skills training. Because of this, by the time we write something down, the speed of writing is a great deal closer to the speed of speech and the speed of thinking, and it makes writing a great deal less frustrating.

Our aim is very similar to a reading technique in which we enter into a dialogue with the writer and add many of our associations to the conversation. We will find that the thoughts of the writer are of secondary importance after our own thoughts, and they are only there to trigger the new thoughts and new feelings.

(13) *“It seems to mean letting my experience carry me on, in a direction which appears to be forward, toward goals that I can but dimly define, as I try to understand at least the current meaning of that experience.”*

This sort of experience comes most easily in a synergic group. Here the importance of the study material is secondary since we mostly learn ourselves. It is very important to realize that the depth of the learning is most important, rather than the speed of fingering the book.

### **Rogers' Conclusions from the Meanings**

Based on the 13 points, Rogers (1961, p. 277-278) draws the following conclusions. Again, I will consider our situation in relation to these points:

(1) *"We would do away with teaching. People would get together if they wished to learn."*

With adult students, it is exactly like this. However, it is very different with small kiddies and teenagers to start with, since kiddies are not and teenagers are not necessarily motivated at the entry. Their parents are motivated to bring them here. As we learn together, they get motivated, and this changes the parents' roles as well. The parental push is over and the parents will let them come.

In the initial period, there are lots of problems with the different definitions given for such basic terms as teaching, learning, teacher, school, etc. It is a major investment to come to a consensus on these terms.

(2) *"We would do away with examinations. They measure only the inconsequential type of learning."*

I think Carl Rogers underestimates examinations. Besides measuring inconsequential type of learning, examinations can measure the stress they themselves cause. We have really done away with internal examinations. If examinations are still very important for any reason, we will find an external examination body. We do not run internal examinations because we know something better.

If I learn a few hundred hours together with a student, I will know a great deal more about them than through any formal examination. The examination becomes a two-way process, and we share the profits and we share the losses. This learning-together examination gets rid of the old slogan: "If you know it well, I am a very good teacher. If you know nothing, you are good for nothing, but I am still a very good teacher."

In the case of teacher-trainees, I know a great deal more about them if we learn together a few thousand hours than through any formal examination, however sophisticated it might be. Without formal examinations, the joyful side of teacher training dominates, and teaching as a profession has a higher chance to give joy for all concerned. Here the amygdala principle applies, i.e., fear or anger and joy mutually exclude each other. To make this already complex picture even more complex, whatever we learn in fear or with anger will go to the short-term memory and leave the body according to the metabolic cycle. It will not be available for any association, and what we will remember is only the fear or anger that accompanied the learning.

(3) *“We would do away with grades and credits for the same reason.”*

There are no grades at the International Language School Group since we know something better. We do not compare students horizontally. We only compare students with themselves, like, “How does your present best compare with your yesterday’s best?” If the trend is positive, the absolute level is secondary, and it is only a question of time and it will be high.

There are no credits at the International Language School Group either since we know something better. We do not compare trainees against each other. We only compare trainees with themselves, like, “How does your present best compare with your yesterday’s best?” If the trend is positive, the absolute level is secondary, and it is only a question of time and it will be high.

(4) *“We would do away with degrees as a measure of competence partly for the same reason. Another reason is that a degree marks an end or a conclusion of something and the learner is interested in the continuing process of learning.”*

I have no problems whatsoever with anybody’s degrees of any kind. I think so in spite of the fact that in Hungary politics has still too much influence in education, and, as a result, “university” is quite often an adjective of place rather than a qualifier in “university professor.”

