

Invitation and Stories

3. CARL R. ROGERS: One thing I think I would say to the audience before starting to talk with Dr. Buber is that this is most certainly an unrehearsed dialogue. Uh, the weather made it necessary for me to spend all day arriving here, uh, and so it was only an hour or two ago that I met Dr. Buber, even though I have met him a long time ago in his writings.

I think that the, uh, first question I would like to ask you, Dr. Buber, um, may sound a trifle impertinent, but I would like to explain it and then perhaps it won't seem impertinent. I have wondered: How have you lived so deeply in interpersonal relationships and gained such an understanding of the human individual, without being a psychotherapist? Um. [Buber laughs; audience laughs] The uh, now the the reason I ask that is that it seems to me that a number of us have come to sense and experience some of the same kinds of learnings that

3. Transcription: (a) The B-F transcript deletes Rogers's reference to the audience and to the bad weather that forced him to arrive just shortly before the dialogue. These comments, while less relevant to the intellectual substance of the dialogue, established an interpersonal immediacy that is quite relevant for understanding the interaction process. (b) Somewhat arbitrarily, we have chosen to note pauses of 2.5 seconds or more.

Content/Process: (a) Rogers from the beginning establishes the presence and importance of an audience, as well as the unrehearsed nature of the interaction. Perhaps in part responding to Friedman's comments about participants' roles, Rogers appeared to be reassuring the audience that they would not be observing a rehearsed or staged event, but a free-flowing conversation. Rogers had in fact prepared nine possible questions for Buber, four of

you have expressed in your writings, but very frequently we have come to those learnings through our experience in psychotherapy. I think that there is something about um the therapeutic relationship that gives us permission, almost *formal* permission, to enter into a deep and close relationship with a person, and so we tend to learn very deeply in that way. I think of one uh psychiatrist friend of mine who says that [2.5 second pause—hereafter noted only by the length of time in seconds indicated in brackets] he never feels as whole, or as much of a person, as he does in his therapeutic interviews; and I, I share that feeling. And so, um, if it is not too personal, I, I would be interested in knowing what were the the channels of knowing that enabled you to, to really learn so deeply of people and of relationships?

which he actually used,¹⁴ a fact that no previous commentary has acknowledged. Rogers's own notes confirm that in his opening question, the phrase, "trifle impertinent" was planned, not an ad lib. To have prepared questions, which functioned as "openers" to his conversation with Buber, is entirely consistent with Rogers's assurance to the audience that the conversation was not rehearsed. This was advertised as a "dialogue," and Rogers is cuing the audience—and Buber—that he takes that charge seriously and that whatever ensued, successful or not, the possibility of genuine dialogue was present. (b) Rogers's initial phrasing of his question might "sound a trifle impertinent" because it presumes through friendly irony that his own profession is a primary avenue of knowing and understanding human behavior, and that

14. Rogers's notes for all the questions were extensive, and frequently included quoted passages either from his own writing or Buber's. The questions not asked were initially numbered four, six, seven, eight, and nine, and concerned: (4) whether Buber's concept of inclusion [Rogers noted a passage from "Education" in *Between Man and Man*] implies that the "basic nature [of human beings] is positive"; (6) how Buber conceives "of the way in which human beings change in a therapeutic or I-Thou relationship" and how this compares to the "elements of the process of change as I see them and have tried to describe them in a recent paper" [which seemed to be what became chapter 8 of *On Becoming a Person*]; (7) whether Buber agrees that a person, relationship, nation, or scientific field is "best or soundest or most effective, when it is in the process of becoming"; (8) how Buber conceives of teaching and learning and whether he agrees that all "significant learning" is "self-appropriated" and "cannot be taught"; and (9) whether Buber feels "there is danger in the world of I-It, in the form of the behavioral sciences, encroaching on the world of I-Thou" (Rogers, 1957a).

