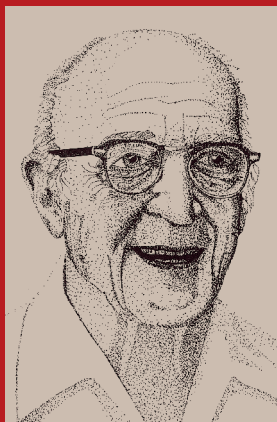


Key Figures in Counselling & Psychotherapy

Brian Thorne
with
Pete Sanders



Key Figures in Counselling & Psychotherapy

Carl
Rogers

Third Edition

Series Editor : Windy Dryden



Carl

Rogers

Key Figures in Counselling and Psychotherapy

Series editor: Windy Dryden

The books in this series provide concise introductions to the life, work and influence of leading innovators whose theoretical and practical contributions have shaped the development of contemporary counselling and psychotherapy. The series includes the following titles:

Eric Berne
by Ian Stewart

Fritz Perls
by Petrůska Clarkson and Jennifer Mackewn

Aaron T. Beck
by Marjorie Weishaar

Albert Ellis
by Joseph Yankura and Windy Dryden

D.W. Winnicott
by Michael Jacobs

George Kelly
by Fay Fransella

Joseph Wolpe
by Roger Poppen

J.L. Moreno
by A. Paul Hare and June Rabson Hare

Milton H. Erickson
by Jeffrey K. Zeig and W. Michael Munion

Carl Gustav Jung
by Ann Casement

Sigmund Freud, Second Edition
by Michael Jacobs

Melanie Klein, Second Edition
by Julia Segal

Carl

Rogers

Third Edition

Brian Thorne with
Pete Sanders



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

SAGE Publications Ltd

1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

SAGE Publications Inc.

2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd

B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd

3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Editor: Alice Oven

Assistant editor: Kate Wharton

Production editor: Rachel Burrows

Copyeditor: Sarah Bury

Proofreader: Derek Markham

Marketing manager: Tamara Navaratnam

Typeset by: C&M Digital (P) Ltd, Chennai, India

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd,
Croydon, CR0 4YY



© Brian Thorne with Pete Sanders 2013

First edition published 1992. Reprinted 1992, 1993, 1994,
1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001

Second edition published 2003. Reprinted 2008, 2010

This third edition published 2013

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, or by any means, only with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside those terms should be sent to the publishers.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012937305

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library

ISBN 978-1-4462-5222-2

ISBN 978-1-4462-5223-9 (pbk)

'I can trust my experience'

Carl Rogers

For Dave Mearns in acknowledgement of his major contribution to the development of Rogers' work and in thanks for enduring friendship and professional companionship.

Contents

About the Authors	viii
Preface to Third Edition	x
Preface to First Edition	xiii
Acknowledgements	xvi
1 The Life of Carl Rogers	1
2 Rogers' Major Theoretical Contributions	24
3 Rogers' Major Practical Contributions	44
4 Criticisms and Rebuttals	65
5 The Overall Influence of Carl Rogers	99
A Select Bibliography of the Works of Carl Rogers	129
Important Events in the Life of Carl Rogers	131
References	133
Index	140

About the Authors



Brian Thorne is Emeritus Professor of Counselling at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, and Co-founder of the Norwich Centre for Personal, Professional and Spiritual Development. He was one of the first practitioners in Britain to be elected a Fellow of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and is recognized as a leading international representative of the person-centred approach to therapy originated by Dr Carl Rogers and his associates.

Brian first met Carl Rogers in 1978 and remained in close contact with him until the latter's death in 1987. On a number of occasions he worked with Rogers in various workshops and seminars in different parts of Europe and his book on the approach, co-authored with Dave Mearns, appeared the year after Rogers' death. This book, *Person-Centred Counselling in Action* (Sage), has now reached its third edition and has proved to be the best-selling book not only in the area of counselling and psychotherapy but in any discipline published by Sage. Brian has also written or edited numerous other books and his influence has been considerable not only in Britain but wider afield. His fluency in French and German has assured that he has made major contributions to the development of the person-centred approach in continental Europe.