There is another, very interesting aspect of this conclusion I want to mention here. Working for, and even craving for, a higher degree is

neither good nor bad in itself. To be able to decide whether it is good or bad, we have to see what the new, higher degree does compared with the one that preceded it. Here are relevant questions for consideration:

- Will it help me understand concepts and theories I could not understand before?
- Will it help me solve problems I could not solve before?
- Will it help me link my original field with neighboring/overlapping disciplines, thus giving a unique insight into both?
- Will it make my successful practice easier to further develop?
- Will it make the theories behind my successful practice easier to understand?
- Will it make the theory of theories even more theoretical?
- Will it make my inefficiency more easily defensible?
- Will it give me a winning point in some power games?
- Will it take me further away from students, teaching, and ultimately from work?

The continuing process of learning, i.e., lifelong learning, is a very important buzzword today. I do believe that learning should first become enjoyable and enjoyed, and the resulting knowledge and understanding should first become practically useful and used before we extend the length of the learning process.

Most probably, the idea above can be applied to the level of intensity, as well. We have, just to give a small example, two lessons per week, and it is a great deal of stress. Our learning together brings no result. Some authority up there decides that the number of lessons should be doubled to show results. The balance, as you can imagine, will be four lessons per week with a great deal of stress and still without any results.

I strongly believe that two hours of stress per week is better than four hours of stress per week. It may sound cynical, but it is true that our efficiency is higher if we reach the nothing in a mere two hours per week rather than in four.

(5) “*It would imply doing away with exposition of conclusions, for we would realize that no one learns significantly from conclusions.*”

This point is most relevant for conclusions that try to, and more and more regularly do, scapegoat the student. Let us take the “LD child” as a small example.

We can read “LD” in at least three different ways in English:

- LD – learning disabled, read unable to learn. If this is the final conclusion, then we cannot do anything. Give him his Ritalin and lock him up on his ghetto. This is the conclusion in most schools in Hungary.
- LD – learning difficulty, read the conclusion is that this student has lots of difficulties and with his limited chances he can survive only in a special class. This choice is the second best.
- LD – learning difference, read he can learn but differently from most of the others. The first step is to recognize this different learning as learning, and then we have to learn how to learn in his way. This is the real bottleneck toward learning how to teach in his way and ultimately to teach him how to learn in our way.

Carl Rogers’ definition of a school above does not go into details about the chances for such a school or teacher training institute to fit into the system of non-Rogerian schools and teacher training institutes. Neither does it say anything about the chances of accreditation and ways of running such ventures without any financial backing from the state educational system.

It is an especially hot topic in Hungary, where you are welcome to innovate if:

- the new ways bring all the promised new results, and;
- they meet all the vintage specifications that have been considered valid since out-of-date times.

### **Conclusion: Broad Stroke Relationships to the Person-Centered Approach**

Some final unstructured thoughts on how we are linked to Carl Rogers and his lifeworks:

- The traditional tripartite role-model of the teacher, i.e., being a source, being a manager, and being a facilitator, has a fourth element added in our schools: being a mentor. We need to add mentoring mainly because the students have changed a great deal over the last two decades or so. In mentoring, the Rogerian principles are fully recognized;
- The facilitator-teacher does not teach in the traditional, didactic sense of the word, but rather he or she creates an optimal learning environment, helps in setting up objectives/goals/aims, helps in finding the delicate balance between the intellectual, social, and emotional intelligences, and probably most importantly, takes an equal part in the learning process.
- A school that operates according to Rogerian principles is a great deal more efficient than a traditional school. This efficiency is the best answer to such cynical statements as “person-centered school = full heart + empty head.”

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# **Vygotsky and Rogers on Education: An Exploration of Two Fundamental Questions**

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## **Abstract**

This article attempts to introduce the main ideas of Vygotsky's and Rogers' theories of education using two fundamental questions to guide the discussion: the purpose of education and how one can facilitate learning. Rogers believed that education should foster self-actualization and democracy. Learning can be facilitated through environments characterized by reciprocal empathy, unconditionality, and authenticity that are flexible to the varied demands of many different learners and the broader educational system. Vygotsky believed that education fostered individuals' development of higher level thinking in a socio-cultural context, where individuals learn their culture's ways of thinking and doing. Learning is facilitated primarily through social interaction with more competent adults or peers, who scaffold the learner's experiences. The reader is invited to consider some areas of potential overlap and difference between Rogers' and Vygotsky's theories of education.

