

TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE SENSIBILITY: CONVERSING ACROSS THEORETICAL BOUNDARIES

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This is a time of dizzying cross-currents and cross-fertilizations—the results of the interplay of new technologies, a global village, and a plethora of rapidly emerging new ideas, theories, and models. It is a time calling for the transcendence of both the reifications of modernism and the postmodern threats of relativism and nihilism. We are addressing a psychoanalytic need in this pluralistic time, for self psychology to take up the challenge of broadening our horizons of belonging—incorporating neighboring ideas, genuine dialogue with other approaches, and an ideal of a sensibility that fosters integration where possible. We discuss some of the components of an integrative sensibility: attitudes of openness, curiosity, fallibilism, and complexification. We use the metaphor of immigrants arriving from different professional shores, speaking their own native tongues, facing the dilemma of holding onto their traditions as they encounter and embrace otherness. Calling upon Gadamer’s idea of genuine conversation and Gendlin’s focus on the implicit dimension of experience, we posit the “language of experience.”

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RESPONDING TO THE PASSIONS AND CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME

Our own integrations of experience and insight are built on a foundation of other's integrations and insights, and soon our contribution will be swept into another's even more fruitful comprehension. We need each individual's integration. Each new viewpoint adds a facet. This presents us with the paradox of integration leading to diversity! The excitement of the present moment lies in the glimpse of new commonalities to be found among diversity [L. Sander, as cited in Brandchaft, Doctors, and Sorter, 2010, p. 122].

This is a time of dizzying cross-currents and cross-fertilizations as a rushing, relentless stream of information propels us into ever more immediacy and connection. The world is becoming smaller and more accessible as our individual worlds, our backyards so to speak, expand to encompass the globe. This is a time of radical innovations and ensuing social upheavals that press for conceptual and experiential reorganizations and integrations.

In the psychoanalytic world we are inundated by a proliferation of emerging/developing theories, approaches, ideas and methods. We receive a flood of e-mail invitations each morning to attend a plethora of lectures, conferences, workshops, and classes. The classical analytic frame of fixed weekly face-to-face hours is stretched as we encounter phenomena like flex-time, the ubiquity of jobs entailing national and international travel, communications innovations like e-mail, texting, Twitter, and SkypeTM. We now have the opportunity to work with people all over the globe as consultants, patients, supervisees, and collaborators. In this new era, the classical idea of analytic anonymity has become an anachronism as patients lift the curtain on our privacy through GoogleTM and Facebook[®]. This age of information abundance and the richness and complexity it spawns forces us to consider anew the parameters and horizons that delineate our analytic work and our sense of professional community.

In the New York self psychology world, it seems as though "purely" self psychological institutions are struggling to attract candidates while

other, wider-ranging, associations that include more than one perspective are gaining momentum. On the other hand, our global membership is growing and we were recently introduced to an international array of culturally flavored perspectives at the 2010 International Association for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology conference in Antalya, Turkey (our first organizational conference outside of the United States). It is now rare to be trained in a single method, and practice only that method for an entire career. It seems as though the entire field of self psychology has been broadening out and our sense of allegiance and the horizons of our belonging are expanding. Do we think of ourselves as classical self psychologists, relationalists, relational self psychologists, intersubjectivists, constructivists, “hermeneuts” (Orange, 2010a, p. 294). Many of us already include systems theory, infant research, neurobiology, attachment theory, complexity theory in our self-definition. We (the authors) are convinced that one of the major challenges of these pluralistic times is to remain grounded in our tradition while at the same time open to the otherness, and even the alienness of clinical and theoretical perspectives that surround us.

In a way, we are all immigrants in this integrative time. It is as if we are faced with the challenge each year of arriving on a new shore surrounded by multiple new cultures, languages and ways of being in the clinical situation. Can we find a way to hold onto our roots—our traditions—and at the same time be open to incorporating “the others?” Can we let these innovations expand and transform our thinking, contributing to our analytic formulations rather diluting them? We are faced not only with the jostling of ideas from all over the world, but with the fast moving pace of the “ever new,” which must be integrated with last year’s thinking, last decade’s thinking, and even last century’s thinking. We are always, so-to-speak, coming from the “old country,” and we have to decide whether we are going to live in a ghetto with our own tribe or open ourselves to the newness and unfamiliarity of a larger culture.

