

NWU WEBINAR

TOWARDS FLOURISHING INDIVIDUALS, ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITIES. A SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC STANCE (SP)

Frans Cilliers. DPhil. Industrial & Organisational Psychology
Emeritus Professor, University of South Africa
Extraordinary Professor, North-West University
Psychologist (cat. Industry). Systems psychodynamic consultant and
leadership coach

PRIMARY TASK

To provide opportunities to think about languishing and flourishing (as contrasting behaviours) from a systems psychodynamic stance, and to develop an understanding of the relevant manifesting conscious and unconscious behaviour acted out systemically (individual, group, organisation, society), in order to further insights and inputs in our roles as psychologists, consultants, coaches and researchers.

SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMICS

Depth psychology paradigm; informed by Freudian social psychoanalysis, object relations, Tavistock group relations, transactional analysis and systemic thinking, studying the manifesting conscious and unconscious behaviour relevant in individual, group, organisational and societal phenomena.

SP studies the systemic, social, dynamic, here-and-now conscious/rational relationships and unconscious/irrational object relatedness towards a deep understanding of systemic identity (in this case languishing and flourishing).

RELEVANT SP CONCEPTS

Rational/conscious behaviour

Irrational/unconscious behaviour

The repressed / associative unconscious

Anxiety (fear of future)

Defensive structures:

Spitting

Introjection and introjective identification

Projection and projective identification

HYPOTHESIS 1

LANGUISHING / FLOURISHING

As response on existential, survival and persecutory anxiety, the system defends itself.

First defence - split. The system splits itself between the objects of bad (here called languishing) and the good (here called flourishing). The bad represents denigration (the not-good-life) and the good represents idealisation (the good life – feeling and functioning good).

Second defence - projection. The subsystem (or object) in the position of languishing projects the idealisation onto the subsystem of flourishing with its associated behaviours of wellbeing. Languishing dissociated itself from important parts of the self (split off and exported) and has given this to flourishing to hold (contain) on its behalf. Bion refers to this as an act of trust, to hold its important parts in tact until ready to take them back (as depositing money in a bank).

HYPOTHESIS 1 CONT ...

Third defence – introjection. The subsystem in the position of languishing introjects the denigration into the self, owning its associated behaviours of lack of wellbeing. Languishing identifies with the shadow side of the phenomenon.

Fourth defence – projected and introjected identification. Through the continuous enforcement of the projection and introjection, both subsystems identify with its given and taken psychic material to the point that it becomes part of its psychic identity. Thus the defences become institutionalised making the connection with the other (the opposite) very difficult.

The opposite manifests from the object flourishing towards languishing.

HYPOTHESIS 2. UNEMPLOYMENT / EMPLOYMENT

The same psychodynamic pattern manifests for these objects. Unemployment introjects and identifies with poverty, submission, de-authorisation and stuck-ness in role, whereas employment (through projective identification) owns privilege, superiority and being authorised in role.

CONSULTING TO CHANGE

Consulting in this scenario involves complex SP group work focussing on the task to become aware of and to process the unconscious defensive structures that lead to both psychological positions of being stuck in the split - by denying parts of the self and acting as container of parts of the other.

Insight, and the owning of aspects of the real self with its negative and positive parts, lead to the integration of identity.