

What is Integrative Psychosynthesis? Su Dunn

The framework of Integrative Psychosynthesis does not aim at a grand unification but rather a bringing together of a diversity of approaches which are contained within the open, non-dogmatic perspective of Psychosynthesis. (Re.Vision Introductory leaflet, 1997)

As the quote above suggests, Integrative Psychosynthesis aims to bring together and integrate concepts from different approaches to psychotherapy under the umbrella of Psychosynthesis. Thus, concepts from Gestalt, Humanistic, Archetypal, Existential, Jungian, Psychodynamic and Developmental psychologies are brought together to complement and add meaning to one another when viewed through the lens of Psychosynthesis.

Psychosynthesis came about as Roberto Assagioli's reaction to the reductive nature of Freud's psychoanalysis, which he felt took into account only the 'sickness' in humans. Assagioli sought to address this by emphasising the health he saw in human nature.

Assagioli's concern was not just about individuals' health, but about humanity as a whole and he hoped to 'make a valuable contribution to the spiritual, psychological and external integration of humanity' ("A Statement from Roberto"). He felt that this integration was the 'urgent need' of humanity and could alone 'counteract the dangers at present menacing it and help to usher in a new and truly human civilisation and culture, a new way of living' ("A Statement from Roberto").

Like Jung, he sought to bring the mystery into psychotherapy, but also to go further than Jung in explicitly bringing in the spiritual too. As Robertson suggests,

If the dialectic between Freud and Jung can be characterised as that of a tension between ego and soul, then Assagioli's vision was to bring into psychotherapy a third element, that of the spirit. ("Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy", p1)

Assagioli studied the spiritual practices of Eastern philosophies and introduced aspects of these into his psychology. He was strongly influenced by Maslow's concept of the self-actualising principle as a driving force, looking to the potential of humans as well as the limitations.

Psychosynthesis was first fully embraced in the 1960s, when reactions against the psychoanalytic tradition were running high. Rogers and the humanists were reacting against the power imbalance in the psychoanalytic relationship and people were searching for meaning through relationship and spiritual quest rather than the 'blank screen' of the psychoanalysts. The shadow of 'depth psychology' had become 'height psychology' and this is what the Psychosynthesists embraced.

In a move away from Assagioli's initial principles, the two polarised and by the 1980s, Psychosynthesis had become an ungrounded psychology, more about spiritual practice than psychotherapy, with a strong emphasis on transcendence and moving towards the light, spiritualising pain and denying shadow. As Grof suggests,

...a one-sided emphasis on the light, problem-free and joyful side of life... can be used in the service of repression and denial of the shadow. (1985, p194)

Assagioli saw Psychosynthesis not as a prescriptive model, but as always evolving, growing organically, responding to the environment. The evolution towards the light can be seen as an understandable reaction to what felt reductive and diminishing in Freudian psychoanalytic thinking. However, the polarisation needed to be addressed, Psychosynthesis needed grounding.

In keeping with Assagioli's vision of continual evolution, Re.Vision aimed to bring Psychosynthesis back to earth. While much of Freud's thinking could be seen as reductive, the importance of his findings with regard to the impact of childhood development are undeniable and have paved the way for the developmental school of psychology. While valuing the developmental approach as important, Integrative Psychosynthesis seeks to *include* this in the work with clients, but not to *reduce* the client to a product of his or her upbringing. As Robertson suggests,

Our pasts clearly have a significant effect on our lives and our childhood experiences are formative, but this is not the same as making mothers the source of all our problems ("Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy" p2).

Holding polarities and integrating depth with height, Soul with spirit, Integrative Psychosynthesis seeks not to transcend wounding and pain but to enter into the wound as the 'gateway to the Soul'. Grof seems to get close to this when he suggests,

While I share Assagioli's emphasis on the creative, superconscious and radiant potential of the psyche, it has been my experience that the direct confrontation of its dark side, whenever it manifests itself in the process of self-exploration, is beneficial and conducive to healing, spiritual opening and conscious evolution. (1985, p194)

It is my sense that Assagioli addressed this 'dark side' in his 'egg diagram', as the 'lower unconscious'. From the central position of the conscious self, or 'I', and *through* the surrounding immediate consciousness, we are able to access the three realms of the personal unconscious; the middle, containing recently repressed and suppressed memories and experiences, the lower, containing our past memories and 'shadow' material, and the higher unconscious, containing our potential, that which we may become, which may also be in our shadow, as a 'repression of the sublime'. At the top of Assagioli's egg diagram, he positioned the Transpersonal or Higher Self, in direct contact with both the 'I' and the collective unconscious.