Kohut provides an idealizing selfobject experience for us in this regard as he was forced by rampant and increasingly dangerous anti-Semitism in Austria in the 1930’s to relinquish his secure embeddedness in Viennese society, eventually arriving in a new life in a new world—an immigrant in the metropolis of Chicago (Strozier, 2001). Displaced from a world in which he was recognized and had a secure place of belonging, he was thrust into a foreign culture in a post-war era, working with patients whose concerns were very different from the Europeans he had known. The

dislocation and challenges he encountered, may well have contributed to the revolutionary theory he developed. This formulation about Kohut's literal immigrant experience, inspires us to meet our metaphoric immigrant challenges by positioning ourselves in such a way that we can be grounded in our traditional culture while also remaining responsive and open to the diversity of the larger culture. This is what we are referring to as an integrative sensibility.

THE MOSAIC EXPERIMENT

As a way of understanding these challenges and availing ourselves of the opportunities of a global neighborhood of ideas, we (the authors), along with a group of experienced psychotherapists, a majority of whom had been psychoanalytically trained and all of whom had an interest and training in more than one approach, started an integrative study center. At our first meeting, we invited people to talk freely about the approaches—psychoanalytic and otherwise—that had influenced them and inspired their work. As people began to relax into the project, they began to articulate or “confess” to hidden interests and influences that they had felt were unacceptable in their professional tribe or affiliation. For example, they spoke of shamanism, non-dual consciousness, focusing, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, accelerated experiential-dynamic psychotherapy (AEDP; see AEDPinstitute.com), somatic experiencing, hypnotherapy, cognitive therapy, behavioral therapy, as well as all varieties of psychoanalysis, old and new. The energy in the room was palpable as each person built on the openness of the others and experienced a sense of their own wholeness as they reclaimed previously sequestered interests and passions.

It took months for this group to find a name that captured who and what we were. On one side of the continuum were those who were interested in the process, of how we, as clinicians, put together multiple theories to make a cohesive whole. On the other side were those interested in the broader question of how we, as humans, metabolize anything new. As our investigation became more and more expansive, metaphors such as orchestra, kaleidoscope, stew, and others proliferated. We became increasingly overwhelmed with images and nuances of what we were trying to capture. “What are we really talking about here?” was a frequent lament.

We agreed that we certainly did not want a process of rounding off the sharp edges of different ideas to make them fit better with each

other. And, we were not trying to make political alliances in order to promote our professional organizations, nor was our group project to be the creation of a new model that synthesized compatible approaches such as AEDP, which describes itself as “a transformation-based, healing-oriented model of therapy . . . [that] has roots in and resonances with many disciplines . . . amongst them attachment theory, affective neuroscience, body-focused approaches, and transformational studies (see AEDPinstitute.com, homepage).

What we were pursuing was an understanding of the process of clinical integration itself. We wanted to be able to make a place for the precision of our thinking at the same time that we were willing to navigate the conflicts that would arise in doing justice to the exactness of the ideas that nourished us. We were interested in exploring our own individual and collective experience of thinking from and working with a multiplicity of perspectives and approaches (even ones that are contradictory) while feeling ourselves to be unified grounded clinicians. The metaphor that arose was of “theory as a parent.” We wanted to be able to be nurtured by more than one parent and find richness in their differences and divergences. Slavin, speaking to the issue of whether the worlds of self psychology and relational psychoanalysis can be integrated, concludes that “at this point, it may be more productive to articulate fully their fundamental differences—in effect, to appreciate the deeper tensions between them as part of a larger, relational dialectic (personal communication, 2011).” We finally settled on the name MOSAIC because we felt it best embodied our unifying theme of exploring an integration of disparate ideas.

Each theory embodies a culture; that is a history, presuppositions, values, a unique community and an experiential world. Each theory needs to be understood or at least accounted for on its own terms. Such understanding or accounting allows for an integration to result in an enrichment of cultures rather than a watering down of the unique contributions of each. It eventually became clearer that what we had in common was not an approach or an understanding of integration, but a sensibility. By a sensibility we mean a cluster of resonant attitudes and values—a milieu, an ambiance, a flavor. Within the diversity of our MOSAIC group we were looking for what we shared, and found that it was not the content of our thinking, or the traditions from which we came, or the methods that we used. It was an abiding interest in broadening perspectives, a deep respect for the lived experience of the moment and a passion for bridge building. We agreed that what we were after was the organic expansion of our

repertoire of ideas, metaphors, and actions; not to sacrifice depth, but to foster depth through authentic, spirited exploration. We were seeking a way of flourishing in this pluralistic time with its offering of a wealth of new ideas that call for exploration, dialogue with neighboring views, openness to expansion, and the juxtaposition of approaches to see how they interface with each other. We were willing to suffer the discomfort of feeling challenged and on edge when our cherished assumptions were questioned in order to have this richness.

