Philosophical Roots of Person-Centered Therapy in the History of Western Thought

Harry A. Van Belle
The Kings University College
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Abstract

I argue a two-part thesis: that the Person-Centered Approach to therapy has roots as far back as the Greeks and that the Person-Centered Approach resonates with basic themes found in the history of Western thought. To support this thesis, I survey relevant events in the history of Western thought, focusing on the Modern Period movements of Rationalism and Romanticism that appear to have most influenced the Person-Centered Approach.

Introduction

Many people believe that the Person-Centered Approach (PCA) began in the mid-forties with Carl Rogers. In this paper, I argue a two-part thesis that challenges this view. PCA has roots as far back as the Greeks, and PCA resonates with basic themes found in the history of Western thought. To demonstrate the validity of my thesis, I will walk you, the reader, through the entire history of Western thought from the Greeks to the present in a short essay! This is difficult to do. Even an abridged version of this history, such as Copleston's (1972), takes up more than ten volumes. I hope you will see that it is necessary.

Philosophies of Ancient Greece

The history of Greek philosophy starts with Homer, Hesiod, Orpheus, and other thinkers who explained the being and becoming of the world and everything in it as the result of the actions of the gods. Among the cultures of their time, this was not an uncommon sort of explanation.

But for the Pre-Socratics who came after these mythologists this was a very unsatisfactory way of looking at the world. For one thing, the gods who were said to have caused the world were totally unreliable. They would act one way at one time and for no reason at all do something entirely different another time. This mythological "world" completely lacked predictability. Moreover, because Hesiod taught that the gods also had come into being, caused by some other, unknown cause, mythological thinking involved Greek thought in infinite regression. It lacked a starting point (Kirk & Raven, 1963).

Mythological thinking was far too fuzzy for the Pre-Socratic Greeks. Beginning with Thales, they formulated a worldview in which the origin of the world was to be found in the world itself. The things of the visible world we inhabit, they said, are the result of (re)combinations of four basic stuffs, fire, air, water, and dirt. Everything in our

world can be reduced to a combination of these four substances. To know these stuffs and how they combine gives a person a definite, predictable, uncomplicated worldview (Kirk & Raven, 1963; Kok, 1998). This view of the cosmos helped Hippocrates, the father of medicine, to make medical diagnoses in terms of four humours of the body. Much later, it helped Galen to construct his four-factor, two-dimensional personality theory, which Wundt and Eysenck and other more contemporary psychological luminaries found useful.

The Sophists, who came after the Pre-Socratics, tried to live their lives as if only those four stuffs were important, but the empirical reality they experienced daily was far too colourful, variegated, and complicated to be explained by a four-factor worldview. Ultimately, they rejected this view as mere intellectual speculation, and they emphasized the individuality of things and promoted non-logical and aesthetic ways of relating to the world over logic (Armstrong, 1983; Kok, 1998). They valued the *in*definiteness and *un*predictability of human life.

Plato and Aristotle combined the orderliness of the Pre-Socratics and the indefinite unpredictability of the Sophists into magnificent cosmological, anthropological, and epistemological thought constructions. Plato did this by constructing two worlds. One is a world of ideal forms or eternal verities, accessible by thinking alone, where all is predictable and nothing ever changes. The other, our familiar world of matter, is accessible via sense perception—a much more colourful world, but one in which nothing is predictable or lasting, and everything one believes depends on a point of view. Hence, there were two worlds, the one definite, orderly and predictable, the other, not (Armstrong, 1983; Kok, 1998). For Aristotle, the relation between the definite and the indefinite in the world was governed by the distinction between form and matter (Armstrong 1983; Kok, 1998). All things, he taught, consist of indefinite, potential matter that strives to become definite, actual form. The acorn is destined to become an oak tree, marble can become a statue, wood a chair or a table.

Plato and Aristotle made room in their thought for both order *and* chaos, but they clearly gave order the upper hand. The definite triumphs over the indefinite. That was not what the Hellenistic Greeks who came after Aristotle experienced in their world. Their world was in an uproar. It was filled with war, famine, and sickness. They held a view of reality as chaotic and advocated a lifestyle of *ataraxia* or *escape* from reality (Armstrong 1983; Kok, 1998).

