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Transpersonal Psychology as a Science

PIER LUIGI LATTUADA

Abstract

Transpersonal psychology represents the newest movement within the psychological field. It was born at the end of the sixties as a natural evolution of humanistic psychology, in the wake of trends that favoured the development of human potential, with the aim to expand the area of interest and jurisdiction of psychology in order to include spiritual inner experiences, the whole spectrum of states of consciousness and the full realization of the Self.

In this article, I will emphasize the specificities of transpersonal psychology, but I will also mention the causes of its weaknesses, which will expose it to attacks by its opponents who are often not willing to recognize its validity. I will examine the criticism and reasons that aim to demonstrate the groundlessness of transpersonal psychology by reporting some ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects of the transpersonal approach, which can guarantee its validity as a science.

Key Words: Exposure, awareness, dis-identification, participatory dialogue, second attention.

Critiques

Before entering the debate on the scientificity of transpersonal psychology, I will try by responding to the ostracism declared by science, which can be summarized in the following justification:

Transpersonal psychology operates on metaphysical bases that cannot be verified or falsified through a procedure of measurement, objectively observable, and replicable; therefore, it places itself outside the field of psychological science.

Comparing Ontologies

We will compare the so-called “metaphysical bases” of transpersonal psychology to the “scientific bases” on which classical psychology is founded. Pierre Weil (Weil, 1992, p. 21), one of the founders of transpersonal psychology, outlines four assumptions that characterize transpersonal ontology:

- Consciousness is an unending and boundless flow. Limits only exist in the human mind.
- Memory goes beyond phylogeny and can be tracked back through the evolution of the living being up to the very source of the vital energy.
- Human evolution does not end in intellect but moves towards higher qualities such as wisdom, love, humbleness, sympathy, awareness, etc.
- Death is just a passage, an opportunity to reach new dimensions of being.

The “scientific” bases of classical psychology are grounded on the premises of materialistic reductionism:

- Where the scientific study of the mind is concerned, consciousness and its

special features are of rather minor importance. It is quite possible, indeed desirable, to give an account of language, cognition and mental states in general without taking into account consciousness and subjectivity.

- Science is objective because reality itself is objective.
- The objectivity of science requires that the phenomena studied are completely objective, and in the case of cognitive science this means that it must study objectively observable *behaviour*.
- From the fact that reality is ultimately physical and the fact that it is completely objective, it is natural to assume that everything in reality is knowable by us. There is no place or at least very little place-for consciousness in this overall picture. (Searle, 1994, p. 28)

Going into detail on the above-mentioned visions goes beyond the aim of this paperwork; therefore, I will limit myself to emphasizing the evidence that stating that everything is matter, the mind can be studied objectively through behaviour, consciousness does not exist or is only an expression of brain activity, has no scientific value.

When it comes to metaphysics, Reductionist Materialism is just as metaphysical as the assumptions on which the transpersonal vision is based. “Ultimate reality is material”, “consciousness does not include matter” and “the psyche coincides with the mind” are non-observable, measurable nor replicable statements.

The issue of the premises could be easily settled by embracing the invitation of Husserl’s *epoché* (Husserl, 2006) to base the premises on a phenomenological approach that places one’s own beliefs and judgments in brackets.

The demarcation line in order to consider any approach as valid should be moved from going into detail on its system of creation to the “way” it treats it. Any discipline should emphasize its ontological assumptions and provide epistemological guarantees regarding how it achieved its knowledge and the use it makes of it.

In so doing, the focus would shift from the discipline to the people and from beliefs to the world. The fake boundary between scientific and transpersonal psychologies would be crossed and the focus would be placed on the people and their statements. The limits, tasks and jurisdictions would become clear and based on a mutual recognition of a difference in the intent, object of investigation and ontological and epistemological bases. However, these bases should not be considered as exclusive or absolutely true, but rather as starting points for the premises to be verified and the relative visions of the world to be approached with an “as if” kind of attitude.

Comparing Epistemologies

As a result, it would become possible to understand that the epistemological approach of transpersonal psychology provides tools and methods that do not invade the territory of behavioural sciences, but rather increase the validity provided by psychological science.