THE ATTITUDES NEEDED FOR AN INTEGRATIVE SENSIBILITY

Attitudes determine how we hold our experience and shape our emotional and intellectual approach to life. We call the attitudes we hold towards our larger professional communities “the horizons of our sense of belonging.” The boundaries around the sense of a professional “we” determine to what extent we can develop an integrative sensibility. To a large extent, it was cherishing common attitudes that brought our disparate, MOSAIC group together. Orange (2007) speaks of attitudes as: “A complex amalgam of outlook, emotional perspective, and disposition taken up . . . an attitude shares both the where-I-find-myself-ness . . . and constitutes a personal choice” (p. 5). Attitudes are closely aligned with ideals. They embrace both feelings and a stance that we take toward our feelings. Openness, curiosity, and “fallibilism” (Orange, 1995, p. 3) are among the attitudes essential for an integrative sensibility. They create an ambiance of hopeful expectancy and trust—“a bath of deeply welcoming curiosity” (Ringstrom, 2007, p. 78).

We also include Sucharov’s (2010, p. 5) term *complexification* in this discussion of attitudes. He coined the term as a way of linking the abstractions of complexity theory and the lived experience of complexity. Complexification, he says, entails an “experiential willingness to stay in complexity, to feel and embrace the irreducible totality and to bear the inevitable anxiety and disorientation when that unknowability is in the foreground . . .” (Sucharov, 2010, p. 6) The process of dialoguing with and incorporating foreign ideas and cultures necessitates a continual awareness that however strongly we hold our convictions and passionately oppose others, truth is always more complicated than our present understanding. Sucharov’s term complexification can hold this awareness.

Although articulating the attitudes that bring us together in new ways is grounding, it is, sadly, much more difficult to embody them than to identify them. We can bask in our empathic openness until someone speaks from an “enemy” ideology. Then, before we are even registering it, we may experience a tightening, a grip, a readiness to defend our ideals and shut the other out. We may withdraw, or respond with a professional, thinly coated veil of hostility, with a patronizing attitude seeping through. As one of our colleagues put it:

“I am all for an integrative sensibility, but in spite of myself, I am gripped by a primitive tribal instinct to bond against the enemy when someone from another orientation seems to be saying that their way of doing therapy is as good or better than mine” (K. Humphries, personal communication, February 2, 2011).

We were struck by the emotional honesty of this quip and the way in which it puts a finger on the politics and power dynamics of our profession. She was not only referring to a personal investment in seeing herself as “doing better therapy” than the other, but was talking about the “tribal” feeling of being invested in seeing one’s affiliated group as “better.” An integrative sensibility inevitably challenges our elitism and hierarchical structures and can be threatening to a secure sense of status that we safely take for granted within our home-base theoretical communities. The attitudes of an integrative sensibility—fallibilism, curiosity, and complexification—support the ability to challenge ideas with which we disagree while holding the conflict between intellectual perspectives in a larger frame of respect and desire to learn.

Perhaps it is unrealistic to think, that even armed with our prized attitudes we can maintain an openness to ideas that we believe are destructive, antiquated, dead, or malignant. But, even if we are not able to be open and curious about the “enemy” idea, we can attempt to de-center from our judgments so that we can be interested in what the idea does for those who embrace, it just as we do in our clinical work with our patients. We can look for how the idea functions, for the life inside it, for the selfobject experience it provides. Such curiosity might inspire us to ask ourselves, “What could this seemingly sensible, intelligent person or group of people find useful about this wrongheaded idea?” Openness and curiosity hold out the promise of understanding adversarial ideas, which can sometimes bring a burst of illumination as we “get” something that we would never have chosen to understand, something that breaks through our comfortable ghetto of agreement. We may have the experience of finding ourselves expanded

or stretched—challenged as well as challenging. The proof of the pudding of these attitudes is in the taste of the dialogue they foster.