During the Greek era, the definite and the indefinite alternated in taking center stage. The relationship between them, indeed, is a major theme in the history of Western thought. We find this theme in Rogers' description of the relationship between, on one hand, a person's self, which is frozen in time and has definiteness and orderliness as its main characteristic, and, on the other, a person's experiential organism, which is essentially indefinite but wiser than the self and is the principle of growth within us that constantly updates the content of the self to make it more in tune with current reality. Rogers (1959) states that "the self, however, resists reorganization and change. . . Consequently, the individual's first mode of adjustment is the reorganization of that part of the [perceptual] field which does not include the self" (pp. 68-69).

If Rogers has to choose between a definite, stable personality *structure* of the self and the more ambiguous *process* of the personal unfolding of the organism, he chooses the latter, as I argue elsewhere (Van Belle, 1980).

Philosophies of the Middle Ages and the Impact of Christianity

One of the most shocking events in the history of Western thought was the entrance of Christianity into the Hellenistic world at the beginning of the Middle Ages. Greek thinking tends to be abstract. Hebraic-Christian thought is essentially concrete. To the Greek mind, the relation between the Divine and the world, including human beings, is one of reason. For Christians, the relation is one of love. The Greeks and Christians differed fundamentally on the meaning of life. For the Hellenistic Greeks, more specifically for the Neo-Platonist Plotinus, the meaning of human life was to *escape* this evil world, to deny that one has a body, and, by means of a life of asceticism and intellectual contemplation, to reach for contact and union with the Divine, who was believed to be eternally beyond this world (Armstrong, 1983; Kok, 1998). Someone described Plotinus as a man who was ashamed of having a body. The meaning of life for him, and in that he personified the Hellenistic Greek Mind, was literally out of this world and *extra*-ordinary.

The meaning of Christian life is defined entirely by the incarnation of the Divine (Bible: John 1: 1-4, 14; Revelations. 21: 3- 4). It is in essence the idea that God (be)comes down-to-earth. By entering this world, God lives in the neighbourhood, dwells with us, and like us, takes on a body of flesh, blood and bones, and, in effect, becomes matter. In this way, the central theme of Christianity asserted that meaning is to be found in the everyday events of our ordinary lives.

The direction of the Greek Mind was upward to God; the direction of the Christian Mind was downward to us. For the Greeks, union with God was *achieved* by walking the difficult uphill life path of denial. Christians viewed union with God as a free gift of grace (Bible: Ephesians 2: 8- 9; Colossians 2: 6-23). To get it takes no effort. All you have to do is accept and *receive* it. And again, there are parallels here with the Person-Centered Approach, which fosters non-directivity and a receptive, listening attitude to life rather than one of manipulation. The Person-Centered Approach prizes life and other people as gifts to be received, and it counsels people to open themselves up to their experience as a way of healing themselves (Rogers, 1961).

The importance of ordinary life as something to be received as a free gift of grace is, I believe, the essence of Christianity (Bible: Galatians 5: 1). However, medieval Christianity was anything but an ideal picture of the Christian life I have just sketched. The leaders of the early Church after the apostles had died sought to harmonize Neo-Platonism and the Christian religion. As a consequence, the lives of the members of the Church during the Middle Ages became more Neo-Platonic than Christian. Neo-Platonism turned medieval Christianity into a world-avoiding religion in which the most important activity of life was intellectual contemplation of the Divine, who was hidden from view. It promoted a way of living that had as its aim knowledge of the hidden God *in our minds.* The observable, evident things of this world were said to obstruct this process. (*The idea of*) God became the most important reality in life (Copleston, 1972). Everything else had to fall into place around it.

This sentiment was evident in attempts by scholars such as Anselm and Aquinas to logically prove the existence of God. The aim of this highly intellectualistic exercise was to provide a rational ground for belief in the Christian God. But paradoxically, it implied that God was subject to logical necessity, thus restricting the freedom of God. God could

only do what was logically possible. (Copleston, 1972). This way of thinking about God produced such logically unsolvable problems, earnestly debated by the Medievals, as whether God can create a stone so big that he Himself can't lift it.

