

CARL ROGERS AND TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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*Our wine existed before what you call
the grape and the vine.*

Ibn el-Farid

ABSTRACT: *The claims that Carl Rogers was what is presently understood as a “transpersonal psychologist” or that he had converted to a “transpersonal movement” by virtue of various late-in-life experiences are shown to be unwarranted.*

To understand his complex relationship with these subjects, it is noted that Rogers did not conform with much of the behavior with which they are associated. Nevertheless, he did have, from the beginning of his work in client-centered therapy, experiences which must be considered congenial with the essence of the “transpersonal.”

The purpose of this article is to recognize the distinction between outward appearance and one’s legitimate inner experience and to encourage a deeper exploration of this difference.

A small, but prolific, academic industry has built up on the basis of comparing the North American psychologist Carl R. Rogers with other famous figures.

Researchers have linked Rogers’s ideas with those of the psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Heinz Kohut; the psychiatrist Milton Erickson; the anthropologist Gregory Bateson; the communitarian H.C. Boyte; the pedagogue Paulo Freire; the philosopher Martin Buber; and the politician Franklin Roosevelt.

In comparing unlikely activities to Carl Rogers’s practice of psychotherapy, the innocent style of Mr. Rogers, a well-known host of an American television show for children, stands at one end. At the other is a psychiatrist who says he applies “client-centered” electroconvulsive shock treatments and his patients are appreciative.

Carl Rogers’s “philosophy” has also been matched with that of Zen Buddhism, the Bach flower remedies, as well as with the Christian doctrine of original sin, and the New Testament vir-

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tues. His professional struggle against orthodox psychiatry has reminded a scholar of Martin Luther's stand against the Catholic church.

Rogers's person-centered approach (to psychotherapy; to education; to small encounter groups; and to larger groups assembled for the purpose of improving transnational understanding, exploring intergroup conflicts, and learning the nature of culture and its formation) has also been submitted to such contortions.

A university professor, for example, suggests joining "the person-centered approach theme" and Tai Chi Chuan. Recently I came across proposals for wedding the person-centered approach with Taoism's technique of the "microcosmic orbit" and, no less serious, coupling the person-centered approach with a French physician's philosophy of human development based on the architecture of the human inner ear.

Another related pastime is to construct elaborate arguments to show that Rogers was in the Existentialist line of descension and then scold him for not admitting his debt to his forebears.

The fact is that what are called existential attitudes and behaviors in his approach developed independently of any contact with the philosophy of Existentialism. It was while he was director of the Counseling Center at the University of Chicago and Rogers's major work on psychotherapy was well established that his intellectual trajectory intersected with the Existentialists. "At the urging of my students," he related, "I became acquainted with Martin Buber (first in his writings and then personally) and with Søren Kierkegaard. I felt greatly supported in my new approach, which I found to my surprise was a home-grown brand of existential philosophy." (Rogers, 1980, p.39)

Several times in his career someone pointed out to him similarities between his work and someone else's. When the similarity was what he called "congenial," as in the case of the Existentialists, he used their ready-built concepts to communicate his ideas to a wider audience.

Likewise, both his intention as a psychotherapist and his research methods concentrated on the *phenomenon* of effective therapy. Thus, one may find many examples of phenomenology in his work. This does not mean that he subscribed to the philosophy beyond where it coincided with his own endeavors.

Following this fashion of making comparisons, in the last ten years there has been an increasing number of suggestions that Rogers had become a transpersonal psychologist in his later years. Many of these assertions imply that he condoned the fringe activities associated with such activity. (See Boainain, 1996, for an example.) This article intends to clarify, as I know it, his relationship with the transpersonal.

WHAT IS TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY?

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, while writing on the "collective unconscious," is said to have coined the term translated "transpersonal." This word continues to mean something like, "beyond the personal."

Like most psychologies, transpersonal psychology intends to help individuals realize deeper self-understanding, improve the health of their minds and bodies and lead more effective lives. In working with individual clients, transpersonal psychologists are said to be dealing with "more than the mere *persona*." Thus, they focus their attention on the "whole person: spirit, mind and body."

