Personal Model of Integration

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Abstract

This paper explores the role and function of integration in clinical practice. A holistic model will be developed, described, and defended using a thorough knowledge of relevant principles related to both theology and counseling/psychology. For the purpose of this paper, the relevant principles evaluated are epistemology/truth, mankind, motivation, health, illness, recover/care, the counselor’s role/techniques, and the value of integrating social psychology with faith-based counseling.

Personal Model of Integration

It is important to understand that faith integration sets Christian counseling apart from secular counseling (Anderson, Zuehlke, and Zuehlke, 2000). Christian therapists understand they are not the ultimate answer for their clients. They counsel each client with the Holy Spirit leading the sessions (Anderson et al, 2000). Powlison (2005) explains that our mere words, simplest actions, and interpersonal attitudes can have a profound effect on our counselees. Entwistle (2010) describes faith integration as the two books of God. In other words, God inspired Scripture. As creator of the world God also inspired nature. Theology from Scripture helps us understand our spiritual self. Science from nature helps us understand our physical reality (Entwistle, 2010). Therefore, it is important to understand how to appropriately integrate faith into counseling. However, according to Anderson et al (2000), few Christian counselors have been trained how to integrate their faith with the role God plays in the therapeutic partnership. McMinn (1996) explains that clients are confused about the place of religion in counseling as much as counselors are confused.

Greggo and Sisemore (2012) believe Christian soul care had its earliest roots in the Old Testament. A study of the history of faith integration into psychology reveals some barriers that have been faced. A major barrier is the continual rejection by those of faith of psychological findings (Carter & Narramore,1979). According to Carter & Narramore (1979) the barriers for faith integration began in the 1920s. Both psychologists and Christians made strong accusations against each other. Carter & Narramore (1979) explain that the issues continued until the 1940s when Rogers, who developed the Rogerian Theory, began rejecting the belief that humanity is basically sinful and began to focus on human growth and actualization. This rejection provided a warm and accepting atmosphere and guidance rather than a direct and judgmental atmosphere (Carter & Narramore, 1979). Shortly after Rogers, pastoral counselors began to utilize empirical research along with theology.

Entwistle (2010) further supports the struggle evangelicals have had since the 1970s to apply more effort in faith integration. Yet, the dialogue between psychology and Christianity has been shaped by history, tension, and interactions as both respond to cultural and ecclesiastical issues (Entwistle, 2010). According to Carter & Narramore (1979) there is no conflict between psychology data and theology data. There could be possible conflict between hermeneutics and psychology data. And, there is a likelihood of conflict between hermeneutics and psychological theories. There is another possible conflict between theological data and psychological theories (1979).

**Epistemology/Truth**

Mahtma Gandhi explained his view of truth as “Nobody in this world possesses absolute truth. This is God’s attribute alone. Relative truth is all we know. Therefore, we can only follow the truth as we see it. Such pursuit of truth cannot lead anyone astray.” He is not the only philosopher who views truth as relative. Although he may be one of the few that allows for a view of God in relation to truth. According to Entwistle (2004), one of the assumptions that we make about the world involves how well our perception of the world mirrors reality. Entwistle may agree to some extent with Gandhi on the basis that human thinking is limited because we are finite creatures (2004).

Entwistle (2004) uses the hermeneutical approach that supports the premise that the Bible, as God’s instruction to His children, is our truth. John 17:17 tells us to “sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” Some would argue the basis of God’s Word being truth. Those who support the belief that God’s Word is our truth would refer them to 2 Timothy 3:16-17 which tells us “all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” The Bible also tells us in John 8:32 that we “will know the truth and the truth will make us free.”

**Mankind**

Entwistle (2004) admits to the huge challenge both psychology and theology face in their attempt to understand human nature and how personalities are structured. According to Thomson (2004), how a person views the root cause and solutions for mental disorders and to a greater extent man’s understanding of our basic nature directly affects how personality is structured. On the other end of the spectrum Freud views the structure of personality as the id, ego, and superego. Still another discussion is the impact of “nature vs nurture” in the development of one’s personality (Schaffner, 2001).

The five integration models all viewed humanity as being created in the Imago Dei, or Image of God (Entwistle, 2004). In Genesis 1:27, 5:1, and 9:6, God tells us that He created us in His own image. With this understanding we have a dual nature, as we are both physical and spiritual beings. Paul agreed when he said in Philippians 1:21, “for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” He further emphasized this in his second letter to the church in Corinth where he explained, “we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, as we walk by faith and not by sight...but we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord’ (2 Corinthians 5:6,8). Ultimately being created in the image of God means there is open fellowship with God and at the same time sacred obligation to fulfill our purpose while on earth (Thomson, 2004).

An emerging theme in recent years is bio-psycho-social view of the person. This is in line with the integration model of levels of explanation. Entwistle (2004) explains that it has become a convenient rubric to organize the complexity of the different factors that influence human behavior. According to Greggo and Sisemore (2012), the bio-psycho-social-spiritual approach is contextual because the way that these parts interact influences behavior and thus should be addressed to improve complex life issues.