The authors conducted a PSYCINFO search for "Vygotsky AND Rogers." Stunningly, this yielded only four publications, none of which actually referred to Carl Rogers and Lev Vygotsky (only different persons named "Rogers"). Hence, we found no publications

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that explored the relationship of the ideas of these two seminal psychologists.

As surprising as this seems, it appears that Vygotsky's and Rogers' spheres of influence have had little overlap. Though his work was largely unknown to Americans for decades due to Stalinist suppression, Vygotsky is now credited with being one of the most influential developmental psychologists in Western thought, and particularly influential in the last two decades (Langford, 2005). In a survey of American psychotherapists published in 2009, Cook, Biyanova, and Coyne found that Carl Rogers still ranks at the top of the most influential psychotherapists, among both psychologists and non-psychologists. Both authors have had an influence on educational thought, but Vygotsky's prominence overshadows Rogers' despite the strong empirical foundation that has grown out of person-centered education (Cornelius-White, 2007c). This article attempts to introduce the main ideas of Vygotsky and Rogers as these ideas relate to their theories of education using two fundamental questions to guide the discussion.

### **What is the Purpose of Education?**

Rogers's (1951, 1969, 1983) proposed that the purpose of education was to foster "self-actualization" and "democratic unity." Self-actualizing people self-initiate, critically think, acquire knowledge, adapt flexibly, utilize all experience creatively, cooperate, and work in terms of their own socialized purposes (1951, p. 387-388). By democratic unity, Rogers (1951, p. 386) was referring to the process of sharing control and choice among members of a group, including the teacher and the students. Rogers developed his vision for what education might create with the terms, "fully functioning person" (1959) and "the person of tomorrow" (1980). While similar to the idea of increased self-awareness resulting from psychotherapy with which all readers are likely to be familiar, Rogers' educational theory emphasized a more extensional view of congruence. Cornelius-White (2007b) defines extensionality as "how the open, mature, adjusted person interacts with not just himself or herself (internal) or others (relational), but the world (systemic). It involves the practice of

personalizing perception and thinking critically and creatively to manage multiple realities.” (p. 196). Rogers (1969) became more dramatic in his later writings, asserting that the “goal of education, if we are to survive, is the facilitation of change and learning” for its own sake because “only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security” in an insecure world (p. 104). Ultimately then, the purpose of education is: “Learning becomes life” (p. 115).

To Vygotsky the purpose of education was to foster development of an individual in a socio-cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978). Formal education is important in that it helps the child progress to adult thinking and understanding. Education, learning, and development are socially and culturally situated, i.e., learners acquire the ways of thinking and doing that are prominent in their social environment. Through education individuals become members of their particular culture, learning both how to think and how to act as members of their culture. Language and collaborative activities are ways to pass on understanding and ways of thinking from one generation to another, so that each generation builds its knowledge and thought on the social, historical, and cultural knowledge base of preceding generations (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984).

### **How Can One Facilitate Learning?**

Rogers’ ideas of facilitation in education were similar to his ideas of facilitation in psychotherapy, with some differences. In both realms, Rogers asserted that the core of facilitation was a relationship between persons: empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence being characteristics of the facilitator and some form of motivation or incongruence as characteristic of the learner. However, in education, he emphasized more the reciprocal nature of these attitudes, the necessary power differential in educational systems, and the flexibility of the facilitator to not only facilitate by “a way of being.” (Rogers, 1969, 1983)

Just as the participants in an encounter group or community meeting help each other, learners in a classroom also facilitate each others’ learning, often as much as the facilitator or teacher does.

Students learn through cooperative endeavors and by internalizing the facilitator's way of being to foster others' learning. They help create a democratic atmosphere.

