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# Existential and Humanistic Psychology

A reflection and dialogue with  
Rolf Muuss

Interviewer: Claire Donnelly

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# Growing up in Northern Germany

- Pilot years during WWII
- Attended People's High School in Sigtuna, Sweden
- Teacher's College Flensburg-Muerwick
- America: 1st as Teacher Trainee 2nd as an Emigrant
- Research Professor at the University of Iowa
- Master's in Education and Ph.D in Psychology
- Goucher College 1959 - 1995





Rolf's Training as a  
Night Fighter  
(Ju.88)

## Rolf's Love for Travel

**He's shared a resilient attitude  
towards life**

→ **Post-War Germany**

After WWII life was difficult and he didn't know what the future would bring, but Rolf was fortunate to find work as a farm hand.

Rolf was able to work as a lay teacher, finally finished his High School diploma, worked for Christian Reconstruction in Germany, attend a church conference in England, and got invited to attend a People's High School in Sweden.

→ **He would "take life the way it comes"**

"I have no regrets. I have done well in my life and I have accomplished things in my life."

—

# “How could it be inauthentic? It’s my life.”

On Genuine Relationships;

“The basic idea is a great deal of mutuality. In terms of communicating and understanding each other, and both seeing eye to eye on major issues.”

# Freedom ~~&~~ Happiness.

"I'm not sure happiness demands freedom. You can be happy even if you're not free."

- You don't choose where you're born, you're family
- Work restricts your freedoms

"I don't have many regrets"



## Tip

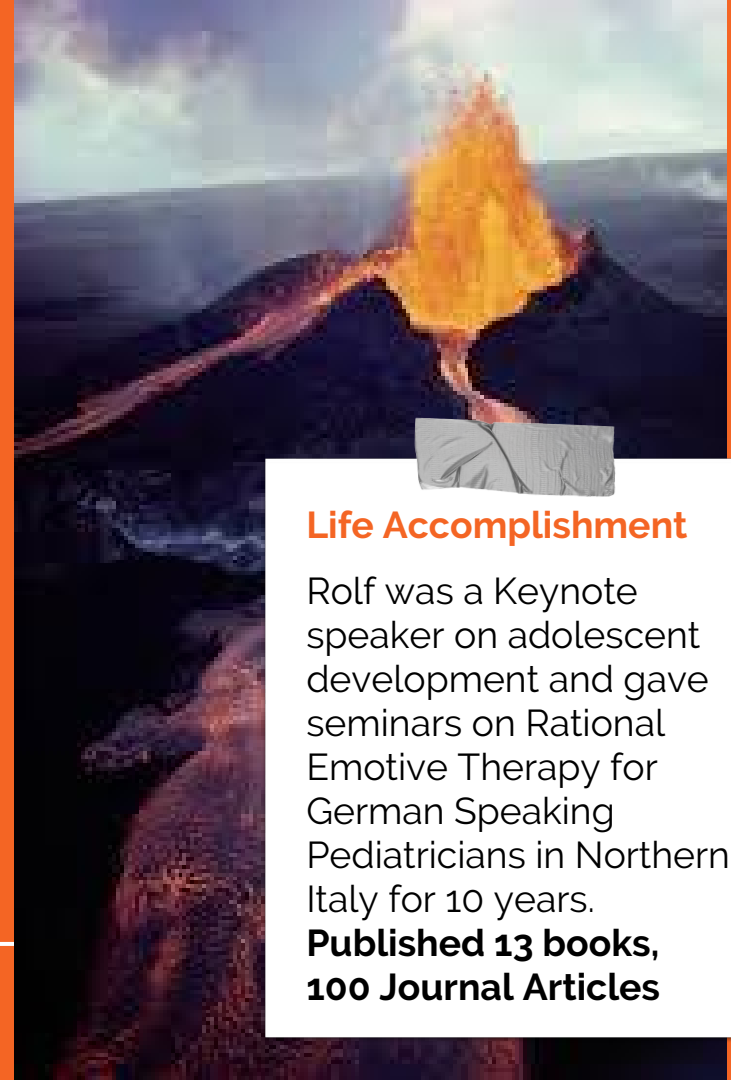
"Freedom is a very vague term that people use for their own ideologies."

Living for yourself

**Verses** Living for others

"I don't think that I've made any compromises.