**Motivation**

Motivation is defined as a general desire or willingness of someone to do something. It is an English based word that developed around the 19th century (Cambridge Dictionary). According to Biblical counseling, motivation stems from the heart, soul, and spirit (Thomson, 2004). Interestingly, psychology views motivation from the psyche or the soul, which seems to overlap Christian views (Entwistle, 2004).

From this point of view, one must wonder why people act as they do. What is one’s motivation to change. A book entitled Hurt People, Hurt People speaks to this phenomenon. The author’s viewpoint is that one’s hurt may motivate or cause them to hurt another. According to Entwistle (2004), Freud would disagree and say our motivation to hurt others is based in the unleashing of our darker impulses.

Thomson (2004) informs us that all humans are formed, the very characteristics of man’s nature comes from the heart and soul. Psalms 35:9 tells us that our soul will rejoice in the Lord. Isaiah 26:9 informs us that our soul will see God. In Ephesians 6:6 our soul serves God. While our soul can be defiled, according to 1 Peter, 2:11, it can also be pure according 1 Peter 1:22. Finally we are built to worship God within our soul according to Psalms 146:1. Based on this information, Thomson would believe that our motivation comes from our heart and the sinful choices within our heart.

In the levels of explanation viewpoint motivation is based in much more than our spiritual makeup. It is our biopsychosocial along with our emotional being that motivates change. This is where some would argue that nature and nurture may also play a role in motivating change. Also change may be motivated by one’s view of God. If the client has attachment issues, their level of motivation for change may be augmented or stunted. However, if they have a strong relationship with God and belief in God then even with a tattered attachment with the parental figures, the client may have a highly developed need or motivation for change.

**Interdisciplinary Fields**

Entwistle (2004) provides a description of the models of integration and the issues each face when it comes to integration. He labels them as enemies, spies, colonialists, neutral parties, and allies as subjects of one sovereign. In the Enemies camp there is a complete rejection of the secular or a complete rejection of faith-based counseling. The spies are selective in their rejection. The colonists filter through one’s worldview accepting or rejecting without using psychology. Neutral parties look at both sides independently of each other and utilize each as needed. The allies are holistic and have the ultimate goal of finding the truth (2004). Depending on where a therapist falls according to Entwistle, there can be room for the integration of social psychology and faith-based counseling.

Greggo and Sisemore (2012) developed five models or approaches to integration of social psychology and faith-based counseling. According to the Biblical counseling approach there is no basis for integration whereas on the opposite end of the spectrum the levels of explanation filter faith-based through social psychology. The integrative approach falls in the middle and views both social psychology and faith-based counseling as equals (2012).

Throughout many of the models or approaches “all truth is God’s truth” is a phrase that is repeated (Carter & Narramore, 1979). Entwistle (2004) supports this though with his two-book theory, he says that God created all things and therefore God created those who developed the theories and sciences behind social psychology.

**Health**

Health is a relative term and dependent on both the therapist and the client. The healthy individual is not going to base his or her decision on family or society. Rather he/she will base the decision on goals met. This mindset would be in line with the integrational approach. According to Greggo and Sisemore (2012), the integration approach deems one healthy when the person’s functional, structural, and relational schemas are intact.

One may argue as to where the spiritual aspect is in this integrational approach. Religion may play a role in this area, if religion plays a large role in the client’s daily life. For example, if a client’s religion is important, then a sign of their health may be their faith regaining strength. In this case, Biblical Counseling or Transformational counseling would be more prudent for the client to see growth and healing (Greggo and Sisemore, 2012).

**Illness**

Illness can be defined in many ways. According to Greggo and Sisemore (2012), the Biblical approach would define illness as a separation from Christ or sin. The transformational approach would call illness as not being in the image of Christ. Christian Psychology would define illness as fallen humanity. The levels of explanation and integration approach combined

best explain illness. Illness is not doing well in our functional structural, relational schemas, we are unhealthy with faith issues, DSM diagnostic issues, and systematic problems (2012). Illness cannot be defined as one area. It is a biological, psychological, social, and hematological issue. As Christians we cannot ignore the aspect sin plays in our lives and how that can cause stressors.

**Recovery/Care**

The Levels of Explanation approach laid out by Greggo and Sisemore (2012) really explains the best example of recovery and care. The client has met treatment goals. The client worked systematically and holistically over all of the issues to meet these goals. Second to this approach is the integration approach, where hope centered recovery and discovery is the focus. Also, the client is focused on improvement of at least three domains of health (2012). These two approaches provide a holistic view, whereas the other approaches focus only on the spiritual aspect. While it is important to show spiritual growth we also want to show growth in all areas of the client’s life.

**Counselor Role**

After viewing the five models or approaches from Greggo and Sisemore (2012), the model that best fits a holistic format is that of an eclectic approach. It is important for the counselor to know their client. It is important for the therapist to provide hope and autonomy, while also collaborating with others when needed. As therapists it is important to be both implicit and explicit. We must provide an alliance and support system to the client until they are ready to go on their own.

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