Though this may also be the goal of other psychotherapies, it is in the means that transpersonal psychologists may differ most from their colleagues. To accomplish their objectives, they may analyze dreams, explore "peak experiences," or delve into paranormal phenomena, such as revelations from "past lives." Other methods may involve provoking altered states of consciousness

through the use of drugs, hypnosis, guided fantasies, breathing exercises, meditation, and other “spiritual” practices.

It is unlikely that Rogers would have approved of some of these activities, particularly those in which the therapist exerts authoritarian control over the client. Certainly, he could not be considered a transpersonal psychologist in an unqualified sense.

A GRANDFATHER CLAUSE?

When a new field of endeavor is put under legislative control, the regulative laws usually include a clause that allows people already recognized as qualified in this area to be licensed. This is called, “the grandfather clause.”

I have often heard transpersonal psychologists refer to Rogers in this way. The reasoning goes like this: Since humanistic psychology is considered part of the foundation of transpersonal psychology, and since Rogers made a significant contribution to the foundation of humanistic psychology, he is thus a transpersonal psychologist.

Inasmuch as transpersonal psychology may have been partly based on his work, he is logically connected to transpersonal psychology, but not necessarily a transpersonal psychologist. He did not develop his psychology to be a foundation of transpersonal psychology.

MEDIUMS & SPIRIT WORLD

Frequently it has been pointed out that Rogers’s interest in the “spirit world,” particularly through mediumistic sources, especially after the death of his wife, proves that he had become a convert to a transpersonal perspective and had he had time, would have become a transpersonal psychologist.

What he would have become with more time, I cannot say. However, his reactions to mediums and the “spirit world” are subjects on which I am competent to comment.

Opinions

Rogers formed his opinions from a combination of his own personal experience, what he learned from scientific research, and the reports of informed people. Usually, his conclusions that were not verified by his own direct experience, but “felt right,” he regarded as tentative. Even with those he had verified, he was careful about generalizing.

A paper that is sometimes used to support the hypothesis that he had become a transpersonal psychologist – “Do we need ‘a’ reality?” (Rogers, 1980) – is far from being supportive of this claim. In this article he uses the subject of exceptional mental states to reach a conclusion about a psycho-social phenomenon, not about spirituality. That is, that everyone perceives the world differently and that by appreciating these differences, communication between people could be improved.

Here is how he argues: To begin with, he quotes the physical scientist James Jeans who suggests that, “the Universe begins to look more like a great *thought* than like a great machine.” Rogers also discusses the psychiatrist Carl Jung’s discovery of archetypal symbols in dreams; the engineer Robert Monroe’s “out-of-the-body experiences;” the medical researcher John Lilly’s experiments with altered states of consciousness; and more.

Rogers suggests that these reports are too convincing to dismiss. He is led to the tentative opinion that, “All these accounts indicate that a vast and mysterious universe – perhaps an inner reality, or perhaps a spirit world of which we are all unknowingly a part – *seems* to exist.” (p. 101-102)

At this point, the transpersonal leaves the story and the personal enters. I have italicized the word “seems” in this quotation, not only to point out his customary tentativeness, but also because this emphasis allows a preview of the argument which characterizes the rest of his article.

What may have appeared to be Rogers backing transpersonal realities shifts abruptly on this word to his using the possibility of other realities to arrive at a conclusion that has very little to do with a transpersonal orientation.

He concludes that such a variety of subjective experience puts an end to the belief that, “we all know what the real world is.” Thus, he is led to his main point: “The only reality I can possibly know is the world as *I* perceive and experience it at this moment.” (p.102)

The remainder of his paper is an argument that cultural “world views,” which were once relatively stable are now in conflict in various parts of the planet. If each person could accept several different “world views,” without insisting on *one* world view, there might be hope for human beings to live together without fear.

This paper is not an endorsement of a “transpersonal movement.” It merely uses the transpersonal perspective to emphasize the relativity of human perception and to present one of Rogers’s perennial concerns, how to improve interpersonal understanding.