To safeguard the freedom of God against the onslaught of this abstract theological type of reasoning, another medieval scholar, Duns Scotus by name, formulated a philosophy of Voluntarism, in which he placed the *will* of God above the *reason* of God (Copleston, 1972). He argued that God is free to do as he pleases, whether this makes logical sense or not. Renaissance scholars soon applied this doctrine of free will as transcending reason to human beings. Human beings are essentially free, they taught. The thinking of human beings is governed by the choices they make. To understand human beings one must know what motivates them, one must understand their *internal frame of reference.*

In my view, the idea of will is not Greek, but Hebraic-Christian. Scotus appealed to Augustine, who lived some nine hundred years earlier and who is often called the last Greek thinker and the first Christian thinker. Augustine taught that the relation of God to the world and to humanity is one of love, is one, we might say, of unconditional positive regard (*Confessions,* 1993). Scotus taught that the free will of God, while it supersedes the bounds of reason, is not arbitrary, because it is rooted in love. In the same way, the Person-Centered Approach argues that to be therapeutic, non-directivity (i.e. the recognition that people are free) must be rooted in unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1951). Love and free will belong together. The one flows from the other. It is impossible to love on command. To love someone entails that you have freely chosen for that person. Love also implies an awareness of the uniqueness of the other; at least in romantic love. What we love frequently is the otherness of others, is the fact that they possess qualities, we lack. This kind of love is also spontaneous, unpremeditated, uncalculating and not thought through, or non-reasoning. Love is blind, we say.

All of these characteristics we find in the Voluntarism of Scotus. These qualities are also core values of a Person-Centered way of living and relating (Rogers, 1961). The values of love, will, individuality, spontaneity and intuition prompted Pascal, some four hundred years after Scotus, to exclaim that "the heart has reasons of which reason knows nothing." The debate between Anselm and Aquinas on the one hand and Scotus on the other had as its result for the history of Western thought that in many ways reason and will came to be seen as opposites.

Philosophies of the Modern Period:
Empiricism-Sensationalism and Rationalism-Romanticism

Two intellectual movements dominate the Modern period in Western thought. One is British Empiricism, which for our purposes incorporates French Sensationalism. The other is Continental Rationalism and its rebellious offspring, Romanticism. Both of these movements differed markedly from intellectual movements in the Middle Ages. Middle Age philosophers taught that in addition to the capacity to think and to observe, human beings need the help of tradition to be able to come to know what is true. For Christian thinkers, that involved the authority of the Bible or of Church doctrine. For Renaissance scholars, the process of coming to know truth required the authority of the Greek and Latin Classics as a necessary condition. Philosophers of the Modern period

held that human beings have within themselves the capacity to perfect themselves without the need for outside input, provided they think straight and, as in the case of Empiricism, that they observe correctly (Copleston, 1960). Thus, Modern philosophy was a philosophy that attempted to eliminate the input of tradition from philosophy and had as its other aim the self-perfectibility of human beings.

Continental Rationalism

The Person-Centered Approach is primarily a therapy movement. For this reason it is more akin to Continental Rationalism, which focused its attention on the acquisition of self-knowledge, than to British Empiricism and French Sensationalism, in which the focus was more on knowledge of the world. Continental Rationalists believed that individuals could perfect themselves through self-reflection. This conviction is similar to a core belief of the Person-Centered Approach to therapy, which holds that clients know what is wrong and that under the right therapeutic conditions they have within themselves the capacity to resolve their personal problems through self-reflection (Rogers, 1951).

According to Copleston (1960) the Continental Rationalists, such as Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff, and Kant, had a number of characteristics in common. They viewed thinking or philosophy as a form of therapy, or as they called it, the "sanitation of the soul." The process of coming to know oneself was a process of "self-clarification" and "unifying plurality" or "whole making." Today we might call the former, "consciousness-raising" and the latter, "integration of experience." Self-knowledge is possible, said the Rationalists, because human beings have the capacity to infallibly "represent" reality as it is, i.e., the ability to "reason." They saw the reasoning *process* as a path of *progress*. Self-improvement was the inevitable result of such reasoning. Through this activity, mankind would be able to eradicate the errors of the past. The path to self-knowledge was a path of liberation. Liberation through consciousness-raising later became the centerpiece of both Marxism and Psychoanalysis. It would not be hard to find echoes of this faith in liberation through self-reflection in the writings on Person-Centered therapy. Already early in his career Rogers recognized the importance of the healing function of "insight" or "self-understanding" in therapy (Rogers, 1942).

Two things must be added to make the initial picture of Continental Rationalism complete. The first is that in its view the mind is always active rather than reactive. It is not informed by reality, but constructive of reality. The second is that this process of coming to know oneself occurs entirely within the individual who does the reasoning. We might say that this therapeutic, emancipatory, soul sanitizing, error eradicating process occurs within (the internal frame of reference of) the individual. Contrary to what the Empiricists taught, this process requires no external impetus to get started; nor is there an external criterion for judging whether the process is on the right track. The process is spontaneous and self-correcting.

