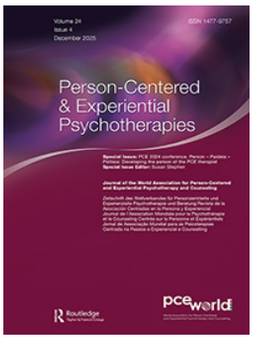

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Person, paideia, politeia: the person, education, and politics in person-centered psychology

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ABSTRACT

This article, based on a keynote speech delivered at PCE2024 in Athens, Greece, aims to strike some keynotes on the theme(s) of the conference, that is, person, paideia (education), and politeia (politics). Despite its centrality to person-centered psychology, the concept of the person is under-theorized. First, expanding on Schmid's identification of two strands in Rogers' thinking about the person (the individualistic and the relational), the article explores the contextual person, that is a person who is inevitably embedded in a number of contexts, not least their culture. Second, the article revisits the radicalism of Rogers' ideas about education, including that of educating therapists, and considers this in the light of the pressures on training as manifested in neoliberal institutions – and institutes – of education/training. Third, the article considers person-centered politics, specifically, the politics of theory, and how person-centered psychology can represent itself externally with more coherence and confidence – for the betterment of people, education and the (political) world. Notwithstanding this presentation as a journal article, its style retains something of the directness of the original form in addressing the original in-person and online audience – and, now, the reader.

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Introduction

It's a great pleasure to be speaking at this conference in Athens. I was brought up in an intellectual tradition that acknowledged Ancient Greece as the cradle of Western civilization from which the modern West derives many of its founding archetypes, myths and ideas in politics, science and art, and, indeed its language – including the English words, politics, science and art – so, for me, there is a lovely and strangely uncanny sense of coming home. To echo John F. Kennedy's famous claim to be a Berliner, I might say 'Είμαι Αθηναίος' (I am an Athenian!). Of course, this is a Western intellectual perspective (and, moreover, one based predominantly in the Northern Hemisphere), and there are, in fact, a number of cradles of civilization including Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, India, Peru and Mesoamerica, as well as Africa and Oceania. This acknowledges that, although we may all trace our intellectual roots back to the work of Carl Rogers, we come from all over the

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world and have and carry diverse intellectual and cultural influences. Indeed, the impact of culture on theory and of theory on culture is something that has interested me for some years.

While I am pleased to be here in Athens, I am also aware that the reason we are here is because we are not in Lviv, and my thoughts and solidarity go to Ukrainian colleagues who are living with the consequences of the Russia's invasion of their country – and to Russian colleagues and citizens who oppose the invasion; and my thanks go to our Greek colleagues who picked up the challenge of organizing PCE2024 in short order – tēnā koutou katoa | greetings and thanks to you all. This is person-centered politics in action at the organizational level.

When, last year, I received the invitation to be one of the keynote speakers at this conference, I immediately thought of and sketched out what I wanted to say and, at that stage, thought I would write this speech well before I got on the airplane to come here. For various reasons, I didn't, and as I reflected on this, I thought and felt that, while I had things to say that I think about and which are informed by living in Aotearoa New Zealand, I also wanted to write more when I was geographically closer to being here. For this reason, I ended up finishing this speech in the two weeks prior to the conference and so have written this on three islands: Aotearoa the North Island of New Zealand, Cres in Croatia, and Paros here in Greece. For me, this process represents the importance of having a certain distance from as well as a closeness to a subject, or, as Kelman (2023) put it, when discussing the political geography of islands, the interstices of separation and connection. This process also represents the significance both of the containment that an island represents and of a sense of it – and me – being an outlier or on the (or a) periphery (Hay, 2006).