A Real Change of Opinion

Rogers was curious about the “transpersonal,” just as he was curious about many other phenomena. He wanted to find out what was going on and communicate to others what he was learning. In 1972, he had published a book about intimate human relationships in an era of “openness,” even though he himself was not at that time involved in such relationships. This was the product of curiosity. Something was happening that affected many people. What was it? Could it be understood? Could its facts be friendly?

Until his wife Helen became gravely ill in 1978 or so, he had pretty much confined his interests in the transpersonal to readings and discussions with friends and colleagues. As always, his mind was open. However, on the subject of life-after-death, he maintained a conventional scientific view. A view that, in spite of its pessimistic nature, he had comfortably come to terms with. He commented,

Ten or fifteen years ago I felt quite certain that death was the total end of the person. I still regard that as the most likely prospect; however, it does not seem to me a tragic or awful prospect. I have been able to *live* my life – not to the full, certainly, but with a satisfying degree of fullness – and it seems natural that my life should come to an end. I already have a degree of immortality in other persons. (Rogers, 1980, p.87)

Nevertheless, the experience of accompanying his wife through her illness until death, did seem to have tentatively modified his opinion. He describes various visions that she had just before dying. He relates psychic contacts some friends reportedly made with her “spirit,” after death. His own experience with the transpersonal he confines to the following passage, adding that he would someday say more.

Helen was a great skeptic about psychic phenomena and immortality. Yet, upon invitation, she and I visited a thoroughly honest medium, who would take no money. There, Helen experienced, and I observed, a “contact” with her deceased sister, involving facts that the medium could not possibly have known. The messages were extraordinarily convincing, and all came through the tipping of a sturdy table, tapping out letters. Later, when the medium came to our home and *my*

own table tapped out messages in our living room, I could only be open to an incredible, and certainly non-fraudulent experience. (Rogers, 1980, p.90)

He concluded, "I now consider it possible that each of us is a continuing spiritual essence lasting over time, and occasionally incarnated in a human body." (Rogers, 1980, p.92)

Evaluating Experience

One can note that, in this case, Rogers's evaluation of the psychic phenomenon was based on three questions.

1. The scientific question, Was the physical evidence reliable? was answered by the observation that the table-tapping seemed legitimate, because it was reproduced in his own home, where a deception could not be rigged.
2. The moral question, Was the medium taking money from the client? was settled since the medium did not ask for money. (Though she may have accepted a donation, if offered.)
3. The spiritual question, Were the spirits and their messages convincing? was responded to by noting that, the messages were "extraordinarily convincing."

Rogers may have had some reservations, since he was reluctant to say more on the subject until he could reflect more carefully on this experience. In 1978, he was intent on experiencing more directly this subject, perhaps in order to clear up his doubts. In any case, Rogers, Maureen O'Hara and I went to São Paulo and visited several Brazilian psychic researchers and mediums. On this trip, we found additional answers to these three questions.

Was the physical evidence reliable?

Rogers quickly lost interest in the physical aspect, for two reasons. First, it is so often inconclusive. As I had discovered in India, a magician could charm a snake or survive a life-threatening ordeal as a result of rigorous physical training that did not necessarily involve spirituality. Second, Rogers was really interested in spirit messages directed to him personally.

The following account is illustrative:

In February, we visited an institute devoted to the study of the phenomena of poltergeist and reincarnation. The laboratory was full of rocks (that had reportedly rained down on the roofs of houses) and scorched panels from doors of wardrobe closets (that had been said to have burst into flame spontaneously). These catastrophes usually occurred in the houses of pubescent girls. The chief researcher had hundreds of reports from witnesses who had been interviewed regarding these phenomena. Often a sorcerer was said to have been involved at the behest of a jilted lover.

Examining a rock collection did not allow us to conclude anything about the psychic event. However, since Rogers's main interest was in messages from the "spirit world," the researcher agreed to put us in contact with what he described as a "remarkable woman": normal in every aspect, married to an engineer. When she entered into trance she was taken by a thirteenth-century gypsy with characteristics completely unlike hers.

Was the medium taking money from the client?

