



Supervisors Association of Ireland

# SAI VISION Newsletter



VOLUME 8  
ISSUE 1  
October 2014

*Message from Geraldine Holton Chair SAI  
Tobin Hart PhD for SAI Conference Sun. Nov 16th Emmaus  
Contemplative Supervision article by Dr. Jack Finnegan  
Change of Address for SAI*

## Message

from  
SAI Chair

Geraldine Holton



*The autumn season marks the arrival of a time of change and transition. What lessons and practices are suggested by the coming of autumn? For me two lessons arise, first balancing being and doing and second, letting go the illusion of control.*

### ***Balancing being and doing***

*As SAI moves into its tenth year in 2015, we have tried to balance being together through our many events while doing the many varied tasks needed to develop the association to where it is **today**. This balance has been achieved through the generosity of a growing cross professional membership, a committed board of directors and talented sub committees.*

### ***Letting go the illusion of control***

*When I contemplate autumn's changes and watch the leaves fluttering to the ground, I am reminded that nature's cycles are mirrored in our lives. Autumn is a time for letting go and releasing the illusion of control. It is with deep sadness that we let go of two of our founder members Tony Jordan and Tom Early who died in recent months.*

*It is also with great appreciation that we let go two of our SAI Directors Bill Mulally and Sandra Kelly. Bill has served for a number of years as a member of the Board of Directors and as a member of the Full Membership Committee and Sandra has served as a member of the Board of Director and as Co Ordinator of the Events Committee. We wish them well on their journey and look forward to meeting them at future SAI events.*

### ***Contemplative Supervision***

*Contemplative Supervision, the theme of our upcoming conference, reminds us to engage in contemplative and reflective practices and for me preparing this newsletter has provided an opportunity to reflect on SAI and what it takes to keep an organisation like this up and running. After almost ten years as the Chair of the organisation I still have great passion for SAI and I am happy to see it develop.*

*I grow more appreciative each day of those who have given so generously of their time and skills to building up the organisation so I want to express deepest gratitude for the harvest of what SAI has become because of the above mentioned people and indeed to all who have given of their time and energy for SAI.*

*Now that the weather is noticeably changing it is time to plant a few bulbs that will grow beneath the surface in the coming months. Whilst we have achieved a lot this year there is great potential for further growth and deeper roots. As we continue to plant and grow I offer some reminders for the SAI planting season.*

### **Planting Bulbs**

*Things to remember in this season*

**Remember to return membership renewal**

**Remember the SAI Conference at Emmaus on **Sun**. Nov. 16th**

**Remember the SAI change of address**

**Remember to make sure your email is up to date**

**Remember to spread the word about SAI - encourage membership and invite non members to conferences**  
**Remember to give of yourself**  
**Remember to take care of yourself**  
**Remember to take time for contemplative and reflective practices**

*Dr. Jack Finnegan has kindly provided this edition of our newsletter with an excellent article on Contemplative Supervision that may be of interest to you. A growing number of voices from a variety of disciplines suggest that any serious understanding of supervision must include contemplative and reflective practices.*

*“It is expected that social workers will access supervision not just for case management purposes but also to provide them with opportunities for reflection”.*

*(Marie Price Senior Lecturer in Social Work Guardian Professional Network, Sept. 2014)*

*It is clear from my work both as a trainer and practitioner that the inclusion of contemplative practices can engender a critical dimension of personal meaning which goes to the heart of human purpose and fulfillment. We can evoke great supervision as much through our silence as through our speech and this creates an expansiveness within the container of supervision that yields a great harvest, for it is in the silence of the dark earth that growing happens.*

*Before we know it the season will have changed again. So let us continue **to learn with, from and about each other** as professionals. Let us take in the breadth of our knowledge and experience so far, embracing difference in professional training and ways of working, researching practice for a way forward so we can respond to what is called for in our times. The 21st century calls for a new type of supervisor who understands him/herself well and can call others into a deeper state of being, rather than the old style supervisor who simply knows how to manage and oversee.*