A recent example of the power of attitudes to determine the nature of our experience comes to mind. As a way of grounding our theoretical talk in some here-and-now event that we could speak from, the members of MOSAIC decided to have a live demonstration—an in-the-moment experience of therapeutic interaction. A self psychologically oriented colleague, one of our own, worked as the therapist while another member of the group took the role of patient. I (Lynn Preston) had been eagerly awaiting this event, but as the interaction got under way I became more and more tense. It seemed to me that this analytic dyad was just “hanging out” together. The “patient” seemed uncomfortable and uncertain as to how to be in her role in this setting. The “therapist” chatted with her, musing about his ideas of mutuality and asymmetry. At one point he asked her how her practice was going. She also asked him collegial questions. I was becoming more and more agitated. Like a back seat driver wanting to take control of the car, everything in me was willing him to talk less and draw her out more. I then remembered the integrative attitudes I was writing about and took a deep breath as I tried to settle back into my seat. I had been so sure I would be free, open and at ease in this situation. But, I began to realize that he was challenging an unexamined, sacred assumption of mine. I have always held that therapy is about the therapist drawing out the patient. I felt he was not doing this. As I was suffering this inner struggle, the patient spontaneously recalled a dream from the early phase of her first analysis in which she was sitting in the passenger seat of a car with her analyst who was driving, and they were talking together “like equals.” Her analyst, at that time, had responded to this dream image by saying that “this will not happen between us for a very long time” and the patient had felt shamed. The therapist in the demonstration chimed in that had he been the analyst he would have wanted to know where they were going and everything about their adventure together. This dream work signaled to me that something therapeutic was surely occurring.

In the discussion that followed the demonstration one of the members of the group asked, “What made this interaction, therapy?” Members of the group pointed out the look of intense focus on the therapist’s face as he was monitoring the patient’s reactions and attending to her non-verbal cues. The patient talked about her shame prone vigilance and how she received his responses as efforts to de-shame the situation. There were

comments about the parallel process of the dream and the therapist's use of self disclosure. I had missed all of these elements of the exchange. The only thing I had noticed was the twinship selfobject experience that they seemed to be co-creating. As the others talked about what they had seen in the demonstration I had the sudden recognition of a world that some other people were inhabiting that I had not been awake to. It had taken conscious intentional work with myself to put aside my judgments to regain a sense of curiosity and openness.

THE CALL OF "THE CONVERSATION"

There is no higher principle than this: Holding oneself open to the conversation [Gadamer, as cited in Orange, 2010b, p. 99].

At the heart of an integrative sensibility is what Gadamer refers to as a genuine conversation. Such a conversation is not merely a discussion in which topics are covered and positions stated, held or relinquished. This larger conversation is the life flow of human interaction, a current of life energy in which the participants are caught up, touched and changed. At the same time the subject of discourse is expanded and deepened in unpredictable ways. This expanded view of conversation is the primary means by which integration itself occurs on all levels.

After being introduced to Gadamer's thinking, the word "conversation" takes on new meanings. He transforms the common taken for grantedness of "conversation" and holds up his vision of "It" as a powerful force, a life-generating and perhaps civilization-saving potential. We come to see that the particular kind of conversation he is talking about is very rare—not in any way ordinary. He is like the Pied Piper calling up in us a remembrance and passion for that wondrous experience of electric attention characteristic of real dialogue. We can taste the excitement of building an idea in concert with another or others, in which each person's self-expression carries us along into a new realm; a new felt order. Each new response flows into the stream of conversation. We do not know where it is going, but we are in the flow of it and there is no doubt that it is carrying us along. At some point we may suddenly get a vision of the whole of what we have been talking about. It is something that has never been put together or conceived of in this way before. There is a feeling of vitality and cohesion of artistry in which each member, even a silent one, is an invaluable participant in the creation of something new.

This “something new” has infinite possibilities. Implicit worlds of meaning, inchoate in each person, make up the large organismic living of the conversation. It is an experience in which we can feel the palpable eagerness of each interlocutor to add her own unique expression to the mix. It is an expression of one’s uniqueness being inherently needed to make this new conceptual thing. We are, in these moments more than ourselves. The whole is greater than any of its parts and each participant feels whole within himself and an integral part of a larger whole.

