

Sylke Meyerhuber  
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# Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI) in Higher Education

A Didactic Approach for Sustainable  
and Living Learning



 Springer

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*Editors*

Sylke Meyerhuber  
Researcher at the artec Research  
Centre for Sustainability Studies  
University of Bremen  
Bremen, Germany

Helmut Reiser  
Emeritus of the Institut für Sonderpädagogik  
University of Hanover  
Hanover, Germany

Matthias Scharer  
Emeritus of the Institute of Practical  
Theology  
University of Innsbruck  
Innsbruck, Austria

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# Greeting Note

We are pleased to present this volume as a further contribution to the concept of Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI). It is our hope that it will serve to enrich the present discussions concerning teaching and learning in the university setting.

Theme-Centered Interaction does not offer swift and easy responses to the pressing present and future tasks faced in the working world or matters concerning holistic approaches to education. Rather, it challenges teachers and managers to direct their attention towards dealing with matters of attitudes, conceptions of human life, human visions and values. In an ever-changing world, we need people who have learned to be their own leaders, who can successfully forge new processes. At the university level of teaching, TCI is capable of supporting the desire to acquire self-reliance, to unfold potentials and to initiate living learning. Some find it irritating to imagine that all teachers are likewise learners, that learners are also managers. But with this volume, it is our hope that the idea of a sustainable, living, inspirational didactic will become firmly planted on its reader's horizon.

Theme-Centered Interaction according to Ruth C. Cohn arose in a context of psychotherapeutic and educational thought. It was based on a multitude of experiences both with individuals and in groups. Reflection on those experiences enabled TCI to become an educational concept of its own accord. Whether working with individuals or groups, whether as part of counselling, in an educational or a teaching venue, TCI addresses how group processes function and how they are controlled, how disturbances are dealt with and how living learning processes are initiated – all based on a unique vision of human life and the development of moral responsibility. To do so, it is necessary to keep the four factors (I, We, It and Globe) in mind as much as it is to respect and balance the needs and skills of the involved individuals, the tasks at hand and the context of the organisation and its environment.

Today, TCI is employed in schools, at universities, in socially oriented fields, in pastoral work as well as in counselling and organisational development. TCI was first launched in the United States and came of age in Germany and Switzerland. It has since grown such that, under the auspices of the Ruth Cohn Institute for TCI-international, there are now branches in Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Hungary and India. An important part is played by the

four international expert groups (supervision, management, school, theology) and the support programme for young adults. Numerous TCI trainings and seminars are offered in association with various collaborators, based on the quality standards set by the Ruth Cohn Institute for TCI-international. There are also special educational and training formats for coaching and supervision according to TCI as well as intercultural and interdisciplinary learning formats.

The Ruth Cohn Institute for TCI-international thanks the Ruth Cohn Foundation for the Support of Young Adults, which supported besides others the publication of this volume. And we thank each and every contributor to this book for their important contributions to the further development of the theory of TCI. May the lecturer in academia benefit from the ideas and understanding TCI is offering them for their work in seminars and beyond. It is our hope that the Ruth Cohn Institute, in particular, and scientific research in this field, in general, will be the benefactors of a fruitful discussion and thus will provide an impetus for furthering work with TCI.

President of the Ruth Cohn Institute for TCI-international  
Berlin, Germany  
January 30, 2018

Andrea Schmid

# Preface

Which learning experiences are you thinking back to as the most positive? If I were asked to put my finger on it, I first would name situations where I was able to feel enriched on the *humane level by the person* who taught me something. Second, I would point out situations in which I could *try and experience and achieve something* by myself. Third, I would remember being *creative* in a unique way or *discovering* something utterly unexpected – what a joy! When one or more of these criteria meet, the accompanying feelings I would call curiosity, feeling energised, touched, happy, content and satisfied. In conclusion, it is mainly three things leading to great learning experiences: positive humane encounter with others, productivity by doing things by oneself, and productivity of one’s mind. Ideally, all three aspects come together.

Institutions of higher education – be it a university, a polytechnic, a college, etc. – are places of learning by definition. But what is *learning*? I would say, it is a process of and between human beings, never only cognitively but also emotionally and interactively. Learning in groups always includes certain dynamics – within each person and within the group. Of course, as a lecturer, one could try to suppress group effects and stoically emphasise on a given topic. We have all experienced such situations sometimes as pupils or teachers, right? And I guess (if the reader nods, thinking of themselves as the participant or the speaker) such situations do not stir the happiest of memories or feelings! Something was amiss. Shared experiences in groups are not something that can be avoided or should be suppressed while learning. On the contrary, they are part of the living organism of sociality and, in this capacity, part of the human life – more precisely: of humane life! Therefore, university (etc.) lessons should, from my point of view, offer not mere content but ‘lessons of life’ in light of a content, providing adequate models of *how* an expert in a specific field can act as a ‘good, humane person’ and how learning situations can create vivid, enlightening, satisfying experiences.

“I listen and forget. I see and remember. I do and understand”, Cicero is believed to have stated. I quote this phrase at the beginning of my university seminars in order to explain to students not used to interactive didactic why it is imperative to me as their lecturer to *involve them* during the term in discussion, problem-solving

in small groups, self-reflection and other forms of encounter for a more-than-cognitive and only thereby memorable learning experience. Students cannot lean back in such lessons; they must ‘do’ things all the time – being involved personally, with other group members and with the subject matter at hand – in order to ‘understand’. Participants are challenged to open up, to become visible as a person, to act successfully or to err, which is at first demanding and then becomes a deliberating joy. For the lecturer, this means to withdraw from the role of a person who mainly explains things. Instead, they must create *tasks which invite students to explore* aspects of a topic by themselves. A university lecturer who thus opens up his/her content to students, letting them make it their own, finding importance in it, letting them question it? Yes. Late Ruth C. Cohn, founder of the Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI) approach for ‘living learning’ experiences in groups, would hopefully agree and probably then involve all parties in the idea of ‘be you own chairperson’!<sup>1</sup> For a scholar in higher education, it might be difficult to refrain from sticking mainly to topic-related facts and instead ask themselves how their students can be involved in finding out personally what one could tell them in a fraction of the time – but without sustainable learning effects, referring to the above quote! The *what* is clear to the academic expert, but too often, the *how* remains a mystery.

The authors of this book agree in their view of learning/lecturing in academia; it should allow for unlocking potentials slumbering in groups of students and their lecturers. This goal leads to specific demands for the teaching situation. A *conscious and empathic group leading* by reflected attitude and process design does not necessarily remain a black box to colleagues outside of pedagogy and psychology. Knowledge from these fields can be transferred into all contexts.

