INTRODUCTION BY IRVIN D. YALOM, M.D.

A Way of Being

CARL R. ROGERS

THE FOUNDER OF

THE HUMAN POTENTIAL MOVEMENT

LOOKS BACK ON A DISTINGUISHED CAREER

BY THE AUTHOR OF *On Becoming a Person*

MARINER BOOKS

A WAY OF BEING

Carl R. Rogers

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Irvin D. Yalom

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Introduction

In his first teaching position, Carl Rogers huddled together with a group of psychology students. He was in his late thirties. It was shortly after electromagnetic tapes had been introduced, and the group listened excitedly to a recording of a psychotherapy interview. Again and again Rogers stopped and replayed sections of the session in order to pinpoint where the interview went wrong or to delineate those moments when the client made a significant step forward.

That is one image of Carl Rogers to be found in *A Way of Being*. There are many others. Imagine another scene, one that occurred when he was twenty years older.

At an academic symposium on Ellen West, a heavily studied patient who committed suicide several decades before, Rogers startled the audience by the depth and intensity of his reaction. He spoke about Ellen West as though he knew her well, as though it were only yesterday that she had poisoned herself. Not only did Rogers express his sorrow about her tragically wasted life, but also his anger at her physicians and psychiatrists who, through their impersonality and preoccupation with precise diagnosis, had transformed her into an object. How could they have? Rogers asked. If only they had known that treating a person as an object always stands in the way of successful therapy. If only they had related to her as a person, risked themselves, experienced her reality and her world, they might have dissolved her lethal loneliness.

And still another image, fifteen years later. Carl Rogers was seventy and had been invited to deliver an honorary lecture at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association. The audience sat back, relaxed in their chairs, awaiting the expected mellow retrospective of a revered

septuagenarian. Instead, Rogers rocked them with a series of challenges. He urged school psychologists not to content themselves merely with treating students damaged by an obsolete and irrelevant educational system but to change the system, to participate in designing an educational experience that would liberate the students' curiosity and enhance the joy of learning. Later he railed against the constrictions of professionalism and suggested that the efforts of certification and licensure had not been worth the cost: there were as many credentialed charlatans as uncredentialed ones, too many gifted therapists had been denied access to the profession, and the rigid bureaucracy of the American Psychological Association had frozen the field in the past and stifled creativity. No one slept during that talk.

In these scenes, and in so many others evoked in *A Way of Being,* Carl Rogers's commitment to the growth of others is evident. "Person-centered"—that was Rogers's preferred term for his approach. Concern and respect for the client's experiential world have been paramount in Rogers's work ever since the beginning of his career when, for twelve years, he worked with delinquent and underprivileged children in Rochester. He began to formulate ideas about therapy that revolved around his belief that one must rely upon the client to delineate the direction of the therapeutic work—that the client knows what hurts, what experiences need to be uncovered, and what problems are crucial. A textbook he wrote in his midthirties on the treatment of the problem child attracted wide academic attention and led to a professorship at Ohio State University.

There he offered a pioneering course on counseling. (Remember that in the late 1930s the field of clinical psychology, as we know it today, did not exist.) Soon, as his ideas about therapy crystallized, he wrote a textbook, *Counseling and Psychotherapy*, which his publishers were reluctant to publish; they would prefer, they told him, a text for a course and a field that existed! Ultimately, *Counseling and Psychotherapy* was destined, along with Rollo May's book *The Art of Counseling*, to play a significant role in the birth of clinical psychology and to shape the future of a humanistically oriented therapeutic approach.

Carl Rogers was a hardy warrior who fought many battles-territorial battles with the field of medicine and psychiatry, which tried to prevent psychologists from treating patients; ideological battles with reductionists, such as B. F. Skinner, who denied the centrality of choice, will, and purpose; and procedural battles with psychoanalysts who considered his client-centered approach simplistic and anti-intellectual.

