

Binocular Vision: Seeing through the two T's of Privilege and Oppression
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From one perspective, an analysis of privilege and oppression liberates our minds. Through the lens of social justice, the impact of historically rooted social injustice comes into view, and we can begin to envision a new world of possibility, free of social injustice and its insidious tentacles. The learning and the opportunity to contribute to social change afforded by these awakenings is infinite and without end. As I write this blog entry, the Supreme court will consider, this summer, the legalization of same sex unions in all states. As I write this blog entry, the cultural collective is demonstrating in opposition to racial injustice. Clearly, the impact of social justice on our personal lives is incalculable and makes an undeniable difference, between life and death.

At the same time, and on another level, the black and white clarity afforded by the conversation about justice and injustice is not the only sphere of social action, not the only relational realm of transformation. The benefits of social justice on my life have afforded me these considerations. Beyond the realm of social justice is the realm of social and relational complexity, where there is less black and white thinking and there are more shades of grey among the multiple views that come to mind. For some, this complexity is a hallmark of confusion, even ignorance. For others, it is a hallmark of maturity and nuance. There is of course truth to both perspectives.

From the perspective of complexity, how might we look at the world through the two T's of oppression and privilege, keeping both in view at the same time, *ever mindful that there is always more than meets the eye*? This is, I would submit, the realm of Integral relational psychotherapy, where the principle vehicle for transformation is empathic attunement. Hidden disabilities and unacknowledged identities are kept in mind; one knows, with reverence for the unconscious, that there is always more to realize than one can hold in mind. In other words, one remains cognizant that one's analysis of privilege and oppression is ever partial and incomplete, however valuable and necessary. Change may appear to be slower in this mode of engagement, yet perhaps the change afforded here is also more deeply rooted, occurring as it does through the vehicle of interpersonal connection.

Of course, we can all work on both levels at once—the collective level of social action and the individual level of Integral relational (and its sister, relational cultural) psychotherapy.

From the individual level of Integral relational psychotherapy, a host of inquires open up. How can binocular vision generate (ever increasing) empathy for both of these mutually determined realities of privilege and oppression, and in this way, *see* through them—become them? How can binocular vision also help us to engage in ongoing (never ending) deconstruction of the twin realities of privilege and oppression, and in this way *see through* them—see beyond them? Through this binocular vision, a third view emerges. We ask how can the view afforded by binocular vision, when it is in focus, help us to use the privileges we do have for the benefit of others and ourselves? How can we exercise these privileged identities in the world even as we deconstruct them and, ongoingly, work for equality? How do we thus move beyond shame and guilt, to a position of ongoing mourning for injustice that paradoxically does not mire in depression? How do we grow our thinking hearts and our caring minds wide enough to continue to embrace these infinite challenges?

From an Integral relational view, these are questions that we live.

There is a great loss in relinquishing black and white thinking. Truth is not always as clear. Hybridity, intersectionality, multiplicity, and complexity come into vivid view. The path of change is not as obvious. There are multiple perspectives to consider, not only around us but also within us. The path of transformation is no longer fueled by the moral superiority of black and white thinking. The path of transformation depends on the ability not to overcome but to *become* that which one seeks to change and, paradoxically, requires one to abandon attachment to a specific outcome, even as one devotes herself to her work on interdependent individual and collective levels.

Reference:

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