A rich dialogue between Orange (2010a) and Benjamin (2010) on the subject of psychoanalytic recognition is a wonderful example of Gadamerian conversation. Orange objected to what she saw as Benjamin’s requirement that the patient recognize the separate subjectivity of the analyst. Benjamin wrote that she thinks Orange was misconstruing her ideas. These two theorists represent schools of thought that have been in heated debate about this subject for years—relational theory and intersubjective systems theory. They were having trouble finding common ground. Slavin (2010), a discussant, acted as a bridge between them. He posed the question as to “whether the disparate paradigms of Orange and Benjamin can each genuinely recognize the fundamental existential truths encoded in the other.” (Slavin, 2010, p. 10) He asked Orange, whose essay began the conversation, to “practice recognition” by which he means “a dedicated effort to enter the experiential world of the other . . . to practice it in the realm of other recognition theories . . . to stretch herself and immerse herself more fully in the basic organizing principles of the paradigm of the other” (p. 275). Orange (2010a) responded, “As a hermeneut and fallibilist I must listen (to my interlocutors) and try to understand what I have misunderstood and why . . . hoping to maintain a bridge finding spirit, let me take up the critiques” (pp. 294–295). Here she is embodying a true Gadamerian (see Gadamer and Hahn, 1997) spirit. Gadamer said:

In a genuine dialogue, people do attempt to convince each other, but they always listen with the expectation that the other can teach them something. Under this condition, understanding can emerge in the play of conversation [as cited in Orange, 2010b, pp. 104–105].

We believe that this debate will continue as a way of understanding the differences between the meanings that recognition has for these two traditions.

THE ROLE OF THE IMPLICIT IN AN INTEGRATIVE CONVERSATION

An integrative dialogue is based on a hermeneutic dedication to understanding. By this we mean an exploration predicated on a principle of infinite unfolding, based on an openness to the unfinished nature of the truth we are trying to understand. This unfolding is an interplay of implicit and explicit meanings. It has a cyclical rhythm. Gendlin (1997) gave a clear, succinct description of this hermeneutic circle:

. . . [O]ne begins without understanding the parts or the whole very well. Only the whole gives the parts their roles and meanings. But of course we arrive at an understanding of the whole only part by part. A better grasp of any part can change the sense of the whole. . . . The meaning of the parts is not fixed; they must grow in meaning . . . [p. 397].

We all know the experience of participating in lively psychotherapy sessions and professional meetings in which each person's contribution changes the nature of the whole that is being explored. We also know too well when this approach is absent, and participants, rigidly wedded to preconceived ideas, "formed things," as Gendlin (1997) put it, go around and around in frustrating, unproductive circles. Gendlin (1997) remarked, "A hermeneutic circle would be vicious and impossible if we could think only with distinctions, parts, units, factors, patterned facts, formed things. We could only combine the individuated units that we already understand" (p. 397).

Integration is closely connected with the kind of development in which ideas, points of view, and the participants themselves are transformed by the experience of interaction. Gendlin (1997) was pointing here to the vital role of the implicit in a "true" conversation. He insisted that we think not only with already packaged concepts but also with what is under these, what is freshly forming and as yet unworded but palpably felt. It is the experience of reaching for something slightly out of reach. We know that there is something more that we want to say, a point that we want to make, but it has not quite come yet. This "feeling of tendency" (James, 1950, p. 472) is a delicate fragile new shoot and its emergence is heralded by an unclear edge, a vague "tip of the tongue" sensation. This kind of new emergent thinking and saying must be welcomed and valued in order for us

to feel safe to stumble about trying out tentative thoughts until the point we are trying to articulate clicks into place. Almost always this clicking in of the emergent is experienced as enlivening, authentic and vital both to the speaker and the listener.

The inclusion of implicit experience in the conversation is a key to the integrative nature of the dialogue. Such a conversation needs to be both a horizontal interaction—that is, a conversation between people; and a vertical interaction that entails dropping down into not yet articulated thinking/feeling. This vertical interaction, which includes touching into one's unarticulated or not-yet-formulated experience and explicating it in words, can be understood as genuine introspection. The kind of integrative conversation we are describing is not just a rearranging and recombining of already known concepts and perspectives. It is rather, a new creation with its own unique complexity, life, present purposes, structure, meanings and message. It brings together the ideals of Gadamerian (Gadamer and Hahn, 1997) genuine conversation and what we call "genuine introspection."