Throughout his long career Brian has remained committed to the practice of Christianity and to his membership of the Anglican Church. It is therefore not surprising that he has been particularly concerned to explore and develop the spiritual dimension of Rogers' work and its relevance to spiritual evolution in the twenty-first century. In recent years he has turned his attention to the development of the theory and practice of spiritual accompaniment and his recent work at the Norwich Centre has focused on this activity. He was made a Lay Canon of Norwich Cathedral in 2005.



Pete Sanders worked as a volunteer counsellor for 'Off The Record' in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the early 1970s while a psychology undergraduate. This, after further qualification, set him on his subsequent career as a counsellor, trainer, supervisor and author. During this time he was the course leader on three BACP-recognized courses, was centrally involved in establishing the BACP Trainer Accreditation Scheme, wrote, co-wrote or edited 15 books, and founded PCCS

Training and PCCS Books with his wife Maggie. Apart from his continuing interest in the development of theory and practice in person-centred and experiential therapies, he is dedicated to the demedicalization of distress. Pete is increasingly of the opinion that mental health services are in urgent need of reformation and is more likely to be found at a Hearing Voices Network conference than a BACP event. He is a Trustee of the Soteria Network, UK.

Preface to Third Edition

Since the Second Edition of this book appeared in 2003 much has changed both in the world at large and in the field of counselling and psychotherapy. It is, I believe, a mark of Carl Rogers' greatness that in the year of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death, the relevance and, indeed, the urgency of his legacy in this changing world become all the more apparent.

On the international stage of counselling and psychotherapy this may at first sight seem an exaggerated claim. In many ways the person-centred and experiential therapies which have their cornerstone in Rogers' pioneering ideas and practice are severely challenged. In the United States, where forty years ago Rogers' star was the brightest in the firmament, the approach to therapy which he and his associates so triumphantly established has all but disappeared despite small signs of resurgence in more recent times. In Europe, the widespread obsession, as in the States, with so-called 'empirically supported therapies' and the need to trim health budgets, has led to an increasingly state- and insurance company-regulated profession dominated by cognitive behavioural therapy which is seen as the appropriate (and cheap) response to the needs of a culture intent on efficiency and rapid solutions to every problem. Interestingly, it is in the Far East, in countries such as Japan, China and Korea, that Rogers' work is gaining attention and is being taken with a new seriousness by a younger generation of therapeutic practitioners.

Against such a background it is apparent that Rogers may be seen as a counter-cultural figure of some significance. Not that his voice is immediately provocative. On the contrary, the emphasis he always placed on subjective experience and the power of relationship was not to the detriment of scientific enquiry and a concern for therapeutic outcomes. The accusation that neither he nor his successors were much concerned with research is blatantly false as the current research activity among person-centred practitioners in our own country amply demonstrates. Rogers was proud of his identity as an empirical scientist and remained so to the end of his life. His importance lies, however, in the fact that he was as distrustful of a dogmatic approach to science as he was to a blind adherence to

religious and philosophical formulations of truth. An openness to experience which characterized Rogers' way of being in the world becomes a pointer to sanity not only in the field of counselling and psychotherapy, where the danger of establishing an entrenched monoculture dominated by cognitive-behavioural therapy is very real, but also in the world more generally, where violent extremism has often caused untold misery. The first decade of the new millennium has seen appalling conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East and parts of Africa while the so-called 'Arab spring' has brought both hope and frightening levels of instability. Inter-faith conflict has intensified in many parts of the world and there are times when the animosity between Islam and Christianity is terrifyingly reminiscent of the Middle Ages. George W. Bush's proclamation post 9/11 of a 'crusade' did little to alleviate the terror.

Recent economic and financial upheavals have further exacerbated the global sense of chaos. It would seem that market capitalism, based as it is on the allure of materialism and the concept of enlightened self-interest (a polite way of describing greed and selfishness), is becoming ever more suspect as a way of underpinning a civilization. The probability that such an economic system is in any case fast destroying the ecology of the planet and may, during this century, render it uninhabitable completes a scenario which could scarcely be more bleak.