We gain an even better understanding of the connection between Continental Rationalism and the Person-Centered Approach to therapy when we look at how the principal representatives of this movement, Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff, and Kant viewed the process of self-improvement through reason. According to Descartes, this self-reflecting process moves an individual from a state of doubt to one of certainty (Descartes, 1637/1939; van Rappard, 1967). At the start of this process there is much

darkness about the answer to the question one is entertaining. But as the process proceeds, one gains more and more clarity. The solution to the problem one poses becomes more and more *evident*. Finally, the answer becomes so *self-evident* that it is impossible to doubt its validity. The certainty one sought after has been achieved.

Leibniz emphasized that this activity of clarification or "perception" is a process of self-perfection (Leibniz, 1973). By means of this process, we actualize our potential and integrate parts of ourselves into a unified personal whole. Perception is a process of integration, which at the same time is a consciousness-raising process. It makes conscious what is *below* consciousness. Leibniz, perhaps for the first time in the history of Western thought, has a concept of a sub-conscious. Leibniz is also important for understanding the Person-Centered Approach because he proposed the idea that reality is essentially dynamic and perpetually growing. The process of perception is a naturally ongoing, spontaneous growing process in all of us. It may in some way be evoked or even elicited from the outside, but it is never caused *by* the outside.

Wolff and Kant also held the idea that human beings are active rather than reactive vis-à-vis experienced reality, that humans are always, in the words of Carl Rogers, "up to something" (Van Belle, 1980). According to Wolff, the mind has the ability to represent reality and thereby organize it into a structured whole (van Rappard, 1976; Wolff, 1713/1965). In the same vein, Kant proposed that the mind immediately orders incoming experience by means of a series of innate categories (Kant, 1902-1942). Fichte took the idea that human beings order their experience one step further and proclaimed that reality is a *construction* of the human ego (Fichte, 1794/1848). The theme of the constructive nature of human experience became prominent in later periods of European philosophy.

In many ways, these philosophies of the Modern period were a revival of Greek thought, with its emphasis on the importance of reason and intellectual pursuits. But the idea that reason occurs principally internal to the minds of individuals and is constructive of reality would have been foreign to the philosophers of Ancient Greece, most of whom subscribed to forms of universalism and realism. The philosophies of the Modern period also show the influence of late Medieval thought, particularly that of the Renaissance philosophers, with their emphasis on free will and the uniqueness of individual minds.

Romanticism

To understand the contribution of Romanticism to Western thought we must go all the way back to Duns Scotus' Voluntarism. The reader will recall that Scotus posited the will as an alternative to reason and logic. Recall further that this notion of will was rooted in love. The connection between will and love is important for understanding Romanticism. The Romanticists stressed the importance of caring or unconditional positive regard for human life and relationships. They reacted negatively to the exclusive emphasis on reason and logic during the Modern period by both the British Empiricists and Continental Rationalists (Copleston, 1960). This one-sided emphasis, in their view, had created a world that was cold and uncaring.

Pascal, who was a forerunner of Romanticism, stressed the importance of the heart as an alternative to reason in the pursuit of self-knowledge. His notion of the heart had many meanings. It could mean the seat or instrument of love, will, freedom,

spontaneity, or feeling and intuition. The meaning most appropriate for the heart as an alternative to reason and logic was probably *intuition* (Copleston, 1958; Steinmann, 1965). There are things that can be known by means of logic, and there are also things that can only be known by the heart, intuitively. This form of knowing is an immediate, pre-logical, pre-reflective, spontaneous grasping of the truth of a thing. It depends more on feeling than on logic.

Herder, one of the founders of Romanticism said, "I feel, I am!" in response to Descartes.' "I think, *therefore* I am." There is no need in his view for a "therefore." For him, knowledge of his existence was immediate (Berlin, 1977). For Rogers too, individual experience is immediate, pre-logical, spontaneous and a more authoritative grasping of truth than insights obtained through logical analysis (Van Belle, 1980). I believe that an analysis of what Rogers means by "experience" would reveal its close affinity to this Romanticist notion of "intuition." See, for example, Rogers (1961): "I can trust my experience. . . I have learned that my total sensing of a situation is more trustworthy than my intellect" (p.22).