TCI is the ‘art of leading oneself and others’ in a humane and fruitful way in all work groups. While group dynamic in all its colours is a given (one cannot avoid or suppress but steer it), the ability of a group leader in *recognising, addressing and positively shaping* this sort of underlying group process will broadly differ. Some lecturers in higher education might be experts in the field of group dynamic (like some psychologists or pedagogues) and therefore have more ideas and less insecurity of how to create a vivid and beneficial learning atmosphere. Some might have good contact within their groups due to their natural social skills – not being sure why their approach works and in search for a clue if it does not. However, others though lack these kind of skills, knowledge and training, shying away from everything beside their content while teaching, feeling insecure and anxious of students expressing themselves. Especially if emotions come into play, insecurity rises for many lecturers. They might think: “Who knows what then happens? The group might escalate or take over, making it impossible for me to continue with my

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<sup>1</sup>Theme-Centered Interaction as an approach of working in/as/with a group will be introduced in the first chapters of the book and referred to in all further chapters. A glossary at the end of the volume supports a reader new to TCI further in their grasp of main ideas and concepts of and around the approach. Please note that the spelling as Theme-Centered Interaction is used as a standardised term throughout the book, while some of the text use British English and others American English (due to the options of writer and copy editor at hand).

content!” Where does this peculiar fear (loss of control, a group that is disruptive or turned against their leader) come from? Own thoughts and feelings are part of any learning process, but how to include them *constructively*? Psychology understands human beings as deeply interdependent, as aiming for both autonomy and acknowledgement. Each individual has to handle this dichotomy, trying as a person and in a given role and situation to balance out these equally important human needs. If a scholar in academia wishes to empathise the humane side within their teaching-learning-setting, fundamental truths of humanity become apparent. Ruth C. Cohn as the inventor or discoverer of TCI expresses this accordingly for the attitude towards groups she works with in the first of three axioms as one of the baselines of her approach:

Human beings are psychobiological entities and a part of the universe. They are equally autonomous and interdependent. The autonomy of individuals is all the much larger; the greater they are aware of their interdependence with all and everything. (Farau and Cohn 1984, p. 357)

This is a book for scholars lecturing in the field of higher education; be it at a university, a polytechnic, a college or similar, according to their country and the educational system they are located in. The international authors of this book invite their readers to think from the standpoint: “What do my students need in order to learn the best they could?” instead of “How do I explain my content the best I could?” Learning in the best possible way addresses more than a subject matter alone, as mentioned before. It acknowledges the need for human encounter as part of the learning process, not only with the lecturer or facilitator but also between fellow students. If structures do not serve the social situation, trust between even the most willing people will decrease – “an experience also true in higher education and therefore reason for further consideration and didactical advancement”, as Arndt (2013, p. 61) puts it. Since not everyone teaching in academia received a didactical training, this book provides scientifically based answers by introducing the reader to the attitude, theory and methods of TCI by Ruth C. Cohn and its uses for academia lectur(er)s. It is an approach based in humanism, group theory, psychoanalysis, pedagogy and other areas of knowledge about the psychological needs of human beings learning in groups. Overall, it maps out a *holistic* way of lecturing and learning.

Different readers are addressed by this book:

- Some might already be *experts* in TCI themselves. Such colleagues probably received training at a Ruth Cohn Institute (RCI<sup>2</sup>), mainly in Europe or India. Probably they are already applying their knowledge to their lectures and might find new ideas in this book of doing just that.
- Others *already possess certain knowledge* in the field of group dynamic and group facilitation from other backgrounds. They might use these insights in their teaching already but find it somewhat limited and unstructured. With TCI, they ought to find an integrating, systematic approach and fresh ideas, broadening their repertoire.

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<sup>2</sup>See [www.ruth-cohn-institute.org](http://www.ruth-cohn-institute.org)

- Some will *know about TCI* foremost from books. Perhaps they already put to good practice what they understood so far and are supported by the content of this book to deepen their approach. Or the interested TCI reader might not yet explicitly apply their<sup>3</sup> group understanding. They are encouraged by examples and theoretical background to transfer new-found ideas into their lectures.
- And others still might be *entirely new to TCI* and the idea of thinking in terms of human needs, group dynamic and group facilitation while having their upcoming seminars in mind. They are also encouraged to broaden their ability of leading oneself and others fruitfully in a group process by first steps with TCI.

As editors and authors, we offer something to all these addressees and are sure they benefit from TCI in whatever field of study they may teach. We think of the book as a fruit basket with offerings for different interests, TCI knowledge levels and tastes. Consequently, our ‘basket’ contains texts from authors who are either TCI-trained and TCI-licensed, very TCI-affine, or positively TCI-interested. Most of them write from their soul experiences with TCI in higher education, some compare ideas offered by TCI to other approaches, some transfer experiences from other educational contexts to the context of academia or discuss its merits from a more theoretical perspective. Accordingly, this is not one consistent textbook but a reader, a compendium of offers from different angles on TCI in higher education.

In part I, the reader finds in-depth introductions into TCI from theoretical, practical, and methodical angles. Adding to each other, these texts offer an understanding of where the approach comes from and why it is of the utmost interest for postmodern higher education. Here, also first examples of how TCI can be used in support of academic seminars are given, as well as some insights on the effects for lecturers and students.

The first contribution on ‘Theme-Centered Interaction for Educating Future Leaders’ by **Sylke Meyerhuber** (Bremen, Germany) discusses the university as a venue for appropriating skills that enable students as leaders-to-be to act socially sustainably in organisations: The author introduces Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI) as an applied social psychology approach for university teachers. She argues that young academics are society’s leadership personnel of the future. In such roles, they will have a great impact on the wellbeing of others. How do they learn to act in a socially sustainable manner? University is not only a place for learning the contents of a chosen field of study. Additionally, the author points out an obligation to enable students to fulfil their future functions in areas of society with respect to social skills and consciousness. It is discussed in the text how resonant relationship experiences can be ensured during lectures. ‘Resonance in class’ as a concept by Sociologist H. Rosa is introduced, and its psychological implications are discussed in more detail with respect to specific approaches from therapy theory and industrial psychology. In more detail, cornerstones of the approach of TCI by Ruth C. Cohn

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<sup>3</sup>In modern English, language is to be gendered: where he/she could be set, a plural form (they) is used instead. The University of Bremen, where the author is working, encourages gender-equality language in academia by policy.

are then introduced with respect to practice examples from seminars of the author. Building on the method, qualitative empirical data from the student's perspective on experienced impacts of teaching with the TCI attitude and methodology at the university are presented. Conclusions are drawn and an outlook is given.

