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About Positive Psychotherapy

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A mighty king wandered for a long time through his kingdom. On a sunny slope he saw a venerable old man bent over, hard at work. Followed by his courtiers, the king came nearer and saw that the old man was planting year-old seedlings. "What are you doing there?" the king inquired. "I'm planting date trees", replied the old man. The king asked in amazement: "You are already quite old. Why are you planting seedlings when you won't see their foliage, won't rest in their shade, and won't eat their fruit?" The old man looked up and said: "Those who came before us planted, and we were able to harvest. Now we plant so that they who come after us can harvest."

(From the book: Peseschkian, In Search of Meaning, Springer 1985)

Positive Psychotherapy (PPT) – founded by Nossrat Peseschkian – is a form of short-term psychotherapy based on a psychodynamic approach, resulting from cross-cultural research, and a humanistic conception of man.

A transcultural approach also runs through the whole of Positive Psychotherapy. This is found to be important for a special consideration because the transcultural viewpoint provides material for the understanding of individual conflicts. Furthermore, this aspect has an extraordinary social importance and can be of help in dealing with problems concerning foreign labourers, problems with foreign aid for development, difficulties which arise in interactions with members of other cultural systems, problems with transcultural marriages, the overcoming of prejudices, alternative models derived from other cultural background. In this connection, political themes resulting from transcultural situations can also be addressed. The main motive for Peseschkian's work was his own transcultural situation (moving to Germany from Iran). The principles of interpersonal relationships, as well as working through internal conflicts have become the object of Positive Psychotherapy.

PPT focuses on answering the following two questions: 'What do all people have in common, and in what ways are they different?' This cross-cultural analysis resulted in Peseschkian's formulation of the so-called „Actual Capabilities“ which are covered in an inventory of 19 different bipolar conflict contents. The PPT method is based on the following principles:

1. The principle of hope: the word 'positive' in the name Positive Psychotherapy is derived from the word 'positum', i.e., from what is factual and given. Disorders and conflicts within a patient are not the only things that are factual and given. The patient also brings with him the capacity to deal with conflicts.

2. The microtrauma theory: this approach focuses on the conflict the client talks about as well as the dynamics of the conflict. It is not only the traumatic experiences of an individual which leads to pathology, but also includes the sum of everyday hassles.
3. Transcultural aspects: the transcultural frame of thought is the basis of PPT and Positive Family Therapy. This approach is applied by analyzing the person both as a group member and as an individual.
4. Uniqueness of the person: the therapy must consider the needs of the patient and be adapted to each patient's unique universal character. Positive Psychotherapy views illness as being more than a mere feature of the individual person. Illness also reflects the quality of relationships within the family and society.
5. Concepts, mythologies, oriental stories and folk wisdom are applied in specific therapeutic situations, hence including the use of Intuition and Imagination in the therapeutic process.
6. Positive Family Therapy is a special construct of therapeutic ideas. Although the family is the center of attention, the therapy does not restrict itself to viewing the family as the only therapeutically relevant unit. Rather it tries to look at the family members as individuals and, in addition, considers social factors relevant for treatment.
7. The terminology of PPT was developed to be comprehensible for everyone, regardless of social class, education, etc.
8. Positive Psychotherapy offers a basic concept for treating all diseases and conflicts.
9. Metatheoretic aspect: PPT offers a comprehensive concept within which various therapeutical methods and schools can be used to supplement each other.

The method of Positive Psychotherapy, which is based on transcultural researches, has a positive concept: The world-view is based on the concept that „every human-being is good by nature“ and „endowed with a lot of capabilities and a great potential.“ This positive image of man – that everybody has the two basic capabilities „to love“ and „to know“ – has led to the concept that illnesses and disorders are some kind of capability, and are therefore interpreted in a positive way: e.g. depression is regarded as *“the capability to react with deep emotions on conflicts”*. Through the further use of stories, anecdotes and examples from other cultures, the patient is encouraged to play a more active role in his own healing process. Positive Psychotherapy believes that every human being is an entity of body, mind, emotions and soul, and the aim of the therapeutic process is to help the client to develop his capabilities and find the balance in his or her life.

Positive Psychotherapy is orientated towards psychodynamic concepts, with a humanistic conception of man with a strong transcultural approach. It is resource-oriented and conflict-centered. PPT therefore belongs within the psychodynamic methods on one side, and within the humanistic psychotherapies on the other side.