By simplifying the transpersonal practice and relying on a phenomenological approach that suggests leaving behind one's own beliefs and judgments, transpersonal psychology introduces in the scientific method three elements: exposure, awareness and dis-identification.

Exposure suggests declaring the ontological premises or beliefs, placing them between brackets and behaving "as if", this way overcoming the well-known problem that is reflexivity¹ (Thomas, 1923; Anderson, 2017), which is the tendency of the researcher to influence the investigation in order to confirm his own assumptions, more or less consciously.

Awareness comes from the consideration that it is possible to observe thinking, offering a further tool that adds supra-rational guarantees, provided by aware thought, to the rational guarantees of critical thought, based on meta-cognition.

Dis-identification allows detachment from the objective and therefore from the results of the research, non-attachment to one's own beliefs and it reinforces the comprehension that it is possible to act "as if". "As if" I weren't the content of my perception, my feelings, emotions, needs, desires, thoughts, judgments, beliefs, etc.

Classical epistemology is based on reason and critical thought. Transpersonal epistemology transcends and includes without denying meta-cognition and we could say it is based on exposure, awareness and dis-identification.

Thanks to the three mentioned pillars, the researcher, or more generally the professional, can guarantee that he knows what he is doing and, once declared his contents, *concept* and *percept*, he is able to leave them behind and not be guided by them.

Transpersonal psychology offers an epistemological map that defines an I, place of *concept* and *percept*, and a Self, place of dis-identified and aware observation, able to operate "as if" and therefore transcend the cognitive dimension of reason within the aware dimension of insight, which is that new order of comprehension mentioned by Bohm (Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1986). Steiner says:

*"Only when we have made the world content into our thought content do we rediscover the connection from which we have sundered ourselves. This goal is reached only when the tasks of scientific research are understood much more profoundly than often occurs."*² (Steiner, 1995, p. 33).

And continues:

"But for everyone who has the capacity to observe thinking—and, with good will, every normally constituted human being has this capacity—the observation of thinking is the most important observation that can be made." (Steiner, 1995, p. 20).

In so doing, anyone can understand that thinking:

“Is a kind of activity that is neither subjective nor objective; it goes beyond both these concepts.”³ (Steiner, R., 1995 p. 37).

And understand that the appearances of reductionist materialism, which he calls “naïve realism”, are overcome through the knowledge of thinking true essence⁴ (Steiner, 1995, p. 53).

Comparing Cognitive Maps

The cognitive map of materialistic science is dual, linear and exclusive and it includes both rational and irrational levels. What is knowledgeable and can be investigated according to a rational method is considered to be scientific, whereas what goes beyond is irrational and therefore anti-scientific.

The cognitive map of the transpersonal approach is ternary, circular and inclusive. Knowledge can be acquired through pre-rational, pre-personal, instinctive, rational, personal, transpersonal and supra-rational modalities.

Exposure, awareness and dis-identification represent the main cognitive tools for the evolutionary journey – which takes place through transcendence and inclusion, differentiation and integration – of consciousness from instinct to intuition through reason.

Access to the dimensions of awareness, intuitive consciousness, supra-rational and transpersonal instances of the Self – which transcends and includes without denying, but rather by “purifying” the instinctive and rational dimensions through exposure, awareness and dis-identification – provide validity guarantees that are testable and verifiable by anyone who knows the right set of instructions and is willing to follow them.

In summary:

In order to solve the problems of the fallacy of subjectivity, ineffability of consciousness and evanescence of the soul, psychological science has restricted its area of investigation to behaviour and has chosen the reductionist materialistic approach of natural sciences:

- Everything is matter
- Consciousness is a ghost to be left out of the area of scientific investigation
- The psyche coincides with the mind and resides in the brain
- Reason is the tool
- Measurement and replicability are the method

In so doing, it had the chance to develop effective methods for the study and treatment of psychopathology and behaviour. The object of study of the transpersonal approach is the participatory, unitary and interconnected dialogue between subject and object. The transpersonal approach suggests that:

- Human experience is a participatory dialogue between objectivity and subjectivity and there are various levels of consciousness through which it can be investigated.
- Consciousness has its own independent existence that can be studied by expanding the investigation methods
- The psyche does not coincide with the mind nor reside in the brain
- Awareness and insight are cognitive tools that transcend and include reason as well as offering guarantees for the study of the true nature of the psyche
- The unity of science is not guaranteed “by a utopic reduction of all science to physics and chemistry, but rather by a structural uniformity (regularity of dynamic models) of the various levels of reality”⁵ (in Wilber, 2011, p. 19).