Today, a half century later, Rogers's therapeutic approach seems so right, so self-evident, and so buttressed by decades of psychotherapy research that it is difficult to appreciate the intensity of these battles or even to comprehend what they were all about. Experienced therapists today agree that the crucial aspect of therapy, as Rogers grasped early in his career, is the therapeutic relationship. *Of course*, it is imperative that the therapist relate genuinely to the patient—the more the therapist becomes a real person and avoids self-protective or professional masks or roles, the more the patient will reciprocate and change in a constructive direction. *Of course*, the therapist should accept the patient nonjudgmentally and unconditionally. And, *of course*, the therapist must enter empathically into the private world of the client.

Yet these were once such novel ideas that Rogers had to bludgeon the profession into taking note of them. His primary weapon was objective evidence, and he was the creative force behind the use of empirical research to elucidate the process and outcome of psychotherapy. His studies of the critical aspects of the therapist-client relationship—empathic understanding, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard—continue to be considered by social scientists as a model of research elegance and relevance.

Rogers was joined in his lifelong efforts to create and nurture a humanistic approach to psychotherapy by the powerful voice of Rollo May. Though the two men fundamentally agreed about the goals and approach to therapy (and though both were educated at the Union Theological Seminary), they drew their convictions from very different sources: Carl Rogers from empirical research and Rollo May from the study of literature, philosophy, and myth.

During his career Rogers was attacked for the supposed simplicity of his therapeutic approach, and many practitioners caricatured client-centered therapy as the method in which the therapist merely repeats the last words of the client's remarks. Yet those who knew Rogers, who watched him interview, or who read his work with care knew that his approach was neither simplistic nor restrictive.

It is true that Rogers always proceeded from the bottom up rather than from the top down—that is, he first grounded himself in his immediate observations of therapeutic work, his own and others', and generated low-level but testable hypotheses. (That was always a major difference between a Rogerian approach and a psychoanalytic one, which drew high-level inferences to construct an untestable theory, which subsequently informed and regulated therapeutic procedure.) But it is also true that early in his career Rogers arrived at several fundamental assumptions upon which his subsequent work rests.

He was persuaded of the reality and significance of human choice; he believed that experiential learning was a far more powerful approach to personal understanding and change than an endeavor resting upon intellectual understanding; he believed that individuals have within themselves an actualizing tendency, an inbuilt proclivity toward growth and fulfillment. Rogers often spoke of his belief in the existence of a formative impulse (counterbalancing an entropic force) in all of organic life. In his belief in an actualizing tendency he joined the ranks of a skein of humanistic thinkers like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Adler, Goldstein, Maslow, and Horney, who believed in the existence within each individual of a vast potential for self-understanding and personal change. Thus Nietzsche's first "granite sentence" of human perfectibility was "Become who you are," and Karen Horney, a maverick psychoanalyst, believed that "just as the acorn will develop into an oak, the child will mature into an adult." The therapeutic task emanating from this position, then, is not one of construction or reconstruction or manipulation or shaping. Instead, it is one of facilitation,

of removing obstacles to growth and helping to release that which has always been there.

The person-centered approach generated so much power for personal change, Rogers believed, that there was no reason to confine it to the psychologically troubled. Consequently he sought to harness its power for use in many nonclinical arenas. For decades he was actively involved in educational programs urging that education encompass affective as well as cognitive learning, that teachers focus on the whole person, that a learning environment of acceptance, genuineness, and empathic understanding be created, that teachers and institutional personnel be trained in a person-oriented approach, that efforts be made to build self-esteem in the student and to unlock natural curiosity.

Encounter groups were sometimes characterized as “group therapy for normals.” They straddled the fine line between education and therapy or, as it has been put less reverently, between “head shrinking and mind expansion.” In the 1960s Rogers understood that the intensive group experience contained enormous potential for change. He plunged into the encounter group movement and made significant contributions to the technology of group leadership. Taking a stand against coercive and manipulative leadership styles, he urged that the same person-oriented approach so essential to individual counseling was equally essential in the group experience. Leaders had to be participants as well as leaders; they could best shape a facilitating environment by their own example. Rogers followed his own prescriptions, and protocols of his groups reveal his breathtaking honesty: as in his individual work, he revealed not only his own personally troubling issues but also his fantasies of other members—insofar as he deemed they might lead others toward constructive introspection.

