


An International Journal of Research, Theory, and Application

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3  
AUGUST 1986

# PERSON- CENTERED REVIEW



 SAGE PUBLICATIONS



required of other professionals. In a powerful sense, the person-centered approach does constitute a way of being and not simply a method of working. Therefore, as long as there are those working in the human relations field who believe that the person-centered approach is as relevant to their private lives as to their professional work, there is a good chance that the approach will develop both theoretically and in its applications. Without such commitment it is, I believe, unlikely that the future will be very fruitful.

I am convinced that on the theoretical front we need to explore further the apparent tension between the concepts of entropy and the actualizing tendency. Often the person-centered approach is accused of a somewhat facile optimism, of refusing to acknowledge adequately the dark side of life. I do not believe such an accusation is justified but at the theoretical level the issues involved need to be more rigorously explored and illuminated.

Certainly we need a new wave of research. The core conditions have to prove themselves fresh—or be found convincingly insufficient. New research models are required which will enable us to investigate the quality of complete therapeutic processes over time and not simply the quality of a single interview or of segments of an interaction. I would hope, too, that in the light of the powerful advances which have been made in the facilitation of large groups and the creation of temporary communities we shall soon see some pioneering research in this area as well.

Brian Thorne

---

\* \* \*

The question is meaningless. There is no *the* person-centered approach.

To client-centered therapists trained at the University of Chicago it is a method of one-to-one psychotherapy backed by theory and research—although the research has become equivocal. To academics it is the foundation for counselor training programs, though they differ as to whether its value is realized by applying behavioral techniques or by adopting a special attitude. Freelance institutes in Europe concentrate on “facilitator development” to ease people into the psychotherapy profession or on “cross-cultural communications” workshops which help people to “reach deeper levels of meeting” and to “re-vision the



future." To idealists at a person-centered institute in New York, it is "empowering the person" and to those at Rogers's home institute in La Jolla, it is planetary well-being through ambitious projects and a positive outlook. "We are interesting. Life is a precious gift. There is a world to be won (one)," says the 1986 bulletin for the La Jolla Program. For Rogers, whose signature authorizes all the activities mentioned, it is a "way of being."

In short, it is everything and nothing. What could be most essential to its development? Only Shakespeare could imagine. Though perhaps he would state, as Iago, "I am not what I am."

If we speak of client-centered therapy (the only one of the above with a legitimate theory). I don't know any behavior therapist, psychoanalyst, or humanistic psychotherapist who doesn't readily admit to being influenced by its principles. Still, no one I can think of, with the exception of Goff Barrett-Lennard and Nat Raskin, has said to me that they are client-centered therapists. Most people repeat vacuously the cliché: "I believe that Rogers's conditions are necessary, but not sufficient." Some of Rogers's closest colleagues use hypnosis, guided fantasies, paradoxical statements, dream analysis, exercises, give homework assignments and generally follow the latest fads to supply their missing sufficiency.

To speak of a "way of being" or a movement," nothing more than skepticism is required. To speak of "theory and application" I suggest it is essential for the person-centered approach to define itself. If multi-dimensional, as it appears to be, then the various aspects must develop theories and research. For client-centered therapy the issue of sufficiency must be resolved.

John K. Wood

\* \* \*

It is important that we develop an understandable explanation for why client-centered therapy or the Person-Centered Approach brings change. There is no obvious reason why the person-centered approach is effective. Because of this lack, people who would be benefited do not seek our services. Also, our services are not as much used by institutions as would be the case if the heads of these institutions knew why the person-centered approach worked. Indeed, I doubt if there is general agreement among person-centered therapists as to why the approach