The word "positive" in the context of Positive Psychotherapy is derived from the Latin word "Positum", which means what is factual and given. Positive Psychotherapy has an original approach: it uses a set of basic concepts that are phrased in every-day language so that they can be easily understood by both therapist and patient. These basic concepts provide a framework for the psychotherapeutic process and can be used to promote communication between different psychotherapeutic models.

Positive Psychotherapy is based on the conviction that all men are intrinsically good and that they have two basic capabilities: the capacity to love and the capacity to know. Conflicts are interpreted as challenges to the development of these capacities. From this premise, many innovative therapeutic concepts and techniques have been developed.

Two examples:

The Balance Model: Human life takes places and can be described in four modes: body/senses, achievement, contact, and future/fantasy. In conflicts, every person develops a preference for dealing with the problems that arise. Example: The father reacts by escaping to his work (achievement); the mother reacts by withdrawing, and hence by avoiding social contact (contact); the child reacts with physical complaints (body).

Stories, wisdoms, transcultural examples: Stories, wisdoms and examples from other cultures are used as respectful mediators between therapist and patient, encouragement for using fantasy in conflict resolution, and mnemonic aid for future situations. Example: an oriental who comes home relaxes right in the centre of noise and chatter of all his family members and neighbours; whereas a westerner rather seeks to relax alone and in a quiet environment.

Due to its accessibility, Positive Psychotherapy has also been successfully applied to education and training. It is now widely spread across the world: it has been introduced in more than 70 countries and territories; institutions have been established in different countries and the major books have been translated into more than 23 languages.

Some years later (in 1977), the Wiesbaden Training Institute for Psychotherapy and Family Therapy (WIPF) was founded, which is accredited by the State Medical Chamber for the postgraduate training of medical doctors in psychotherapy. Since then more than 38000 medical doctors and psychologists in Germany have been trained in Positive Psychotherapy. In accordance with the new German law on Psychotherapy, in 1999 the Wiesbaden Academy of Psychotherapy (WIAP) was formed, which has been licensed by the State Ministry for Medical Professions for the postgraduate training of psychologists. The main focus of the Academy is on psychodynamic psychotherapy.

Since 1974, the method of Positive Psychotherapy has been introduced in more than 80 countries worldwide, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s the first centres of Positive Psychotherapy were established.

European Federation Of Centers For Positive Psychotherapy

(EFCPP) The EFCPP is the umbrella organization of national, regional and local centres of Positive Psychotherapy in Europe. It represents the interests of Positive Psychotherapy at the continental level in Europe. Its main fields are training, teaching, research and psychotherapeutic practice, and these activities are also pursued in the different member countries and centres. The EFCPP was formally established in 1997, and has been approved by the European Association of Psychotherapy (EAP) as a European Wide Accrediting Organization (EWAO). Positive Psychotherapy is now one of the best-known and well-established psychotherapeutic methods. Due to the engagement of many colleagues, it has been possible to contribute to the formulation of psychotherapeutic laws in several countries.

EFCPP evolved from the World Association of Positive Psychotherapy, WAPP, which is the international umbrella organization of Positive Psychotherapy. At present (2010) the following countries are represented by the EFCPP with centres in Germany, Austria, Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Cyprus, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.

Outside of Europe, Positive Psychotherapy is especially represented in China, India, Bolivia, Ethiopia and South Africa. In all these countries, thousands of doctors, psychologist, mental health professionals and teachers have been trained in training seminars in Positive Psychotherapy.

Transcultural research has always been very important in the field of Positive Psychotherapy, as it claims to be a transcultural psychotherapeutic method. Results of these researches have been presented at numerous national and international conferences, and approximately 20 Ph.D. dissertations have been successfully defended on topics related to Positive Psychotherapy. Books on Positive Psychotherapy have been amongst the first ones on psychotherapy in Eastern Europe. The members of the EFCPP have been the main force behind the 5 World Conferences on Positive Psychotherapy – in St. Petersburg, Russia (1997); Wiesbaden, Germany (2000); Varna, Bulgaria (2003), Famagusta, Northern Cyprus (2007) and Istanbul, Turkey (2010).