In the second chapter, '[Theme-Centered Interaction by Ruth C. Cohn: An Introduction](#)', renown TCI expert, communicative theologian and TCI trainer, **Matthias Scharer** (Innsbruck, Austria) offers the reader an introduction into the biography of Ruth C. Cohn, deriving from it the genesis of ideas and further developments of our shared frame of reference 'Theme-Centered Interaction'. Scharer shares his intimate knowledge of the historical and philosophical background underlying the TCI approach. Being honoured with the custodianship of the Ruth C. Cohn archive in Berlin, Scharer's introduction provides unusual insights into both the approach and its history, sharing his deep understanding of the biography of TCI's founder. Due to the author's profound knowledge and international experience with TCI, he explains with humane warmth the concept to the interested reader.

In chapter three, as an expert for psychoanalytic and systemic pedagogy and former RCI lecturer, **Helmut Reiser** (Hanover, Germany) introduces in his text, 'Concrete Methods and Case Experiences with Theme-Centered Interaction', insights into modifications of TCI methodology for a variety of teaching situations, together with **Walter Lotz** and **Birgit Menzel** (Frankfurt, Germany), **Christoph Huber** (Tübingen, Germany) and **Hiltrud Loeken** (Freiburg, Germany). Different formats of the work with TCI in lectures at the university are introduced, developed by Reiser and his co-authors. The different ways of using TCI didactically are described; their advantages and drawbacks discussed; and conclusions for the context of higher education are drawn. What is additionally characterised is where each approach might be fittingly applied. Completing, their relation to nowadays standards of TCI and its leading theorems are shown. While Reiser provides a framework in this chapter, each co-author with their unique university teaching experience introduces a special example. Some of them are not only teaching at the university but are also accredited RCI lecturers and therefore also familiar with newer developments within the 'TCI world'. In light of their specific expertise, this contribution closes with an overall conclusion.

These three broader pieces are followed by distinct examples of teaching with TCI. In part II, case experiences with TCI in different fields of study and also in different cultures are presented. The authors here refer to aspects of TCI without explaining the approach all over again. They show how they find facets of TCI helpful in their work of academic lectures.

The fourth chapter gives a detailed insight into a strictly process-orientated TCI workshop setting of a seminar at the University of Hamburg (Germany), where the communication expert **Friedemann Schulz von Thun** and his colleague **Roswitha Stratmann** taught together. First, 'On the Psychology of Civil Courage: A Theme-Centered Interactive Teaching Experiment' describes the framework in which the fortnightly course, held 1994, took place. Second, the readers follow a first draft and guiding thoughts in the development of an appropriate setting for their target group. Third, the seven sessions of the course and how the lecturers perceived them are

described, giving insights into the ongoing creation of further steps based on the lecturers' reflection of the group process, a most insightful description. Thereby, it can be closely observed how the lecturers perceived the group development and how they, guided by TCI principles and further communication methods by Schulz von Thun, shaped the process from session to session, observing closely the ongoing process and its results. Summarising in ten theses, also the knowledge on 'civil courage' gained throughout the course, and overall insights are discussed.

**Stefan Padberg** (University of Wuppertal, Germany) shows in 'Big Themes for Little Kids? Living Learning in a Teacher Training Course Dealing with Flight and Migration' how he teaches students in a course for the primary school subject 'Natural and Social Sciences Education' (in German, Sachunterricht). In school, the subject deals with issues of the real world, allowing pupils a more specialised learning of natural sciences (biology, chemistry, physics), on the one hand, and the social sciences (geography, political sciences, sociology, economics, history), on the other hand. A third issue is concerned with technical learning (as the architecture of a bridge). Lecturing students of these university teacher training courses incorporates the initialisation and fostering of the students' learning process on didactical approaches to social sciences teaching as an overall part of the primary school subjects mentioned above. The author first describes the normal situation of learning in teacher training courses at university in Germany. Second, he introduces the TCI approach in light of his target group, particularly focusing on the path of TCI-based planning in order to engage the teachers-in-training in a 'living learning' process. Here, the structuring of the collaboration and communication is of utmost importance, supported by the 'eternal search for dynamic balance' of the four TCI factors. This is illustrated by a course that took place in summer 2016, based on a real-life situation, here: the public discourse on a recent immigration wave into Germany. In other words, while dealing with the content of escape and migration, the class of future teachers explored different approaches of teaching and learning.

**Dora Pereira** teaches clinical psychology at the University of Madeira (Funchal, Portugal). In the sixth chapter, '[First Steps with TCI in a Class for Psychopathology: How Students, Topics and Lecturer Gain from the Approach](#)', the author describes her work as a teacher of psychology with undergraduate students after years as a practitioner of clinical psychology. As such, she sees her task at the university not only in providing knowledge. The task at hand is, according to her, to help students become future psychologists. In this light, teaching psychology must support personality development, the construction of a new identity as being a future psychologist. Therefore, classes planned should have this double aim in mind. But how? The TCI approach is known to Pereira only by literature and life examples gained while observing a German guest lecturer working with TCI in her class. These glimpses opened to her a meaningful and helpful way towards her goals, providing a humanistic framework and concrete ways of thinking about the process in the group she works with. Even with only cornerstone knowledge to date, TCI offers her ways to connect knowledge and personal growth convincingly. In her text, the author describes how she started applying aspects of TCI to her psychopathology class as an experiment. The text is organised along the four factors of the TCI model, reflect-

ing the author's process as a university teacher: (1) Globe factors – some thoughts on features of the context the class takes place in. (2) Individual aspects – on how she encountered TCI as a method for her class and why it spontaneously made sense to her. (3) Group factors – how the group of students did react to her proposal of an unfamiliar didactical setting. And furthermore in retrospection: How did the social climate in class change during the term? Here, feedback of students is also addressed. (4) The 'It' or subject matter – reflection on how the content 'psychopathology' is developing during the group process, with respect to individuals, the overall group and to theme and context. Thus, different challenges Pereira encountered as a university teacher are reflected. In light of the four TCI factors, she asks: "How did the course go, were the TCI principles helpful, when did I reach the goal of balance, or when did the process waver, and why?" Implications of these reflections lead to thoughts about the future shaping of her teaching/learning processes, for sure supported by TCI again.

Then, the angle shifts to an even more intercultural perspective with contributions from three continents, starting with an experience of academic teaching with TCI in India.