What was true for the small group was true for the large group as well. At the age of seventy-five Rogers led groups of several hundred people in community-building endeavors. He believed that person-oriented groups offered a powerful tool to resolve human conflict, both national and international. Determined to have an impact on cross-cultural and ethnic

tensions, Rogers traveled widely in the last ten years of his life. He conducted communication groups of blacks and whites in South Africa, spoke to large audiences in Brazil (then a dictatorship) about individual freedom and self-actualization, facilitated a four-day conflict-resolution workshop for high officials of seventeen Central American nations, and demonstrated client-centered counseling in crowded workshops in the then Soviet Union. His international efforts were so extensive that he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

A Way of Being begins with Rogers's views on communication. Few things mattered more to him than the accurate and honest communication of his feelings and thoughts. He eschewed any impulses to awe, to persuade, or to manipulate. In a sense, this makes the task of an introducer superfluous. Though few deserve an introduction more, no one needs it less. As the reader shall see, Rogers speaks for himself—and speaks with extraordinary clarity and grace.

Irvin D. Yalom

Preface

Sometimes I am astonished at the changes that have occurred in my life and work. This book encompasses the changes that have taken place during the past decade—roughly, the seventies. It brings together diverse material which I have written in recent years. Some of these thoughts have been published in a variety of journals, some have never been published. Before I endeavor to introduce you to the contents, I would like to look back at a few landmarks of my own change.

In 1941, I wrote a book on counseling and psychotherapy, published the next year. It was spawned by my awareness that I was thinking and working with individuals in ways which were quite different from other counselors. The book was completely focused on verbal interchange between a helper and a person in need of help; it contained no suggestion of broader implications.

A decade later, in 1951, this point of view was presented more fully and more confidently in a volume on client-centered therapy. In this book there was a recognition that the principles of therapy had application in other fields. In chapters written by others, or drawn largely from the experience of others, there was discussion of group therapy, group leadership and administration, and student-centered teaching. The field of application was widening.

I cannot believe how slow I was in facing the ramifications of the work that I and my colleagues were doing. In 1961, I wrote a book to which I gave the title, “A Therapist’s View of Psychotherapy,” indicating that the focus of all the papers was individual work, though actually various chapters dealt with the ever broadening fields of application. Fortunately, the publisher was not impressed by the title and, modifying one of the chapter titles, suggested that

I call it *On Becoming a Person*. I accepted the suggestion. I had thought I was writing for psychotherapists, but to my astonishment discovered I was writing for *people*—nurses, housewives, people in the business world, priests, ministers, teachers, youth—all manner of people. The book, in English and in its many translations, has now been read by millions of people all over the globe. Its impact forced me out of my parochial view that what I might say would be of interest only to therapists. The response broadened my life as well as my thinking. I believe that all of my writing since contains the realization that what is true in a relationship between therapist and client may well be true for a marriage, a family, a school, an administration, a relationship between cultures or countries.

So now I wish to return to this book and what it holds. I have grouped together at the outset five papers which are very personal—revealing my experiences in relationships, my feelings as I grow older, the origins of my philosophy, my perspective on my career, a personal view of "reality." Essentially these were written not only by me, but for me. Whether they will touch you and your experience, I cannot predict.

In this section, and throughout the book, the writings can be partially dated by my handling of the "he-she," "him-her" problem. Thanks to my daughter and to other friends with feminist leanings, I have become more and more sensitive to the linguistic inequality between the sexes. I have, I believe, *treated* women as equals, but only in more recent years have I been clearly aware of the put-down involved in the use of only masculine pronouns in statements with generic meaning. I have preferred to let the papers stand as written, rather than endeavoring to bring the language up to my present-day standards, which would seem somehow dishonest. I said what I said. Some of the papers are also dated by the references to our (in my opinion) incredibly stupid, impersonal, and destructive war in Vietnam, as tragic for Americans as for the Vietnamese.