In so doing, it suggests tools and methods for the study and mastery of inner experience, states of consciousness and the development of the highest spiritual potentialities and qualities. Considering work such as *Spiritual Emergency* (Grof & Grof, 1993), or the works of Walsh and Vaughan (Vaughan, 1989; Walsh, Vaughan & Walsh, 1999), among others, would be enough to comprehend that the transpersonal approach is able to operate with competence and deal with psychological problems created by the vast world of spiritual research, providing guarantees of validity.

Transpersonal psychology represents an efficient answer to the overflow of moral-less spiritual practices, as it offers psychological guidelines, maps and methods that allow studying and mastering the ineffable dimensions of consciousness with due care.

Once again, the problem lies not in metaphysical beliefs but in what a person makes of them, that is to say the cognitive system used to deal and elaborate them. It is possible to approach a spiritual experience with a dogmatic, confessional and fundamentalist attitude or a laic, dis-identified and aware one. Transpersonal psychology provides tools for the second kind of approach.

Circular Reasoning

Proceeding with the analysis of the criticism, we now must deal with the article by Peter Schulthess – Chairperson of the Swiss Charta for Psychotherapy and of the Science and Research Committee of EAP – in a recent issue of the *International Journal of Psychotherapy* (Vol. 21, No. 1, March 2017).

Within a debate on psychology and spirituality, Peter Schulthess states:

“Transpersonal Psychology's mysticism, deceive the people who hardly tolerate the existential philosophical view that the creation of life starts from a zero point and that death marks an end-point where everything is over: beginning and end. Full Stop!” (Schulthess, 2017, p. 14)

Emphasizing the scientific inconsistency and epistemological fallacy of such statement might seem superfluous, if not for the significant position held by Schulthess within European Psychotherapy. Schulthess employs the classic circular reasoning typical of wishful thinking, since life begins with birth and ends with death, then Transpersonal Psychology's mysticism deceives the people by stating the contrary.

Besides being wrong from an epistemological point of view, the statement also represents a generalization without any foundation. Where are these deceived people and when does Transpersonal Psychology act that way? Besides ideological beliefs, the scientific thought cannot get around the basic evidence that everything always happens

within a certain space and time. So, Doctor Schutlhess, here are a couple of questions: “When and where does Transpersonal Psychology’s mysticism deceive the people?” “What do you mean exactly by Transpersonal Psychology’s mysticism?”

Perhaps you refer to the shared awareness that apprehension of knowledge, inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender, as a brief analysis of the history of human thought could easily demonstrate?

Perhaps a superficial reading doesn’t allow understanding that transpersonal psychology offers maps and models, tools and methods to guide, without dogmas nor beliefs, anyone who is looking for apprehension of knowledge and takes care of anyone willing to do that and who is lucky enough to lose themselves during the journey, by providing reliable guidance and precise reference points. The research and data on how to develop spiritual competencies in the psychological field are countless (Lukoff, 2016).

A greater knowledge of the scientific documentation and comprehension of the transpersonal approach based on the ternary cognitive map: exposure, dis-identification and awareness, might suggest greater care and willingness to engage in dialogue. It would become possible to engage in a true debate based on the aforementioned epistemological differences and agree, as Tart suggests (Tart, 2009), on the fact that there are principles and methods to investigate reality, as if life begins with birth and ends with death, this way obtaining measurable and replicable results within the fields of physio (matter) and bios (life), as well as principles and methods to investigate the *Psyché* (nous) as if it were an unlimited, synergic and interconnected flow...