Rogers (1969) acknowledged the power differentials within educational systems inherent in age and role. He also considered the relationship between a teacher and her administrators and the teacher and her learners' parents to be important, expanding the realm of facilitation beyond the walls of the classroom (or office) (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010). Likewise, Rogers acknowledged the specificity of many educational systems' goals (e.g., spelling, maintaining schedules, etc.), believing that person-centered education can develop even within typical public schools. Indeed, empirical research, most notably by Aspy & Roebuck (e.g., 1977) and Tausch & Tausch (e.g., 1963/1998), but many others as well, has shown the viability of the facilitative attitudes and larger person-centered educational theory within a very wide range of educational contexts across many countries, decades, grade levels, ethnicities, and aptitude of persons (Cornelius-White, 2007c).

Third, Rogers asserted that flexibility in method of instruction was vital for learner success. Participants' authenticity guided this flexibility. When a student, or class (including the teacher), found a topic relevant, whether because of internal conflict (e.g., incongruence) or simply interest, the learner was likely to learn. The facilitator's role was to help the learner identify these tasks, but also adapt ways of doing to help them learn. For one student, a self-directed project might be best; for another, a lecture may be more appropriate. For two more students, a cooperative group might be most respectful and successful. Hence, Rogers advocated for the teacher to be a resource to learners, flexibly adapting to the requests and possibilities that emerge within a particular class or learning environment.

Vygotsky believed that people learn through social interactions, particularly with individuals whose development is more advanced. In Vygotsky's (1978) theory, learning is facilitated through scaffolding, a complex process involving collaborative interaction, assisted performance, and shared understanding (Berk & Winsler, 1995). This process has also been termed guided participation (Rogoff, Mistry, Goncu, & Mosier, 1993) or guided discovery (Mayer, 2004). In guided

participation an adult or more competent peer works together with the learner in an activity or to solve a problem. Learning occurs as the individual collaborates with the more competent person. The more knowledgeable person does not necessarily make the task easier, but varies the amount or level of assistance and gradually hands over the responsibility for the performance of the task to the learner. Vygotsky (1978) thought that children could learn more through interacting with others than by working alone. He proposed the idea of the “zone of proximal development” or ZPD where a child’s ability to understand or perform independently defines the lower end of this zone and the learner’s potential to develop with assistance lies at the upper end. Thus, a learner’s independent performance does not demonstrate his or her true capacity for learning. It is through interaction with others that the learner’s potential is revealed. Fostering experiences within the learner’s ZPD are the most ideal conditions for supporting and facilitating learning (Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984). A teacher can best facilitate learning, in Vygotsky’s view, by discovering those capacities which are not completely developed, and working collaboratively with the learner to encourage his or her growth. Scaffolding the learner through his or her ZPD may involve such activities as questioning and discussing as the teacher and learner together engage in a problem solving activity.

Vygotsky (1962, 1978) also believed that language played a critical role in learning. Language is a psychological tool for creating meaning from experience. External experiences are transformed into internal mental processes through the use of language (Diaz & Berk, 1992). For example, as a teacher talks about what they are doing together a child hears the words. Next, as the child works on the activity he might say those words out loud to himself. As the child becomes more competent at the activity he may think the words. Through such a process or progression the experience is first labeled and then transformed to inner speech. As language heard from others becomes inner speech, understanding or meaning that is encoded in language is internalized. The child then learns the patterns of thinking encoded in language. In this way children learn to think in the ways of those in their social environment.

### **Comparing and Contrasting Vygotsky's and Rogers' Ideas on the Purpose and Facilitation of Learning**

A full comparison, contrast, or integration of the ideas of two gargantuan, prolific thinkers is beyond the scope of this paper. However, we do hope to pose a few areas of potential overlap and difference. In this way, we invite our readers to read more and contemplate where their own thinking may lie in relation to these issues.