Buber came to similar knowing—as Friedman noted in his introduction—through other routes. In asking his question in this way, Rogers establishes his own experiential base, implicates other psychotherapists and a psychiatrist in support of his “learnings,” and (relevant to a later exchange) suggests that the therapist—in addition to the client—is helped by the therapeutic relationship. This facet of the question also reminded us of Jacob Bronowski’s remark to the effect that an impertinent question will often open the doors to a pertinent answer (from Rieber, 1989, p. 1); and if Rogers’s question might be termed impertinent, as we will see, it certainly brought forth a highly pertinent answer from Buber. (c) Although Rogers labels his question as impertinent, by offering that label and by the way he asks the question, he deflects the possibility that it would be understood as truly impertinent. Rogers is genuinely interested—and no doubt thinks the audience will be too—in how Buber’s philosophy of dialogue developed. The numerous pauses—both the longer ones we have noted and the many shorter ones we haven’t—indicate something of Rogers’s thoughtfulness and his interest in having Buber appreciate the ground of the question. (d) In concluding his question, Rogers invites a personal answer from Buber, while also inviting Buber to set his own limits for the dialogue’s personal tone.

4. MARTIN BUBER: Hmm. Er, It's rather a biographical question. Eh, eh, I think I must give instead of one answer, two. [Rogers: Uhm huh] One, eh, eh, [unclear: "aber" (German for "but") or perhaps "rather"]—this is only just a particular—is that I'm not eh entirely a stranger in, eh, let me say, psychiatry [Rogers: Uhm huh], because when I was a student—it's long ago—I hmm studied three terms uh psychiatry, and uh what eh they call in Germany "Psychi-atrische-Klinique." [Rogers: Uh huh] Uh. I was just, eh I was most interested in the latter. You see, I have not studied psychiatry in order to become [Rogers: Hm hmm] a psychotherapist. I studied it, eh, three terms. First uh with eh Flechsig in Leipzig, uh, where I was eh, eh student of Wundt's, Wundt. [Rogers: Uh huh] Eh, afterwards in Berlin eh with Mendel, and third term with eh Bleuler in Zurich [Rogers: Uh huh], which was the most interesting of the three. Eh, and, eh, I wanted just uh then, [unintelligible—German phrase?] I also was a very young, inexperienced, and not eh very, not very understanding young man. But I had the, had the feeling that I wanted to know about eh man, eh and eh man in the so-called pathological state. I doubted even then if it is the right term. [Rogers: Oh, I see] Eh, I wanted to eh to see, if possible to meet, such people, and to establish—as far as I can remember—to establish the

4. Transcription: Numerous details in this statement have been misheard, misnoted, or curiously edited. (a) The CR and P transcripts have only a blank line for "Flechsig," indicating that the word was unintelligible; Friedman inserted "Flechsig" in his B-F transcript, and corrected the spelling of "Mendel." Interestingly, existing transcripts have Buber saying only that there were students of Wundt in Leipzig while Buber was there—although Buber states that he himself was a student of Wundt (see Friedman, 1981, pp. 22, 24; 1991, pp. 14–15). Schaefer (1973, p. 203) describes Buber as telling Rogers that he took part in "some psychological laboratory experiments" under Wundt, which he may have, but it wasn't part of what he said to Rogers. This is especially intriguing because the transcripts to which Schaefer had access—Buber had loaned her the typescript that Rogers had sent him (p. 480) and she also had the B-F transcript in *The Knowledge of Man*—had Buber saying only that there were students of Wundt in Leipzig while he was there. (b) A long pause by Buber (almost six seconds) was, significantly, respected by Rogers without interruption, but is not noted at all in previous transcripts—although an ellipsis was inappropriately inserted at a later point where there was virtually no pause. (c) Existing transcripts have Buber saying that he "began as a young man," which

relation, the real relation between what we call a sane man and what we call a pathological man. [Rogers: Uh huh] And this I have learned in some uh measure—as far as eh a boy of uh twenty or so can [Buber chuckles] can learn such things.

