

The Ever Evolving Landscape of French Psychotherapy

Helene Cadot

Abstract:

The article is the Keynote Address given at the 5th International Integrative Psychotherapy Association Conference in Vichy, France, April 21, 2011.

Key Words: integrative psychotherapy in France

This morning, I would like to introduce the landscape of psychotherapy in France, where integrative psychotherapy has gradually developed: there are now twenty three psychotherapists, with three soon-to-be and five soon-to-be trainers/supervisors. For over twenty years, Richard Erskine, PhD has come to France to pass on this approach.

Who are the French clinicians who have come to discover Integrative Psychotherapy?

They are already working as psychotherapists, have often had years of training in Transactional Analysis, Gestalt, sometimes Psychodrama, they are clinical psychologists, physicians, and for the main part driven by an *empirical quest* focusing on the following issues:

- How to work in *psychic care*?
- How to be a psychotherapist from a *True Self* and not from a role, or a posture - to be genuinely in contact?
- How to give intersubjectivity its real place?
- How to help and keep the therapeutic relationship alive with patients suffering from early or cumulative traumas and with severely dissociated patients?
- How to be a psychotherapist in front of a patient who has no dreams, no memories, whose psyche is sometimes in a siderated state?
- How to work when words are not available?
- How to deal with a body which is speaking, suffering, closed, stiff, sometimes, negated?
- How to deal with conflicting, suffering, disturbing introjects?

- How to elaborate an overall vision of the person, who is a being of flesh, needs (especially relational), affects, desires, hopes and representations?
- How to maintain our bearings in the course of long term therapies, through such complexity and in front of so many interactive aspects?
- How to have our own place, how to proceed when the good our care aims to bring paradoxically ends up hurting, when juxtaposition pain is triggered and has repercussions on the process and the frame of the therapy?

Such questions and preoccupations have been alive in me for a long time as a psychologist, psychotherapist, supervisor, trainer... When listening to professionals during supervisions, I have always been called out and interested in this quest –professional, indeed- and above all in the deeply human ring it has. I have been moved to observe the intimate, sometimes, solitary aspect of this quest in every person.

I have noticed that the approach used by *Sandor Ferenczi*, a Hungarian psychoanalyst who in his time had courageously faced this very quest, inspired many French clinicians. The same goes with *Winnicott's* empirical writings, and for others, *Masud Khan* who describes in "*The Hidden Self*" the obstacles he was faced with, with regressed, schizoid patients for whom the frame of the psychoanalytical cure was not suited; his testimony fraught with great descriptive sincerity unfolds his personal know-how, his failures to make the frame evolve, and he looks very close to us.

Thanks to deep reflection about:

- Tactful *exploration*
- *Involvement* from the therapist
- Attentive and continuous *attunement* to the patient's idiosyncrasies
- The "*Keyhole*" model, the description of *Relational Needs* among others, *Integrative Psychotherapy*, especially in the "*Theory of Methods*" helps to give an answer to this empirical quest and fuel it; it gives hope to clinicians, sheds useful light on paths that are often difficult to walk and brings this solitary quest to an end.

Psychotherapy can only be **contextual**, it is rooted in the culture of the country it is practised, it takes the colours of the evolution of society, of rises that crop up, it is crossed by ideologies on *mental health, suffering, care, patient-therapist relationship*, etc. In France these days, mental health is an *exacerbated political stake* (see the rebellion of 20,000 psychiatrists against a security drift, present in a bill called the "night of law-and-order"). The title of "psychotherapist" has been the recent focus of a law that many professionals experience as unfair and rather counterproductive. In such social, economic and political environment, when humanistic clinicians and the meaning they attach to their practice are given a rough time, *the values carried by Integrative Psychotherapy* are all the more precious, and all the more *meaningful* to us. Finally, be aware that it has

also been ***collectively beneficial*** to invest time, energy, creativity in order to make a success of this important meeting with everyone of you all, dear colleagues.

Author:

Helene Cadot, PhD has been a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist for 25 years. She is a Certified Integrative Psychotherapist, Trainer & Supervisor, doing training in France and Central Europe. Currently she is a member of the CSC of IIPA and on the editorial board of the Integrative Psychotherapy Journal. She has translated Integrative Psychotherapy articles and books into French.

Date of publication: 12.9.2011