The person

Despite its centrality in and to person-centered psychology, the concept of the person is under-theorized. Rogers himself said that he used the term in a generic sense to indicate the individual (reported in Schmid, 1998). Indeed, in his formulation of the fully functioning person (Rogers, 1957, 1961/1967a, 1969), his focus was on the person as an individual. Here, the fully functioning person is synonymous with optimal psychological adjustment, what he referred to as complete congruence and extensionality, and is characterized by an openness to experience, the ability to live in the present and to be attentive to each moment and a trust in organismic experiencing. However, one of the problems with using 'fully functioning' as a descriptor of the person is that it sounds more complete and fixed, and thus is more akin to Maslow's (1954) notion of the self-actualized person, than it does of a person in process. It also begs the question: 'For whom or what is the person fully functioning?' For a different view of the person, we have to look to Rogers' later writing – in *Carl Rogers on Personal Power* (Rogers, 1978) and *A Way of Being* (Rogers, 1980a) – on the related concepts of the political person, the emerging person and the person of tomorrow. In his book on *Personal Power*, Rogers (1978) described the political person as 'a new political figure' which he then viewed as gaining influence and fostering an emerging culture (Rogers, 1978). He characterizes the emerging person as having an openness to experience, a trust in one's organism, an internal locus of evaluation and a willingness

to be a process (rather than a product or a goal) (Rogers, 1978). While this is a more fluid view of the person – and we should remember that, some 20 years earlier, when articulating his process conception of psychotherapy, Rogers (1958/1967b) had acknowledged fluidity as social value judgment which individuals and cultures will have to make – his inclusion of the internal locus of evaluation is still somewhat self-referential and individualistic. Arguably, it is in his identification of the qualities of the person of tomorrow (Rogers, 1980b) that Rogers' view of the person is most outward looking. He described this person as

- having openness, a desire for authenticity, a skepticism regarding science and technology, a desire for wholeness, the wish for intimacy, a closeness to and caring for nature, an authority within and a yearning for the spiritual; and
- being caring, a process person, anti-institutional and fundamentally indifferent to material things.

Schmid (1998) identified these different conceptualizations of Rogers as representing two strands in Rogers' thinking about the person: the individualistic (that is, the fully functioning person) and the relational (that is, the political person, the emerging person and the person of tomorrow). While I agree with Schmid's analysis and consider that the person represented in Rogers' relational strand does appear more open and fluid, I also think that Rogers' descriptions of them are still framed in individualistic language and as emanating from the person out to their environment. All the qualities or ascribed attributes of these persons somehow reside in the individual, separately from others. As Schmid (1998) viewed experience and relationship as the two most important principles of the person-centered image of the person – as he put it, 'we live through experience, and we live in relationships' (p. 45) – I think he might well have agreed with my critique of Rogers' language in this respect.

With regard to developing a more relational and contextual view of the person, I suggest that we need to return to the roots of person-centered theory and the centrality of the concept of the organism, which, arguably, is the root metaphor of person-centered psychology (Tudor & Worrall, 2006). Writing in the early 1950s, Rogers (1953/1967c) stated that 'the inner core of man's personality is the organism itself, which is essentially both self-preserving and social' (p. 92). When Rogers and others refer to the organism, they are generally referring to 'the visceral, sensory, bodily, instinctual, [and] unselfconscious aspects of the human being' (Embleton Tudor et al., 2004, p. 25). As the self is a differentiated part of the organism and the perceptual field, Rogers (1951, 1959) clearly viewed the organism as a prior and more fundamental concept to that of the self. For instance, when writing about interpersonal relationships, he stated that 'one of the fundamental directions taken by the process of therapy is the free experiencing of the actual sensory and visceral reactions of the organism without too much of an attempt to relate these experiences to the self' (Rogers, 1953/1967c, p. 80). Significantly, this passage continues:

> This is usually accompanied by the conviction that this material does not belong to, and cannot be organized into, the self. The end point of this process is that the client discovers that he can be his experience, with all of its variety and surface contradiction; that he can

> formulate himself out of his experience, instead of trying to impose a formulation of self upon his experiences, denying to awareness those elements which do not fit. (p. 80)

