

# **PROFILE: metanoia**

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*In past issues we have done profiles of The Karuna Institute (November 1989), The Open Centre (July 1990) and CAER (January 1991). In the July issue we hope to print one of the IDHP - The Institute for the Development of Human Potential. Towards the end of the year we should be able to print a profile of IPSS - the Institute for Psychotherapy and Social Studies. In this issue we are printing the first part of a profile of metanoia which is one of the main London based training centres and a member of UKSCP - the United Kingdom Standing Conference for Psychotherapy. The second part of this profile will appear in our May issue.*

## **Core Philosophy and Theoretical Overview of Training at metanoia**

Our philosophy has always been to encourage freedom of thought, excitement of exploration, emphasis on individuality and a reluctance to accept a single doctrine as an ultimate truth. At the heart of this orientation is the concept of individual responsibility for individual behaviour (whether conscious or unconscious), as well as responsibility towards others. So while we seek excellence of individual development, we attempt to encourage this within a framework of respect for the person and our shared common humanity.

### **Standards**

In the training of psychotherapists the person needs to be suitable and their performance needs to meet certain standards. Throughout the history of our work we have contributed to or led in setting standards and developing an impetus for excellence in the field of work in which we were engaged. At the same time we have tried to balance this with the professional demands of the time, comparability with other organisations of a similar nature and the inherent fallibility of human achievement against the perfectionist ideal. We try not to make the unrealistic 'better' the enemy of the 'good', while we encourage improving judgement and developing quality in 'the good'.

We believe that humanistic and existential approaches to psychotherapy on their own, as well as integrated with psychodynamic and cognitive behavioural approaches can make a genuine and alternative contribution to alleviating human distress in the private and the public sector as well as promoting growth, development and education in healthy and exceptional individuals and societies.

## **Authenticity**

Our educational philosophy works towards a high distillation of experiential learning with syllabus-based work in the best theoretical literature available at the time. The learning community and the educational dialogue is valued as much as the content. Individual learning styles are honoured in so far as they can interact productively with the common goals of personal development, theoretical understanding, clinical competence and professional responsibility. We expect that people who train with us will influence our structures as long as their integrity can be maintained. We respect the choices of individuals to train elsewhere if their values are more compatible with other approaches.

We encourage the development of specialist skills and interests as well as the development of integrative skills and interests. Obviously such polarities are not always harmoniously reconciled at any one moment for all time. It is rather that we value the enquiry and the attempt in an atmosphere of mutual respect while knowing that at some time one aspect of a polarity will be in ascendance and at other times the natural balancing effect of enantodromia will have something to contribute to the continuing process of the evolution of our ideas, practice and ideals. We have learned from our planetary and individual histories that what seemed like incontrovertible truths at one time may in the light of further information need changing or substantial revising. However uncomfortable (or seductively easy) this process may seem at times we are committed to discovery rather than certainty. This reflects the striving for authenticity in a therapeutic relationship which, transferenceal or not, seeks to affirm the unique individuality of every person rather than seeking to fit the person to a theory.

## **Physics and Spirituality**

We recognise and respect the individual and collective manifestations of the psychological forces often described as Thanatos, Destrudo or envy, but we also know the transformative potential of at least equally powerful psychological forces which go under the name of Eros, compassion, love. In addition we are persuaded that Physis is the name of the third force in Psychology and human destiny, which historically and phylogenetically precedes Eros or Thanatos.

Zeno talked a great deal about Physis, the force of Nature, which eternally strives to make things grow and to make growing things more perfect. Physis as a verb means 'to grow' or 'to be' - 'what things really are' (Edwards, 1967). The concept, developed by the pre-Socratic Heraclitus, originally meant change or growth which comes from the spirit within the person. It is equivalent to Nature and the generalised, natural *creative* force within all living organisms which strives for healing, evolution, and increasing actualisation.

The Stoics identified Physis with God and the active principle, while the Epicureans saw it as consisting of atoms and the void (Edwards, 1967). This profound connection between physics and spirituality (whichever one of these sides of the coin one wishes to focus on) informs all our work.