Assagioli's 'egg diagram' can act as a frame through which to understand the other models embraced by the Re.Vision approach to Integrative Psychosynthesis. Central to this approach is the integration of Wilbur's pre/ego/trans model. This is a tripartite cyclical model which, in its simplest form, demonstrates the three phases of emotional maturation from Pre-ego, before the ego is formed, to Super-ego when the ego is fully formed and in control, to Trans-ego, when some of that control has been relinquished, not in a passive, regressive way, but as a movement towards wisdom and a transpersonal way of knowing. This description in itself is reductive and the model aims to demonstrate not only the emotions experienced at each of these phases and the transitions between each phase, but also and possibly most importantly, that this process is not a once-in-a-lifetime, linear one, but 'a cyclic process with no end-points to attain', which, as Freshwater and Robertson continue, 'allows the model to describe a process that may last several years, weeks or even minutes' (2002, p18).

For me, the model gains in richness and depth by the Re.Vision use of it as a base upon which other models can be transposed. Thus, the transposition of Grof's Basic Perinatal Matrices and Pearson's archetypes enable us not only to see how these models may inter-relate, but also how, when integrated with one another, they add layers of depth of understanding and meaning to one another. Each of these models is, in itself, a lens through which to gain further understanding of the spiralling through life. They are 'exemplars of an archetypal pattern that belongs to the individual's unfolding destiny or fate' (Freshwater and Robertson 2002, p40). Each has both personal and archetypal elements inextricably linked within it and should not be viewed literally, but with the overarching view of life's bigger picture; how the transitions each of us make through life play a part in our journey towards individuation.

Holding in mind the Wilbur model, with the transpositions of Grof's and Pearson's models, enables the counsellor to understand where the client may be more identified and what may be in his shadow. Seeing the client's story through the prism of where he is in the present and the roles with which he is most identified can help me as a counsellor to gain a greater understanding of the client's perspective.

With each of these models, Integrative Psychosynthesis holds that there are no rights and wrongs with where a person may be identified, only what is. Acceptance of where we are in the spiral can enable us to move on to 'what we may be'. Hillman suggests that there is no truth, only what we make of our experiences through our personal mythologizing. As counsellors, we can help clients to deconstruct their personal mythologies and to come to new, continually evolving mythologies. The cyclical nature of the Wilbur model enables us to understand this continual spiralling and to hold it in awareness when working with clients.

The Wilbur model has also been used by Freshwater and Robertson to track the development of the therapeutic relationship itself.

The three thresholds... divide the focus of the different phases and represent quantum leaps in the nature of the therapeutic relationship and the style of engagement. (2002, p16)

In keeping with the Rogerian and Gestalt thinkers, Integrative Psychosynthesis sees the relationship as central to meaningful therapy. The emphasis on Buber's I-Thou relationship (Hycner 1993) in which the

therapist strives to be fully present to the client and to enter fully into relationship with him is a departure from the psychoanalytic model of relating.

What allows a Psychosynthesis psychotherapist to enter into this process so fully is the sense of being held by a power greater than themselves. The I-Thou of the relationship is the container that holds both personalities - client's and therapist's. ("Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy", p5)

While being closer to the humanistic approach to counselling, this can also be integrated with Jung's concept of 'getting into the bath' with clients, being both affected and infected by them. Hycner's 'between', the 'third' that is created when two people come into relationship with each other is further deepened when seen through the psychodynamic lens as the 'field', recognising both the conscious and unconscious relationship of the client and counsellor.

Jacoby (1984) developed the Jungian model of interaction between counsellor and client whereby both the conscious and unconscious of both are constantly sending and receiving messages to and from one other. This is experienced by the counsellor as transference and counter-transference.