One of the reasons that I and others have been concerned to assert and revitalize the centrality of the organism to person-centered psychology is that the organism cannot be understood separately from its environment. As Fritz Perls (1947/1969) put it: 'No organism is self-sufficient. . . . there is always an inter-dependency of the organism and its environment'. (p. 38) Andras Angyal (1941), the Hungarian-American psychologist, whose work on the organism influenced Rogers, makes this point strongly: 'Any attempt to make a morphological separation of organism and environment fails and necessarily leads to endless hair-splitting dialectic'. (p. 89) As organismic psychology emphasizes the indissolubility of organism and environment, it also asserts the inevitability of interpersonal relationships not only between people but also between the person and their environments – and, of course, the environment and the person, thereby acknowledging the significance of stimuli from the environment on the person. This, in turn, means that we cannot understand a person separately from their identity and culture, whether self-defined, perceived and/or socially constructed. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this means, at least from an indigenous perspective, and, increasingly, from a critical settler perspective (see Lythberg et al., 2025), that the concept of personhood includes ancestors; geographical features (such as mountains and rivers); and tribes, sub-tribes and extended family. That this is a felt experience and an ontological reality was enshrined in 2014 when, under the *Te Urewera Act 2014*, the Urewera National Forest was given equal legal status as that afforded to human beings, and in 2017, when, under Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017, this status was also given to the Whanganui River. The local Māori whakataukī (proverb) puts this well: 'Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au' (I am the river, and the river is me).

While such extended views of the person can be encompassed by Rogers' theory, they are not explicit in the theory, and it has taken others since to discuss different aspects of culture, politics, ecology and diversity in relation to person-centered psychology. What I suggest is needed now is to make this more clearly linked to the *nature* of the person, as well as to the 'personhood' of nature (for examples of which, see Tamahou & Tudor, 2026). Interestingly, Rogers (1951) identifies experiential knowledge of cultural setting and influence as important preparation for the training therapist, although, for Rogers, the focus of this was more on the training therapist gaining such knowledge of the other, not of themselves. To this – or, rather, more than this – I would add the importance of what, 35 years ago, Shweder (1990) referred to as 'cultural intentionality', that is, that the person knows themselves culturally and is intentional about that knowing, a perspective that has led some colleagues to write about being white (Haugh, 2016; Naughton & Tudor, 2006; Tudor et al., 2022). Regarding this, we can take inspiration from the philosophical maxim which was inscribed on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi Γνῶθι σαυτόν (gnōthi sauron) | Know thyself or, as reinterpreted by Plato, 'Know your soul'.

Clearly, there is more work to do in developing our understanding of the person-in-context, as well as the significance of the context in the person, for which see contributions to the special issue of this journal on PCE2021 (Revell et al., 2022). One psychologist and writer who influenced Rogers was Gordon Allport, whose work on *Becoming* (1955/1980) informed Rogers' thinking about this particular evolutionary focus. Given the

emphasis in person-centered psychology on the present, it's particularly significant that Allport posits the concept and reality of a purposive person who is oriented to the future; as he puts it: 'To understand what a person is, it is necessary always to refer to what he may be in the future, for every state of the person is pointed in the direction of future possibilities'. (p. 12) While this may initially appear at odds with an emphasis on honoring the ancestors and on looking back, I suggest that it is complementary, indeed necessary, to look backward and have an eye on the future, both of which are important when we come to consider the necessity of responding to the climate crisis and to the continuing effects of colonization (see Tamahou & Tudor, 2026).

Finally (on the person), just as the personal is political (Hanisch, 1969), so, too, *the concept of the person* is political. As Maureen O'Hara put it recently (in a personal communication, 13 December 2024):

> As we see Trump unfurl his intentions to roll Western culture back to the feudal middle ages where only the male nobles were considered full persons and everyone else – including even noble women – chattel, the question of what is meant by 'person', and 'personhood', and what rights and responsibilities the status implies is at the forefront of our minds. We [in the United States] currently have states such as Alabama and Louisiana planning to declare an embryo, from the moment of conception, a *person* with the same rights as an adult woman in whose body it lives.

Paideia – education

Rogers was one of the very few founders of an approach to psychology to articulate his approach to education, yet, judging by its absence in citations, in references in articles in this journal and on person-centered course reading lists, his book, *Freedom to Learn* (Rogers, 1969; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994), appears to have gone out of fashion; and the personal, psychological, political – and organizational – implications of promoting the freedom to learn largely unexamined. This second part of the article revisits the radicalism of Rogers' ideas about education, including that of educating or training therapists, and considers this in the light of the pressures on training as manifested in neoliberal institutions – and institutes – of education/training.