Eh, but what *mainly* uh constituted what you ask, is—it was something other. It was just hmm a certain eh inclination to eh meet people, and as far as possible to, just to [5.7] change if possible something in the other, *but also* to let me be changed by him. Eh, at any event, I had no resistance—I put no resistance [Rogers: Uh huh] to it. [Rogers: Uh huh] I eh—already then as a young man—I felt I have not the right to want to change another if I am not open to be changed by him as far as it is legitimate. Something is to be changed and his touch, his contact, is able to change it more or less. I cannot eh be, so to say, above him, and say, “No! I’m out of the play. [Rogers: Uh huh] Uh, you are mad.” [Rogers: Uh huh] And so eh from my—let me see—there were, there are two phases of it. The first phase went til the year eighteen, eighteen nineteen, uh meaning til my, til I was eh about forty.

makes no sense in this context, instead of what he actually said, which was that “already then as a young man” he felt he hadn’t the right to change another unilaterally. (d) Previous transcripts refer to the “concept” of the other when Buber said “contact,” extending his “touch” metaphor. (e) Here and in turn 6, the B-F transcript corrects Buber’s mistakes identifying dates. (f) Within this turn we hear the first instance of an interjected comment from the other, in this case from Rogers. While these are, obviously, not substantively meaningful turns, and were omitted in other transcripts, we note them to indicate the extent to which the speakers reinforced and were attentive to each other. (g) Seymour Cain, who was at the dialogue, listened to some of the tape with us and was the first to suggest that Buber may have used a German word in this response (personal communication, August 10, 1993). **Content/Process:** (a) In labeling this a “biographical question,” Buber may have been considering how to respond to this query. He did not like biographical questions that were intended to reduce philosophy to biography or to interpret ideas in light of the life experiences of a thinker. As it turned out, Buber was quite willing to discuss with Rogers, and occasionally to write about (see Buber, 1973), the experiences from which his philosophy emerged; but only a few years earlier he had declined to respond

at all to questions from a young doctoral student about his early family life (Buber, 1952a; Friedman, 1983, pp. 186–187). (b) By not interrupting a quite lengthy pause, by respectfully maintaining Buber’s “floor,” Rogers in effect verified for Buber and the audience that the evening’s focus was to remain on Buber. (c) Buber’s statement that he felt he didn’t have “the right to want to change another if I am not open to be changed by him as far as it is legitimate” seems very close to the kind of mutuality or equality that Rogers later in this conversation suggested were characteristic of his experience in therapeutic relations. In response to that, however, Buber asserted that the limits placed on such a relationship precluded mutuality. We note that although this dialogue has been quoted to illustrate Buber’s thought on mutuality, his statements on this topic from later in the dialogue have usually been removed from the context of these earlier comments.

5. **ROGERS:** Hm-hmm. Till you’re about forty? Uh hum.

6. **BUBER:** Just so. [Rogers: Hmm] And eh [3.0] then I, in eighteen nineteen, I felt something rather strange. I felt that I had been, been eh strongly influenced by something that came to an end just then, meaning eh the Second, the First World War.

5, 7. **Transcription:** These turns are deleted in previous transcripts.

Content/Process: By clarifying Buber’s inconsistent dates for himself and the audience without correcting or even directly questioning Buber about them, Rogers contributed to establishing a respectful and nonjudgmental tone to the evening.

7. **ROGERS:** In in nineteen eighteen.

8. **BUBER:** M-hmmm. [Rogers: M-hmmm] It ended then, and in the course of the war, I did not feel very much about this influence. But at the end I felt, "Oh, I have been terribly influenced," because I eh [3.1] could not resist to what went on, and I was just compelled to, may I say so, to live it. You see? Uh, things that went on uh just in this moment. [Rogers: Uh huh] Eh, you uh you may call it "imagining the real." [Rogers: Uh huh] Imagining what was going on. This is—this imagining, eh, for four years [Rogers: Hmmm], eh, influenced me terribly. Just when it was finished [Rogers: Uh hmm], eh it finished by a certain episode uh in uh May nineteen when a friend of mine, a great friend, a great man, was killed by, by uh, antirevolutionary soldiers [Rogers: Uh huh] in a very barbaric way, and I, now again once more—and this was the last time—I was eh compelled to imagine eh just this eh killing, but not in an optical way alone, but may I say so, just with my body.