LANGUAGE: A PROBLEM AND A GIFT

Language is our special human gift and our nemesis, our prison and our liberation. It buoys us up to fly with each other in realms of deep connection but also ensnares and imprisons us in its inherent algorithms and inescapable cultural and contextual embeddedness. We curse it for trapping us in its small containers and constraining what we implicitly know and want to express, yet we are awed by its ability, at times, to transcend these limitations and open up the parameters of our imagination, rendering the unthinkable, thinkable. It is the medium of our profession once named "the talking cure" and the means by which we understand and extend our clinical thinking.

"Conversation is the game of language, and readiness for conversation is the only entrance door into this game" (Gadamer, Dutt, and Palmer, 2001, p. 68). Wittgenstein points out that it is the unrecognized rules of this game that often preclude real conversation on all levels of discourse (as cited in Orange, 2010b, p. 41). With repeated use the very same words and phrases that once brought new vistas, clarity and meaning can become taken for granted jargon. The shelf life of theoretical terms is quite short. Cherished words such as "selfobject," "projection," the "implicit," which began as bright, new, thought-provoking conceptualizations, shortly become handles for a theory, often eventually losing their ability to evoke

experience. These terms eventually become containers not only for the original idea, but for the culture and the shibboleths of the group that identifies with the theory. Orange (2003) stated:

We can easily forget that words are verbal gestures whose meaning arises and changes in the course of conversation and culture. We begin to imagine that they stand for things as a flag may stand for a country [p. 26].

This becomes painfully clear when we see how communication screeches to a halt when we begin to argue about the right and wrong of theoretical constructs, as if they were entities in the world rather than attempts to language our experience.

We often begin to notice that we are taking our terms for granted when we are confronted with a neighboring lexicon that confounds us and raises our hackles. Living dialogue and the integration it brings is a project solely dependent on our ability to translate from one language game to another. Each theory expresses/encompasses/contains its own experiential world, its own presuppositions, culture, values, history, concerns, and terms. Theoretical discussions that do not account for this problem become endurance tests of exasperating, counterproductive miscommunications. To return to our earlier metaphor, we are, in this pluralistic time, like immigrants all arriving from different professional shores, speaking our own native tongues. If we are not to live in isolation in our theoretical ghettos we need to find a common language in which to converse. In our sessions and professional meetings we have to use common words; words that we have put together ourselves in new phrases that express what we mean to say to the particular others we are addressing in the moment.

A colleague, a Buddhist psychotherapist, and I (Ellen Shumsky) are usually fine interlocutors but when he begins to speak about putting aside the "ego," the whole ambiance, tone and nature of our discussion changes. I bristle and speak from my Kohutian point of view about the paramount necessity of having a strong sense of cohesive self. We are then speaking past each other, each of us hardly able to wait until the other finishes a statement in order to counter it with our own. At some point, we recognize that we cannot even assess how close or far apart we are because of this word/term *ego* that has such different meanings and associations for each of us. We have agreed that we need to slow things down and listen carefully to each other, to be taught by each other, about the terms *ego* and *self*

in our respective traditions. What has come out of this discussion is an exploration of the relationship between the eastern idea of ego and the Kohutian idea of narcissistic vulnerability.

THE LANGUAGE OF EXPERIENCE

We are suggesting that in order to bridge the multiplicity of professional languages and cultures and to invite the inclusion of the implicit dimension of the thinking process we need to cultivate the use of a “language of experience.” By this we mean words that spring directly from something that is lived—words that touch us. The language of experience is often evoked when one is asked “what do you mean by that?” I (Lynn Preston) have developed a course called “Making a Creative Relationship With Theory” in which I teach psychoanalytic students to focus on a favorite theoretical idea and spell out, without the use of professional terms, what it means to them, and how it is useful in their work. It is striking to me how alive and meaningful ideas become when there is room for their implications to emerge in an atmosphere of friendly interest. The pursuit of a language of experience starts with a commitment to laying aside our treasured handle terms that are such facile signifiers within our professional nuclear families. We also need to develop a sense of what we are “meaning to say”—the point that is right below the surface of our conventional terms in order to speak words that are not just thought, but felt—words that can have an emotional impact on those with whom we are speaking.

However, even with our best intentions and a heartfelt willingness to leave jargon at the door, it is incredibly difficult to speak in the “language of experience.” In our professional communities, we develop fluency in taken-for-granted terms with thickly layered meanings. Each term is packed with interconnected references, history and logical sequences belonging to its own world view—the country for which the flag stands. In this conundrum, there is no short cut around the patience, time and careful listening for the subtle inflections and the sounds foreign to our ears and mouths that hold the fragile possibility of conveying shared meaning. Genuine conversation is hard work. It can take years to learn to communicate the most subtle and important things in a way that those from other traditions will be able to truly understand.