*Watch the bulb become something even more amazing and beautiful in 2015.*

*Sincerely*  
*Geraldine Holton*  
*Chair SAI*

**Tobin Hart PhD**  
**Contemplative**  
**Supervision**  
**SAI Conference**  
Sun. Nov. 16th 2014  
Emmaus Swords



***Contemplative Supervision involves an education and psychology of consciousness that integrates the wisdom of mind and heart.***

***Tobin Hart explores human consciousness, centering on how we know, especially knowing characterised as contemplative, intuitive, empathetic and inspired..***

**When: Sunday November 16th**

9.30 am-4.30 pm (Light Lunch Included)

**Cost : €60 Members €70 Non-Members Groups 15% discount**  
**Earlybird 10% before October 17th 2014**  
**Emmaus Conference Centre, Lissenhall, Swords**

### **Tobin Hart PhD**

Keynote Speaker: Tobin Hart, Ph.D. is father, professor, psychologist, author and consultant. He serves as professor of psychology at the University of West Georgia, as well as co-founder of the ChildSpirit Institute, a nonprofit educational and research hub exploring and nurturing the spiritual life of young people and adults. His research and practice explores human consciousness, centering on how we know, especially knowing characterized as contemplative, intuitive, empathic, or inspired. His interdisciplinary work emphasizes psychospiritual integration applied to psychotherapy, spirituality, and education. His most recent books include: *The Four Virtues*, *The Integrative Mind: Transformative Education for a World on Fire*, *From Information to Transformation*, and *The Secret Spiritual World of Children*.



## **Contemplative Supervision**

### **A Brief Reflection**

**by Fr. Jack Finnegan**

Supervision [today](#) is challenged to take on a more integral view of reality, one that is able to take into account not only the personal issues at stake for supervisees and their clients but also the unrecognised behavioural, systemic and cultural realities that influence personal and professional life in every human context. David Powell has already drawn attention to the intensity of forces at play in contemporary transformative interactions.[\[1\]](#) Add to that Ken Wilber's view that everything we do unfolds in four interactive quadrants that embrace the interior and exterior of our individual and social worlds.[\[2\]](#) How, then, are we to attend to issues of intensity and complexity in our efforts to establish good working and learning alliances especially in cross-professional supervisory contexts? It is precisely at the place where intensity and complexity meet that the contemplative approach in cross-professional supervision comes into its own. Contemplative attention allows us to penetrate the veils of illusion that tend to obstruct our vision of reality. It understands how known positions compress and even rigidify a supervisor's ability to work with true openness. It presumes critical self-reflection on assumptions and expectations. The diagram helps to make the point. Diagram ©

Contemplation in the Western tradition has to do with practices that support compassionate sensitivity to what is really going on in the moment. The phrase that is constantly used to summarise contemplative awareness and attention is "pure and simple"; the phrase has clear unitive implications, an invitation to oneness with the real and what lies beyond the real in the moment. For both supervisor and supervisee a contemplative stance implies a learning challenge: learning to separate personal perceptions from actual reality and learning to understand the interplay of the known and the unknown. The contemplative supervisor is waiting upon the real, open to the real, available to the real, leaning towards the real in a kind of inner darkness, in a kind of unknowing which though dark is nevertheless welcomed because it is pregnant with possibility. In effect, pure contemplation lies in receiving: it discloses a commitment to receptive awareness.

Expanding on a point made by Powell, contemplative supervision reduces the supervisor's felt need to be a universal expert with

answers of every sort for supervisees. Because it denotes a mode of listening without an agenda, because it takes a more humble, more receptive stance, because it is ready to welcome the unknown, contemplative supervision empowers supervisees to seek and find their own answers and approaches. The organising concern is not function but dynamic process, the learnt capacity to recognise and respond compassionately with head, heart and hara to the interweaving impact of all of Wilber's quadrants, both personal and social; to attend to verbal and non-verbal channels of communication; and, perhaps more significantly, to what is veiled and hidden.[3]