9. **ROGERS:** With your feelings.

10. **BUBER:** And this was the decisive [unintelligible] or rather

8. **Transcription:** The CR and P transcripts have "*imagining the real*," as though two words were emphasized. Friedman (B-F), however, realizing that this is a significant concept of Buber's (e.g., see 1965a, pp. 96–101), italicized the entire phrase. Because there was little vocal emphasis, however, we have employed quotation marks to suggest its conceptual meaning to Buber.

Content/Process: This incident concerning the "great friend," Gustav Landauer, is an autobiographical event that preoccupied Buber and about which he felt "too close" ever to be able to write (in Buber, 1973, p. 8). Friedman describes it as one of the three most important events in Buber's life (see Friedman, 1981, 257–258; 1991, pp. 114–115). Apparently this was the only occasion in which Buber spoke or wrote publicly about the impact of this episode on him. This kind of emotional revelation is naturally one of the goals of an effective interviewer; Rogers's (impertinent) question and curiosity has stimulated Buber to voice a real but dormant experience.

9. **Transcription:** This turn is deleted in previous transcripts.

10. **Transcription:** Where previous transcripts have "many con-

eh the decisive moment, after which, after some days and nights eh in this eh state, I eh felt, "Oh, something has been done to me." [Rogers: Uh huh] And from then on, eh, eh, these meetings with people, particularly with young, young people um were the eh—became—in a somewhat different form. I had a decisive experience, experience of four years, very concrete experience, and eh from now on, I had to give something eh more than just eh eh my inclination to eh exchange eh-eh thoughts and feelings, and so on. Eh, I had to give the fruit of an experience.

11. ROGERS: M-hmmm, m-hmmm. Sounds as though you're saying the the knowledge, perhaps, or some of it, came in the twenties, but then some of the wisdom you have about uh interpersonal relationships came from wanting to meet people openly without wanting to dominate. And then—I see this as kind of a threefold answer—and then third, from really living the World War, but living it in your own feelings and [Buber: Uh huh] imagination.

crete experiences," we heard "very concrete experience."

Content/Process: Buber here provides personal historical context for the difference between mere exchange and offering the dialogic "fruit of an experience," a distinction he developed in depth in his writing.

11. Transcription: In this summary, Rogers notes that Buber's knowledge came in "the twenties" rather than in "your twenties," as previous transcripts have it. However, obviously, he is referring to Buber's age, rather than to the 1920s.

Content/Process: This is a prototypical Rogers "perception check" or "reflection," an example of what he calls "active listening." Rogers (Rogers & Farson, 1957) had just recently coauthored his famous exposition on this listening style, and its emphasis on the meaning of the other was probably in the forefront of his mind. Rogers here organizes and clarifies Buber's answer effectively—perhaps as much for the audience as for himself—without trying to reply to it.

12. BUBER: Hmm. Just so. [Rogers: Huh hm] Because this eh latter was really, I cannot eh-eh say it in another language, it was really a living *with* those people. People wounded, killed [Rogers: Uhm huh] in the war.

13. ROGERS: You you felt their wounds.

14. BUBER: Yes. But feeling is not sufficiently strong—[Rogers: Ah, uh huh]—the word “feeling.”

15. ROGERS: Uh huh, you’d like something stronger.

I’m going to make one suggestion, even though it interrupts us a little. I can’t face the mike and face you at the same time. [Buber: Oh] Would you mind if I turned the table just a little?

16. BUBER: Yes, please, please do.

17. ROGERS: Then I—

18. BUBER: Shall I sit here?

19. ROGERS: Yes. It—move it forward just a little then I think it uh—

20. BUBER: Is this right?

21. ROGERS: That seems better to me. Hope it does to the audience.

12. Transcription: Although previous transcripts have Buber emphasizing “living,” instead he clearly emphasizes “with.” This emphasis, of course, is consistent with his own philosophy of “the between.”