If Rogers provides a powerful corrective to the prevailing forces in the psychotherapy world, his ideas and example offer a hopeful and inspiring commentary on the global situation. His perception of human nature does not conform to the view that we are all essentially selfish creatures who must be controlled and for whom an economic system based on self-interest is therefore appropriate. On the contrary, his experience as a therapist and empirical scientist led him to believe that we possess untold potential for relating in depth, an empathic ability which often remains undeveloped and a capacity to move forward as a species so that we can celebrate our interconnectedness not only with each other but with the whole created order. During the final years of his life he lived out his beliefs by travelling the globe in order to facilitate communication between opposing groups and to aid the development of cross-cultural communication and co-operation. Weeks before his death in 1987 he was already planning further trips abroad in pursuit of a vision which he believed to be realistic and attainable. He offers a model and an inspiration for those who would despair of a world poised on the brink of disaster.

Since 2003 my own life has undergone considerable change. In 2004 I had a minor heart attack followed by by-pass surgery and the

following year I retired as a counsellor and psychotherapist after 37 years in practice. In some ways I am no longer fully in touch with the day-to-day experience of person-centred therapists and for this reason I have invited Pete Sanders to contribute the final chapter of this Third Edition. Pete, as the co-director of the major publishing company in the world of person-centred literature, is ideally placed to reflect on the current scene nationally and internationally and I am immensely indebted to him for undertaking this task. What is more, as the publisher of the monumental further edition of Howard Kirschenbaum's biography of Carl Rogers in 2007 (Kirschenbaum, 2007), Pete has had the opportunity of being alongside the world's pre-eminent researcher into the whole of Rogers' life and work, including the last decade when Rogers was most clearly exerting his influence on contemporary society way beyond the confines of person-centred psychology and psychotherapy.

For my own part, I have for the last six years devoted my energies to the development of the theory and practice of spiritual accompaniment. In this task my indebtedness to Carl Rogers continues to be immense. In the Second Edition I wrote, I believe prophetically: 'A few years from now it is likely that Rogers will be remembered not so much as the founder of a new school of psychotherapy but as a psychologist whose work has made it possible for men and women to apprehend spiritual reality at a time when conventional religion has lost its power to capture the minds and imaginations of the vast majority' (Thorne, 2003: 114). My experience in the last six years both with individuals and with groups has more than confirmed the likely validity of this prediction. In Rogers, those seeking deeper meaning or the desire to come closer to what they experience as God, have found the encouragement to enter with confidence both into relationship with others and into the depths of their own being. They have found in him an intrepid pioneer whose refusal to judge others adversely or to demand allegiance to a dogmatic credo has left them free to plumb the mysteries of the universe and of their own natures without a sense of being abandoned in an ocean of limitless relativity. It is as if Rogers in his search to discover how best to do psychotherapy and how best to facilitate communication between those at odds with each other opened up new possibilities in the exquisite art of loving which is avowedly the goal of every major religion. If Rogers' legacy were to make that goal just a little more attainable, his contribution to the well-being and even the survival of humankind would be incalculable.

*Brian Thorne
Norwich 2012*

Preface to First Edition

Carl Rogers enabled countless people throughout the world to be themselves with confidence. His impact has been enormous through his voluminous writings, through the school of counseling and psychotherapy which he founded and through the indirect influence of his work on many areas of professional activity where the quality of human relationships is central. And yet he was always suspicious of those who sought power and he eschewed every attempt to make him into a guru figure. He believed deeply in the capacity of every individual to find his or her own way forward and, as a result, he not infrequently adopted a self-effacing attitude which for the less discerning concealed his greatness. The best facilitator, he maintained, was the one who enabled others to feel that they had done it themselves, whatever 'it' might be.

This small book attempts to convey the essence of Rogers' theoretical ideas about the nature of human beings and about what happens in effective therapeutic relationships. It also gives an insight into Rogers' actual way of working with people in therapy and draws out the practical implications of what is, in effect, a functional philosophy of human growth and relationships. Rogers, gentle and courteous as he usually was, made enemies because his ideas and way of being tend to threaten those whose self-esteem is dependent on their professional expertise or their capacity to impose a particular perception of reality on others. Both among fellow psychologists and those from other disciplines he was sometimes seen as naive, utopian and perversely misguided in his optimistic view of human potential. Some of his critics undoubtedly raise serious questions about the validity of his approach and in Chapter 4 I attempt to explore the more telling of these objections and to refute them where possible. Rogers himself, however, never claimed that he had established the absolute truth about anything; indeed he was committed to a ceaseless process of learning and held to the temporariness of all knowledge. For him the mark of the mature person was a fearless openness to both inner and outer experience, however disturbing this might prove to previously held convictions.

