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Perspectives on Integration

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The bottom right corner of the cover features a stylized graphic of human figures. It consists of three rows of shapes. The top row has three circles, the middle row has three rounded rectangles, and the bottom row has three tall, narrow rounded rectangles. All shapes are filled with a light green color and outlined with a thick white border. The figures are arranged in a staggered pattern, suggesting a group of people.

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Editorial

Perspectives On Integration Further Contributions To The Discourse

We welcome our increasing members, old and new, to the third issue of the journal. There continues to be a lively response to the ideas already presented in the first two issues and to the integrative discourse initiated by UKAPI. We will continue to publish book reviews, students' final submissions and letters to the editors, as well as articles of interest. For the first three issues of the journal we have commissioned articles, but we now invite contributions from our membership. If any readers have written material that they wish to be considered for publication, please send copies to the Consulting Editors at maria@fluffy.dircon.co.uk or post to UKAPI Journal at: P.O.Box 2512, Ealing, London W5 2QB. From time to time we will have themed issues. Forthcoming issues will address: Narrative therapy and Integration; Body therapy and Integration; and Spirituality and Integration. Please submit relevant material for these issues.

Contents of Volume 2 Issue 1

Some of the articles in this issue look at integration as a dynamic process, others view integration as an organizing framework and others see integration as a description of their identity in a broader socio-political context. We believe that this signifies the broad sweep of the integrative project in the current climate in Europe. As can be seen from the articles and the letter to the editor, there is healthy difference, disagreement and room for debate. We welcome a robust exchange of

ideas and a vibrant dialogue on integration in future issues.

Ernesto Spinelli has both critiqued the integrative enterprise and provided an interesting alternative perspective drawing on existential, phenomenological ideas. He offers a way of viewing integration as a way of being in the therapeutic relationship in that integration is an aim rather than a destination. Julie Hewson has offered a poetic exposition of the archetypal narratives that she regards as being at the heart of her work as an integrative psychotherapist. She offers a cross-cultural perspective integrating Celtic myths into the mainstream of the Western psychotherapy narrative.

Frances Hawxwell draws on her experience as an integrative psychotherapist, who is psychodynamically informed, to convey her understanding of challenges to the psychotherapeutic frame. She illustrates her discussion using two interesting clinical examples to both enrich our appreciation of the need for clear boundaries and to remind us of the gift of boundary disturbances to deepen the psychotherapeutic process.

Graz Kowszun provides a framework for conceptualising integrative processes in psychotherapy, centred on the needs of the client in a particular context. She provides helpful maps to guide the student practitioner, in particular, in their integrative decision-making processes. Her framework reflects much that has been highlighted by others in

the integrative literature to date and is a useful overview for students of integration.

As Andrew Samuels, a Jungian analyst, often does in his writing, he offers us in this article a challenge for practitioners to turn some of their assumptions on their heads, and consider that any therapeutic encounter is a trans-cultural endeavour. He invites us to consider both what 'foreign' approaches can offer us as practitioners in the United Kingdom, and to consider that 'any other' is always foreign to 'self'.

Our student contribution is Bobby Moore's written submission for an Advanced Diploma in Supervision. This is in line with our editorial policy to include final written projects from graduating students.

We are including one book review and a letter to the editors.

Maria Gilbert and Katherine Murphy
Consulting editors and co-editors of
Volume Two, Issue One.

Ernesto Spinelli

The Dis-integrated Psychotherapist

Abstract

This paper examines critically a number of central assumptions underpinning the quest for integration within contemporary psychotherapy. It presents a view of experiential dissociation that, it argues, epitomises the current stance, and its resulting difficulties, adopted by the great majority of integrative psychotherapists. The paper provides an alternative interrelational focus that is derived from the writings of various major existential-phenomenological theorists, and the work of Martin Buber in particular, in order to highlight and offer potentially worthwhile possibilities and implications for the integrative enterprise.

The Dis-Integrated Psychotherapist

In several of my previous writings, I have considered the notion of dissociation from an existential-phenomenological perspective (Spinelli, 1994: 2003). This view of dissociation does not refer to a 'splitting' in or of personality or a dissociation (or series of dissociations) in identity. Rather, my use of dissociation is intended to refer to the experientially-lived divide that is provoked by the dissonance between one or more of the deeply maintained or sedimented attitudes, values and beliefs that constitute my worldview regarding self or others (how I or they must/must not be defined, related to and understood) and the actual currently lived experience of being that reveals a challenge to such sedimented stances regarding my own or others' essence, existence and/or identity (Laing, 1965). For