The seventh chapter introduces the reader to **Joby Cyriac** and **C. A. Lal** (Kerala, India) and their experiences with 'TCI Didactics in the Higher Education Context of Kerala/India: Experiences and Insights of Teaching English Language and Communication at the Tertiary Level'. Cyriac and Lal draw from their background as teachers of English at the tertiary level in India, where they are constantly confronted with the need for a contextually appropriate way to teach the language. Cyriac describes 'finding TCI' as a defining moment in his professional development; since it conforms to his notions of teaching/learning and offers him the freshness of an experiential learner-centred process with a philosophical underpinning, deeply humane and fine-tuned to the needs of his students. The authors discuss their classroom experience of offering a TCI-based language and communication course for postgraduate students in Kerala, in southern India. The nature and rationale of the course, its participants and the process are each delineated in the chapter. An emphasis lays on the attempts to translate the system of TCI into academic classroom practice – the TCI attitude ingrained in the axioms, the four factor dynamics, postulates in action, various tools and techniques of TCI, as session timing, rounds, group configuration, activities, energisers, and how these animate the classroom process of teaching and learning English language and communication. The involvement, responses and feedback of students are discussed by the authors along with observations and insights as group leaders. Ethical and political aspects are issued – by means of chairpersonship. For example encourages TCI participating women to voice their own thoughts, often a socially unfamiliar terrain for them. The authors also reflect on a personal level: As a teacher in the higher education field of India, how does TCI influence me? How did it influence/did not influence my students, looking back on the classroom climate and process? In closing, perspectives on TCI didactics in the higher education context of India are discussed, making also quite apparent the – by Ruth C. Cohn well intended and hoped for – societal-political dimensions of the approach.

The two following texts in part III are focused on interdisciplinary intersections: how does TCI fit in the landscape of approaches supporting interactive didactics in higher education, besides what already was said in this respect?

Starting with the eighth chapter, written by **Mary E. Hess** (Minnesota, USA), the author provides a methodology-comparative perspective, 'Theme-Centered Interaction: Intersections with Reflective Practice in North American Religious Contexts'. For more than 20 years, Hess has worked to support reflective practices in theological and religious contexts. Using a spectrum of reflective practice highlights how this kind of learning is ongoing, never finished, and dynamic. This spectrum also helps the author to identify resonance and helpful patterns in a variety of disparate but nonetheless connected practices. The 'Art of Hosting', 'Liberating Structures', 'Public Conversations', 'Circles of Trust', 'Civil Dialogue Project' and 'Common Ground Project' – all of these grassroots efforts in North America include according to Hess frameworks for helping participants in learning events to listen more carefully, to speak more slowly and to participate overall more reflectively. This is an intersection in which the powerful work of Theme-Centered Interaction, Ruth C. Cohn's psychologically grounded and astute theorising and practice, offers the author a substantial support as well as helpful critique to these forms of pragmatic engagement. Hess sees a clear resonance between strategies such as 'being your own chairperson' and 'beginning in shared table fellowship'. Finally, from the author's own specific theological context, she adds the socio-political angle of 'Womanist Theology', and further theologians, who are working in multi-faith contexts more generally, emphasise the importance of Kegan's deconstructive propositions for characterising TCI and other similar practices of dialogical conversation both as aligned with each other and as truly transformative. Ultimately, it is shown that reflective practices support putting learning at the heart of higher education, rather than too narrowly falling into teaching-focused patterns.

In the ninth contribution, the intercultural dimension in teaching and learning comes into focus even more pronounced. **Svetlana Kurteš** (Cambridge, UK) is an expert in applied linguistics and intercultural communication as well as vice-president of the European Network for Intercultural Education Activities (ENIEDA). Her contribution 'Theme-Centered Interaction in the Context of Intercultural Education and the Constructivist-Inspired Pedagogy: Potentialities and Perspectives' offers a concise reflection of the Theme-Centered Interaction approach observed specifically from the point of view of intercultural education and its requirements within the postmodern competency-based education. Having democratic citizenship, global dexterity, cultural literacy and internationalisation among the core values on its agenda, intercultural education requires a cross-curricular presence and a joint effort across educational levels. Looking specifically at its applications in the higher education contexts (in Europe and beyond), TCI is linked by Kurteš to the above-mentioned core values of intercultural education and discussed in comparison to the author's hitherto teaching approach 'Linguistic and Intercultural Education' (LIE), leading to 'best practice reflections' for the development of interculturality and diversity consciousness. These important skills for future roles in academia and leadership can find support by TCI in higher education,

providing immediate and ongoing training of social skills and attitude. The chapter ends with recommendations for the future development in these areas, looking into the potentiality and prospects of TCI in connection to LIE, not only in the context of intercultural education but – more widely – in the promotion of a tolerant and democratic society.

In part IV, contributions point into the future, considering aspects of what would or should be with respect to TCI in academia, technically as well as strategically.

Chapter ten is concerned with the future of TCI in the technology epoch. **Annelies van der Horst** (University of Maastrich, Netherland) explores ideas for TCI in and outside of academia; in the shape of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), reflecting first on teaching TCI online and second on online-based teaching shaped by TCI principles. As many of the other contributions in this volume explain, TCI is (or can be) a valuable aspect in the curricula of university studies and practices, be it in a specific course for students, as a pedagogical guideline for the faculty, or as a learning concept. Concentrating on the skills that academic students should acquire in their education – their ability to communicate and interact socially – the TCI-accredited author considers a TCI course an invaluable asset to all academic curricula. As TCI is a (self-)leadership enhancing approach, it could prove to be a crucial plus in their academic education. However, since TCI professionalism is still not very common among university staff, the theoretical possibility of developing a MOOC on TCI is explored by the author. Such a MOOC would be accessible for all parties interested – students, staff and beyond – for everyone who wants to become acquainted with TCI. The overall idea of van der Horst's research is based on Mick Cooper's (2016) question on the conditionality of micro-level communication skills for a fully functioning society. Van der Horst transforms this question into a hypothesis, stating that individual interaction skills are preconditional for an inclusive society. In her chapter, the content and methodological conditions for developing a TCI-MOOC are investigated, a concept she is developing currently in her PhD research. This research is inspired by the societal ambition of Ruth C. Cohn as the inventor of TCI. Van der Horst refers to the idea that TCI could function as societal therapy. She attempts to translate the ideas of Ruth C. Cohn to the present, meaning society's need for basic communication skills, which are often no longer validly taught in family, school and church. The author attempts to draw a connection between TCI and social media, such as animation, gaming and other media (like MOOCs) that were unthinkable in Ruth C. Cohn's days, reflecting that the concepts of MOOC may change the future way of academic learning and teaching entirely. For this reason, she starts exploring its chances of transmitting the concept, the values and skills of TCI to an audience of academic students and staff. Ultimately, the TCI community could decide, in cooperation with one or more universities, to develop a MOOC on TCI. This chapter may function as a first step of investigating the modalities of such an initiative, also in light of bringing the approach into the globalised world.

In the eleventh chapter, **Sandra Bischoff** presents with 'Theme-Centered University Didactics: An Answer to Bologna, a Summary of a Dissertation with the Same Title', main results of her PhD paper. The author researched in theory and via

interviews with experienced practitioners of TCI in university didactic how the approach is fruitfully adapted into tertiary education. Bischoff's theory as derived from this process deals with the convictions and attitudes of university teachers as well as didactic design principles. She emphasises the interlocking of the various dimensions of university teaching. Important results of her study are, for example, the outstanding importance of personality development also at the university teacher level, and that a comprehensive understanding of competences can serve as a connection between Humboldt's traditional teaching ideal 'education through science' and the Bologna reform (unifying tertiary education in Europe). Accordingly, specifics of Bischoff's Theme-Centered University Didactics approach can also lead to 'living learning' at universities, even in times of the Bologna reform.