However, while Jacoby and traditional psychodynamic therapists see this as a 'sorting of the seeds', a working out of what belongs to me and what belongs to the client, Integrative Psychosynthesis understands that what is constellated in the transference and counter-transference is not a case of either counsellor's or client's, but both counsellor's and client's. Whatever we feel as counsellors, whatever images, thoughts and body sensations we may have, are all part of the field.

One becomes aware that the field has its own dynamics which are separate from and independent of the individuals. Yet the discovery of these dynamics is only possible by experiencing them through the individual and combined subjectivities of both people. (Schwartz-Salant 1995, p2)

The field or 'third' is created by the coming together into relationship of two people, Jung's *mysterio coniunctio*, the alchemical mystery of '...the combining of two chemical substances in a kind of analytic test tube...The mixture or "combination" of these elements results in (and paradoxically

is also the result of) the alteration of each element and the creation of a new, third component' (Sedgwick quoting Jung 2000, p12). This mystical aspect of the relationship is both honoured and encouraged by Integrative Psychosynthesis, where both client and counsellor are affected by the 'mutual arising' that occurs and both are subsequently changed.

The field is a primitive form of communication; it is pre-verbal. The client pushes needs and emotions that are too much for him out into the field and the counsellor feels these for him. While there are differing levels on which to work with this, as a counsellor, I may have to carry my counter-transference feelings for some time before it is appropriate to address them with my client, and as the medium for experiencing these messages is through our wounding, this can be excruciating.

Thus, what is stirred up for me as a counsellor as part of my story is relevant to what is happening with the client. With certain clients, I have become aware of erotic transference in our relationship, and have found this difficult. It brought up issues for me around my own sense of being an attractive woman and how I had needed to repress this knowledge as an adolescent because the message I had received from both my parents and peers was that to be attractive was threatening and dangerous. Working through this in therapy and supervision enabled me to hypothesise that this fear and sense of danger was not just about my story but also true for my clients. What are constellated in the field are the shadow aspects that a client may find too unbearable to allow into his or her consciousness. Feeling it so strongly through my wounding, it took some time in therapy and supervision to understand this.

In this way, while excruciatingly painful, the gift of the therapist's wound allows a much more visceral understanding of how the client is feeling than theoretical insight might otherwise allow. As Sedgwick suggests, 'a "wounded healer" does not mean a "once-wounded-now-recovered" one, but one who is currently *vulnerable* as well' (2000, p112), feeling the wounding of another through our own wounds and communicating empathy to the other without detracting from their process, but rather adding to their understanding of it.

Transference and counter-transference can work on many levels at any time, and I have found myself acting out of my counter-transference with clients while trying to avoid doing just that. Where a client's story is one

of transgressed boundaries, this can manifest in the counselling relationship. When I have felt an acting out of the lack of boundaries a client experienced as a child, I have tried hard to re-establish these boundaries. However, on occasion, while having a sense that I had definitely re-established our boundaries, I have also had a sense of having wounded the client. Further exploration in supervision enabled me to recognise when I had not only become a client's rejecting mother and/or father, but also my own rejecting father who was unable to cope with my emerging sexuality and acting out as an adolescent.

This exemplifies that '...the analyst's more pathological or volatile complexes... are never totally worked through and can sometimes be reconstellated under the impact of the patient's unconscious' (Sedgwick 2000, p106-7), hence the need for continual self-exploration and good supervision as a counsellor.

And yet it seems that with the best of intentions, sometimes this unconscious wounding is unavoidable. There is an inevitability of wounding the client that Integrative Psychosynthesis acknowledges. The wounded healer is also the wounded wounder, and there is an acknowledgment that wounding into awareness is inevitable and even desirable in therapy, that something becomes real when it's embodied in pain; a wounding into life. It is through the painful breaking open and descent into our own wounding that we can find healing and experience a sense of our Soul.

The descent into the wound requires a strong therapeutic relationship and the counsellor needs to be able to offer herself as a container for the pain of the client. This is where 'the sense of being held by a power greater than themselves' is invaluable to the Psychosynthesis therapist.

Only with safe containment can the client allow himself to move through the ego's 'pseudo-acceptance' of his sense of wounding and drop 'bone by bone' (Dickinson) into the wound.

