

Non-Directivity: Response to Jerrold Bozarth 30/01/11

Jerrold

Many thanks for your lengthy response. I'm sorry for my tardy reply, but due to work pressures I'm only now able to respond, and in future may only occasionally be able to submit messages.

1. *Why did Rogers' give up use of the term 'non-directive', and the ancillary term 'non-directiveness'?*

I really don't see you providing an adequate explanation as to why Rogers did this.

- (a) When I read what you say and when I read statements of the NDCCT position declaring that:

'Non-directivity is the distinguishing feature of the revolutionary, anti-authoritarian approach to psychotherapy and human relations developed by Carl Rogers' (Levitt, 2005, p. i);

'It [being non-directive] is in the bones of his [Rogers'] theory and practice'. (Brodley, in Levitt, 2005, p. 4);

the only conclusion I can draw is that you are in fundamental agreement with Garry Prouty when he declared that Rogers made a fundamental mistake in not retaining the term and including an explicit statement about being non-directive, or non-directiveness, in his 1950s theory statements (I don't have the quote to hand, but can provide it if you wish).

This being the case, what to me you are essentially saying is that *Carl Rogers' theory statements of the 1950s are inadequate formulations of NDCCT theory*. Shame on you.

A major reason for Rogers dropping the term 'non-directive', as I understand things, was that it gave rise to confusion about the essential character of Rogers' form of therapy, 'colorless and neutral' was one critic's comment in the 1940s.

There was, for instance, the joke about the suicidal client who jumps out the window while all the therapist does is reflect the verbal expression of their feelings. But, as Rogers responded to an interviewer years later, 'I *know* the story. My answer, once and for all time, is that I would not have let him jump out the window' (Kirschebaum, 2007, p. 132).

Here I struggle to equate the notion of being non-directive as the foundation of Rogerian therapy and human relations with Rogers' directive action in preventing the individual jumping. It goes along with my struggle to see how being non-directive can be the foundation of child-rearing.

Oh but, it has been said to me, if a therapist acts directly in the manner Rogers describes, that is the therapist not acting as a therapist but as an ordinary human being, as part not of therapy, but of ordinary human relations. And, in any case, as Barbara Brodley, says, non-directivity is defined in terms of the non-directive attitude, not in terms of behaviours.

What do we have here then?

Directive behaviour, stopping a child running into the road, can be an expression of the *non-directive attitude*?

The non-directive attitude is not fundamental to all human relations?

No wonder the notion of being non-directive inspires confusion; no wonder Rogers dropped the term.

(2) *To further attempt to explicate the inadequate nature of Raskin's notion of the nondirective attitude*

I refer to the story, as I hope I correctly recall, of Rogers stopping seeing a particular client. The client was experiencing paranoid feelings and through totally immersing himself in the client's world Rogers developed paranoid feelings also.

In suggesting that Raskin's definition of the non-directive attitude could be misunderstood as a definition of emotional identification, this, to me, is the kind of thing Rogers had in mind. Which is to say that empathic understanding is immersion in the other's world with an awareness also that one is not that other person; having one foot on the bank, maintaining the 'as if' character of experiencing the other's world by being aware that one isn't oneself paranoid.

Raskin's definition, to me, is essentially a flawed definition of empathic understanding (it's better as a definition of animal empathy).

If Raskin's notion was so great as to serve as the foundation of CCT, as the NDCCTers claim, why did Rogers express his reservations and then go on to develop his own more adequate definition of empathic understanding?

The notion, then, as NDCCTers claim, that Raskin's 'non-directive attitude' equates with the core conditions in combination, infuses the 'meld' of the core conditions, as I think one advocate poetically puts, is, as you might imagine, not one I find convincing.

A flawed definition of empathy can serve as an all encompassing definition of the core conditions? Pull the other one.

(c) No time to respond to your reference of Rogers' late 'speculations', except to quote my other American hero, Susanne Langer: 'Theory is speculation in the light of significant facts'.

Not about to croak (I hope),

Ivan

