

# Getting in Touch at a Distance: Encounter as a Philosophical Concept for Distance Education

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## Characteristics of Distance Education

- Subject matter
- Social Presence
- Process

## Different Concepts of Encounter

- Existential encounter of subjects in education according to Otto F. Bollnow (Bollnow, 1955, 1959; Koskela, 2012; Koskela, Siljander, 2014).
- Existential encounter of persons according to Emanuel Lévinas (Fulford, 2016; Lévinas, 1983; Zembylas, Vrasidas, 2005)
- Encounter of human plurality according to Gert Biesta and referring to Hannah Arendt (Arendt, 2006; Biesta, 2002)
- Encounter groups according to Carl R. Rogers (Rogers, 1971, 1973)

## Comparative analysis

1. As a formal or structural issue, encounter is characterised by objects of experience.
2. As an issue of engagement, encounter is characterised by a certain depth of experience.
3. As a transformative issue, encounter is characterised by a move or shift of a person's mind.

## Conclusion

- Within distance education, learners may encounter with persons of subjects. Encounter hereby is a spontaneous phenomenon referring to personal engagement and transformation.
- Distance Education frames possibilities for encounter with other persons or new subjects, while actual encounter remains spontaneous and uncertain.
- Considering Distance Education as a space of experiences that frame encounter highlights the potential of learning and communication within those environments for personal and societal transformation.
- Distance education structures possibilities of encounter

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