As a partial justification for those who are confused, it must be remembered that transpersonal phenomenology, in absence of a map consistent with the territory, might *seem* to coincide with magical, superstitious and mythological contents, typical of uncritical and pre-rational fusional experiences. However, the transpersonal approach offers a non-judgmental kind of listening, maps and tools, words to name things, in order to face the arduous psychological journey into territories at the doorstep of mystery, as well as competencies for a leap of consciousness that makes it possible to face the ineffable experience of the *Psyché*, beyond a literal reading, towards a further mode, symbolic, dynamic, interconnected, synergic and archetypical.

The ternary cognitive map together with the “as if” epistemology, the tools of awareness and dis-identification, the widening of the cartography of the psyche, and pre-birth and transpersonal experiences, allows operating with the aforementioned vast phenomenology, integrating it in the field of psychology. Access to super-conscious, transpersonal and transcultural states of consciousness makes it possible to access profound and archetypical structures of consciousness.

As a consequence, the competencies obtained preserve the subjects of experience from the risk of using them in an uncritical, manipulative and dogmatic way, enriching psychology with tools, areas of intervention and research.

Psychologists state:

“Shamanic intuition and/or the eternal mystical traditions of the high religious cultures (“philosophia perennis”) alienates us from our present culture and also from our profession, as the argument is hardly rational and not externally verifiable.”
(Schulthess, 2017, p. 16)

Since the only science is materialistic reductionism, everything that is hardly rational and not externally verifiable is left out of psychology. Once again, the use of circular reasoning is using the premises to justify the conclusions.

Even if we overlook the ethnocentrism of an attitude that excludes what doesn't belong to Western culture for the mere reason of not belonging to it, it is very difficult to find a justification for an argument willing to support the danger of alienation in welcoming the inheritance of the past in our current culture.

Plato was aware that we are standing on the shoulders of giants. It wouldn't take much to see the historical evidence that the majority of the current psychotherapeutic practices already existed in ancient shamanic cultures.

Without the technical and cultural heritage of the past psychotherapy would not exist. If anything, the problem lies in the thinking that uses it, which depends on one's state of consciousness, which in turn, depends on one's cultural beliefs and emotional experience.

The need to differ from the past indicates an unresolved bond with it, which is a legitimate phase during development, but it must be transcended and included within integration once the conflict is resolved.

It is legitimate to feel overpowered by a heavy unresolved past and therefore act to overcome its shadows, for instance, thanks to the development of reason and the scientific thought that have freed us from the slavery to the superstitious, magical and mythological thought. On the contrary, it is certainly limiting to leave behind the inheritance of the knowledge and tools that those who came before us conquered and it is even more disconcerting to exclude from the community those who are not willing to do that.

Once again, the maps of transpersonal psychology, that take into consideration various states of consciousness and evolutionary stages of thought, provide psychology with tools capable of distinguishing and protecting from an inappropriate use of powerful traditional healing technologies.

The transpersonal psychologist's knowledge of states and stages of consciousness is the necessary resource to face those risks that the psychological community sees as a threat to its own identity.

By expanding its jurisdiction and methods through the contributions of the transpersonal epistemology and methodology, future psychological science could become a reference point capable of protecting the most authentic spiritual areas of human experience.

These areas will become increasingly attractive and it would be deleterious to leave them in the hands of New Age, confessional dogmatism of Religion or even worse the dark objectives of fundamentalism and esotericism.

The "as if" ontology, epistemological maps and methodology of awareness allow traditional tools to cooperate with supra-rational modalities, purifying the process by providing guarantees of ethical and methodological validity.

In so doing, as Boadella warns, it might become possible to prevent "throwing the baby out with the bath water", giving back to the *Psyché* its original meaning and to psychology its function for the future.

Psychology or Spirituality

Another singular accusation is that transpersonal psychology contributes to spiritual visions rather than the psychology of spirituality. Such a statement is only possible if you don't properly understand Transpersonal Psychology.

There are many established clinical methodologies, namely psychotherapeutic transpersonal approaches. Having a 'vision' means supporting the practice with a theoretical model that is both ontological and epistemological. Transpersonal ontology and epistemology inevitably share many statements with perennial philosophy but, as explained

before, differ from it in the interpretation and application in therapeutic practice.