A CONCEPTUAL HOME BASE

It seems to us that an integrative sensibility rests on a secure conceptual home base that can establish it as a valid theoretical perspective. In our teaching at multiple-theory institutes we perpetually encounter confused, insecure, and overwhelmed students who feel thrown into a swirling sea of ideas and are crying out for something to hold onto, something to ground them. These students have not yet found a “mother theory,” one in which they can see glimpses of their own unique nature, whose voice they recognize. Finding such a theory may be either a love-at-first-sight epiphany or a slow adoption over time. Winnicott (1971, p. 3) spoke about how theory must “be in your bones.” He referred to the need to take in theory in such a way that it becomes truly one’s own. It seems to us that this also has to do with a fit, a strong family resonance. It is as if our bones recognize this theory or philosophy and feel as if we have always somehow belonged to it. It speaks to us. It echoes our values and concerns. It inspires us. Its explanations have a resonant ring of truth. When we find such a theory we want to get to know it deeply, to follow it to the limits of its meaningfulness to us. And, then we may want to expand upon it and develop it, integrating other ideas into it. This kind of secure attachment to a theoretical home base allows us to feel free to play with other theoretical perspectives like the secure toddler who does not have to cling to the parent but can explore and return to her lap as home base.

CONCLUSION

The present zeitgeist presents us with radical cross-fertilizations—the interplay of new ideas, technologies, and cultures. These currents have a strong undertow that pulls us out of our familiar ways of thinking and propels us into new configurations and broader affiliations.

We propose that an integrative sensibility helps us to address the challenges of broadening our horizons of belonging. We are using the term *integrative sensibility* to mean a respectful, open, dialogic relationship with “otherness” that encourages us to consider and selectively incorporate neighboring ideas. Our goal is to participate in genuine conversation with other approaches, while remaining grounded in our own theoretical home bases. We are not talking about the imposition of a culture of indiscriminate acceptance that precludes challenge. We recognize that disagreement has a vital role in the ongoing process of articulation, clarification, and

development of theoretical ideas. What we are talking about is the creation of an ambience of genuine interest and welcome. Attitudes of openness, curiosity, fallibilism, and complexification are essential ingredients of such a milieu. We are suggesting that such attitudes help to create a context of openness that enables challenge to be an invitational experience. Our intention is to encourage participants to feel free to express their points more deeply and exactly rather than feeling cornered or silenced. We also realize that although we may embrace these attitudes, we can never choose them once and for all, like choosing a name or a place to live. We can, however, cultivate these attitudes as valued home-base ideals to which we return again and again.

We call upon Gadamer's idea of a genuine conversation as the embodiment of an integrative sensibility: "A conversation is always a kind of living together and as such it has its incontestable and unreachable priority" (Gadamer and Hahn, 1977, pp. 403–404). And, we reference Gendlin's (1995) articulation of the vital role of the implicit dimension of experience to fill out the picture of the kind of dialogue that is characteristic of an integrative sensibility. A Gadamerian conversation and what we refer to as genuine introspection together form an integration fostering process. A Gadamerian conversation is one in which we empathically engage the perspective of another. This, in combination with Gendlinian embodied self reflection, creates a conceptual foundation for our theory of an integrative sensibility.

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TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

Vivimos en tiempos de vertiginosos cruces de corrientes y fecundos intercambios, como resultado de la inter-relación entre nuevas tecnologías, el mundo global, y la plétora de nuevas ideas, teorías y modelos que emergen rápidamente. Es un tiempo que pide la trascendencia tanto de las reificaciones del modernismo y las amenazas postmodernas del relativismo y nihilismo. Estamos abordando una necesidad psicoanalítica, en este tiempo plural, para que la psicología del self recoja el reto de ampliar nuestros horizontes de pertenencia, incorporando ideas vecinas, un diálogo genuino con otros abordajes, y un ideal

de sensibilidad que promoció una integración donde sea posible. Discutiremos algunos componentes de la sensibilidad integrativa: actitudes de apertura, curiosidad, falibilidad, y complejización. Utilizamos la metáfora de inmigrantes que llegan desde diferentes orillas profesionales, cada uno hablando sus propias lenguas y ante el dilema de aferrarse a sus tradiciones al mismo tiempo que encuentran y abrazan la alteridad. A partir de la idea de Gadamer de la conversación genuina, y del énfasis que pone Gendlin sobre la dimensión implícita de la experiencia, nosotras proponemos el “lenguaje de la experiencia”.