The secret is a willingness to unfold what appears to be mysterious and unravel what seems to obscure because the good, the true and the beautiful are encountered even in painful moments of human experience. In terms of Karpman's drama there is nothing of the co-dependent rescuer here, no element of collusion, no hint of self-referred use of the other, no power game. All is clear, transparent, rich with the bright crystals of integrity. In effect, then, contemplative supervisors are free from the bane of restricted focus. They seek to unfold spaces for change, spaces that occur naturally in the supervisory alliance, or are willingly sought to create slow and fruitful spaces for critical reflection and honest listening in a busy world. Contemplative supervisors are compassionately receptive to all the thoughts, feelings, sights, sounds and other sensory perceptions that each moment in the supervisory process brings into the light. They value the healing power of relational time and the giftedness of open stillness. Contemplative supervisors welcome the worlds of metaphor and story, the worlds of image and symbol, the worlds of music, art, poetry, and the dramas and events of every life journey and pilgrimage. Echoing Plotinus, they seek to be receptive to everything that generates a more complete definition of our embodied nature in our search for transformative depth and meaning and our search for oneness with the very ground of being.[4]

Here are some questions to help evoke the inward/outward cycles in contemplative supervision:

### **INWARD**

- Do you move inward first? How?
- Are you ready to work from the unknown?
- Have you noticed how working from the known compresses and restricts openness?
- Can you be with yourself? With all of your emotions, moods, thoughts, and states of mind?
- Can you drop out of inner chatter and jumping to conclusions?
- Can you manage the buzz that comes from your own expectations and interpretive horizon?
- Do you notice and clarify your intentions?
- Do you notice and clarify your understandings?

- Can you visualise the person before you meet?
- Can you tune into them and seek intuitive guidance?

## **OUTWARD**

- Do you cultivate a genuine relationship?
- How do you experience others and their pain?
- How do you communicate?
- How do you show that you are genuinely relational?
- How do you engage with the other?
- Do you have a sense of play?
- What do you do with your own perceptions?
- How do you play with simultaneously knowing and not knowing?
- How do you play with the paradoxical nature of life and identity?

## **CLARIFYING YOUR BASIC STANCE**

- How do you practice being open, clear, receptive?
- How do you practice becoming present to yourself?
- How do you practice becoming present to another person?
- Do you trust the unknown?
- How do you handle a landscape of many possibilities?
- What happens when you get distracted?

## **CLARIFYING YOUR CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE**

- How do you practice attention to the details of experience?
- How do you maintain mindful attention?
- How do you practice compassion and benevolence?
- Can they be seen in your face, heard in your voice?
- Can you tolerate uncertainty and confusion?
- Have you a spirit of humility or are you a false seer pretending to be wise?
- Can you tolerate not knowing?
- Can you tolerate boredom?

Contemplating an experience of reality, an event, a story or narrative or an issue goes beyond the who, what, when, where and how of a particular event, pattern, or memory to feelings, insights,

understandings, images, symbols, and meanings. More to the point contemplative supervision seeks the core image, pattern, or memory hidden at the heart of an experience. It is concerned with depth and reality, with the assumptions and expectations that move their understanding. That is why contemplative supervision reflects calmly on their hopes, desires, doubts, questions, assumptions, presuppositions and the like. It is also the reason why contemplative supervision remains alert and open to the interweaving social and systemic influences hidden in the impacts of location and cultural context on people's lives, as well as the flow of egocentric, ethnocentric, world-centred and cosmocentric as well as magical, mythical, rational, pluralistic, and transpersonal interpretations of reality. To conclude: the contemplative supervisor delights in the rich textures of reality as it unfolds in the moment. Like wise elders they learn to embrace reality in all its rainbow wonder and surprise.

---

[1] David J. Powell with Archie Brodsky, *Clinical Supervision in Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counseling: Principles, Models, Methods*. Revised edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004) 170.

[2] For a discussion of Wilber's work see [Harris L. Friedman, Glenn Hartelius](#), editors, *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Transpersonal Psychology* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) 191-202.

[3] Powell and Brodsky, *Clinical Supervision*, 171-175.

[4] See for example Georg Oswald, *What is Contemplation* (Munich: GRIN Publishing GmbH, 2009) <http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/146128/what-is-contemplation> (accessed 16/10/2014).



Please note the new location and  
correspondance address for SAI

Supervisors Association of Ireland  
An Croí Wisdom Institute  
Tullyallen Village  
Drogheda  
CO. Louth  
Tel. 353 (0)868808592  
Email: [info@saivision.ie](mailto:info@saivision.ie)  
[www.saivision.ie](http://www.saivision.ie)