Content/Process: Buber, by emphasizing “with” in this statement, previews his later points about inclusion and “imagining the real.”

15. Transcription: (a) The CR and P transcripts delete Rogers’s “Uh huh, you’d like something stronger,” a perception check similar in function to his earlier comment in turn 13, “You you felt their wounds.” (b) The B-F transcript deletes the entire episode of Rogers’s attempt to move the table to facilitate interaction (turns 15–21).

Content/Process: Rogers takes primary responsibility for the communicative process by adjusting their physical environment to allow better interaction. In doing so, he indicates not only his role as questioner-respondent but his concern for the audience (“That seems better to me. Hope it does to the audience” [Turn 21]). The P transcript, which reports these turns, deletes this reference to the audience. Although such deletions are trivial in the sense that they don’t directly affect the flow of ideas, they are revealing for students of

22. FRIEDMAN: While he is uh changing, I'll interject this, that Professor Rogers's question reminded me of uh a a theological student from a Baptist seminary who talked to me about Professor Buber's thought for an hour, and when he left he said, "I must ask you this question. Professor Buber is so good. How is it he's not a Christian?" [Laughter]

23. BUBER: Now may, may I tell you a story, not about me, eh, but a true eh story, too, eh, not just an anecdote. Eh, eh, a Christian eh, eh officer, officer—I don't—colonel, or so—eh, had to explain eh some people in eh—I think—in Wales, had to explain them something in the war, in the Second War, [unintelligible] to explain them something—soldiers—eh, something about the Jews. Eh, it began, of course, uh, with eh the uh explanation uh what Hitler eh, eh means and so on, eh and he explained to them that eh the Jews

communication process who are interested in the impact of roles and the negotiation of relationships.

22. Transcription: (a) Friedman "interjects" his story, rather than "admitting" it, as other transcripts have it. (b) We have used the standard convention in scholarly writing of creating a possessive from a name ending with "s"; the CR and P transcripts use "Rogers'," while the B-F text contains the typographical error "Rogers's."

Content/Process: In one sense, this story seems to function as Friedman's comment on the premise of Rogers's "trifle impertinent" opening question. Both this story and that question have as their theme the naive but all-too-human assumption that one who is admirable must be like us in essential ways.

23. Transcription: Previous transcripts have edited this turn extensively to increase readability and presumably to remove ambiguity.

Content/Process: Buber's story reinforces the impact of Friedman's, also focusing on naïveté when an innocent Christian confronts the complex otherness of Jewish culture. Taken together, the stories might be heard as a mild rebuke to Rogers, although the tone of the interchange is one of good humor. (While it is clearly valuable and interesting to speculate on possible meanings and

are not just a barbarous race, they had a great culture and so on; and the, now, then, he addressed a Jewish soldier that was there and knew something and told him, "Now you go on and tell them something." And this eh eh young Jew told them something about eh eh Israel and eh even about Jesus. And eh, to wit, one of the soldiers answered, "Do you mean to tell us that before your Jesus we have not been Christian people?" [Extended laughter] [3.5]

24. BUBER: Now you go on.

25. ROGERS: Oh no. [unintelligible—not after this?]

26. BUBER: No? [More laughter]

intentions, we consistently reminded ourselves that we have little or no direct access to what Buber, Rogers, and Friedman meant that night in 1957. This, of course, is a hermeneutic caveat that applies to any textual discussion. What we are trying to illustrate here, of course, is a broader set of concerns not always dealing with what the individual principals *intended*, but also with what an audience heard and how the dialogue itself unfolded with a life and voice[s] of its own.)

24–26. **Transcription:** Previous transcripts have deleted turns 24–26, which happened amid laughter. We have treated turn 24 as a separate Buber turn—though adjacent to his previous turn—because of the laughter, the significant pause, and the topic shift.