I think in the situation if there was a need to help others or do for others I did it and I don't think I compromised my own well being in the process."



### Life Accomplishment

Rolf was a Keynote speaker on adolescent development and gave seminars on Rational Emotive Therapy for German Speaking Pediatricians in Northern Italy for 10 years.

**Published 13 books,  
100 Journal Articles**



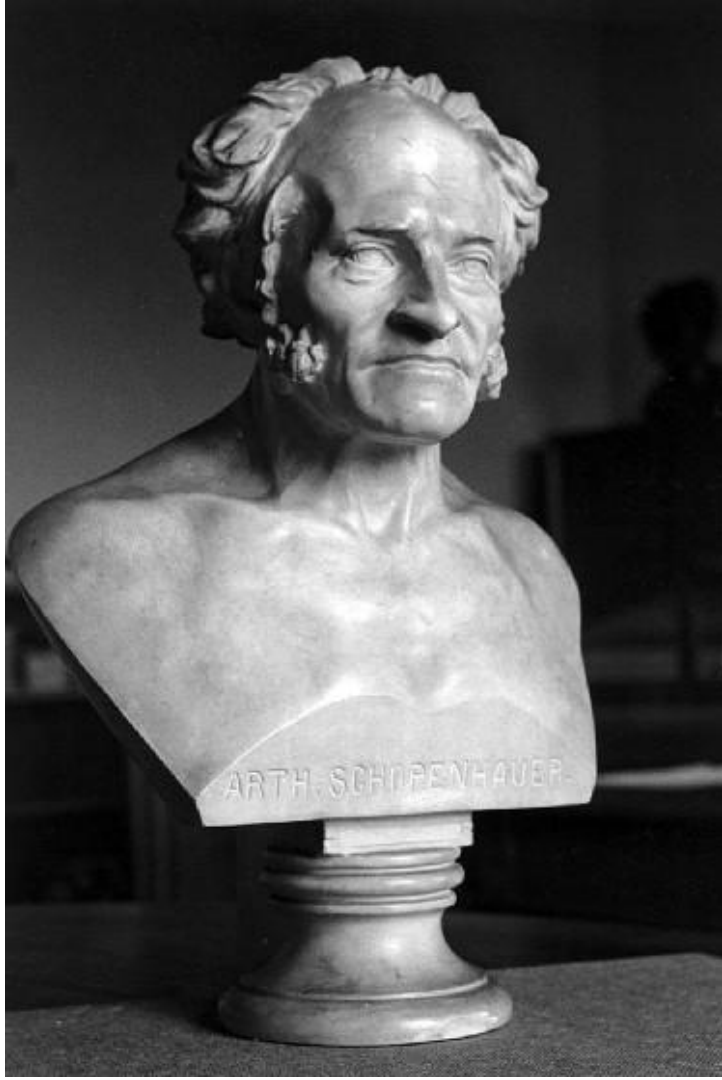
# The Passing of Time

## **"It goes too fast."**

→ **"You can't change it,  
you can't speed it up"**

"That is just one of the features of  
life, that you better accept what  
you cannot change"

→ "I have always accepted time as being  
a natural given that is outside my  
control. Whether I used it wisely I  
don't know, that is a different  
question"