The distinction between pre-personal and transpersonal contents, the laic, non-confessional, non-doctrinal and non-dogmatic approach favoured by the supra-rational and transcultural “as if” reading, the definition of maps and models that indicate the phases of the transpersonal evolutionary process, and the use of a clinical methodology that teaches how to reach, master and verify certain transpersonal stages and states, trace a clear boundary with spiritual and esoteric traditions for anyone who is willing to see the distinction.

There are many different psychodynamic, cognitive and humanistic approaches. Similarly, there are various transpersonal psychologies that present transpersonal psychotherapeutic models attributable to common matrices that respect the entire spectrum of human experience and deal both with historically important issues of Western psychology and specific matters of the transpersonal approach. (Tart, 1992).

From Evidence-based to Attention-oriented Methodologies

The evidence-based method starts thanks to the life and work of Florence Nightingale (1820–1910). Nightingale used the collection, analysis, and graphical display of healthcare data from the Crimean War to prove that conditions at the time in military hospitals were not beneficent, but in fact harmful to the lives of the soldiers being treated (Small, 1998).

The transpersonal approach’s suggestion to the scientific community is based on accurate reflections, such as the consideration that evidence-based methods were born within the medical field to study the effectiveness of cures for diseases in a context where it is clear that the disease is objectifiable and there is a method that can be a protocol for external intervention.

As it occurred for the reductionist scientific method – which, after its huge success within the study of matter, was implemented for the study of the living being and the psyche, which was in the meantime reduced to the mind and placed in the brain – the evidence-based method was also implemented for the study of behaviour, given its usefulness for the evaluation of medical treatment.

Transpersonal ontology and epistemology suggest a wider view that is not reducible only to objective data, the cure of symptoms and study of behaviour. The object of investigation of the transpersonal approach is the participatory dialogue subject/object, where the “object symptom” and the “object behaviour” are not separable from the “subject inner experience”, where the “object body” and the “object mind” are not separable from the “subject consciousness”, unitary experience of the psyche, dynamic and interconnected.

Moreover, it recognizes in its subject/object of investigation a self-organizing and self-transcending complexity (CAS), as well as a multiplicity of stages and states for which mere objective evidence is limiting. If the psyche is considered an expression of a body-mind unity, stratified in unconscious, conscious and supra-conscious dimensions, pre-rational, rational and supra-rational stages, evidence is interpreted as appearance. Therefore, a deeper and integral investigation is needed; an investigation that respects and recognizes the complexity and mystery and that timidly, humbly and consciously explores the ineffable territories of consciousness and the

transpersonal dimension searching for classifiable regularities. These regularities might not coincide tout court with the measurable evidence demanded by behavioural science, but they may be compared within a view of reciprocal respect and synergic collaboration.

Ultimately, the transpersonal approach agrees with the necessity of the experiential guarantees demanded by the reductionist scientific method if limited to the study of behaviour.

At the same time, for the study of inner experience, the transpersonal approach claims the most elevated qualities of the human being, the realization of the Self and states of consciousness as well as other methods and forms of guarantee, as for instance the epistemological and experiential ones.

Proof that the transpersonal vision does not deny, but rather transcends and includes evidence-based methods, lies in the fact that the methods of treatment and results of transpersonal psychology do not avoid evaluation through specific tools of measurement and diagnosis of the related constructs in the field, as the DSM-VTR classifications or psychometric tools such as the MMPI or the scales of Beck and Hamilton.

There are specific methods of measurement for the transpersonal field, precisely twenty-six different tools that are used for research (MacDonald, Friedman & Kuentzel, 1999, p. 137-154), such as: 'The Assessment Schedule for Altered States of Consciousness'; 'The Ego-Grasping Orientation'; 'The Expressions of Spirituality Inventory'; 'The Hindu Religious Coping Scale'; 'The Measures of Hindu Pathways'; 'The Self-Expansiveness Scale'; and 'The Vedic Personality Inventory'.

As it isn't limited to the study of behaviour and it deals with issues such as inner experience, the participatory object/subject dialogue and the evolutionary journey of realization of the Self, the transpersonal approach suggests the necessary transcendence and inclusion of measures and falsifications within qualities, the overcoming of correct data through the identification of regularity, as well as investigation and description through attention and awareness. A lot of research within the transpersonal field present and use innovative epistemological and research approaches, as described by Anderson and Braud (2011).