One unfortunate by-product of the exclusive emphasis on reason by both the Empiricists and the Rationalists was that they saw themselves as the pinnacle of social and cultural development. They viewed their time as the ultimate age of Enlightenment. Thus, they did not value history as the study of past events since they considered past civilizations inferior to their own. Nor did they think much of cultures other than their own culture of Enlightenment. As proof of their superiority they cited the scientific discoveries their culture had made in the physical sciences and elsewhere.

The Romanticist who most strongly and effectively opposed the devaluation of history and culture by these Enlightenment philosophers was Vico. He began his opposition by stating that our knowledge of physical nature is inferior and second-hand compared to our knowledge of society and of history. He used a criterion of knowledge used regularly during the Middle Ages: One couldn't really know something unless one had made it. God made the world of physical nature, said Vico, so only God really knows the natural world. To human beings, the physical world is given only as "brute fact." We can only observe it "from the outside in." However, we see our own lives "from the inside out," and via sympathetic understanding, or empathy, we understand the lives of women and men in other cultures and other historical times. History, the study of the process of human self-creation, is the greatest science. History, as Dilthey was to call it later, is a *Geisteswissenschaft*, literally a "science of the human spirit," a "social" science rather than a natural science. The distinction between the "natural" and the "social" sciences started with Vico (Berlin, 1977).

Anti-Positivism

During the Nineteenth Century, a group of scholars rejected the Positivist approach of applying the methods of the natural sciences to the study of human experience. They argued that the human sciences needed their own methods of investigation. In their view, an experimental approach, for example, to psychology, which views the human mind as one physical system among many, fails to deal adequately with the higher functions of the mind, such as thought, judgment, and valuation and ignores other equally important psychological functions, such as emotion and motivation. A

natural scientific experimental statistical approach, they argued, excludes from the purview of psychology the very essence of human experience.

According to the Anti-Positivists, reality as experienced by human beings is of an entirely different kind than physical reality. It is subjective, rather than objective. It deals with experience that is always connected to an individual subject, to an "I," or a mind, or some kind of personality structure. Human experience always presents itself as an organized, integrated structural whole. The elements of this experience can only be understood in terms of that whole, as manifestations of this holistic experience. The experience of one individual differs fundamentally from that of another, so that a general theory of human experience is an impossibility. For this reason, an Anti-Positivistic approach to the study of human experience generated typologies rather than theories. In much the same vein, Carl Rogers was later to suggest that there might be as many realities as there are persons (Rogers, 1980).

Furthermore, according to the Anti-Positivists, the mind, which is the subject pole of human experience, is always active. It *generates* experience. The structure of the mind is *intentional,* teleological or goal-directed, and *dynamic.* It is a structure of motives, purposes, ideals and goals. The human person who does the experiencing is always up to something.

Finally, a natural scientific, experimental approach to the study of human experience is in the nature of the case compelled to view that experience as a mechanism of causal relations. Thus, it is unable to deal with what are possibly the most essential characteristics of subjective human experience—spontaneity, choice, creativity, imagination, meaning, and value (Lersch, 1960; Muller-Freienfels, 1938; Polkinghorne, 1983). The study of these aspects of human experience has always been the central focus of Humanistic Psychology and, in particular, the psychology of Abraham Maslow (Van Belle, 1985). Rogers was probably the first therapist to advocate and practice empirical research in counselling and psychotherapy, and one could argue that this places him squarely in the Positivist camp. But the *tools* he used for this research (e.g., analysis of therapy protocol and the use of Q-sort) quite clearly demonstrate that in terms of his basic intent, with his respect for the uniqueness of human beings, he was beyond a doubt an Anti-Positivist.

Verstehen

The Anti-Positivists argued that the aim of the human sciences is to *understand* human experience. In order to describe what the Anti-Positivists meant by "understanding," I introduce the technical term, *Verstehen,* and unpack the various meanings this term acquired in the development of Anti-Positivistic thought. According to Polkinghorne (1983), Johann Gustav Droysen coined the term in 1858. He drew on Kant's distinction between practical reason and theoretical reason to define two different approaches to two different kinds of knowledge, *Verstehen,* understanding, and *Erklaren,* explanation.