Nous vivons une époque étourdissante de courants multiples et de fertilisations croisées – effet de la superposition des nouvelles technologies, du village global et de l'émergence aussi rapide que pléthorique d'idées, de théories et de modèles. C'est une époque qui appelle à transcender à la fois les réifications conceptuelles de la modernité et le relativisme à tendance nihiliste de la postmodernité. Nous attirons l'attention, en cet âge pluraliste, sur l'importance pour la psychologie du soi de relever le défi suivant: élargir ses horizons d'appartenance en faisant siennes des idées voisines, par un dialogue authentique avec d'autres approches, favorisant avec délicatesse l'intégration là où il est possible de le faire. La discussion porte sur quelques aspects de cette sensibilité intégrative: ouverture, curiosité, faillibilité et respect de la complexité. Nous utilisons la métaphore d'immigrants venant de rivages professionnels différents, parlant leur propre langue et exposés au dilemme de maintenir leurs traditions tout en embrassant la nouveauté et l'altérité. Faisant appel à la conversation authentique de Gadamer et à l'expérience implicite de Gendlin, nous proposons le concept de “langage expérientiel”.

La nostra è un'epoca di vertiginosi incroci di correnti e di reciproche fertilizzazioni, determinate dall'intrecciarsi di nuove tecnologie, dal villaggio globale e dalla varietà di idee nuove, di teorie e di modelli che si succedono con grande rapidità. E' dunque un tempo che richiede il trascendimento sia delle reificazioni della modernità sia delle minacce del relativismo e del nichilismo. In questo tempo di pluralismi intendiamo rivolgerci al bisogno della psicoanalisi che la psicologia del sé affronti la sfida di un ampliamento dei nostri orizzonti di appartenenza—incorporando idee contigue e un dialogo genuino con altri approcci e l'ideale di una sensibilità che sappia promuovere l'integrazione laddove possibile. Discutiamo alcune delle componenti di una sensibilità integrativa: gli atteggiamenti di apertura, la curiosità, un approccio fallibilista e una visione della complessità. Usiamo la metafora dei migranti che provengono da lidi professionali diversi, che parlano le lingue delle loro origini e si confrontano con il dilemma di mantenersi fedeli alle proprie tradizioni nell'incontro e nell'abbraccio con l'alterità. Con il riferimento alla concezione di Gadamer di una conversazione sincera e l'attenzione posta da Gendlin sulla dimensione implicita dell'esperienza, enunciamo il principio del “linguaggio dell'esperienza”

Wir leben in Zeiten schwindelerregend gegenläufiger Strömungen und gegenseitiger Befruchtungen – Ergebnis des Wechselspiels neuer Technologien, der Globalisierung und der Fülle in rascher Folge auftauchender neuer Ideen, Theorien und Modelle. Es sind Zeiten, die die Überwindung sowohl der vermeintlichen Objektivierung der Moderne als auch der der post-modernen Bedrohungen durch Relativierung und Nihilismus erfordern. Wir wenden uns der innerhalb der Psychoanalyse entstandenen Notwendigkeit der Selbstpsychologie zu, sich den Herausforderungen zu stellen, die sich aus der Erweiterung unseres Horizontes in Bezug auf Zugehörigkeit ergeben: nachbarschaftliche

Ideen aufzunehmen, einen ehrlichen Dialog mit Vertretern anderer Herangehensweisen zu führen und das Ideal einer Sensibilität zu entwickeln, die Integration erleichtert, wo immer sie möglich ist. Wir diskutieren einige Komponenten dieser integrativen Sensibilität: die Haltung der Offenheit, der Neugier, der Fehlbarkeit und Komplexifizierung. Wir benutzen die Metapher der Einwanderer, die von unterschiedlichen beruflichen Ufern kommen, die unterschiedliche Sprachen sprechen und dem Dilemma begegnen, gleichzeitig an ihren Traditionen festhalten zu wollen, wenn sie Andersartigkeit begegnen und aufnehmen wollen. Mit Bezug auf Gadammers Begriff des ehrlichen Austausches und Gendlins Augenmerk auf die impliziten Dimensionen von Erfahrung schlagen wir eine „Sprache des Erlebens“ vor.