We refer, among others, to: 'The Intuitive Inquiry' by Anderson; 'The Integral Inquiry' by Braud (Anderson & Braud, 2011); 'The Organic Inquiry' by Clements; 'The Essential Science' by Tart (2009); 'The First-Person Science' by Varela (1999); 'The Integral Science' by Wilber (2011); and 'The Second Attention Epistemology' by Lattuada (2010, 2011, 2012).

Experience Based Guarantees

Scientific research excludes from its area of investigation any subjective data, emphasizes objective data and by choice disregards the subject of experience, if not in order to submit it to a strict experimental protocol.

When dealing with Physio, Bios and behaviour receiving credit is relatively easy. What happens when dealing with inner experience of a spiritual kind or non-ordinary states of consciousness? In this case, academic qualifications are not enough to have credit in the study of the *Psyché* in its integral conception; it is necessary to explain one's experience and clinical history and from there deduce the knowledge that one has gained through hands-on experience. I don't mean that we should give credit to someone only because of his experience and consequently that this person is allowed to obviate the hard task of validation of his statements, but rather that anyone who is willing to embrace a discipline and make statements about it should declare in detail his experience in the matter, so that his history, coherence of method and subjective data can contribute to give value to his statements.

A first-hand science encourages complete transparency about our beliefs, values, motivations and experience related to the subject of research, as well as the exposition of our experience during the investigation.

This way, as Rosemarie Anderson (2017) suggests, the use of reflexivity might help the researcher rather than represent a problem to dismiss. Moreover, if it's true that looks are deceiving and reality is not as it appears, it is necessary to use an experience-based method that teaches going beyond appearances, beyond the mind understood as rational thinking, and consequently the researcher will have to explain how he intends to obviate the issue of appearance and the tools he will use to do that. Experiential investigation uses millenary technologies implemented for centuries by spiritual researchers from all around the world and it is implemented this way:

- Through the laboratory of personal, inner and integral experience, according to declared and validated methods, insights are reached and they are explained to anyone who wants to verify them through the same experiential procedure and therefore recognize the veracity or falseness of the conclusions.
- As Wilber says: "they show that there are higher domains of awareness that include love, identity, reality, Self and truth (Wilber, 2011, p. 369).
- These statements are not dogmatic; they are not believed because stated by an authority, but rather because they are based on hundreds of years of experimental introspections and shared tests.
- False statements are rejected on the basis of consensual evidence; successive evidence is used to correct and tune experimental conclusions.
- In other words, these spiritual dimensions are literally purely scientific and the systematic presentations of these dimensions follow exactly the ones of any *reconstructive science*".

Following are a few more words about the method, that is to say the type of thinking through which these statements are reached.

The highest states of consciousness that operate according to modalities of supra-rational thinking, such as casual and non-dual, can be explained rationally by those who have experienced them in first hand but cannot be experienced through rational thinking (first attention). They can be reached following a trans-rational and contemplative modality (second attention) (Lattuada, 2010, 2011, 2012).

We can understand the accusations of elitism and non-scientificity, but we cannot agree with them. The scientific community should simply accept that there are states of consciousness and stages of thought whose access demands precise procedures and whose acquisitions can be described and understood with the use of a supra and trans-rational language.

Hereafter, we will report how Wilber describes a process of access to the psychic, subtle, causal and non-dual worlds, providing validity guarantees (Wilber, 2011 p. 381)

- Injunction: “If you want to know this, do this”.
- Insight: as mentioned before, insight should be considered as the adequate tool to reach the true nature of knowledge; it is a direct vision that shows things the way they really are, a flash that we have all experienced once, that unveils the veil and reveals the data hidden beyond appearances.
- Shared confirmation or denial: sharing one’s conclusions with a community of equals.