Rogers published his initial ideas about the training of therapists in a chapter in his book *Client-centered Therapy* (Rogers, 1951). In it, he identified some significant trends in the training of counselors and therapists, that is, away from technique/s and toward 'attitudinal orientation of the counsellor' (p. 432); toward giving the student an experience of therapy themselves, primarily with a view to increasing the students' sensitivity and empathy; and providing the opportunity for the practice of therapy. He then makes the following tentative suggestions as to the desirable preparation for training as a therapist: experiential knowledge of the human being in their cultural setting; empathic experiencing; consideration and formulation of personal basic philosophy; the experience of personal therapy; a deep knowledge of the dynamics of personality; a knowledge of research design, scientific methodology and psychological theory.

Almost 75 years later, I regard these as still desirable and relevant preparation for therapists but, if I think about these in terms of the psychotherapy education/training programs at the university at which I work, I would assess them in Table 1.

Table 1. Rogers' desirable preparation for training as a therapist evaluated with regard to a specific psychotherapy program.

Desirable preparation for training as a therapist (Rogers, 1951)	Evaluation with regard to a specific psychotherapy program
Experiential knowledge of the human being in their cultural setting	Yes
Empathic experiencing	No (not least as the program is not person centered)
Consideration and formulation of personal basic philosophy	No
The experience of personal therapy	Yes – it is an entry requirement for admission onto the program, though its value is being questioned by the university
A deep knowledge of the dynamics of personality	Yes – though from a psychodynamic rather than a person centered or humanistic perspective
A knowledge of research design, scientific methodology and psychological theory	Partially

Rogers' groundbreaking book on education, *Freedom to Learn*, was originally published in 1969; revised in 1983 with the additional title 'for the 80s', which edition predicted the rise of the influence of neoliberalism in education; and further revised and coauthored by Jerome Freiberg and published posthumously in 1994. In titling his book(s) *Freedom to Learn*, Rogers states his underlying philosophy and methodology – and, in effect, his politics – of education, that is, a commitment to freedom. Consistent with its philosophy of organism and persons, the person-centered approach to education gives primacy to the view:

(1) That the student/trainee tends to actualize in negotiating their learning.
(2) That the teacher/trainer or facilitator adopts a nondirective – or, more positively, an actively supportive – attitude with regard to the directionality of the student in relation to the content, process and outcome of their education.
(3) That together the student/trainee and teacher/trainer co-create the equivalent of the therapeutic conditions in the context of their application to the learning environment.

As Rogers (1951) put it (in another chapter in *Client-centered Therapy* on student-centered teaching):

> If, in therapy, it is possible to reply upon the capacity of the client to deal constructively with his life situation and if the therapist's aim is best directed toward releasing that capacity, then why not apply this hypothesis and method in teaching. If the creation of an atmosphere of acceptance, understanding, and respect is the most effective basis for facilitating the learning which is called therapy, then might it not be the basis for the learning which is called education? (p. 384)

This represented – and still represents – a radical shift in educational philosophy and practice from philosophies of education, which create a dependent relationship between an 'expert' teacher and an 'ignorant student'; which are curriculum led and serve the needs of an institution and/or society; and which seek to 'ambush' the student through formal examination. Rogers' ideas on education (see especially Rogers, 1969, 1983) are , essentially, an application of the principles of person-centered psychology. They also have resonances with the work of other contemporary educators regarding how children learn,

and fail (Holt, 1967b, 1967a, respectively); on free schools (e.g. Neil, 1968); and on deschooling (Illich, 1973); and, more recently, on the concept of the psychopathic school (Gatto, 2002). There are also parallels between Rogers' approach to education and that of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator and revolutionary. Rogers (1978) himself acknowledges the similarities between his and Freire's (1972, Freire, 1967/1976) ideas on education as follows:

- Both are subversive of authoritarian structures;
- Both are statements about change in power relationships, especially in breaking down the vertical, top-down 'banking' concept of education;
- Both propose a dialogical, problem-posing (as distinct from problem-solving) education; and
- Both view(ed) this type of educational work as representing a new factor in wider, social change and development.