### The metanoia logo

We believe Physis is the name people have been looking for in describing the life force. It's what Maslow was looking for when he said there is a third force in psychotherapy. What is needed over the next few years is to reintroduce ourselves to Physis, the life force, of which, we believe, we are the servants in psychotherapy. We believe that it is the task of psychotherapists and educators to allow people to get back in touch with that inner force inside themselves, in equivalent to Bergson's *elan vital* (1965).

Physis is the force which drives the interplay between Individuality and Commonality - it is the creative life force which strives for increased wholeness and increased perfection through evolutionary processes of growth and change. 'We are part of an Order, a cosmos, which we see to be infinitely above our comprehension... But in the rest of the world, we can see a moving Purpose. It is Physis, the word which the Romans unfortunately translated "Nature", but which means "growing" or "the way things grow" - almost what we call Evolution...' (Murray, 1955).

### Change around

Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1984/1920) expressed his doubt about the existence of such a general creative force, terming it 'a pleasing illusion'. He himself was none too sure at one time, however, that something like Physis did not assist Ananke as the motive force in evolution. 'This appreciation of the necessities of life need not, incidentally, weigh against the importance of "internal developmental trends" if such can be shown to be present' (1973/1916 p.400). As students of history, human nature and statistics we are well aware of the apparently overwhelming presence of determinism as it effects the individual and the group. Based on similar observations we have also participated in and witnessed individuals, groups and societies making profound and lasting changes in directions which few, if any, observers would have predicted (Clarkson, in press).

This knowledge that 'change is possible' (which has been honed on personal and collective experiences of oppression, poverty and injustice) is encapsulated in the name **metanoia** which means 'to change', 'to turn around' or 'a transformation of mind or character'. Metanoia is derived from the Greek verb 'metanoeo' which also suggests 'to change one's mind on reflection' (Liddell, 1963, p.439). Metanoia is elsewhere defined as 'a change of the inner man' and a 'turning about' (Burchfield, 1976, p.911). Sam Keen (1985), an existential psychotherapist, also indicates that we can talk about metanoia in many ways. He sees metanoia as the opposite of 'paranoia' and akin to repentance, a re-owning of the shadow and a turning around away from the person toward the Self (p.146). (See also Clarkson, 1989b). The change that is referred to in a metanoia is for all practical purposes a permanently transformed state of being, whether it is a spiritual or psychological transformation '...something more active and fruitful, the setting up of an immense new inward movement for obtaining the rule of life' (Burchfield, 1976, p.911). So, although we value insight, analysis and understanding, we see these as in service of the process of individual transformation and collective evolution. We delight in difference and we seek communication and respectful co-operation as the desired climate for learning, growth and healing.

### **Left hemisphere - Right hemisphere**

As well as developing counsellors and clinicians of high quality who have forged some level of personal maturity, we hope we set an example and encourage professional participation in their respective fields of specialisation, and actively contribute through teaching or publication to the common endeavour of improving psychological resources to alleviate human pain and improve the quality of life for ourselves and others. We will seek to incorporate the best from traditional structures and conventional wisdom while finding benefits in responding and contributing to reformulation, revision and planned or serendipitous new developments. Organisationally we are attempting to interpret and to live in new ways while developing and experimenting with old structures.

Training at **metanoia** is an ongoing interweaving of left hemisphere and right hemisphere, knowledge and experience, playfulness and seriousness, physicality and spirituality, individuality and commonality, flexibility and range. Individual trainees, whatever their idiosyncratic inclinations, unique style or current theoretical preference (from integrative supervision to person-centred counselling), will find, discover, or influence the training programmes in a variety of directions. Hopefully, at some time all will be touched by the poetic polarity of the therapeutic experience, as voiced by the existentialist, Marcel:

"Life is achieved by resolving the tension in responsive feeling and creative activity, in which having is not eliminated but is assimilated to being, in which one and another become I and thou; in which science is integrated with metaphysics; in which autonomy (managing my own affairs) is transcended in liberty, which is participation; in which my body and the world with which it is consubstantial and which enlarges and multiplies its powers is the place in which I bear witness to Being; in which I work out my fidelity and my hope and keep myself open, fluid and ready to spend". (Marcel, 1969, p.78).