Vygotsky and Rogers both emphasized people's potential, especially the potential in relationship, rather than in their static or existent selves. They both saw that education happens through relationship, a relationship that is sensitive to the idiosyncrasies of skill and interest of the unique learner. Both discuss how teaching must be flexible and adaptive to rouse to life what is emerging. Despite these broad strokes of agreement, there are some areas where the agreement is not as obvious or where the views more clearly diverge. The authors invite the reader to consider two such areas.

The focus in Rogers' objective of fostering a democratic society through education, is to bring into being a society as a collection of individuals. His terminology in phrases such as "becoming more congruent," "fully functioning," or "person of tomorrow" highlights this emphasis on individualism. In contrast, Vygotsky believed the primary focus in educational psychology should be on how the individual emerges from and within the context of collective life rather than how the collective is constructed from individuals. The person learns to become through others, not just through their facilitation of the individual but through how they think, feel, and act. Both believed that relationships help people construct themselves and develop to become more self-regulating, but Vygotsky emphasized how the nature of that self is related to, not just the empathy, warmth and congruence of the facilitator, but to how facilitators think. By focusing on language, Vygotsky explains how this internalization of thought occurs. Consider your own experiences or Rogers' experiences over time to see where and when you may have thought of the primacy of the person as individual or as relationship.

In a related vein, both theorists viewed motivation similarly with some differences. For Rogers, the relationship brings out a person's own tendency to actualize. People will actualize with or without facilitative relationships, but a loving, supportive relationship encourages the actualization of an emerging self. In contrast, Vygotsky emphasized how motivation emerges from the relational context. It is the shared goal, the scaffolded experience between a facilitator and learner in meeting a challenge that motivates. The role is more collaborative than nondirective for Vygotsky. Rogers' educational view is similar to his psychotherapeutic view that nondirectivity remains a value, but looks quite different as one needs to be nondirective towards all students and one's self, that is, allowing one's self and one's (often superior) knowledge base to emerge in the search for a democratic process of learning. Consider what you view as the idealistic, practical, or possible role for the nondirective-collaborative continuum within your own educational and growth-producing group experiences.

### **Conclusion**

In Summary, Rogers and Vygotsky offer similar views on the purpose of education and the facilitation of learning. Rogers believed that the purpose of education was to create better learners to support both self-actualization and democracy. Vygotsky believed that education was necessary to foster individual development as it emerged through interactions in a socio-cultural context. Rogers asserted that learning is best facilitated in a climate characterized by empathy, unconditionality, and authenticity. In educational contexts, facilitators need to be flexible to the demands of their schools and systems, revering the role that learners can play with each other to foster learning. Vygotsky maintained that learning occurs through interactions with more competent others, who scaffold the learner's experience. Learning is most successful when it occurs in a person's "zone of proximal development," the area between what a learner can understand independently and what is possible to understand in collaboration with more competent others.

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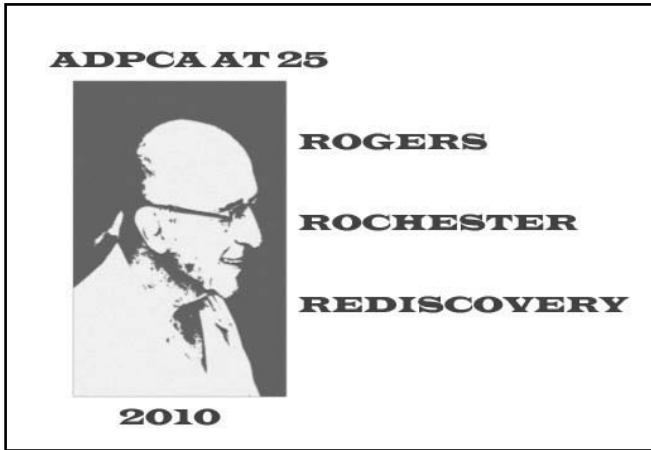
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