
Editorial

With this issue, *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies* continues its documentation of fine papers originally presented in Summer 2003 at the 6th World Conference on Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling in Egmond aan Zee. The papers in this issue have been carefully revised by their authors after our standard rigorous review procedure carried out by members of PCEP's Editorial Advisory Board (see inside front cover).

In their essay Roelf J. Takens and Germain Lietaer, members of the Scientific Committee of the Conference and co-editors of the Special Issue on the Conference (PCEP 3:1 with four of the keynote papers), focus on one of the most controversial topics, not only of the conference but generally in the person-centered and experiential community: Can person-centered also be problem-centered? Connected with the principled question of whether this is a contradiction or not are the subjects of diagnostics, the need for a differentiation in the therapeutic process, the necessity and sufficiency of the relationship conditions for personality change, and the nature of the therapist's expertise. The authors give their personal observations and remarks on the keynote papers from the previous issue of PCEP, highlighting the commonalities among the speakers without ignoring the differences among the different models of approaching the issues at stake. They plead for a spirit of mutual respect and — quoting a statement by Peter F. Schmid at the closing panel session of the conference — living with the differences by regarding them as a fertile conflict that can further develop our approaches to therapy and our ability to help our clients.

Picking up the key question of whether person-centered can also be problem-centered, Dave Mearns gives an answer in the form of an unambiguous and strict 'no'. His article documents the fifth keynote paper of the conference. Mearns delivers a strong statement for an independent, person-centered stance within a problem-centered world encouraging and provoking person-centered therapists to articulate their standpoint in the relevant institutions of society, instead of either opting out of the mainstream or conforming to it. Mindful of what the person-centered paradigm has to offer, his option is not to compromise but to communicate clearly its uniqueness, integrity and its emancipatory power. Being with the client in a strong and full person-centered relationship, 'working at relational depth', particularly with severely damaged clients, shows the power of person-centeredness.

One of the key aspects of the person-centered paradigm's potential is further investigated by Art Bohart in his treatise on the way empathy works in therapy. Bearing in mind the *client*-centered nature of the approach the author offers an alternative to common, widespread therapist-centric perspectives implying that it is the therapist who, by his or her therapeutic actions, produces change in the client. Like Mearns, Bohart suspects that the one-sidedness of this perspective, namely to cast what the client-centered therapist does in the typical language of intervention, reflects in part the current therapeutic zeitgeist.

To balance this view Bohart does not see the client as somebody who only experiences empathy, but regards them as an active self healer. Thus the client is understood as an active change agent who makes empathy and therapy work, e.g., by using empathy for advancing their personality change, creating new meaning and shaping the therapeutic relationship.

Next, Judy Moore demonstrates the creative and fertilizing potential of a multiple perspective view of traditional, client-centered core concepts. In her paper she leads the reader to reconsider traditional ego-bound views of the self and points to the importance of being aware of a 'pre-verbal, unconditioned self' that can be accessed within the body, at a felt-sense level. In doing so she goes beyond the Western theories of the self developed by Carl Rogers and Eugene Gendlin and reflects on recent authors as well as on Eastern spiritual traditions, particularly within the Buddhist tradition. Like Rogers in his later years, this results in a spiritual viewpoint. 'Letting go of who I think I am' leads to a stance that focuses on the necessity of releasing the egocentric self to becoming more fully and compassionately alive.

The final paper, by Frans Depestele, further exemplifies the importance of seriously examining the client's unfolding in-session process in order to help the client reflect on, attend to and symbolize their experiencing. The author uses the rich metaphor of a series of psychological 'spaces' (i.e., client processing steps) to draw together work on the client Focusing process (by Gendlin and others) with recent work on relational presence and authenticity. On a micro and a macro level he ponders the different forms of space (relationship space, reflection space, focusing space, symbolization space, self-symbolization space) created by the client in the development of the relationship between client and therapist. We hope that work such as this will contribute to further rapprochement and creative exchange between person-centered and experiential branches of our larger therapeutic 'space'.

The co-editors wish to express their hope that the publication of articles originating in conference papers stimulates our readership to present their own views in this Journal — be it on one of the controversial topics, or on other topics from the realm of person-centered and experiential psychotherapies, and to submit it for publication. Language should not be a barrier. We provide help for non-English speaking authors and a first review process that is done in the original language. We are pleased that we already enjoy numerous submissions from different parts of the world. As expressed through our mission statement, we regard it as crucial for the further development and the future of these paradigms that cross-fertilization among languages, cultures and perspectives can take place. Along with the regular conferences that will take place in a two-year cycle from 2006 onwards, we want our readers to regard PCEP as a key outlet for theoretical, practical and research papers on person-centered and experiential therapies. We also welcome cooperation with existing local or regional journals in different ways and are always open to suggestions. You can find more information (including recent developments) on our website: www.pce-world.org/worldjournal.htm, and you can also contact us at journal@pce-world.org.

Robert Elliott, Dave Mearns and Peter F. Schmid

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