In 2009 the International Academy of Positive Psychotherapy (IAPP) and Wiesbaden Academy of Psychotherapy (WIAP) – two important bodies of Positive Psychotherapy – were accredited as European Accredited Psychotherapy Institutes.

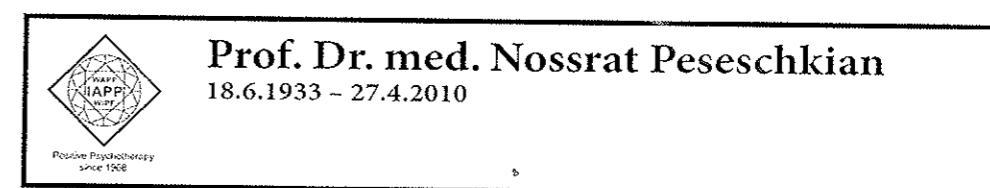
Through this recognition, Positive Psychotherapy belongs to two important pillars of EAP: EWAO European Wide Accrediting Organization (EWAO) and European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute (EAPTI). The above-mentioned Positive Psychotherapy organizations are institutions involved in the award of European Certificate of Psychotherapy (ECP).

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Note: There is a memorial to Prof. Dr. med Nossrat Peseschkian later in this issue.

OBITUARY

In Memoriam



One cannot add days to life, but one can add life to a day.



Prof. Nossrat Peseschkian, founder and leading figure in the growth and development of Positive Psychotherapy for almost 40 years, passed away on April 27th 2010 at the age of 76 in his home in Wiesbaden, Germany.

His endeavours as psychiatrist, psychotherapist, writer, lecturer, teacher and educator bring to mind the words from the Bahá'í writings: *"The all loving God created man to radiate the Divine Light and to illuminate the world by his words, action and life."*

"He is in my heart" – those were the tearful, half-whispered words of the colleagues who knew Nossrat Peseschkian well, when informed of his passing. Others, in tribute to his memory, dedicated their programs to his teaching. And in a flood of emails, condolence cards, letters and personal messages the sentiment was expressed: he was so dedicated, so loving and understanding, and so very humble.

Nossrat Peseschkian was born on June 18th, 1933 in Iran. He moved to Germany to study medicine in 1954. His wife Manije is a family therapist. They have two sons that are both medical doctors in the field of psychiatry and psychotherapy. Prof. Peseschkian and his wife have four grandchildren. Nossrat Peseschkian was a member of the Bahá'í Faith.

Prof. Nossrat Peseschkian, M.D., Ph.D., was a specialist in psychiatry, neurology, psychotherapeutic medicine and psychotherapist. He had his training in Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. He was the founder of Positive Psychotherapy, which is based on a cross-cultural approach. His work focused the investigation of the relationship between culture and disease, and the analysis of cultural concepts, which evolved in twenty-two different cultural groups.

As an international lecturer, Dr. Peseschkian travelled to over 68 countries and territories from all five continents to conduct seminars, workshops, courses, public lectures and interviews with the press, TV and radio. He met and consulted with medical associations, educational organizations, universities, academic and business leaders, all on an international level.

Between 1954-1960 he did his medical studies at the universities of Freiburg, Mainz and Frankfurt/Main. The special training in neurology, psychiatry and psychotherapy followed at the Wolfgang Goethe University of Frankfurt/Main. Nossrat Peseschkian completed his psychotherapy training in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and USA. He has maintained a practice and daily clinic in Wiesbaden since 1969. Along with his outpatient practice, he provided intensive treatment, particularly to those suffering from psychosomatic disorders or cross-cultural problems.

Since 1968, Prof. Peseschkian developed his method of Positive Psychotherapy, which he has taught and established as an innovative and integrative approach to psychotherapy all over the world, and he has touched, educated and consulted the souls of numerous individuals face-to-face. He was a wonderful example of a scholar who was both an outstanding intellectual and a loving teacher.