### **TA: Gestalt**

Equally, trainees are likely to develop a taste for conceptual activity and an appreciation of the rich intellectual heritage of psychotherapy today. Trainees usually develop their own particular specialisations or integrations as they follow their preferred tracks. Integration is the guiding principle behind the teaching and training at **metanoia**, whether it be an integrative approach across different schools within Transactional Analysis, or an integration of different strands within Gestalt psychotherapy, or an integration of different psychotherapeutic systems as in both the Integrative Psychotherapy training and the Systemic Integrative psychotherapy training. We encourage an integrative attitude towards their studies in our trainees, whatever their field of interest.

The theoretical and conceptual field of training at **metanoia** can be visually portrayed in the following diagram. It was conceived by Phil Lapworth on the basis of Petruska's work.

The diagram is an attempt to produce a working technical representation of the vicissitudes of human existence in counselling and psychotherapy. It suffers all the defects of attempted articulation of a subject which is both art and science. The model of the psychotherapeutic field as indicated in the diagram shows the interplay of at least four different dimensions - *time*, *environment (space)*, *relationship* and *epistemological levels (experience)* - within the psychotherapeutic encounter. There are of course, many other ways of explaining this in the range between. Each person, with their own different background and unique personality, is encouraged to select for themselves their own way of working. Whichever prior training and experience someone brings, they can potentially find their bearings within a wide and complex orientation utterly dedicated to individual difference as well as assessment and feedback on competence.

Figure 1. Dimensions of the Psychotherapeutic Field.

CLIENT-THERAPIST  
RELATIONSHIP

TRANSPERSONAL  
RELATIONSHIP

PERSON TO  
PERSON  
RELATIONSHIP

WORKING  
ALLIANCE

TRANSFERENTIAL/  
COUNTERTRANSFERENTIAL  
RELATIONSHIP

DEVELOPMENTALLY  
NEEDED/  
REPARATIVE  
RELATIONSHIP

FUTURE

FUTURE

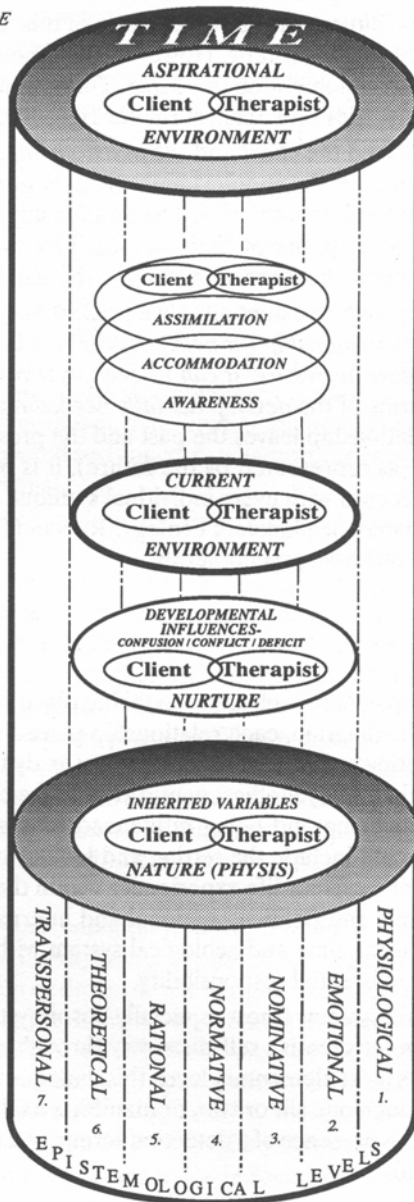
PRESENT

PRESENT

PAST

PAST

THE THERAPEUTIC HOUR  
(50 MINUTES)



Within the model we have developed, the central cylinder can be seen as a kind of 'Time Tunnel' ranging back (downwards) to the past, through the present and on (upwards) to the future. Such a vast expanse of time in an individual's life is potentially the stuff of psychotherapy. However, the time of one psychotherapy session is of course a mere moment on this scale. This moment of meeting is represented here by the 50 minutes time scale at the far right-hand side.