In a finally assessing twelfth chapter, **Sylke Meyerhuber** discusses the possible merits of TCI as part of personnel development in academia. The author shifts the reader's view away from the classroom's 'I'-'We'-'It' focus over to the 'Globe' of it: the context, the environment in which the class takes place. She explores which role TCI can play from the angle of the university as an organisation – as a strategic means and in the systematic personnel development of universities. TCI seminars are suggested to be offered to academic staff members in support of their need for finding ways towards a good social climate and for social learning – in their seminars, teams and research groups alike. In this light, TCI could be promoted as a common didactical basis. Beside theory and its discussion, the author includes insights from talks with co-editor Matthias Scharer, as well as with Matthias Kroeger, a TCI'ler of the first hour in Germany and close friend to late Ruth C. Cohn, and with Gisela Liebens from RCI Niedersachsen e. V. (Germany). Their experiences and insights add to the author's thoughts about TCI in academia from the 'Globe' perspective. Overall, the author promotes TCI as a socially sustainable group and leadership model with positive career effects inside and out of academia, equally for students and academic staff members. At the end of this contribution, a list of publications on TCI in higher education is offered.

Ending this anthology, some further information is offered to the reader:

In his closing commentary 'About Evidence', **Reiser** reflects about TCI-related research and introduces some interesting studies in this field. Since studies about complex social interaction settings are difficult to conduct, only some are available. Qualitative and quantitative studies concerned with TCI and its effects are shortly highlighted and a literature list is provided. With this orientation, readers interested in research on TCI will know where to look.

A **glossary** is offered at the end of the book. It introduces concisely some main terminology used in Theme-Centered Interaction, humanistic psychology and group dynamic. As editors, we hope this will be of assistance especially to readers/lecturers from faculties of natural and technical sciences, who might be less familiar with these concepts and language from the social sciences.

Finally, **all contributors of the volume** are briefly introduced at the end of the book. They come from four European countries, India and the United States. Consequently, the book mirrors that most of us use English as a lingua franca and access different points of reference in this respect – most articles are written in

American English and some in British English. Regarding gender equality, the contributors are quite well balanced. Even if most authors live in Germany, we are proud of the international and intercultural perspective achieved so far.

As main editor of this book, as a social psychologist and personally, I am convinced that true experiences of humane encounters are *existential* and essential for good learning and living. I am sure that not everything people can learn is valuable: some kinds of learning can be actually bad for the soul and the body, while others are beneficial, satisfying and healing. This conviction leads to a normative view on learning encounters for me as a psychologist in accordance with the rules for the profession of psychologists in Germany: “You shall do no harm – passively or actively!” Who does ask which kind of teaching setting is chosen, interaction offered, and if it might do actual harm to participants? Estrangement and self-estrangement as part of the role-taking process of students during their academic education should be avoided. Accelerated content bombardment and ‘bulimic learning’, as some call a purely test-oriented marathon of recording and reproducing of contents in exams, are not adequate in my estimation. As TCI expert Kroeger put it during our talk in December 2017:

It is not enough to nurture selectively the intellect, people are consisting of soul and spirit also. In all stories of seduction there is a core of truth, from this derives the ‘appearance of truth’. We come further without TCI is one kind of truth: you can do more with a dead body, an examination you conduct as half a person, showing what you memorised, but not how you actually processed it, what it means to you!

In light of a globalising world shaken by economic dominance, north-south-inequality and other hardships, young academics as future leaders need education in humane values and enlightening encounters for a sustainable life and future for all of us. This is only possible if their lecturers nurture such a socially sustainable attitude by leading their seminars, viz. students and themselves, humanely. In this respect, a strictly humane way of working with groups in academia is also a political statement. Ruth C. Cohn intended TCI not only as a didactic tool for learning contents but as a psychologist definitely as a means of personal growth, supporting competencies as compassion, self-reflection, capacity of seeing the world from the perspective of others in social interaction, and civil courage (cf. Cohn 1989).

As far as I see, TCI can be described as an approach, an attitude, a method and a theory. Different TCI practitioners will stress different aspects of what the approach offers.<sup>4</sup> This is fine with me, as long as the overall humane attitude supported by TCI remains a core value. Our book gives interested academic lecturers from all fields of study first insights into the application of TCI in higher education. As editors, we hope that more international books on the issue will follow! We share a conviction that scholars in the globalised world can learn from each other not only content-wise but also interaction-wise, beneficial to themselves, their students and their lec-

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<sup>4</sup>For a timely overview, cf. Schneider-Landolf et al. 2017. If you are interested in evidence of effects of TCI, cf. Reiser ‘About Evidence’ in this volume, where TCI-related research is introduced and a reference list is offered.

tures (I-We-It) and beyond (Globe). We want to encourage international colleagues in academia to learn from each other and to learn about and from TCI.

*What could the sensitised reader do now?* Read about TCI, start reflecting on your own attitude as a group leader, and try balancing the four factors (individual, group, subject matter and, if fitting, also environmental factors) for the theme of your academic seminar. Go on from there. Perhaps you can reflect on your steps with a colleague who is also interested, or even work in a co-teaching setting as a team. Would your university's personnel development department organise TCI courses for lecturers if you suggest it? Or can you invite a guest lecturer working with the TCI workshop method and experience first-hand how the approach can be put to good use with a group of your own students? Alternatively, you could go abroad yourself as a guest lecturer to an institution of higher education where colleagues work with TCI in their teaching learning settings. By experiencing a TCI workshop first-hand, the approaches' value becomes particularly evident. Of course the best would be to attend TCI workshops in a licensed RCI institute.<sup>5</sup> However, we encourage you to try working with the ideas TCI offers you and the groups you already work with.