example, though an attitudinal component of my worldview regarding my self might insist that I am always an honest man, a dissonance is created when my actual lived experience of being dishonest contradicts this stance. In such circumstances, I might alter my previously held stance (for instance, I might now declare that I am usually an honest man) or I might reject my lived experience and continue to insist upon the truth of my prior assertion. While the former strategy might appear initially to be the most appropriate to take, I have argued elsewhere that if adopted it would challenge not just that particular aspect of my worldview but rather serve to alter the whole of it in ways both subtle and obvious and, as well, always unpredictable as to their impact and disturbance upon my self-structure (Spinelli, 1994: 2003). Indeed, the uncertain impact of this worldview re-alignment would also have its ramifications upon my structuring of and relations with others, and, as well, upon others' relations with others (Spinelli, 2005). It should now be seen that the initially less attractive option of rejecting those lived experiences that challenge or contradict those deep-seated values, attitudes and beliefs that structure my overall worldview serves to avoid the uncertain and unpredictable consequences of my "facing up to what is there for me through my lived experience". That this latter strategy requires me to dissociate from or disown my lived experience in favour of my inadequate, but deeply-held, values, attitudes and beliefs appears to be a price that, at least most of time, all of us seem willing to pay.

This dissociative divide that maintains a fixed or sedimented worldview is something that we psychotherapists know all too well whether as professionals working with our own clients or as members of a “school” or model-oriented community or as qualified experts within specialist organisations. For instance, in many ways we present ourselves and our profession as being centred upon the gaining or regaining of some sort of “expertise in living”. I leave it to your own observations of the lives of fellow psychotherapists, or, if you are more courageous, of your observations regarding the way you live your own life, to decide whether we are, or practice anything of the sort. And if you are even more courageous, or foolhardy, than either of the above, you might challenge yourself even further by eliciting the honest views of your partner, your children and/or your closest friends on such matters.

Whatever the case, I would suggest that such investigations tend to reveal to us that our actual lived experiences of doing therapy and being psychotherapists don't correspond too closely to our own, and our various organisations', sedimented beliefs about what it is to do therapy and what it means to be a psychotherapist and that, as a result, both we and our profession are experts in living with dissonance.

Just as the psychologist, Jerome Kagan, has written about psychologists' tendency to hold on to “pleasing ideas” regardless of their questionable evidence-based status (Kagan, 1996), so too have psychotherapists such as Alvin Mahrer argued that psychotherapy as a whole is riddled with dubious, if pleasing, ideas or foundational beliefs that are essentially illusory (Mahrer, 2000). I would like to add to these conclusions by arguing that as well as being illusory such beliefs provoke for psychotherapists a set of critical dissociations from lived experience that are equal in significance and aim to those of any we might encounter and observe being expressed by our clients. That these dissociations succeed in allowing us to maintain our illusory beliefs is in no doubt. What is important to ask however is: what price do they exact upon the very heart of the psychotherapeutic enterprise? And, more specifically for those who are committed to an

integrationist movement, how do these stances serve to doom this movement by imposing a dis-integrationist stance right at its very heart?

The one recurring counter-example to this state of affairs, the one twig that just about every one of the 400+ current models of psychotherapy has clutched at, is the centrality of the therapeutic relationship itself (Norcross, 2002). And, indeed, and not surprisingly, it is currently the focus upon this relationship that serves as centrepiece to most contemporary notions regarding the possible means toward an integrative ideal (Clarkson, 2003). But how are we to understand the term “therapeutic relationship”? What are the qualities with which we wish to imbue it? How might we prevent the undesirable consequence that the therapeutic relationship might as well also become just one more ‘pleasing and dis-integrative belief’?

I would suggest that the key critical foundational philosophical assumption regarding the therapeutic relationship that will direct us either toward its integrative possibilities or away from them such that dis-integration is fostered is the commonly accepted notion that self and others are separate and distinct entities or structures, each definable within its own set of characteristics and features. In contrast to this view lies a philosophically-derived stance that currently seems somewhat alien to contemporary Western thought (though far less so in the worldview of many non-Western cultures). This is the seemingly novel notion of interrelatedness as the basis to the evolution of self and other consciousness.

To clarify further, this second view takes the position that self and other are interrelational terms that are meaningless in themselves when considered outside of this interrelationship or when addressed and analysed in isolation. With this basic contrast in mind, we can now return our attention to the therapeutic relationship.

At present, no one psychotherapeutic model or approach, no matter how it defines and works with “the therapeutic relationship”, indeed, no matter how sensible or absurd its theoretical underpinnings may appear to be to some or most other psychotherapists, has been shown to be more successful than any other