Within this is placed the *client* and the *psychotherapist* as two individuals meeting (of course, this may be the couple, family, team or group) - each with their own histories, expectations, idiosyncrasies. The relationship between the two being represented by the overlapping of their circles. Five types of relationship between psychotherapist and client are shown in the left hand column.

The relationship in the existentially alive present may be the *working alliance* or the *person to person relationship* (or both). *As the relationship 'goes back into the past' and becomes more 'regressive' it can be seen in terms of transference/countertransference* or in terms of the *developmentally needed/reparative* (unfinished) *relationship*. As the relationship leaves the past and the present and dwells more on what is conceivable (as represented by the future), it is of a *transpersonal nature*. This needs to be in accord with every individual's unique conceptualisation, whether it be Zen, Christianity or planetary ecology. Rowan (1990) sees these three aspects as necessary in effective psychotherapy.

## **Systemic**

This relationship in time is clearly also taking place within an *environment* or a system. Thus, in the diagram, each relationship placed in time is also placed within a circle representing a different environment (or dynamically alive system) as encountered within the psychotherapeutic arena. The client is always seen as belonging to and influencing and being influenced by systemic relations. The current environment would include the setting and locality of the psychotherapy room as well as the client's current life experiences within the family/social system and the present economic and political, national and international, local and global environment. This is the time and ecological system within which the individual exercises his or her existential responsibility.

All quantum systems (most especially boson systems like ourselves) share this mechanism for creative self-discovery through a dialogue with their environment. At its most elementary level, this dialogue is evident every time a photon travels through one slit or two, or manifests itself as a wave or a particle in response to the presence of a detection screen or a photomultiplier tube. (Zohar, 1990, p.176).

## Move

As the environment 'moves back in time' it encompasses the environmental influences of both *Nurture* and *Nature*. Nature is placed further back in time and includes both inherited variables (temperament, physical attributes, etc.) as well as the presence of Physis (the life force which strives for healing, growth and actualisation). Nurture is placed subsequent to Nature to represent the early influences of our childhood experiences which lead to later *conflict*, *confusion* or *deficit*. It is within the matrix of Nurture and Nature that the individual finds the crucible for an autonomous life within their destiny. This is the context for consideration of what is known as object-relations influences and psychological development.

As the environment 'moves on' from the present, taking account of the past, it becomes a learning environment where growing *awareness* is initially *accommodated* before eventually becoming *assimilated* in the process of the psychotherapy. The *aspirational environment* represents the unknown and uncharted environment of the future and involves that towards which the client (and the psychotherapist) may aspire, the goal towards which the psychotherapy is directed, the Self which the client conceptualises and visualises. This kind of environment is of course always self-created or self-discovered and concerns whatever the person understands of themselves as the transpersonal.

The other dimensions intersecting within the time tunnel are the seven epistemological levels of human experience and behaviour which may be used as foci in the psychotherapeutic encounter and in facilitation or healing intervention. These are: *physiological*, *emotional*, *nominative*, *normative*, *rational*, *theoretical* and *transpersonal* experiences. This is one of many maps useful for the conceptualising and organising of levels of attention in psychotherapy. All trainees, whatever their fields of specialisation, relate to this map in an individual way as they develop their own model of psychotherapy as theory and practice. What happens in the healing moment is of course paradoxically very simple. *In the moment of being with another, none of this matters*. What matters is the meeting. Research results are increasingly showing that it is the relationship between the client and psychotherapist which makes the difference, not theoretical orientation or type of training (Norcross, 1986).

Unfortunately, what the diagram cannot do is move! If it did, it would pulsate like the beating of a heart to show it's rhythmic, breathing, organismic aliveness. Further, a spotlight would move up or down, or left to right, highlighting the intersecting of the four dimensions as the moment-by-moment encounter of client and psychotherapist in time and space shifts and turns in its own idiosyncratic way. And lastly, there would be a small illuminated space where the attention of the psychotherapist and client is focused at a point in time, while the rest of the therapeutic landscape is in darkness. No amounts of explanation, study, reading, clinical rigour or intellectual effort has ever succeeded in reducing the ultimate mystery of the therapeutic encounter. As we move forward on our mutual evolutionary path in the dark, every spark of light contributes.

References obtainable from the Editor