Nossrat Peseschkian was the founder and Honorary President of "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Positive Psychotherapie" (German Association of Positive Psychotherapy) since 1979. Shortly after the establishment of the German Association of Positive Psychotherapy in 1979, he launched a yearly magazine, "DGPP-Zeitschrift", the first issue appearing in 1979. This magazine carried scholarly articles written by him and his colleagues, in which he set forth the basics of Positive Psychotherapy, explained the idea of 'unity in diversity' in science and religion and challenged the therapists to investigate with open minds the claim of Positive Psychotherapy (DGPP-Zeitschrift will shortly be available online: www.positum.org.) He was also the Founder-President of the International Association for Positive Psychotherapy (WAPP). WAPP is an international association of national, regional and academically oriented psychotherapy societies in the fields of psychiatry, pedagogic, sociology). Today about 100 local, regional and national centers or representative offices of Positive Psychotherapy have been established worldwide. Prof. Peseschkian was Director of the International Academy of Positive and Cross cultural Psychotherapy (Peseschkian Foundation). As conductor and head of "Bad Nauheimer Psychotherapie-Woche", he held continuing education certificate training programs on Psychotherapy, Positive Psychotherapy and Positive Family Therapy since 1973, and this program is still continuing. Last but not least, he was Professor for Psychotherapy and Psychosomatic Medicine at the Academy for Continuing Medical Education at the State Medical Association for Hesse, Germany.

One of the most important services rendered by Nossrat Peseschkian was the publication of his 27 books on different aspects of Positive Psychotherapy which have been translated into 24 languages. He is appreciated as well for the many articles he wrote.

Nossrat Peseschkian was an effective public speaker and frequently addresses prestigious gatherings of medical and psychological colleagues who were much affected by the simplicity and humour of his nature and the compelling force of his remarks. His voice was heard in many far corners of the world.

Through his endeavours Positive Psychotherapy modality and the organisations of PPT since 1992 have become a prominent and active member of EAP. Nossrat Peseschkian served as a member of the EAP-Board, representing the European Federation of the Centers of Positive Psychotherapy.

He was highly regarded by all who knew him and worked with him. Despite the difficulties of misunderstanding or rejection by some psychotherapeutic professionals, he was determined and continued his uninterrupted service. Nossrat Peseschkian possessed high qualities of human capacities, especially humour and trustworthiness. His goal was to be a servant of mankind. "First maturity, then wealth" was always his statement. He will always be remembered for his giant humanistic contribution and his concerted effort to share his wisdom.

Awards and Honors

1. In 1997 he was awarded the **Richard Mertens Prize** for his work, "Computer Assisted Quality Assurance in Positive Psychotherapy". This Prize is one of the highest awards of quality assurance in the medical field in Europe.
2. In 1998 Federal Medical Chamber of Germany awarded Prof. Dr. med. Peseschkian the **Ernst von Bergmann Plague** for Services in Continuing Medical Education for Physicians in Germany (38 000 colleagues in German speaking countries).
3. In **June of 1998**, President Prof. B.D. Karvarrarsky nominated Prof. Dr. med. Peseschkian as a **Honorary Member of the Russian Association for Psychotherapy**. The ceremony took place in Moscow.
4. The Lord-Major of the city of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, declared Prof. Dr. med. Peseschkian as a **Honorary Citizen** for his outstanding Postgraduate Teaching Projects at NUR University.
5. The Primorsky Branch of the Russian Association of Psychotherapy honoured Prof. Dr. med. Peseschkian in **July of 1999** with the "**Ceramic Dolphin Prize**" for Distinguished Contributions in Development of High Standard Psychotherapeutic Training in the Primorye Region of Russia.
6. In **2002** the **Foundation Samii-Housseinpur**, Belgium, awarded Prof. Dr. med. Peseschkian in the category of science (in recognition of his achievements).
7. In **January 2006**, Prof Dr. Nossrat Peseschkian received the **Order of Merit, Distinguished Service Cross of the Federal Republic of Germany**. (Bundesverdienstkreuz). The President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr. Horst Köhler, signed the Document. *"This Order is the highest recognition of the Federal Republic of Germany for those citizens who have acquired distinguished services and achievements in social-economical, political and spiritual fields as well as their particular services for the Republic for example social charity and humanitarian aid."*
8. In **June 2006** **Association of Iranian Physicians and Dentists** in Germany honored Prof. Peseschkian among the Iranian Physicians – with **Avicenna International Award** of recognition of his significant scientific contribution to the field of medicine and health in the world.
9. In **November 2006** Prof. Peseschkian was one of the honourees of the **Encyclopaedia Iranica at the Geneva Gala**. Encyclopaedia Iranica is a branch of Columbia University in New York, United States.
10. In **2009**, there was a nomination for the **Nobel Prize of Medicine and Physiology**.