

Integral Counseling – A Synopsis

In the past year, I have written a book about counseling or psychotherapy. It describes my views of it, based on several sources. In what follows, I give a synopsis in English, as the book as a whole is written in Dutch. I'll consider translating the complete book in English if there is enough interest in it (e.g. a publisher), but for now, please refer to the following.

Integral Counseling describes my vision of the work of a counselor or psychotherapist. I have created that vision in the past years based on several source: my education at the Dutch Academy of Psychotherapy, but also many aspects from literature, mainly the Integral vision of Ken Wilber and the work of Ali Hameed Almaas. In the end, my vision rests on a number of foundations, namely: Neuro Linguistic Programming, Developmental Psychology in the line of Jean Piaget, the Integral Model of Ken Wilber and aspects of attitude that I base mainly on Almaas. This all combined leads to a therapeutic model within which the therapist can focus on all aspects of a human being. The main idea in the book is in fact, that the request of a client who seeks help from a therapist is generally much broader than the aspects that are to do with the psychological development of man. Also physical cultural and social aspects play roles of importance that need to be taken into account in order to be able to guide a client effectively to a solution for his issues.

The chapters of the book have in broad lines the following contents.

The first chapter deals with the principles of NLP. I mainly use NLP as the basis of my communication with people. NLP gives the structure of communication en provides a broad set of techniques that can help to more quickly get to the core of what people are concerned with and to show those people other perspectives of their issues. What I certainly don't believe in is the use of NLP procedures as quick interventions to solve people's problems: for that purpose, the MLP techniques are too superficial. To really get to the deep core of people's concerns, you need much more and that is what the rest of the book is dealing with. This first chapter does not deal yet with individual aspects of NLP, like definitions of Rapport, Ecology and Logical Levels. Those are expanded on in the rest of the book in the form of *sidebars* where needed.

After this introduction of NLP, a chapter on developmental psychology follows. In it, it is explained how man develops individually and as a society via several stages. Those stages turn out to be general in nature and be similar in various cultures. Furthermore, these stages are comparable for different types of development: emotional development occurs along similar stages as cultural development, social development, etc. The development of these stages is in layers that succeed and contain each other: each next stage transcends the previous stage and takes all aspects of the previous stages with it. This way of growth is called *holonic*. For the naming of the stages, I use a combination of expressions used by Piaget for the development of the child and, for higher development, expressions from Ken Wilber and Sri Aurobindo. The aim of this chapter is to show that people who come and visit a therapist can be at various stages of development. It is primarily the task of the therapist to acknowledge that and adapt to that fact for the sake of a better mutual understanding (in NLP terminology *rapport*) between client and therapist. This assumes, that the

therapist himself is at a level of development that can oversee all previous levels of development: this is the *Integral* level.

As the third chapter, I give a short description of Ken Wilber's Integral Model. Wilber originally developed this model in his book "Sex, Ecology, Spirituality" and has applied and expanded it in various ways afterwards. Basically, his model assumes that man can be seen from four different perspectives: the internal aspects of the individual (emotions, intelligence, spirituality, etc.), the external aspects of the individual (health, physical development), the internal aspects of the group of which one is part (culture, art, religion) and the external aspects of that group (social structures, politics). In each of those four aspects (that are called *quadrants*) and parts of those aspects, man can grow according to the developmental models described in the previous chapter. Taken together, an Integral Model can be built that can show all aspects of humanity. It is this model on which also Integral Counseling is built.

The next chapter is the core of the book and shows how we can work with the Integral model in a therapeutic context. I start describing the basis of psychotherapy as a combination of *healing* and *growth*. I state that in the development of man, certain events may have a traumatic effect that will only arise at a later age, so at a later stage of development. These so-called "gaps" in the development are healed with the usual types of psychotherapy. As these gaps often occurred in an earlier stage of development, though, we'd need to go back to that earlier stage to be able to heal the trauma. Techniques such as *Inner Child Work* can help in these cases. Note that therapeutic techniques that only deal with forms of (for instance, spiritual) growth forget about this: growth can only happen when healing has occurred. Namely, the foundation of the house must be sound before you can add another floor to it. Subsequently, I combine these principles with aspects from the other quadrants. Firstly, the combination with the external-individual: the in the mean time popular body and mind connection. Psychological complaints can often not be seen separately from physical complaints, and vice-versa. The modern medical world is starting to accept this fact gradually. The combination of individual psychology with aspects that are to do with the culture of the community shows how someone's original culture has a great influence on his experience of a psychological or physical issue. The level of acceptance of such an issue has an influence on the process of how to deal with it. In this part, I also describe "multicultural counseling", that is an aspect of therapy aimed at people with a non-western cultural or religious background in a western society. It is important for the therapist to tune in to the cultural background and, if necessary, to use traditional healing methods in order to help the client in the best way possible. The third combination is that of individual psychology with the social structure in which someone lives: is that structure sufficient to deal effectively with the support of psychological issues? Finally, all these aspects are taken together and the idea of *Integral Health* is introduced: health in all the aspects of our being.

The attitude of the therapist is dealt with in the following chapter. Attitude turns out to be a difficult aspect to make clear. I try to make its definition concrete basing myself on the work of Almaas. Attitude is the core of the therapist's work: the way in which the therapist approached the client is a deciding factor for the success of the therapy. That attitude goes far beyond the classical definition of NLP's *rapport* and leads to transpersonal development of the therapist: how much is the therapist in contact with his own core and through that with the core of the other?

Based on this, I cover in the last chapter the way in which I see the role of the transpersonal in counseling. Here, I try to make complex things as concrete as possible and remove from the transpersonal all the vagueness and spiritual narcissism that is it often surrounded with. At the same time I indicate that transpersonal counseling is only to be used with clients in very specific cases and can definitely not be used as a general method for the treatment of each and any psychological issue.

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