The holding of the relationship creates a container to allow the process of descent, the falling apart of the known habitual patterns of ego response. (Freshwater and Robertson 2002, p93)

While Kearney (1996) suggests that we can make a conscious choice to surrender to this process, the descent is driven by the unconscious and with it comes a sense of brokenness, of breaking apart, breaking open.

A client in descent will encounter all of the defences that he has developed in order to survive his wounding and to be in the world. Integrative Psychosynthesis emphasises the importance of acknowledging these defences and honouring them with compassion. The client may find it too difficult to move beyond these layers of defence and the Psychosynthesis approach emphasises the inherent wisdom of the psyche and the importance of honouring the client's ability to integrate learnings at his own pace. The descent into wounding is seen as a continual cycle, a spiralling through life, and each time we encounter it and survive, we are able to move deeper into our next descent.

In the breaking open of the descent and the movement through and beyond these defences, the client can learn to give the wound a place of meaning in his life story, and this is at the heart of Integrative Psychosynthesis.

Classical Psychosynthesis uses the concept of 'bifocal vision' (Whitmore, 1991) through which to view the client's story, whereby the counsellor not only holds an awareness of where the client is in the present, but also attempts to hold an awareness of what the current crisis might mean in the bigger picture of his life, in his soul's journey. Integrative Psychosynthesis differs in its emphasis that this learning can only come by moving *through* the wound, rather than attempting to transcend it, seeing the wound as the gateway to the Soul.

In honouring and allowing the wound, it can be allowed to breathe; space can be made for the client to feel the grief of the loss of innocence inherent in the primal wound and the longing to be whole. At the same time, through the true acceptance of the wound as it is, as a part of who I am, not just something that was done to me, can come a point of no longer wanting it to be different, no longer wanting to be rid of it.

Through this acceptance and compassion can come healing through discernment and wisdom; the potential to learn from the descent and each time notice a little bit more about defences that are still active. Through this spiralling through, we can develop psychic scar tissue as a healthy protection, allowing openness to the wound, rather than defence against it. Through the holding of the Psychosynthesis counsellor and his learnings from his descent, the client can learn to internalise containment, both intrapsychic and transpersonal.

The therapeutic process can become an initiation, an often painful but liberating transformation of emotion, which brings therapist and client into a more intimate and mutual connection. (Freshwater and Robertson 2002, p112)

Through this 'intimate and mutual connection' the heart connection deepens to a soul connection. Part of this deepening is created by the counsellor listening for the soul's messages in what is presented by the client. The ego dominates language and so the soul finds subtler ways to bypass its censorship. If 'the soul's language is imagery' (Schwartz-Salant 1995, p28) then it is essential that as a counsellor, I am willing to listen for the imagery presented by the client through dreams, metaphor and figures of speech.

Psychosynthesis has always valued the place of imagination in the therapeutic relationship. The integration of 'a Jungian concern for trusting images to unfold in their own rhythm rather than manipulating them' of the Integrative Psychosynthesis approach, has enabled a 'more mature and respectful method of working with the imagination. These more subtle methods elicit spontaneous images and facilitate clients sinking down below their rational mind to access their inner source of healing and wisdom' ("Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy" p4).

Imagination is a gift from the unconscious. Working with the imagination through spontaneous images, dreams and the Psychosynthesis concept of subpersonalities enables the counsellor and client to bypass ego defences and address areas of internal conflict, not with the goal of conflict resolution, but that of conflict *awareness*: 'not to slay the dragon but to *name* the dragon' (Pearson 1989, p124).

Subpersonalities develop out of early childhood experiences and needs. Over time, the original need and resulting behaviours become distorted and no longer serve the client. Psychosynthesis emphasises the need to get to the core of the subpersonality energy to find the gift in it, acknowledging and appreciating the *intention* of protective subpersonalities. Exploring the way this intention has become distorted over time can be informative and potentially reassuring for clients. In this way, we can 'learn to honour all our selves. The selves we do not honour grow inside us in unconscious ways, gaining power and authority' (Stone and Stone 1989, p25). Rowan quotes Ferruci's statement that 'all subpersonalities are expressions of vital elements of our being, however

negative they may seem to us at first' (2003, p75). The process of meeting and naming them through guided imagination and imaginal dialogues can prove transformative for the client.