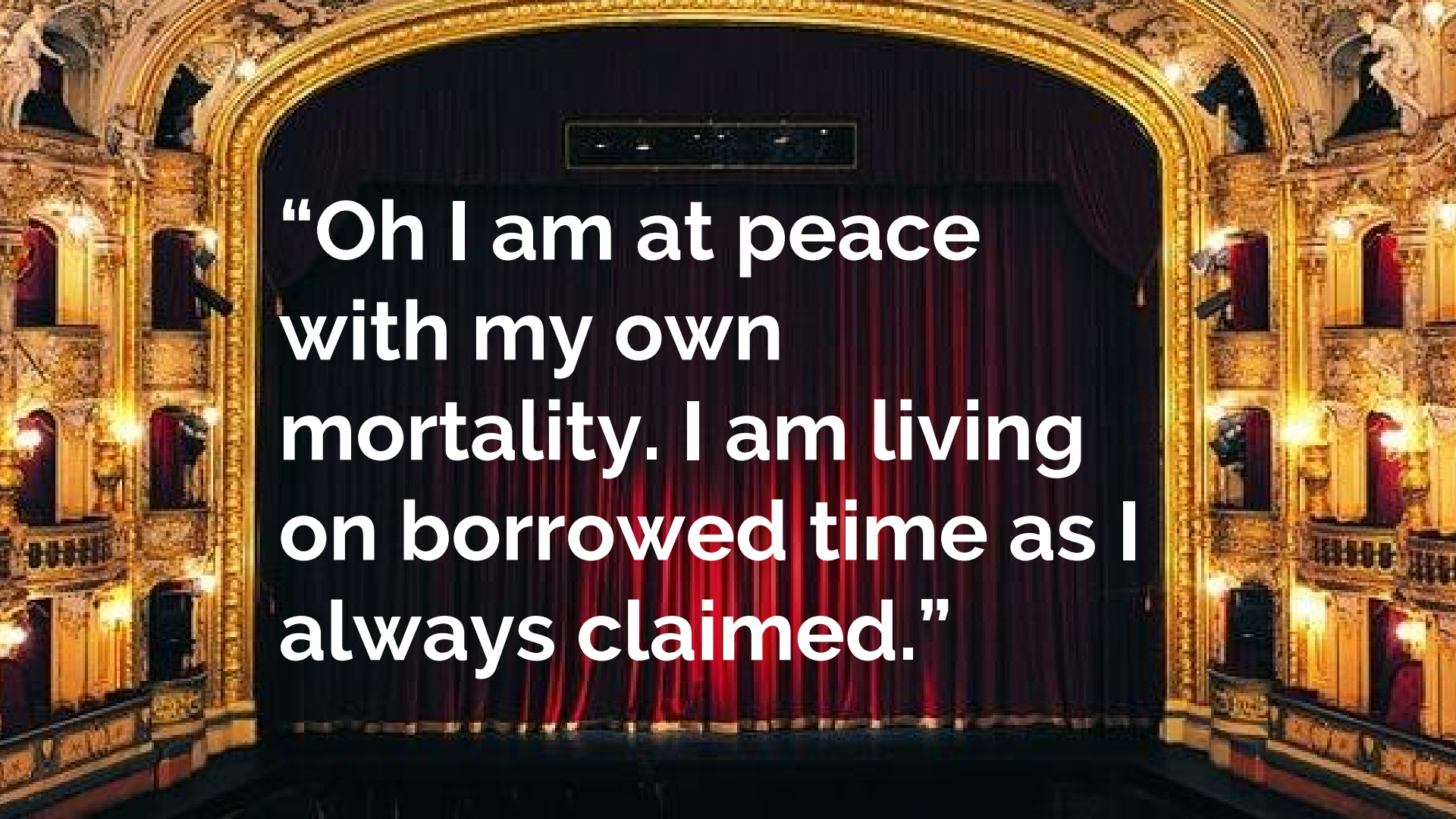
## Living in the moment

"We all live in the moment  
you can't live in the past & you can't live in the  
future."

Schopenhauer's Cure by Yalom:

"Of that we must not think. Goenka will teach us that it is only the present that we must inhabit. Yesterday and tomorrow do not exist. Past remembrances, future longings, only produce disquiet. The past to equanimity lies in the observing of the present and allowing it to flow undisturbed down the river of our awareness"



The background of the image is a photograph of a grand, ornate theater interior. The architecture features intricate carvings, gilded details, and multiple levels of balconies. The stage is framed by a large, arched opening, and a deep red curtain hangs across it. The lighting is warm and focused on the stage area, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the central part of the image, in a large, white, sans-serif font.

**“Oh I am at peace  
with my own  
mortality. I am living  
on borrowed time as I  
always claimed.”**

# Intense & Vivid Memories

- Time and Travel in Sweden
- Professor Lectures at University of Kiel Germany, British Columbia Canada, Italy and Switzerland
- Flying a variety of aircrafts in WWII as pilot in training

“And many of the vacation trips, in other words things in retrospect that are very alive.”



Caspar David Friedrich - German Painter

**“Oh I think my life has been meaningful all along”**

- Sweden was meaningful
- Research in Iowa, on preventative psychology for children
- Publications
- Lectures in Europe

**Thank you for sharing  
your stories**

