



Guest Editorial, I: a historical overview

Approaches to psychological therapy based on anthroposophy and the work of Rudolf Steiner began in the 1980s and since then many variants have developed throughout the world. Steiner did not directly initiate an approach to therapy but spoke about many issues which are relevant to it, including early child development, the biographical phases of life, the relationship between body, soul and spirit, and the effects of our present materialistic culture on our psychological and physical health. In view of the plethora of approaches to psychological therapy based on anthroposophy, I will focus in this short editorial article on those that concentrate on speaking and working with the therapeutic relationship for individuals, of which there are three that are currently active in the English-speaking world.

Two of the approaches developed out of the work of Bernard Lievegoed, a Dutch psychiatrist, anthroposophic doctor and consultant, as expressed in two major publications: *Phases* (Lievegoed, 1979) and *Man on the Threshold* (Lievegoed, 1985). *Phases* concentrated on the biographical phases of life. *Man on the Threshold* addressed the fact that humanity is facing a difficult time in its history in which the challenges facing us, including the possibility of developing insight into spiritual phenomena, can undermine us as we unfold our potential and develop insight and the clairvoyance of the future, as expressed by Steiner in such publications as *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* (Steiner, 1909/1969). One of the approaches developed in the Netherlands and one in the UK, both in the 1980s – namely, anthroposophic psychotherapy and biographical counselling. But, at the same time, as if in a synchronistic resonance, another approach also flowered in the United States, where William Bento and Robert Sardello began to link anthroposophical approaches with a range of transpersonal and psychosynthesis therapies. To extend the synchronistic principle, there was also the initiation of psychophonetics therapy in the UK in the 1980s by Yehuda Tagar, who had trained in speech and drama as well as counselling, and, a little later, *Building Bridges* and *Oasis*, which was founded by Melanie Taylor in the 1990s and was concerned with group work.

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Anthroposophic psychotherapy was founded by Ad Dekkers, a pupil of Bernard Lievegoed. It incorporates a biographical life cycle perspective but also includes a somatic perspective. As well as tracing the soul life in its journey through the life cycle, it also looks at the way in which the body grows in the first part of life and its effect on our health throughout the whole of our lives, the way in which it plateaus in mid-life and declines in the latter part of life when a number of physical illnesses are likely to arise. Its early childhood developmental theory resembles attachment theory, and its outlook on presenting problems includes a strong psycho-social perspective which sees illnesses as being caused by an increasingly traumatizing materialistic, globalized and cyber-influenced world. It has developed in 11 countries in Europe, South America and Asia, and works closely, where possible, with other anthroposophic therapies such as anthroposophic medicine, eurythmy, massage and art therapy. It also works closely with the worldwide leadership of anthroposophic medicine and therapies. Furthermore, since

2012 it has been co-ordinated by an international federation called the International Federation of Anthroposophic Psychotherapy Associations (IFAPA).

This is the most widespread form of psychological therapy out of anthroposophy and has made the most inroads into academic and professional life. After the pioneering work of Ad Dekkers and Henriette Dekkers, it has moved on to the next stage of its development and is now building its knowledge base with theoretical and qualitative case study research, which is then published in peer-reviewed journals. In so doing, as it has only been in development since the 1980s, it is still in its early stages of building a knowledge base and, in this respect, builds on the same principles underpinning anthroposophic medicine: namely, 'to understand each individual case thoroughly, regardless of the outcome ... with all its idiosyncrasies' before employing statistics (Steiner, 1924/1998, p. 252). Furthermore, it does this in such a way that, like anthroposophic medicine, it aims to extend existing psychotherapeutic methods as a result of adding 'further knowledge' to them through making discoveries 'by different methods' (Steiner & Wegman, 1925/1983, p. 1).

Biographical counselling, initiated by Tijnno Voors at Emerson College in Sussex, UK in the late 1980s, concentrated on the biographical phases of life; that is to say, it emphasized the way in which the human spirit unfolds over the life cycle. This was then carried forward by pupils of the first course, Margli Matthews and Anita Charton. In saying this, it should be emphasized that, as well as biographical counselling, there is a professional activity called biography work which has been established in many countries throughout the world in Europe, South America and Asia. Whereas biography work is salutogenic in that it works with the circumstances for promoting health, and takes place mainly in groups, biographical counselling additionally works with psychological problems, primarily with individuals. Furthermore, it recently gained recognition in the UK as a result of the fact that its UK training course was accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

The transpersonal/psychosynthesis approach developed primarily in the United States but it also has adherents in the UK. It arises out of the work of Robert Sardello and William Bento (see elsewhere in this issue), both of whom worked independently of each other but who incorporated similar principles in their work, in that they linked psychological therapy out of anthroposophy with the approaches to therapy that have grown out of the pioneering transpersonal work of Carl Jung and the psychosynthesis of Roberto Assagioli, along with the work of others such as James Hillman and Ken Wilber. William Bento also made strong links with astrology and what in the anthroposophical world is referred to as 'astrosophy', or star wisdom. Overall, their work incorporates what they saw as a missing element in many of the applications of Steiner's work – namely, an emphasis on the experience of soul life.

I now hand over to my co-editor Richard, who will introduce the work of Steiner, the Steiner movement and the articles in this theme issue.

Notes on contributor



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