A few days later, we went to dinner at the home of the medium who the poltergeist researcher had arranged for us to meet. Her dyed, flaming red hair, fanned out nearly to the width of her shoulders. Long, painted fingernails. Silver and turquoise bracelets climbed up to her elbow. In spite of previous reports, her low-cut, gauss-silk, see-through dress in a busy flower pattern, also agreed with what I imagined a gypsy might wear.

We were shown a slide presentation on reincarnation and a case study that had been presented at an international conference. As I had no way to objectively evaluate their data, I decided, for the sake of learning a bit more, to accept their hypotheses and their conclusions. "Very well," I in-

quired, "what more can you tell us about this phenomenon?" "At the end of successive reincarnations, what happens to the spirit?" "What is the grander significance of this process?"

The discussion was brought to an abrupt end. Everyone said goodnight. Maureen O'Hara, who had similar questions, and I were taken in one car back to our hotel. Rogers was taken in another. However, though our car actually took us to the hotel, his drove around the block and back to the house for a *séance*. Although our curiosity was genuine and not primarily intended to challenge their beliefs, Maureen and I had evidently been seen as skeptics.

When Rogers arrived back at the hotel, he told us that the medium had assumed a very complicated yoga posture, entered in trance, and told him that he had been a priest in an earlier life. This priest had persecuted people and did not believe in the soul living on. He was a very young spirit and had a long road ahead.

Then she urged him, as an important figure, to write about the spirits in his books in order to give support to their work. The thirteenth-century gypsy did not ask for money. She evidently wished to receive payment in a different way: by soliciting advertising from a world-famous author. Rogers was not very pleased with this spirit-world marketing tactic.

Were the spirits and their messages convincing?

The first experience we had with Brazilian mediums was in 1977 or so when one came to La Jolla, claiming that the spirit of the dead artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec had contacted him and told him to get in touch with Carl Rogers. The medium gave several demonstrations whereby, after entering into a trance, he painted on canvas, using his fingers (and toes). This was done in a dark room. He claimed that the spirits of the great masters "waited in line, clamoring to enter his body and express themselves." Indeed, his paintings did resemble the style of the artists he claimed were "riding" him as a *cavalo*.

Rogers had little to say as to the phenomenon of painting in the dark in the style of dead masters, but he was interested in what Toulouse-Lautrec had to say to him. I don't know what the spirit-message was, but having received it he was a bit disappointed by its generality.

In São Paulo in 1978, that was also the case. One afternoon, for example, Carl and I visited an aged *baiana* (an African-Brazilian from the state of Bahia) who spread a cupful of *buzios* (sea shells) on the green oil cloth of her kitchen table and "read" their message for Carl. I did not make notes, but I do remember that what she had to say was again too general to be convincing. In messages from the "spirit world," Rogers was always looking for details only he would have known.

Although we were unable to find convincing messages from apparently reliable mediums, we did find examples of clearly unreliable spirits. One night, we went to a Spiritist Center where spirit-healing sessions were held. A preacher gave a long and tedious sermon on the "final message of Jesus." Then six persons at a time were taken to a room where, seated back to back, we had our "auras cleansed" with "passes," sweeping motions made over the body (without touching) with the palms of the hands of a medium.

Back in the main room of the church, we witnessed the spirit-healer beginning to work. The mediums sat around a large table and incorporated the spirits left behind by the people who had passed through. Each time that a medium shook in trance and a "spirit" became manifest, the healer "facilitated" its entry into the "spirit-world."

One such session went like this. A female medium began to speak in a deep male voice. The healer asked, "What is your name?" "Jorge," the medium replied in the same hoarse voice. "Why are you bothering this person?" the healer inquired. "I am not bothering anyone," was the reply. "You are bothering her. You are dead and you should go where you belong." "I am not dead." "Yes, you are. Place your hands on your chest." The medium felt her breasts. "Oh, my God, I

must be dead,” replied the male-sounding voice. The healer directed “Jorge” to look in a certain direction where he would see a cloud bank. He ordered him to walk toward it, where he would be met by his departed family and friends. Soon the medium’s face softened. She took a deep breath and opened her eyes.