Conclusions

We have tried to emphasize the specificity of the transpersonal approach, characterized by its object of investigation, the participatory dialogue between an individual and the world marked by an evolutionary journey of gradual realization of the Self towards the comprehension of the dimensions of inner experience of a spiritual kind. We have explored the guarantees of transpersonal psychology, offering a brief overview of the benchmark ontological premises, epistemological maps and models that are based on aware observation and the historical roots that support it. We have traced the outlines of an experience-based methodology that can be subject to validation and capable of engaging in debate and integrating with the methods of behavioural science.

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Criteria for Science-based Psychotherapy and the Emancipatory Aspects of its Secular Spirituality

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Abstract

The criteria for a science-based psychotherapy, as defined in the Swiss Charter for Psychotherapy, is applied with reference to the findings and scientific epistemology, taking C.G. Jung's Analytical Psychology and Transpersonal psychology as an example. It can thereby be demonstrated that C.G. Jung is not one of the founders of Transpersonal Psychology, as its representatives' claim. Jungian Psychology meets the prescribed criteria. Transpersonal Psychology on the other hand cannot meet them, as it goes from a position, which is not supportable in terms of epistemology, as it is built on the assumption of a transcendental reality.

Over and above this conclusion, it can be demonstrated that the whole wide and diverse field of spirituality can be justified on secular grounds. The secular view of spirituality in science-based psychotherapy is not only justified through enlightened humanistic ideals, which protect the patient's autonomy and emancipation. It is also an anthropological constant that has its roots in mammals' empathic and altruistic behaviour, in particular in primates with their emotional and cognitive abilities.

Key Words: Analytical Psychology, C.G. Jung, Transpersonal Psychology, epistemology, philosophy of science, mentalising, secular spirituality, placebo effect.

Introduction

The current occasion for the present work is, on the one hand, an application made by Transpersonal Psychotherapy representatives for recognition by the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) of its scientific nature; and, on the other hand, the guidelines for demarcating scientific psychotherapy from esoterically-based methods. There has been intense debate in the EAP about this. In the above-mentioned application Transpersonal Psychotherapy refers to established therapy practices, which they claim is founded on the humanistic schools and that C.G. Jung is one their founders.

I, as a Jungian analyst, have been asked whether Analytical Psychology is also a form of Transpersonal Psychology, and linked to this is a question about its scientific method. Since the start of the 1990's, within the framework of legislative regulation of psychotherapy as a healing therapy, it has been so recognised. In Switzerland, representatives of the main directions of psychotherapy (schools of depth psychology, humanistic and integrative psychology) held conferences between 1990 and 1993, attended by the psychotherapeutic training institutions and professional associations, with the aim of preserving psychotherapy as an independent scientific domain in all its diversity, its interdisciplinary nature and to develop it further.

A consensus was reached about the contents, training, science and ethics, which took the form of the Swiss Charter for Psychotherapy (2016). Since then there have been regular conferences and combined research projects where contents and structures have been further developed and checked to ensure that the conventions have been abided by. In the case of research, a specific declaration was compiled and a regulation drawn up listing the criteria that psychotherapy research had to meet in order that it complied with the special conditions of psychotherapy research (cf. Ibid.). Influential protagonists in these processes were also involved in the establishment and development of the EAP.

In connection with Transpersonal Psychotherapy, its scientific nature became a theme, as it assumes a position which is neither tenable in terms of its knowledge basis, nor the epistemology. For this reason, it appeals to quite a few therapists on the basis of their personal convictions. This is not unexpected as a religious need is a basic need for many people. However, for psychotherapy as a science, this cannot be a basis. For this reason, Peter Schulthess brought this theme to public attention. In his article, published in the Association of Swiss Psychotherapists' (ASP) journal "Psychotherapy needs to be demarcated from Transpersonal Psychotherapy and Esotericism" (Schulthess, 2015, p. 23), he triggered a heated discussion with regards to spirituality in psychotherapy. An expanded version of this article regarding the international discussion can be found in the EAP's Journal (2017).