Verstehen first of all has the meaning which we already find with Descartes in Continental Rationalism, namely that of the "self-clarification of the mind." Dilthey's use of the term was probably the most influential in Anti-Positivism and is similar to the term *hermeneutic method* in biblical and literary interpretation. As used in the human sciences it

views human experience as a text, the meaning of which needs to be expounded. This means that elements of human experience can only be understood or interpreted correctly in terms of the whole of human experience. Human experience, or "the life of the soul" as Dilthey quotes Thomas Reid to say, "is not composed of parts. . . but is always and immediately an integrated whole" (Lersch, 1960; Polkinghorne, 1983).

Yet another meaning of *Verstehen* is based on the fact that human experience is always unique. This meaning refers to Wilhelm Windelband's distinction between a *nomothetic* approach to the study of human experience and an *idiographic* method (Polkinghorne, 1983). The nomothetic approach aims to formulate general theories about human experience applicable to all human beings. The idiographic method is more typological and attempts to formulate personality descriptions of individual persons in an effort to clarify their unique way of experiencing the world. By extension, what the experimental approach describes as quantitative differences between people in the method of *Verstehen* are viewed as really qualitative differences. From the point of view of *ideography* human beings differ radically rather than by degree. They are incomparably unique (Lersch, 1960; Muller-Freienfels, 1938).

When one adopts *Verstehen* rather than *Erklaren* as a research method in the human sciences, one essentially attempts to understand a person's subjective experience, including the reasons for or motives behind experience. To understand subjective human experience requires looking for the activity of the will, the emotions, the affects, personality, and the drives that determine experience. Dilthey stated that to understand someone's experience in the sense of *Verstehen* one must penetrate his spirit down to his structure of choices, purposes and ideals, values and meanings. The essence of understanding (*Verstehen*) a person's experience (*Erlebniss*) is to empathize with (*Nacherleben*, literally "to experience along with") that person's experience (Copleston, 1965). The end product of such an exercise is that one can truthfully say, "Now I know why this person looks at the world the way she does, thinks the way she thinks, and acts the way she acts."

What I have tried to describe so far is the manner in which one person attempts to understand another. Clinical psychologists will recognize this method as a staple ingredient in *psycho- or personality diagnostics*. When the focus is instead on a person acquiring self-understanding, with or without the help of a therapist, this process is more likely to be called *psychotherapy*. Psychotherapy is a process of self-clarification, which is often healing for a person's emotional life as well. But this analysis of the various meanings of *Verstehen* illustrates most clearly what the Person-Centered Approach means when it states that therapists must empathize with the internal frame of reference of their clients (Rogers, 1951). The central aim of this approach to therapy is to understand clients from the inside out rather than from the outside in, as would be the aim of a Positivistic approach.

Conclusion

In summary, there are a number of connections between the history of Western thought and the Person-Centered Approach. First, all great Western thinkers accounted for both order *and* chaos, for both the definite and the indefinite in human experience. Plato did, Aristotle did, and so did Carl Rogers. All great Western thinkers attempted to

account for themes from both the Greek Mind and the Hebraic-Christian Mind. Continental Rationalism, Romanticism, Anti-Positivism, and Carl Rogers did.

Second, if one wants to be a person-centered therapist, one must in some way believe in people's capacity to sanitize, to heal and perfect themselves through self-reflection. These are central themes of Continental Rationalism and of person-centered therapy. Furthermore, to practice person-centered therapy with success one must prize the otherness of others and believe in the importance of empathizing with, or understanding others. One needs to believe in the importance of indwelling a person's personal frame of reference rather than logically dissecting his or her mind for expert treatment. This is the legacy of Romanticism and Anti-Positivism in person-centered therapy. In addition, to be an effective person-centered therapist, one must demonstrate one's trust in others by acting with them as if they have a free will or by following them wherever they want to go. The actions of a person-centered therapist must show his or her conviction that people have the ability and the right to choose in addition to having the capacity to reason. Voluntarism taught that to person-centered therapists. Finally, to be a successful person-centered therapist, one must love the ambiguity of therapy. One must prefer the disorder of emotion to the order of logic, for the person-centered therapeutic process is anything but linear and predictable. But then, Romanticism had already stressed this point centuries ago.

However, none of these factors in themselves are likely to be therapeutic in person-centered therapy unless we add the action of unconditional positive regard. To be non-directive, or client-centered, or person-centered is to believe that clients have the capacity to diagnose and to heal themselves. But it is not a *sufficient* condition for therapy to occur. The necessity of practicing unconditional positive regard represents the central core value of person-centered therapy. In my view this fact points to the significant influence of Christianity on this approach to therapy.

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