Until then, we had only heard from supposedly knowledgeable “spirits,” giving sagely advice, reporting news from departed loved ones. Here was an unexpected twist: a spirit who not only did not know about others, he did not even know about himself. I certainly would question advice I got from an entity who did not even know that he was dead. Carl had similar feelings. ⁽¹⁾

OUTWARD OBSERVATION

In summary, the fact that Rogers was in general sympathetic towards experiences that increased human awareness (a good deal of what transpersonal psychology concerns itself with), that he visited mediums, that he maintained an open mind regarding mysteries, does not mean that he had become a transpersonal psychologist or a leading figure in a “transpersonal movement.”

As he had always done, he used the concepts and language current in his culture to describe his ideas and put forth his arguments. To describe phenomena whose meaning escaped the neutral scientific language he preferred, he adopted some terms common to transpersonal psychology, such as referring to “presence” or his “transcendental core” or his “inner spirit.” Nevertheless, his principle psychological concerns and arguments remained the same. Furthermore, he did not change in any essential way his method of psychotherapy or working with groups.

Thus, Rogers did not become a transpersonal psychologist as far as outward appearance can be evaluated. He continued to be a client-centered therapist with the same intentions as he had always had.

INNER EXPERIENCE

Although he admitted the possibility that “each of us is a continuing spiritual essence lasting over time,” he did not *become* a transpersonal psychologist in his interior experience because he had *already* experienced the transpersonal, from early on, in his psychotherapy work.

Two important factors concerning Rogers’s practice of psychotherapy and his “person-centered approach” to other endeavors indicate characteristics compatible with mysticism.

1. The mediumistic nature of his psychotherapy interviews in which he could perceive beyond the everyday reality.
2. His belief in and reliance on a hidden order in the universe.

The Mediumistic Nature of His Psychotherapy

When engaged in psychotherapy, Rogers concentrated his attention on the subjective world of the client, trying to understand – in league with the person – the meaning that that person’s experience had for him or her.

In centering on this unique person, he was often surprised. Not only did he become aware of the meaning of another’s personal subjectivity, he also became conscious of something that was not easily classified as “personal.”

Clearly involving a mediumistic trance, Rogers described his experience as one that, starts with, and is preceded by, settling into this attitude of “I want to understand every single thing that [the client is] saying; I want to really sense what it means to [him or her].”

I feel [in the subsequent moments] all in one piece, as though I am all focused. Yet, in ordinary life, I think, "God, how am I going to get everything done before I leave for Europe." You know, pretty well fragmented.

It is a very existential moment because, when I finish a really good interview, my memory for that interview is often very bad. Later, when I think about it, some parts of it will come back; but the intellectual side of me is not very much present. Well, the intellectual side is there too, but it is all focused in this moment with no intent of thinking about it, with no intent to remember it. So, all my abilities are there, I think.

The best periods in therapy are timeless moments. I am not aware of time. Except for the fact that if I have another appointment at such and such a time, there is some background awareness of that. In an interview in front of a group, pretty soon the group disappears completely. They are not there. It is just the two of us. (Monteiro dos Santos, 1985)

Why do I call this a "mediumistic trance"? Because that is what it is, by commonly accepted definitions. Rogers participates with his clients in an experience that, for him, transcends time, as well as the boundaries of the presumed identity of both client and therapist and of the immediate environment.

Through a single-pointed attention to "every single thing" the therapist's (and doubtless the client's) "generalized reality orientation" is relaxed, allowing (among other things) conflicting values to co-exist. (Shor, 1959) Therefore, a client's very different opinions or perceptions were doubtless easier for Rogers to accept uncritically than may have been possible in his "everyday mental frame of reference."

In this state, Rogers feels "all in one piece" as he "settles into" a holistic mode of perception. Losing awareness of his surroundings and even the sense of time, he demonstrates that he is experiencing, *by definition*, a "trance state." (Ludwig, 1967)

Many would water-down this expression to, "an altered state of consciousness," or anything else that might suggest that it was not weird. And, in fact, it was not. The state in which Rogers seemed to be operating is closest to what William James (1890) has referred to as, "the lower phases of mediumistic possession," such as playing a musical instrument, where, "the normal self is not excluded from conscious participation in the performance, though [the] initiative seems to come from elsewhere."