Last but not least, some *thanks* are in order: Foremost to the assembled contributors and their efforts in sharing their interesting and engaging experiences and insights in texts or interviews – overall a statement about the value TCI can have for committed higher education. Second, our thanks go to all the students we have (or had) the privilege to lecture, learn with and learn from in our teaching that is supported by the spirit, attitude and methods of TCI. Third, thanks to our universities for the freedom of working in the way each of us does – individually and with TCI. Fourth, to Yoka Janssen, Natalie Rieborn and Astrid Noordermeer as our liaisons during the writing of the book with Springer as its publisher, thank you for your openness to the idea of the book, support in the process and the overall realisation. Additional thanks we owe to Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht for letting us include an English version of the text of Sandra Bischoff. Many thanks also to Dipl. Ing. Werner Wesling for proofreading, most of the figures and tables realised in this book, and also to several peer-review readers for their encouragement and really great advice in the process of writing. Representatives of the Ruth Cohn Institute for TCI-international saw the opportunity this book idea provides and aided with funding one translation, as well did the University of Bremen Personnel Development Department and the artec Research Centre for Sustainability Studies; thanks to all these supporters for their appreciation. Since not for all the authors of this volume English is their first language, copy editors or translators supported the issue of printable Academic English – American or British – due to expertise of author and copy editor or translator! Special thanks go to our copy editors, Dan Smith (Language Associates Bremen, Germany), Katrina Stollmann (Fremdsprachenzentrum Bremen, Germany) and Edir Borda D'Água (Nazaré, Portugal) as well as to the translators, Deborah Barrie (Carlsberg, Germany) and Joseph Smith (Satzspiegel Nörten-Hardenberg, Germany). Last but not least, we

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<sup>5</sup>Ruth Cohn Institute for TCI-international (RCI-international).

thank our beloved partners or spouses, families and friends who supported us authors patiently during the process of delivering our parts of this book into the world of Higher Education.

Bremen, Germany  
28 December 2018

Sylke Meyerhuber  
As initiator of the book and on behalf of the editor team

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**Part I**  
**In-Depth Introductions**  
**to Theme-Centered Interaction**  
**in Theory and Practice**

# Theme-Centered Interaction for Educating Future Leaders. Applied Social Psychology for Teaching Academics to Act Socially Sustainably in Organisations



Sylke Meyerhuber

**Abstract** Young academics are the leadership personnel of the future. In such roles, they will have a great impact on the wellbeing of their staff members. How do they learn to act in a sustainably manner? Academia has an obligation to enable students to fulfil their future functions in areas of society with respect to social skills and ethical consciousness. How the task of supporting socially sustainable interaction could be met is a question answerable by social psychology. The text combines the concepts of deceleration and resonance by sociologist Rosa with knowledge from therapy theory and in-depth psychology of the workplace in order to argue the introductory assumption and presents Theme-Centered Interaction by Cohn as a suitable answer in theory and by praxis examples.

**Keywords** Didactics · Resonance · Humanistic values · Applied social psychology · Interactionism · Theme-Centered Interaction · Social sustainability · Future leaders · Participative leadership · Role of academia in society · Ethics

## 1 Young Academics in Need of Social Skills for Future Leadership Positions

The place of unconditional consideration of all problems, the rightful space for their elaboration and reworking, must principally be kept open in the university and par excellence in the humanities. (Jaques Derrida 2001, 11f.<sup>1</sup>)

Establishing and maintaining social sustainability in organisations is to be recognised as a complex and manifold task of executives on all levels of the post-modern workplace. In light of demographic changes, it becomes a necessity for all managerial employees to know how to shape the social fabric of the workplace to the

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<sup>1</sup>All translations from German into English are done by the author.

S. Meyerhuber (✉)

Researcher at the artec Research Centre for Sustainability Studies, University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany

e-mail: [meyerhuber@uni.bremen.de](mailto:meyerhuber@uni.bremen.de)

benefit of all members of their body of staff. This means diversity management as an enormous package of tasks: having a good knowledge of and skills in communication, group dynamics, and gender- and age-differentiated (not discriminating<sup>2</sup>) leadership; taking into account factors of a given situation as well as the degree of maturity; and being able to allow for and shape processes of participation, including the expectation and productive handling of resistance. How can responsible leaders-to-be learn to take on such tasks?

Young academics have to be recognised as potential aspirants for future leadership positions. In this light, universities have the chance and the responsibility to provide future managerial staff not only with specialist and technical knowledge. Knowledge and skills concerned with the so-called ‘soft skills’, meaning social competencies, have to be enhanced as well. In order to gain practical knowledge, this calls for settings within university programmes which do not focus on content alone: Such competencies need to be gained by experience and reflection in real social situations. Especially critical social situations cannot be mastered based on theoretical knowledge alone – only through fitting and authentic reactions at the right moments will future managers be able to act successfully, meaning in a socially sustainable manner. I consider it therefore not appropriate to narrow the task of training soft skills only to the area of General Studies, particularly as they often turn out not to be trainings but mainly another content-focused seminar.

Besides content, the way *in which learning processes are shaped and steered* forms the basis for the training of social skills: Situations of social interaction and reflection in class must be allowed and supported by the lecturer. University teachers who do not feel particularly socially skilled themselves might avoid settings which are more prone to trigger social interaction. Which guidance can be given to them to take on the task of opening up for the chances and limitations of the social aspects in their teaching? Which ideas and design guidelines might support the development of their social skills as a prerogative of supporting them in students? Through change of perspective, for instance, lecturers might empathise with students and take into account their future roles.

Socially sustainable behaviour in organisations, in this light, is to be defined as a goal and a guideline on different levels within an organisation. Social sustainability needs to be substantiated on the different levels of actions occurring in the context of work, that is, in the structural rules and processes of work, its social proceedings and interactions, and also its individual considerations and actions. In conclusion, the following definition of ‘acting socially sustainably’ should support the reasoning in this article:

Socially sustainable actions in organisations are all actions on the levels of structure, interaction or individual behaviour that provide support, development of, or care for the sociality of a given organisation and all its members.

All actions or omissions which influence the social fabric are socially efficacious, but socially sustainable actions aim on influencing the social fabric and its individuals positively, in a sense of a normative goal and in favour of a humane working environment. (Meyerhuber 2017, 139)

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. Schlick et al. 2013; Meyerhuber 2016.

Following this definition, the education of future leaders for their fitness in ‘acting socially sustainably’ would be prudent to aim on all three levels:

- First, systemic thinking and an understanding of organisational structures and procedures, with consideration for their impact on the social fabric
- Second, psychological knowledge and skills of group dynamics and interaction
- Third, an in-depth understanding of psychological human needs and perceptions of the individual at the workplace

In this light, it becomes evident that a transdisciplinary and interactional approach to the issue at hand might be advisable. Such an approach should allow for first-hand experience and reflection as a goal of the teaching setting and in support of students understanding the interrelatedness in a systemic sense: their structural and interactional abilities and awareness, as well as a respectful and considerate attitude towards others and oneself, based on an understanding of the psychological basic human needs and their manifold ways of manifesting in everyday life. In conclusion, in order to support such skills, a lecturer will profit from a *structural, interactional and psychological understanding* in addition to the content of their teaching.

For socially valuable learning processes, students must feel involved and ‘touched’ by what happens in class. This would be the biggest difference to just reading a text or listening to something being explained – the *humane encounter with others* and the fulfilling richness through true exchange of thoughts. But as far as I am told, many students experience hour after hour of frontal and PowerPoint-supported monologue with very little space for pertinent questions or further interaction. Sitting in rows, they do not see each other but the back of others, having contact at best with students on the chair right and left of them, sometimes not even asking their names, and being mostly with people they already know. As a consequence, students practise to *ignore even people close by*, focussing on content alone instead of on their social effects and personal perceptions. Socially speaking, by neglecting the social aspects of given classroom situations, they rehearse the wrong things.