A client may feel ashamed about a feeling connected with a subpersonality, for example a fear that seems to come from a very young place. As a counsellor, I may ask the client to describe that young child, and ask how the client feels about him. Even if a client does not feel ready to enter into a dialogue with or accept this child as a part of himself, if he can allow him into the counselling room, I, as the counsellor, can then model that it is okay for him to be there.

Thus, imagination and subpersonality work is a way of accessing parts of ourselves we would normally repress. Allowing a subpersonality to be present in the room may in time enable the client to feel more able to speak to him and learn more about him. This in turn may lead to greater acceptance, understanding and compassion for him as one of his shadow, 'not-me' parts, which are still present 'whether you have owned them or not. Becoming aware of them enables you to take charge of them rather than be enslaved by them' (Rowan, quoting Satir, 2003, p103). Through acknowledging and working with subpersonalities and their internal conflict, the client can move through to a greater understanding and acceptance and this in turn can lead to him being more allowing of his inner multiplicity.

As the client learns more about his internal dynamics, and is able to accept more of the parts of himself that he previously feared or repressed, so he may be able to see how these dynamics have been playing out in his external relationships, and disidentify from some of the projections that may have hampered meaningful relating. As Freshwater and Robertson suggest, 'therapy should not be for its own sake but rather working for the client to integrate their learnings within the world' (2002, p107).

However, while this may be the purpose of therapy, this does not mean that the therapist should be driven by a goal for the client. Integrative Psychosynthesis emphasises the importance of the client's autonomy, going with the client's pace and not pushing for acceptance and dialogue. As a counsellor, it is important for me to honour and accept where the client is in his journey to becoming 'more of himself' and trust in the unfolding process between us.

Integrative Psychosynthesis emphasises that this process is only transformative from within, not by trying to transcend subpersonalities and view them from above. While the traditional Psychosynthesis technique of the 'third chair' can be a useful way to encourage the client to move out of subpersonality dialogue and view it from the place of the 'I', care is taken in Integrative Psychosynthesis that this is not done in order to dissociate from the subpersonalities.

Subpersonalities and imagery often appear in dreams. Robertson reminds us that the origin of the word 'therapist' is 'therapae', the maidens who worked in the temple of Aesclepius, preparing patients for their dreams. Dreamwork has long been associated with healing. Dreams carry direct messages from the unconscious. They are the province of Hermes, who dwells in the liminal spaces and carries messages between the gods and the human world and as such are a way of avoiding the conscious censor; getting past the ego. They may defy association and interpretation, or may require some degree of germination time before a sense of them can be grasped. They can be numinous, their metaphors living on into daily life and growing in significance over time. The Integrative Psychosynthesis approach sees dreams as another level of reality, not as fixed entities, but as living on. Integrative Psychosynthesis emphasises Jung's concept of not trying to know what the dream is about, 'never know first and never know best', but instead honouring the sanctity and preciousness of the dream.

A client may bring dreams that speak to me of where he is with his process, yet may be reluctant to explore his feelings and associations around these. Tempted as I may be to offer 'oracular readings' (Hillman 1987, p130), it is important for me to honour the private and special nature of dreams and to allow his relationship with his dreams to unfold over time, without trying to rush the pace. It is enough for me to notice my own associations and hold them in my awareness, noticing as well where a client's energy is in retelling the dream, and any images and metaphors that seem to have gone unnoticed.

In both imagination and dream work, it is important to listen for the archetypal as well as the personal. Archetypes live within us; they have their own personality and shape the way we are and who we become, yet are inextricably linked with our personal stories. Archetypes tell us about ourselves, hold our personal stories in myth and so are a way of seeing the

bigger picture of our lives; our soul's journey and our interconnectedness. Integrative Psychosynthesis sees archetypes as an integral part of who we are that allows not only for a greater understanding of our life stories, but also for a sense of transpersonal holding.