The differences between the more traditional, conventional approach to education and that of the student-centered approach to education are summarized in Table 2.

Others since Rogers have developed his ideas on education and training, including that of therapists, i.e. Combs (1986/2002), Thayer (1991/2002), Hanson and Roebuck (1988), Aspy and Roebuck (1988), Thomas (1988/2002), Neville (1991, 2008, 2011) Keil (1996), Blomfield (1997), Mearns (1997), Natiello (2001b), Embleton Tudor et al. (2004), Cornelius-White (2005, 2006, 2007), Tudor (2007), Tudor and Worrall (2007), Cornelius-White and Motschnig (2012), Hope (2013) and Bevly et al. (2023).

For Rogers and others, including myself, the point about encouraging students to develop or reconnect with their inner freedom – or, ideally, not to take it away from them in the first place – is that they can then process feedback from the environment. After all, as we know, the organism cannot be understood outside its environment. This feedback encompasses an awareness of education/training realities such as course and academic requirements, and the further external requirements of course accreditation and validation, and of professional recognition, registration and regulation. In the original edition of *Freedom to Learn,* Rogers (1969) reports on an experiment in person-centered learning, observing that, among other things, the pupils were not only aware of the (external)

Table 2. A comparison of different approaches to education (from Tudor, 2007).

Traditional, conventional approach to education	Student-centered approach to education
Prescribed curriculum	Student-led and process-led curriculum, mindful of but not subservient to the standards and requirements of external accrediting or validating bodies
Same assignments for all students	Student-directed assignments, e.g. choosing their assignments and/or essay title
Lecturing and tutorials	Facilitated and self-directed learning through experiential learning, large and small group discussion, some didactic presentations, demonstrations and personal development groups
Standard tests by which all students are externally evaluated	A variety of evaluative schema, consistent with an internal locus of evaluation and negotiated and agreed learning outcomes
Teacher-assessed grades	Self, peer and tutor assessment and grades awarded by a combination of parties to assessment, again, in the context of the requirements of external validating bodies

realities but came up with creative solutions to them through group problem-solving, such as contracts for grades: 'The point is'. Rogers (1969) reflects, 'that when freedom and self-direction are given to a group, it is also easier for the members to accept the constraints and obligations which surround the psychological area in which they are free'. (p. 24) Both children and adult learners can thus be mindful of external requirements; be encouraged to question their necessity; and be facilitated to come up with creative solutions for those which they and the institution have to accept. I write 'question', partly in the spirit of what is a reflective, enquiring approach, and as what are often understood and presented as 'requirements' are sometimes not. On one particular course, the students challenged the tutors about giving them set essay titles. The tutors responded by saying that it was a requirement of the university which had validated the course. However, on further investigation, it turned out that this was not the case, with the result that both students and tutors were liberated – and challenged – by this particular freedom. So, we see in this view of freedom also a sense of responsibility – to others and the environment. Regarding responsibility, I want to acknowledge a point Sheila Haugh made (in the preconference encounter group at PCE2024) that, while we are not responsible for the past (the sins of our fathers and mothers, as it were), we are responsible for dealing with the impact of that past in the present – a particularly important point when challenging passive or hostile responses and, for example, dealing with white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018). However, following 17 years in the private/independent education sector, and, to date, almost the same in the public sector, I have become more aware of the constraints of the neoliberal university system, especially with regard to making a profit from education, as a result of which I am less certain that we can effectively facilitate a genuinely person-centered or even, broadly, humanistic education/training of therapists in such institutions. Over 35 years ago, Combs (1988), a long-time champion of humanistic and person-education, wrote an article in response to attacks on humanism from the then vicious attacks on it from the far right, and the mechanism of education. In response, he was optimistic, arguing that '[h]umanistic, person-education is an idea whose time has come . . . . [and whose] future is assured'. (p. 96) I am less optimistic or certain and, in any case, and especially in the context of the current political shift to the right, consider that we (humanists) have to fight even harder to make space for genuine education.