## 2 Concept of ‘Resonance’ in the Classroom by Hartmut Rosa

Once again speaking of the luck of hoping for luck, that still some might ask: When was that, when will it come again? (Fried 1981, Before I Die, 3<sup>rd</sup> verse)

From a sociological perspective, Rosa (cf. Rosa and Endres 2016) recently bemoans a lack of didactics in teaching at universities and in schools which allows for a ‘crackling fascination’ in class. The author’s reasoning is based on his realisation that our *dealings with time* are getting more and more out of hand – postmodern

growth and acceleration lead often to estrangement (cf. Rosa 2005, 2016). This societal tendency reaches into postmodern universities as well – students feel under pressure to study from exam to exam by a tightly and externally set schedule. While the amount of the contents studied might not differ very much, instead of self-regulated learning and by setting personal goals, the structure of bachelor and master programmes dictates externally the student's pace (cf. Ackermann and Schumann 2010; Bargel et al. 2012). Psychologically, this makes a huge difference; what a person can do happily and willingly if done by choice can turn into a stressful burden if forced upon them. University teachers might feel the same kind of pressure in their work – pressure to acquire funding, to publish, or to meet the tight time frame of research projects, etc. – and thereby unconsciously support this tendency in the classroom as well.

Rosa comes to the realisation that “if our time relations are not alright, then our relations to the world might not be alright” (Rosa et al. 2016, 12). Therefore, in his book researching “world relations in the era of acceleration” (cf. Rosa 2012), the author explores this idea further, concluding that “for our relations to the world, *experiences of resonance and alienation* are of the utmost importance, and they are influenced by acceleration” (Rosa et al. 2016, 13). What the author aims for here is how a true experience of connectedness to something or someone is achieved; this he calls ‘resonance’. He summarises: “To enter into a relationship with the world means to transform and adopt the world” in order to become confidential and familiar with it (ibid. 15). His idea of *resonance as a main indicator of quality* in class includes ‘being on fire’ for something. But that needs a spark.

How can university scholars kindle such sparks in their students, and why should they bother? “If my efforts are without resonance, without reverberation, if nothing comes back, if I get the feeling of speaking into an emptiness, if there is no answer, the interaction stays mute”, Rosa (ibid., 16) observes. And I would like to add: If students during their studies at universities have mainly experiences like that, they rehearse and practise the wrong things! What by experience gets imprinted into a person, the person will express later on – this is a basic rule in all understanding of psychotherapy (cf. Rahm et al. 1993). And not only that, the relationship to oneself is shaped by such experiences as well: “I do speak to myself as you spoke to me”, philosopher Buber (1979) calls this dialogue-based principle of being a human in interdependency on one's social environment. So, what is it that university lecturers want to get across, which kind of learning experience, of hierarchic experience, of interaction experience with superiors and in-group situations are to be cultivated? From my point of view, this needs serious consideration. Studying three–five years of professional content, competitively and cognitively, in disconnection to their lecturers and most of their fellow students, anonymously in big rooms ... all this nurtures a *disconnectedness as part of an incorporated expertise and role as an academic*. Thus socialised students enter the labour market or an organisation as high potentials being put to work with others and (over time) in superior positions – how will they *cope*, how can they *act humanely*? Serious doubts might be in order.

Rosa, a university professor himself, states: “In the hollow space of disinterest I am cold” (Rosa et al. 2016, 16). Resonance in the sense of sociologist Rosa means

to get close to someone or something, to be touched by an idea or experience, and being perhaps also changed by it. The author muses, “It is not enough to own, to command or to handle things. Not until I make them speak to me I begin to truly connect, to transmute and to turn them into my own” (ibid., 17). Here, Rosa refers to two aspects of the teaching situation: the *topic of (dis-)interest* and the *quality of contact* between lecturer and student(s). First, in order to actually familiarise oneself and to connect with a topic, to really acquire it, people have to make a topic their own, turn it around a bit, perhaps change it by letting it in, or being changed by the process of letting it in. For this, engagement in the sense of intensive personal dealings with the topic is necessary. Second, this will mainly be based on some sort of co-responsibility between people (lecturer-student, student-student) because learning mostly happens in social relations. Hence, the connections between learning, humane contact and content are to be examined further.

## **2.1 Psychological Excursion 1: Contact-Encounter-Relationship-Bonding**

Psychology examines the occurrence and impact of different qualities of relationships, originally as a basis for the therapeutic process. But such knowledge is very helpful indeed for other areas of sociality and can in some aspects as well be applied to the topic of interaction in class.

From the viewpoint of therapy theory, one might imagine a continuum of how relationships can be described and differentiated due to their quality. Rahm et al. (1993, 157) describe such an understanding for integrative therapy and speak about principles of ‘co-responsibility’ as a practical form of intersubjectivity in everyday life. Particularly, they analyse how successful interactions differ from failed interactions in order to understand the aspect of interaction within the field of co-responsibility as social acts between the individual and others.

The medium of a person’s contact with the surrounding world is always their body. Therefore, co-responsibility is always based on sensual corporeal experience: “All our relationships and contacts are ultimately corporeal” (Rahm et al. ibid., 103<sup>3</sup>). This might be, in context of the university, an unpopular realisation – part of the academic culture is to emphasise on the cognitive mainly while often dismissing the rest of the body as a mere functioning unit. But the individual’s body remains the basis of and model for all experiences of borders: “Here I end, here ends my space, here begins yours” (ibid.). For example, through eye contact, people do connect or delimit, by gazes of rejection, by meeting through glances, etc. (ibid.). As Rosa said, “In the hollow space of disinterest I am cold”; bodily functions express disturbances in a relationship, even if sometimes people ‘unlearn’ to realise this

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<sup>3</sup>Rahm et al. (1993) refer for these aspects to Mead 1968; Watzlawick et al. 1969; Garfinkel et al. 1977; Habermas 1981; Goffman 1985; etc.

consciously. By allowing university scholars as well as students to realise and positively integrate such signals of the body as significant in classroom situations, they support a holistic and healthy attitude of social interaction while working on a knowledge base.