Thus, this state is not that deep trance that possesses the person, capturing his will and incapacitating his thinking ability. Nevertheless, it is an "exceptional state of consciousness," (James, 1896) in which Rogers's critical faculties are fully functioning, but the initiative seems to come from the interrelationship of individual minds. A phenomenon that Rogers called "empathic understanding" in the context of psychotherapy.

In this state, Rogers was able to be *more*, not less, aware than at other times. He verifies this when he relates that he never felt "as whole, or as much a person" as he did in his therapeutic interviews. (Rogers, 1957)

No one has described the *complementary* functioning of the analytic and holistic modes of mind encountered in psychotherapy better than Rogers (1980) himself when he noted his direct experience, thusly,

Beyond the immediate message of the person, no matter what that might be, there is the universal So there is both the satisfaction of hearing *this* person and also the satisfaction of hearing one's self in touch with what is universally true. (p.8)

One of the most innocent and at the same time most striking verifications of this blending of awareness with another person, is a client's description:

We were mostly me working together on my situation as I found it. (Rogers, 1949)

Furthermore, this type of experience was apparently a quite normal part of the early practice of client-centered therapy. Rogers (1961) commented, matter-of-factly, that,

When there is this complete unity, singleness, fullness of experiencing in the relationship, then it acquires the "out-of- this-world" quality which therapists have remarked upon, a sort of trance-like feeling in the relationship from which both the client and I emerge at the end of the hour, as if from a deep well or tunnel . . . a timeless living in the experience which is *between* the client and me. (p.202)

This experience indeed has become so familiar to client-centered therapists that many find it difficult to see it's implications outside of their own framework. One veteran psychotherapist remarked, "I don't see anything special about that. It's just empathy."

When Rogers was deeply involved in group work, in which the nature of empathic understanding may not have changed but the way it manifested was often radically different from in individual counseling, he continued to rely on what were possibly extra-sensory perceptions. For example, he related,

I *trust* the feelings, words, impulses, fantasies, that emerge in me. In this way I am using more than my conscious self, drawing on some of the capacities of the whole organism. ... While a responsible business executive is speaking, I may suddenly have the fantasy of the small boy he is carrying around within himself – the small boy that he was, shy inadequate, fearful – a child he endeavors to deny, of whom he is ashamed. I am wishing that he would love and cherish this youngster. ... Often this brings a surprising depth of reaction and profound insights. (Rogers, 1970, p.53)

Is this "fantasy" or "intuition" (or what the psychologist Jules Seeman (1997) refers to as emergent "precognitive organismic processes" different from similar insights, derived when one's awareness is divided between inner sensations and outer impressions while scanning sea shells scattered over a kitchen table? On hearing about "empathy," one could just as well imagine a *pai de santo* from *Macumba* or another mystical cult saying, "I don't see anything special about that, that's just consulting the spirits."

While Rogers (1955) had acknowledged that he experienced an "almost mystical subjectivity" as a therapist, he had always sought a conservative scientific explanation for the process of psychotherapy. Nevertheless, as he was also accustomed to using vernacular expressions to transmit his thoughts more clearly, he eventually resorted to "new-age" terms to explain the perennial experience of empathic understanding.

He states,

When I am at my best, as a group facilitator or a therapist, I discover another characteristic. I find that when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then simply my *presence* is releasing and helpful. There is nothing I can do to force this experience, but when I can relax and be close to the transcendental core of me, then I may behave in strange and impulsive ways in the relationship, ways which I cannot justify rationally, which have nothing to do with my thought processes. But these strange behaviors turn out to be *right*, in some odd way. At those

moments it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself, and has become a part of something larger. Profound growth and healing and energy are present. (Rogers, 1985)

His legitimate, even mystical, experience had not changed. His manner of explaining it had become less precise, moving closer to what one might find in current fashion. Doubtless, this development has encouraged the trend to classify him within the transpersonal psychology camp.