Such mindfulness of external realities, requirements and conditions brings me to how the environment, including social and cultural factors, impacts on education. Thus, educators and trainers are paying more attention, for instance, to the impact of race, culture and racism in therapy training. In the UK, this includes Colin Lago (2006, 2012, 2021), and Gillian Proctor and other colleagues at the University of Leeds (Denyer et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2021a, 2021b; Whitney et al., 2024). In Aotearoa New Zealand, partly because of the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a Treaty signed between Māori chiefs and the British Crown in 1840 (see Orange, 2024; The Waitangi Tribunal, 2024), and the awareness of the continuing and current impact of colonization, there is an increasing focus on all aspects of education being informed by the Articles of Te Tiriti, which includes Māori sovereignty, and co-governance; and by moves to decolonize curricula (Lee-Morgan & Hutchings, 2016). This includes understanding Māori models of health, and deconstructing what are in effect Western – and Northern – models of psychology and therapy. This is a psychological and political project to which a number of person-centered and indigenous

colleagues have been contributing – see Haenga-Collins et al. (2019), Rodgers and Tudor (2020), Tudor and Rodgers (2020) and Rivers et al. (2022) – which brings us to the third keynote and part of this article: politics.

Politics

Rogers (1978) himself makes the case for person-centered therapy being political in that it represents:

> a conscious renunciation and avoidance by the therapist of all control over, or decision-making for, the client. It is the facilitation of self-ownership by the client and the strategies by which this can be achieved; the placing of the locus of decision-making and responsibility for the effects of these decisions. It is politically centered in the client. (p. 14)

Other political aspects of person-centered therapy include the following:

- Its openness in recording and publishing transcribed therapeutic interviews – Rogers (1942) was the first therapist to do so with his case of Herbert Bryan – and the consequent demystification of the nature of therapy.
- Its emphasis on the authority of the client and the focus on *their* process – which has cleared the ground for developments such as *The Heroic Client* (Duncan et al., 2004).
- Its acknowledgment of the influence and mutuality of the therapeutic relationship – which predated the relational turn in psychoanalysis by some 40 years.
- Its focus on personal power (although, as far as Rogers was concerned, this was framed somewhat individualistically).

As with the field of education, a number of person-centered colleagues have taken forward Rogers' ideas on politics and power, including Miller O'Hara (1984), Natiello (1990, 2001a), Tudor (1997a, 1997b), Proctor and Napier (2004), Proctor et al. (2006). The third and final part of this article focuses on the politics of person-centered and experiential theory with regard to certain misrepresentations of its theory, ecological responses to the climate crisis and sociopsychological responses to colonization.

Person-centered and experiential therapy is counter-cultural. It is not mainstream. While its skills are widely considered fundamental to other approaches, as a distinct practice, it is often not rated, recognized or publicly funded. Notwithstanding its foundation in and long association with and contribution to psychological research, it is not considered to be evidence-based, that is, based on *empirical* evidence; and so we are still fighting the paradigm wars. In response to this situation, different people within person-centered and experiential therapy take differing approaches as to how mainstream or marginal/peripheral we should be. However, and notwithstanding our differences, we do ourselves no favors when we misrepresent our theory.

Misrepresentations

One example of such misrepresentation is that of Rogers (1957, 1959) theory of the necessary and sufficient conditions of therapy and/or personality change as 'the core conditions', a phrase that Rogers never used and which actually derives from Charles

Truax and Robert Carkhuff who were interested in promoting and commercializing skills training for therapists (Carkhuff, 1969a, 1969b; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967), for a critique of which see Tudor (2000, 2011). Moreover, from a *client-centered* perspective, the focus on the core conditions is particularly and profoundly ironic as these conditions center on the therapist, not the client. Indeed, if we have any pretentions to be *client*-centered, then we need to be talking, researching and writing more about the conditions of contact, client incongruence, and client perception and/or reception, that is, the sixth condition, which, significantly, Rogers (1967b) referred to as the central or 'assumed' condition (p. 130). There is, of course, no problem in questioning the necessity or sufficiency of Rogers' conditions, or any other aspect of his theory; there is, however, a problem when person-centered and experiential colleagues misrepresent the theory, both within the person-centered nation or international community and externally, for instance within this journal. Another major problem regarding the politics of theory is the misrepresentation of the various strands of person-centered and experiential therapy, for a critique of which see Tudor (2022).