The second part of the book centers on my professional thoughts and activities. The breadth of their application is indicated by the change in the terminology categorizing my views; the old concept of "client-centered

therapy" has been transformed into the "person-centered approach." In other words, I am no longer talking simply about psychotherapy, but about a point of view, a philosophy, an approach to life, a way of being, which fits any situation in which *growth*—of a person, a group, or a community—is part of the goal. Two of these papers were written during the past year, while others were produced somewhat earlier, but taken together they present the major facets of my work and thought as of today. Personally I am fond of the chapter containing six vignettes—snapshots of experiences from which I have learned deeply.

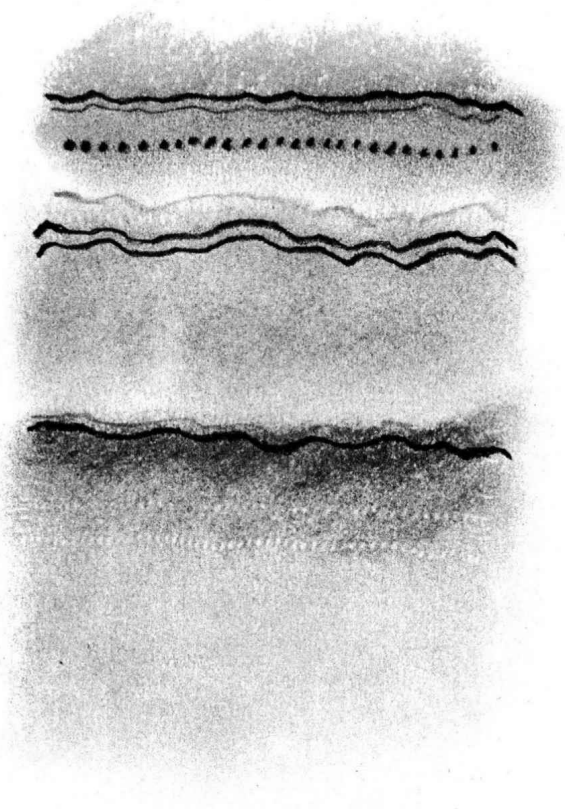
The third section deals with education, a field of application in which I feel some competence; I offer some challenges to educational institutions and some thoughts about what we may be facing in the years ahead. I am afraid that my views are quite unorthodox and that they may not be popular in a temporarily conservative mood in education, in an era of shrinking budgets and short-range views. These are thoughts about the far future of learning.

In the final section I give my view of the drastic transformation which faces our culture due to little known advances in scientific thinking and new developments in many other fields, and I speculate about the manner in which the shape of our world will change. I also give my views as to the nature of the person who can live in that transformed world.

Several chapters have been published previously in different form. Chapter 4, "Growing Old: Or Older and Growing?" Chapter 9, "Building Person-Centered Communities: The Implications for the Future," and Chapter 15, "The World of Tomorrow, and the Person of Tomorrow," are published here for the first time.

The theme holding the book together is that every chapter expresses, in one form or another, a way of being toward which I strive—a way of being which persons in many countries, in many occupations and professions, in all walks of life, find appealing and enriching. Whether this will be true for you, only you can determine, but I bid you welcome, as you journey through this "way."

Part I
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES



Experiences in Communication

In the autumn of 1964, I was invited to be a speaker in a lecture series at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, one of the leading scientific institutions in the world. Most of the speakers were from the physical sciences. The audience attracted by the series was known to be a highly educated and sophisticated group. The speakers were encouraged to put on demonstrations, if possible, of their subjects, whether astronomy, microbiology, or theoretical physics. I was asked to speak on the subject of communication.