Belief In a Hidden Order in The Universe

Rogers's *worldview* integrated the "therapist" and the "client" in the therapeutic or group activity. In this regard, he relied on what he called the *formative directional tendency*, which he described as,

an evolutionary tendency toward greater order, greater complexity, greater inter-relatedness. In humankind, this tendency exhibits itself as the individual moves from a single-cell origin to complex organic functioning, to knowing and sensing below the level of consciousness, to a conscious awareness of the organism and the external world, to a transcendent awareness of the harmony and unity of the cosmic system, including humankind. (Rogers, 1980, p.133)

In summary, Rogers did not become a transpersonal psychologist in essence, because he always was one. In each particular moment and in his life as a whole he represented the intentions of transpersonal psychology, as, "the study and application of various levels of consciousness in the direction of a fundamental unity of being." (Garcia, 1997)

AN APPROACH

Rogers's world-view and his practice of psychotherapy should be understood as part of an integrated approach that he cultivated over his entire life.

His (person-centered) approach evolved over time out of a specific stance or *way of being*, which can be described as consisting not only of certain beliefs and attitudes, but also abilities that improved with experience and varied in form when dealing with different phenomena (such as psychotherapy, education, small and large group work).

His attitude was, "not in truth already known or formulated but in the process by which truth is dimly perceived, tested and approximated." (Rogers, 1974) He maintained a tolerance for uncertainty or ambiguity. Keats's (1899, p.277) Shakespeare is the example: That is, to have

negative capability . . . capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.

And, he was willing, within reason, *to be changed* by the experience: in the vein that Martin Buber (1966) had proposed,

I felt I have not the right to want to change another, if I am not open to be changed by him as far as it is legitimate.

Rogers's (1980) "way of being" was both the means and the end: he tried to do what was necessary to help people to know and be a true self.

CONCLUSION

Rogers's relationship to transpersonal psychology is complex. But not so difficult to understand. He did not become a transpersonal psychologist. The criteria derived from outward appearance: such as his role in the development of humanistic psychology, his visits to mediums and attempts to explain his own mediumistic experience in psychotherapy in the new-age language, do not justify placing him in the transpersonal psychology camp as it is currently constituted. His attitude, as towards most phenomena, was curiosity and an eagerness to learn more. He may have been congenial to transpersonal psychology but he was a client-centered psychotherapist.

On the other hand, the fact that, as mystics are also said to do, he based his work on a belief in a hidden order in the universe and entered exceptional states of consciousness in his psychotherapeutic interviews, also suggests that he did not *become* a transpersonal psychologist. He *always was one* in the sense that his personal experience was compatible with what may also be the essence of transpersonal psychology.

In other words, Rogers's personal, interpersonal and transpersonal approach was the same: *He turned the best part of himself toward the best part of the other in order that something of lasting value might be accomplished that none could have done alone.* Not his researches with spiritists, but the accumulation of his life work, led him to conclude,

I believe there is some kind of a transcendent organizing influence in the universe which operates in man as well . . . My present very tentative view [of humans] is that perhaps there is an essential person which persists through time, or even through eternity. (Bergin, 1991)

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NOTES

⁽¹⁾ Apparently, the mediumistic trance may be legitimate, but it does not necessarily convey a useful message. My own opinion is that certain so-called spiritual activities are useful for some people at certain times. For example, in the Philippine Islands I witnessed psychic healers pretending to enter a patient's body and, (in my judgment) through slight-of-hand, producing "bloodied tissue" which was drawn out as if diseased tissue from the patient.

From a western scientific point of view, this was a hoax. Nevertheless, the healer was unapologetic. From the shamanic viewpoint, one might say, it is the presence of this material (no matter from where it comes) that helps to draw out of the body the spiritual "tissue" that causes the real illness.

Others explain this procedure as a valuable part of the placebo effect. The patient's "remembered wellness" (Benson, 1996) for self-healing is provoked by a (culturally approved) ritual that both he or she and the healer believe must take place for healing to occur.

Was the operation a fake? Yes.

Was it real? Yes.

Was it effective? Sometimes. Can more be said of most psychology?

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