An ecotherapeutic response to the climate crisis

It is clear that we as a species and the planet of which we are a part are in crisis, largely if not entirely of our own making. Increasingly, this crisis is being addressed by psychologists and therapists both beyond and within person-centered and experiential therapies. A few years ago Suzanne Keys initiated and edited a special issue of *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies* on 'Ecology and person-centered and experiential psychotherapies' (Keys, 2014) in which a number of colleagues acknowledged the challenges of the ecological crisis for therapy (Bazzano, 2013b; Neville, 2013), and of ecopsychology for person-centered therapy (Bazzano, 2013a; Blair, 2013; Tudor, 2013), while others contributed different ideas about focusing in nature (Harris, 2013), and sustainability (Chatalos, 2013). In my own contribution to that issue, I offered some theoretical and conceptual links between person-centered psychology and ecopsychology, and person-centered therapy and ecotherapy. I also argued that Rogers' key concepts of the organism and the formative tendency are useful and congruent ones for thinking about both human beings, other beings and the earth; and that Rogers' therapeutic conditions for change – which, when we think about them, are, in practice and effect, *environmental* conditions – and the concept of encounter are useful in developing a person-centered ecotherapy and contributing to an eco-centered therapy (author reference). More recently, Neville and Tudor (2024) took this further in their revisioning of person-centered psychology, theory and practice from the point of view of the living world. I include this under consideration of the politics of theory as a truly ecological perspective challenges aspects of our theory, especially with regard to:

- Extending our concept of the organism to all aspects – or things – of our living world.
- Repositioning our understanding of the actualizing tendency, or, that we tend to actualize, as an expression of the formative tendency, i.e. that all living things tend to form; and, as part of this, to consider the concept of social actualization (C. Keyes, 1998).

- Decentering the self in person-centered and experiential theory.
- Reconceptualizing Rogers' therapeutic conditions in terms of wider relationships, including those with the living world, which includes thinking about incongruence and conditions of worth in terms of alienation.

Taking inspiration from the ecological slogan 'Think globally, act locally', an ecological politics of theory requires us to revisit our 'local' person-centered theory and therapy and revision it as a species-centered approach (Tudor & Worrall, 2006) or an eco-centered therapy (Bazzano, 2013a; Neville & Tudor, 2024; Tudor, 2013).

A sociopsychological response to colonization

Similar arguments (to those from an ecological perspective) have been made with regard to the implicit biases in or basis of Western – and Northern – theory and therapies. If we consider the 'underlying value orientation and view of human nature' (Rogers, 1957, p. 199) embodied in person-centered theory, we find individualism, and an individualistic notion of the self. Just as ecophilosophers such as Arne Naess have challenged the individualistic and anthropocentric assumptions on which most therapies are based, so critical race theorists and indigenous scholars and activists have challenged the individualistic and Eurocentric assumptions of these therapies. Writing about *Southern Theory*, Connell (2008) argues that 'since the ground is different, the form of theorising is often different too' (p. xii). Unfortunately, all too often, Western and Northern psychology and its therapies have been transplanted often with little interest in, or much care or attention to existing healing traditions, people, land or history, fundamentally because many of its proponents view it as universal.