In light of therapy theory, any individual has to be understood as an entity reaching over several social areas as well as over areas of time (past, future) while being in a present situation. Rahm et al. (*ibid.*, 118) explain: “This becoming one with context and continuum creates the process of personality building, the inner dynamic of a person.” In this respect, experiences of positive and touching contacts to scholars and their topics can add to the fruitful building of a student’s personality as well as their professional role identity, while denial and reduction of these aspects of the social situation might inhibit personality building in a healthy, humane sense. Social reality as a shared reality is always a product of acts of co-responsendency and of communication and negotiation, even if often not consciously. Conducted autocratically or with disinterest for the social aspects of one’s university teaching, interactions will show symptoms of dependency and powerlessness, and students act not as participants but become passive and receptive or get themselves sidetracked as a form of resistance. Such a dynamic can be described as co-respondent between lecturer and student, with the message: “I neglect you as irrelevant as you neglect me.” By focussing on a topic while avoiding the embedded social aspects of a teaching situation, the expertise is emptied of its social side. Philosopher Foucault (1998, 22f.) writes:

Every pedagogical system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and power it carries with it, supporting it or changing it. What then is an educational system if not the ritualisation of the word, if not the qualification of some fixing of roles for speakers, if not the constitution of a (diffuse) doctrinal group, if not the distribution and appropriation of discourse, with all its learning and its powers?

In realising and accepting the political dimension of one’s university teaching, a scholar faces responsibility for the process. Being a psychologist as well as a researcher in social sustainability matters, the author’s choice is clear and somewhat normative: in favour of the humane and the social, in order to support personal growth and wellbeing of the human being. From this perspective, I ask how a university teacher can understand and create lectures in a socially sustainable way, holistic and humane.

With therapy theory, the social contact between people can be understood as the basis of all co-respondence. If not in contact with someone or something, no exchange is possible (*ibid.*, 164). Rahm et al. (*ibid.*, 157ff) differentiate a continuum of being with others as follows: contact–encounter–relationship–bonding. This differentiation might be of interest as a background for ‘resonant’ lectures.

*Contact* in this sense means to be attentive to each other and to establish dialogue: “Contact is a functional connection, less intense than encounter, less continuing than relationship, or bounding. Contact happens in the present and builds on immediateness and proximity” (*ibid.*, 167). In contact, distance and nearness are regulated continuously and sensitively through sensual perception of the individual,

based on personality, situation, interaction, and topic. Courses at the university are spaces of contact and should be therefore shaped by the lecturer to allow for experiences of connection through humane attentiveness and dialogue.

Building on contact, the term *encounter* describes a short but intensive deepening of contact, an ‘existential’ (Buber 1979) moment of connectedness and intersubjectivity: Through intensity of contact, encounter reaches beyond the participants into the space enclosing the relationship to all humanity and to the world. The experience of encounter changes a person. By density of understanding and being understood, in moments of encounter, the parties meet as equals (even though not as the same). To allow in university teaching for such humane and touching moments, a lecturer must be able and willing to open up to such an understanding and interaction. Through the chance of encounter, students learn as part of their professional mindset that it is not weakness but strength to interact humanely. “What is imprinted in you, you will express” is a main rule for human life, according to therapy theory. Therefore, young academics who experienced for themselves the benefits of encounter in the hierarchy of the university (being dependent on their lecturers) might more likely allow for encounter with subordinates or students in their later career.

Moreover, a *relationship* in this continuum is characterised by a further and deeper recognition and indicates more shared time together, allowing for a transformative basis of trust through meaningful and shared experiences. Therefore, in a single short seminar, the building of relationships becomes less likely than in a teaching project or other formats reaching over several terms of the study. Nevertheless, only based on the *experience of the unique quality of relationship* can a person(ality) develop the ability to form relationships. “Basis of the ability to form relationships – and therefore the feeling of stability and security in the social world – is to contain the ‘inner picture of the other in oneself’ including its emotional aspects” so Rahm et al. (ibid., 171). This might be possibly provided (with respect to a group but also for single individuals) to some degree in any class: relationship is rooted in an aspect of continuance. As such, it can only develop and remain if individuals are able to differentiate and to touch, to deal with conflicts and to negotiate compromise, based on reciprocal understanding and on a shared reference of reality (ibid.). These aspects can occur and be nurtured in short-term classes as well. Lecturers, though, have to be able to offer continuance, to differentiate and to touch, to deal with conflicts and to negotiate compromise, based on reciprocal understanding – they have to set an example. If afraid of such nearness, the attempt will most likely fall flat.

Finally, *bonding* expresses an explicit and fundamental connectedness, mostly by deepening of a relationship and over time (ibid., 173). Often based on an ethical element of decision for the other, the quality of a relationship is enriched through deeper knowledge about the other and by caring for them. In light of a ‘carry-over effect’ through which an individual generalises early experiences of bonding,<sup>4</sup> a

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. Bowlby and Ainsworth here referred to with Dornes 1993, 205.

lecturer should at least be careful not to mix aspects of the present and their personal past by way of projection. Being aware of one's individual tendencies in this respect should be helpful. Overall, bonding with students is not likely. It might also be inappropriate. Anyway, aspects of the quality described in bonding – respectful handling of knowledge about the student, a sense of caring for the student – might be fitting to consider.

In summary, good teaching in light of the continuum described with reference to Rahm et al. would at least aim for encounter, allowing for some true moments of recognition, by seeing and meaning a person, and by a touching of minds. Finding sparks of mutual interest and understanding, fascination or trust should be good indicators for at least chances of encounter in class. That would provide, psychologically speaking, a profoundly humane and therefore also potentially healing human interaction. Aspects of relationship and bonding may enrich the encounter situation further. Education which allows for such experiences can, in the long run, be expected to be very beneficial for the individual student as well as for society and its organisations. Also, the lecturer will be enriched and might be better motivated through humane, 'resonant' encounter.

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After this excursion into therapy theory, the train of thought comes back to considerations about 'resonance in class' by Rosa.

As a sociologist, Rosa does perhaps not differentiate the continuum of relations as a psychologist might do. However, he as well thinks of education as a space in which not only knowledge transfer but relationships are happening. For him, relationship is actually the basis of knowledge: "Education will be successful where we are able to make an aspect of the world speak. The idea of education is to make the world speak to an individual or cause it to resonate. Education, therefore, does not mean to acquire knowledge about the world, or to educate oneself, but means that *education is relation-to-the-world-education*" (Rosa and Endres 2016, 18). In this light, educating students how to relate to the world translates to 'how to relate to people, topics, and tasks and how to be true to oneself'. That idea indicates a necessity that scholars themselves need to feel related to their topics as well as to their students, being excited about both. Sometimes, professors at universities in Germany avoid their teaching obligations by sending an assistant in order to cover their subjects. They might 'burn' for their subjects in research but do not feel really comfortable in the classroom situation. How deep does in some run the interest of sharing knowledge and of 'kindling a spark' in students, really?

At best, Rosa imagines an axis of resonance, opening between a pupil/student and a teacher/lecturer, supported by the social relationship they share and triggered by a content which mutually fascinates them (ibid., 20). In this light, the author reflects the many dimensions education includes besides the content – like spatial