As I started collecting references and jotting down ideas for the talk, I became very dissatisfied with what I was doing. The thought of a demonstration kept running through my mind, and then being dismissed.

The speech that follows shows how I resolved the problem of endeavoring to *communicate*, rather than just to speak *about* the subject of communication.

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I have some knowledge about communication and could assemble more. When I first agreed to give this talk, I planned to gather such knowledge and organize it into a lecture. The more I thought over this plan, the less satisfied I was with it. Knowledge *about* is not the most important thing in the behavioral sciences today. There is a decided surge of experiential knowing, or knowing at a gut level, which has to do with the human being. At this level of knowing, we are in a realm where we are not simply talking of cognitive and intellectual learnings, which can nearly always be rather readily communicated in verbal terms. Instead we are speaking of something more experiential, something having to do with the whole person, visceral reactions and feelings as well as thoughts and words. Consequently, I

decided I would like, rather than talking *about* communication, to *communicate* with you at a feeling level. This is not easy. I think it is usually possible only in small groups where one feels genuinely accepted. I have been frightened at the thought of attempting it with a large group. Indeed when I learned how large the group was to be, I gave up the whole idea. Since then, with encouragement from my wife, I have returned to it and decided to make such an attempt.

One of the things which strengthened me in my decision is the knowledge that these Caltech lectures have a long tradition of being given as demonstrations. In any of the usual senses what follows is not a demonstration. Yet I hope that in some sense this may be a demonstration of communication which is given, and also received, primarily at a feeling and experiential level.

What I would like to do is very simple indeed. I would like to share with you some of the things I have learned for myself in regard to communication. These are personal learnings growing out of my own experience. I am not attempting at all to say that you should learn or do these same things but I feel that if I can report my own experience honestly enough, perhaps you can check what I say against your own experience and decide as to its truth or falsity for you. In my own two-way communication with others there have been experiences that have made me feel pleased and warm and good and satisfied. There have been other experiences that to some extent at the time, and even more so afterward, have made me feel dissatisfied and displeased and more distant and less contented with myself. I would like to convey some of these things. Another way of putting this is that some of my experiences in communicating with others have made me feel expanded, larger, enriched, and have accelerated my own growth. Very often in these experiences I feel that the other person has had similar reactions and that he too has been enriched, that his development and his functioning have moved forward. Then there have been other occasions in which the growth or development of each of us has been diminished or stopped or even reversed. I am sure it will be clear in what I have to say that

I would prefer my experiences in communication to have a growth-promoting effect, both on me and on the other, and that I should like to avoid those communication experiences in which both I and the other person feel diminished.

The first simple feeling I want to share with you is my enjoyment when I can really *hear* someone. I think perhaps this has been a long-standing characteristic of mine. I can remember this in my early grammar school days. A child would ask the teacher a question and the teacher would give a perfectly good answer to a completely different question. A feeling of pain and distress would always strike me. My reaction was, "But you didn't hear him!" I felt a sort of childish despair at the lack of communication which was (and is) so common.

I believe I know why it is satisfying to me to hear someone. When I can really hear someone, it puts me in touch with him; it enriches my life. It is through hearing people that I have learned all that I know about individuals, about personality, about interpersonal relationships. There is another peculiar satisfaction in really hearing someone: It is like listening to the music of the spheres, because beyond the immediate message of the person, no matter what that might be, there is the universal. Hidden in all of the personal communications which I really hear there seem to be orderly psychological laws, aspects of the same order we find in the universe as a whole. So there is both the satisfaction of hearing this person and also the satisfaction of feeling one's self in touch with what is universally true.

When I say that I enjoy hearing someone, I mean, of course, hearing deeply. I mean that I hear the words, the thoughts, the feeling tones, the personal meaning, even the meaning that is below the conscious intent of the speaker. Sometimes too, in a message which superficially is not very important, I hear a deep human cry that lies buried and unknown far below the surface of the person.

So I have learned to ask myself, can I hear the sounds and sense the shape of this other person's inner world? Can I resonate to what he is saying so