Interestingly, in his major paper on 'A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the client-centred framework', Rogers (1959) himself acknowledged the significance of 'the soil of the theory', stating that 'No theory can be adequately understood without some knowledge of the cultural and personal soil from which it springs'. (p. 185) He then went on to describe this cultural and personal soil. I think this is inspiring and warrants reading and further development. Furthermore, as Tudor and Rodgers (2020) have written: 'following [Rogers'] agricultural metaphor, we argue that a truly person-centered approach would consider both the "soil" and the land in which it settles – and [that] this is not only courteous, it is also relational'. (p. 91) One person-centered colleague who led the way on this was Len Holdstock, who, informed by his experience of living in Africa, wrote a series of publications that acknowledged cultural realities and promoted cultural concepts of the self, including interdependence (Holdstock, 1981, 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2000, 2002). My own contribution to this project has included three coauthored articles looking at Rogers' necessary and sufficient conditions of therapy from different cultural perspectives – with a British Asian colleague (Singh & Tudor, 1997), a Japanese colleague (Komiya & Tudor, 2016) and a Samoan colleague (Ioane & Tudor, 2017) – and another article which considers the implications of putting the family rather than the individual organism at the center of Rogers' (1959) client-centered framework (Ioane & Tudor, 2022). In this sense, I suggest that we also need to adopt the slogan 'Think locally, act globally'.

Summary: philosophical congruence, keynotes and challenges

In these critiques, in addition to person, paideia, and politieia, I am influenced by and, in effect, have presented a fourth 'p' (or f), that of φιλοσοφία (filosofia) or philosophy – and by the importance of philosophical congruence (Tudor & Worrall, 2006), that is, an integrity between our practice, theory and underlying philosophy. After all, as Rogers (1957) put it: 'One cannot engage in psychotherapy without giving operational evidence of an underlying value orientation and view of human nature'. (p. 199) He continued: 'It is definitely preferable, in my estimation, that such underlying views be open and explicit, rather than covert and implicit'. (p. 199) Thus, in presenting different practice and tribes within the person-centered 'nation', it would be more rigorous and satisfactory to do so with reference to underlying values (axiology), theories of knowledge (epistemology) and philosophies of practice (methodology). As Heid (2024) put it, we have a need for metaphysics.

So, with regard to what keynotes I have struck – both in the original speech and in this article – I think they are as follows:

- The significance of culture.
- The importance of knowing our theoretical base and underlying philosophy, of critique and of local knowledge.
- The centrality of the organism to person-centered theory.
- The radicalism of the person-centered approach to education.
- The desirability of balancing freedom with responsibility.
- The necessity of revisioning person-centered theory and therapy for a living world, and to achieve social justice.
- The value of thinking and acting both globally and locally, not least in our organization(s).

However, as the resonance of any notes struck are ultimately in the ears or eyes of the beholder – a perspective which, I suggest, represents Rogers' (1958/1967b) assumed condition, this time of the reader's response to what is written – I imagine that you, the reader, may have taken other keynotes from the preceding pages or screens.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, when you are welcomed on to a marae (a Māori meeting ground), part of the ritual is that the mana whenua (hosts) lay down a wero or taki (a challenge), for the manuhiri (visitors) to pick up. As, at this point, I am still in the role of a host, I conclude this article by laying down four challenges for you, the reader – and, indeed, all of us – to pick up, a process that was started at the beginning of PCE2024, continued throughout the conference, and, hopefully, we as an international community can and will continue to take forward:

- First, that we maintain our radical conceptualization of a fluid and emerging person and enhance it by acknowledging the inevitability, influence and importance of context, culture and diversity.
- Second, that we maintain our radical approach to paideia or education and enhance it by asserting it in the face of neoliberalism in education and training.

- Third, that we maintain our political perspective in, on and from person-centered psychology and enhance it by being open to challenges, including those from the periphery and especially regarding decolonization.
- Fourth, that we enhance our nation or, better, international community by acknowledging our underlying values and philosophy, especially when we find that they are different, and by developing greater philosophical congruence between our values, theories and practice, including that of the ground which lies under our standing.

In framing these challenges, I am deliberately referencing the language Rogers uses to describe the qualities of the experiencing organism (Rogers, 1963), that is, that it maintains, enhances and reproduces itself – and dies or transforms (Tudor, 2021). I argue that if we take up these challenges, we will reproduce the experiencing organism that is the person of the person-centered clinical practitioner – and the 'person' of person-centered psychology itself – for the benefit of our living world for as long as we continue to be relevant to sustaining and, indeed, enhancing it.

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