Archetypes have their own energy and carry their own wisdom, which the ego may find difficult to relate to and feel threatened by. It is important to trust in the wisdom of the archetype and let go of the need for ego-bound explanation, both as a counsellor and as a client. Over time, and with appropriate modelling from the Integrative Psychosynthesis counsellor, clients can begin to recognise and validate this part of themselves.

Allowing and listening for archetypes as well as personal imagery in this way enables the Integrative Psychosynthesis counsellor to allow the mystery into the counselling relationship, and to hold the bifocal awareness of the unfolding story.

In this way the counsellor is like Hermes, listening for messages from the unconscious to the conscious and moving between the worlds, learning to inhabit the liminal spaces, to live on the threshold in order to hold clients in transition. Using archetypes, symbols and myths allows me as a counsellor to make meaning out of life's events and suffering, to see the spiritual connection through the soul's pain.

The trials and emotional suffering endured in therapy can be seen as the preparation for those numinous moments when attunement happens and both members of the therapeutic couple are transformed through an influx of divine or archetypal energy. (Freshwater and Robertson 2002, p93)

The importance of honouring and integrating the transpersonal realm is as important to an Integrative Psychosynthesis approach as it was to Assagioli. Rowan is explicit when he states that,

To the extent that we do not cover the transpersonal in our work with clients, we are actually cheating them of their birthright, not allowing them to develop into their full humanity. (2002, p45).

Whereas Psychosynthesis and 'height psychology' got over-identified with transcendence, Integrative Psychosynthesis emphasises the importance of engaging with the cycle, experiencing the transpersonal as *a part of*

the spiral through life rather than the goal that facilitates freedom from it.

In this way, the cycle of life can be seen as a continual spiralling up and out and in and down; reaching from the heart down to soul and up to spirit. Integrative Psychosynthesis honours the importance of both the need for grounding spirit and the need to allow spirit in order that the search for soul is not a flight from the sublime, from potential, from interconnectedness.

Integrative Psychosynthesis seeks to ground Psychosynthesis with the Jungian emphasis that our relationship to life needs to include a relationship to death, both literally and symbolically (Kearney 1996). If we do not develop a relationship with the experience of our life that includes loss, death and separation, these become neglected shadow aspects, which haunt us through our neuroses. To paraphrase Jung, these gods will return to us as symptoms. However, addressing these symptoms through inner work can not only resolve neuroses but also enable connection to an inner source of wisdom.

However, as with all therapeutic work, this connection can only take place if the Will of the client is engaged and the shadow of that Will is acknowledged. A client presenting with a great deal of resistance to change, may deny her Will as a shadow aspect, maybe due to fear, shame, anger or any range of emotions constellated by past experiences of willing.

Conversely, a client may present with a clear Will, but what this may eclipse is the client's 'won't'. A client may come to counselling because she wants to change a dysfunctional behaviour, for example an eating disorder. If her Will seems very much engaged, I may attempt to explore the *need* behind her behaviour. As suggested earlier, dysfunctional behaviours often arise out of a need and it is important as a counsellor to allow the pain of that need to be felt and not be pushed away in the service of the Will. Some clients may find it too difficult to engage with a Will that *includes* their 'won't'; their ambivalence, their non-acceptance of the behaviour and a recognition of how the behaviour has served them. Robertson's approach to this phenomenon suggests,

What we need to understand as therapists is that we are receiving two messages. One is from an unconscious aspect of the person which is speaking through the symptom and another,

from a conscious part of the person. The fact that the person needs to keep the meaning of the symptom unconscious implies that it is unacceptable to the conscious part of the person. ("The Nature of Change", p1)

If a client is able to accept her non-acceptance, she may come to a greater feeling of wholeness that may then enable the change she desires. This is the paradoxical nature of change that is embraced by Integrative Psychosynthesis. As a counsellor, it is important that I can hold the client's ambivalence and work with what is in the shadow, be it 'will' or 'won't'. As Robertson states, '...the most significant difference we can make as therapists is in the attitude of acceptance... creating a context in which the client can accept themselves as they are' ("The Nature of Change", p2). When we stop *trying* to change things, we can surrender to the flow and rhythm of life in which things are constantly changing.