I was privileged to know Rogers during the last ten years of his life and to work with him on a number of occasions in different parts of the world. The biographical chapter with which the book opens owes little, however, to my direct involvement with him. Most of the content is distilled from Rogers' own writings, from Howard Kirschenbaum's outstanding biography, *On Becoming Carl Rogers* (1979), and from the summary of Rogers' life provided by David Cain, editor of the *Person-Centered Review*, in Vol. 2 No. 4 (1987b) of the journal which served the person-centred community well in the immediate years after Rogers' death in February 1987. I trust these two men will forgive my plundering of their dedicated research into Rogers' life and work.

In one respect this book may perhaps claim some originality. Unlike many of my colleagues in the field of person-centred or client-centred therapy, I see in Rogers and his work the re-emergence of a spiritual tradition which has its origins in the early writers of the Old Testament and continues through Jesus, the earliest Christian theologians and many of the great medieval writers, not least Dame Julian of Norwich, much loved and honoured in the city where I live and work. This tradition is acutely conscious of the divine indwelling within the created universe and in each human being. It bears witness to the unconditionality of the love which is poured out by God on his creation and to the capacity of human beings to internalize that love and then to give it expression in their relating. Rogers died an agnostic but in his later years his openness to experience compelled him to acknowledge the existence of a dimension to which he attached such adjectives as mystical, spiritual and transcendental. In many ways he often provides the channel into spiritual experience for secular men and women who have long since rejected the idea of God and the trappings of institutional religion and he does so by enabling them to discover the infinite worth and uniqueness of their own being. Yet with this recognition of personal value there comes an accompanying sense of interconnectedness with other human beings and with the whole of the created order. In short, Rogers does not provide, as some have suggested, the mirror for Narcissus but the assurance and acceptance of individual uniqueness and the invitation to communion. Given a different theology in his childhood and adolescence, it is not over-fanciful to suppose that Rogers might himself have become a much-loved pastor and theologian whose life could have transformed the face of the Church. An underlying theme in this book, however, is that God moves in a mysterious way and that client-centred therapy and the person-centred approach will continue to contribute to the psychological and

spiritual well-being of humanity to a degree which would have been impossible if Rogers had not turned his back on Christianity and the Church in order to find a greater freedom.

Many people have encouraged me in the writing of the book but I am particularly indebted to my colleagues at the University of East Anglia, the Norwich Centre and Person-Centred Therapy (Britain) for their support and the stimulation they have offered, often in the midst of frenetic lives characterized by an ever-escalating clientele. I am grateful to the University for granting me a brief period of study leave in the summer of 1991 and to my Norwich Centre partners for convincing me that I should not feel guilty about writing books instead of seeing yet more clients in order to ensure the Centre's financial security. To Maria Bowen, Rogers' close friend and colleague at the Center for Studies of the Person in La Jolla, my debt is inestimable for she not only encouraged me in the project but also provided me with invaluable material from her own long experience of sharing in Rogers' work and aspirations. I only hope the result will serve to make Rogers' immense contribution more accessible to those to whom he is little more than a name in psychology textbooks. I hope, too, that in a small way it will help to ensure the continuing health and development of person-centred therapy in a world which all too often seems to sacrifice persons on the altars of efficiency, expediency or the latest version of the market economy.

Brian Thorne
Norwich 1991

Acknowledgements

Without the persuasive but gentle prompting of Susannah Trefgarne at Sage this Third Edition would probably never have seen the light of day. The willingness of Pete Sanders to undertake a thorough re-working of the final chapter was a vital factor in the enterprise. Kate Wharton, Alice Oven and Rachel Burrows provided much welcome encouragement along the way.

Word-processing and technical support were provided by Barbara Frances at the Norwich Centre. Her willingness and efficient labours ensured that the equilibrium of the writers was maintained throughout the production process and for this we are both immensely grateful.