This involves what Wilbur would describe as a trans-ego surrender, letting go of ego-control, which is sometimes thought of as Will, and allowing the Will of the true self to surrender to the cycle of life and in turn experience the healing nature of this surrendering and acceptance.

A Psychosynthesis approach emphasises the importance of Will as opposite and therefore complementary to Love. Assagioli suggested that too often, wilful people are not loving enough in their willing and loving people are not wilful enough in their loving (1974). Assagioli felt that the training of the Will was an essential part of inner work. He identified four aspects of the 'fully developed human' Will; Strong Will, Skilful Will, Good Will and Transpersonal Will (1974). When we have a 'fully developed' Will, we can access all four of these aspects. However, more often, people are identified with one or two of either the strong, skilful or good elements to the exclusion of the third, often because we learnt as a child that this expression of Will is unacceptable, and so repressed it. We build up belief systems and self-maintaining cycles that keep us out of this expression of Will and so keep us out of practice, maintaining our discomfort around engaging this more shadowy aspect of our Will.

The different aspects of the Will can be transposed onto and integrated with Wilbur's pre/ego/trans model and in this way further demonstrate the many layers at work in any transitional period.

The exercise of Will and of autonomy is a profound soul need. If this has been quashed, clients may not even recognise that they are exercising their will and autonomy through resistance. This is where Assagioli's concept of training the Will becomes important, learning to choose 'right goals'.

It is necessary, both for the general welfare and for our own, that our Will be good as well as strong and skilful. (Assagioli 1974, p16)

This brings us back to Assagioli's and indeed the Integrative Psychosynthesis approach that inner work is not just about helping the individual, but also about the well-being of the wider community of people, plants and animals in which we live, Hillman's '...living right with Gaia's earth' (1987, p140).

Ecological life is also psychological life. And if ecology is also psychology, then 'Know Thyself' is not possible apart from knowing thy world. (Hillman 1987, p114)

That the individual soul is part of the world's soul is often experienced by people in existential crisis as a nudging, a recognition of a higher purpose. Integrative Psychosynthesis recognises the soulful quality of purpose, while again grounding this in the acknowledgment that it can be used as a way to transcend the pain of needs, or as a way for the ego to set goals and diminish the transpersonal into something more manageable and understandable.

Nevertheless, central to my understanding of Integrative Psychosynthesis is this potential for an awakening to something larger, to the Soul and to the greater connectedness of all things. This potential may manifest in existential guilt and a sense of the meaninglessness of life. It may start with listening to the neurotic pain of a client and, as a counsellor, staying with that, in order to hear the deeper levels of existential pain and soul suffering, the longing of the client to be more of himself, to be complete.

Hillman developed his 'acorn theory' (1996) as a way of framing this potential and as a way of framing our lives' journeys, connecting us not only to our own choices and responsibilities but also to our destinies and to what Assagioli might term 'Universal Will' (1974).

As a counsellor, I can only work with the individual sitting before me. I can listen to the myths he tells and the parts he misses out. I can listen to the pain of realised limitations and unrealised potential. I may use many different models through which to hear and understand this, be they the more modern myths of the last 100 years of psychology, or the ancient myths of our ancestors. As Hillman suggests, '...psychology shows myths in modern dress and myths show our depth psychology in ancient dress' (1987, p90). I may transpose each of these on top of the next to try to appreciate the many levels with which the work of therapy may be dealing.

We read a myth to learn what it tells about psychic figuring,
how the psyche configurates, figures out patterns of life.
(Hillman 1987, p118)

The importance for me is in both allowing the individuality of each client and holding an awareness of how they are inextricably interconnected with all things. Integrative Psychosynthesis offers a container within which to hold this tension, emphasising as it does, the importance of holding models and theories lightly, not as 'truths' but as ways in which to frame the client's story and form hypotheses which may or may not be disproved as the work unfolds. Integrative Psychosynthesis embraces some of the techniques of traditional Psychosynthesis and Gestalt, but with the emphasis that any technique should only be in service of the therapy, and so in service of the individual and the greater unfolding journey of his life. Whatever the models and techniques, Integrative Psychosynthesis is really about recognising and holding the spiral of life, which in itself is not just about healing the wounds of the past but about embracing the potential for the future, both individual and collective.

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