My answer to the question if Jung's Analytical Psychology is a form of Transpersonal Psychotherapy, in that Analytical Psychology has not been identified as a Transpersonal Psychology and this label is also not applicable on factual grounds. The more complex answer develops in the work at hand and provides me with the opportunity of demarcating esoteric methods from scientific criteria as they are laid down in the Charter, and as it applies to Jungian psychology. Thereby, four essential aspects are highlighted:

- The exemplary application of Charter criteria as taken from concrete therapy procedures;
- A more in-depth description of the philosophy underpinning the Charter (cf. Buchmann *et al.*, 1996);
- A contribution to the discussion about spirituality in psychotherapy in general as well as;
- A clarifying description of Jungian Psychotherapy with reference to its position regarding spiritual questions.

The theme of this article is therefore not "Jungian Psychotherapy versus Transpersonal Psychotherapy" but rather the application of the Swiss Charter criteria to all psychotherapy procedures.

Exemplary Application of the Charter's Epistemological and Scientifically-Based Criteria – to C.G. Jung's Analytical Psychology

C. G. Jung's Analytical Psychology lends itself particularly well to demonstrating my thesis, as by acknowledging people's religious needs, it has introduced this as a central question in psychotherapy. Over decades of Jung's extensive and ongoing examination of religious phenomena, and his

comprehensive comparison of Christianity with other religions, also means that Analytical Psychology began to become involved in the discussion on the knowledge and meaning of religion, which previously was the exclusive domain of theology (cf. Schaer, 1947, p. 9). Naturally, this also led to a description of certain similarities and fundamental differences in the goal setting of both psychotherapy and religion.

The Swiss Psychotherapy Charter formulated two crucial criteria for investigating whether a psychotherapy direction should be recognised or not. One of these criteria is: if a therapy direction has an epistemology, which directs its critical investigation of our knowledge towards itself. In contrast to pure objective sciences, the object of psychology is not outside the psyche; rather it is the psyche itself that we wish to gain insight. It lacks an Archimedean point outside of ourselves as Jung pointed out. This criterion applies to the epistemology of philosophy as well (cf. Schoendorf, 2014, p. 9).

The other criterion asks if scientific theory requires a methodology for self-reflection of psychotherapy practice (cf. Erismann, 2016; Swiss Charter for Psychotherapy, 2016). Meeting this criterion is a given in Analytical Psychology, as – for over a hundred years of scientific discourse – it's concepts have been questioned, challenged and discussed. Furthermore, most of their therapy techniques have been taken over by other recognised procedures. As an example, methodological self-reflection regarding appropriate research methods for Analytical Psychology has, in recent times, been mentioned in the work of Ralf Vogel (2012). Last but not least, what needs to be mentioned is the connection between the reception of Analytical Psychology in the psychology of religion.

The application of criteria from both epistemology and the philosophy of science are fundamental for psychotherapy as a scientific discipline. They not only establish it as a science in its own right, but also make possible its demarcation from other forms of knowledge such as common knowledge or intuitive knowledge (cf. Erismann, 2016).

The Theory of Archetypes

At the centre of Jung's investigation of various religions is the 'archetype'. The clarifying question for now deals with applying above mentioned criteria to the theory of archetypes. It covers three dimensions: a biological; a mythological; and an attempt to explore the relationship between mind and matter.

At a *biological* level, Jung understands archetypes as an evolutionary, biological adaptation that corresponds to instincts and "patterns of behaviour", as is the case with animals. Archetypes are phylo-genetically acquired neuronal, psychological systems that form the basis for behaviour, perception, thinking, understanding, self-reflection and intentionality, as well as the creation of

human's inner worlds. They are not only reactive, rather they build an active dynamic part of the psyche, as well as regulating developmental psychological changes in actual situations and the corresponding interactions, in that a natural "set point" is reached.

In consciousness, archetypes appear in dreams and fantasies are often dressed up in emotionally highly-charged mythological images, which vary depending on one's culture, however these overlap in terms of their meaning. They take into account both the current, actual inner and outer world. For this reason, the images are effective. These are used in therapy in as much as they are felt emotionally by the patient and they can also be interpreted mutually with the therapist. They help to structure psychological processes meaningfully. Their function, as natural "set points", makes them a central resilience factor in the most diverse of life situations.

Whilst the biological and mythological dimensions of archetypal theory present a connection between biology, social behaviour and culture, the attempts to explore the theme mind matter Connection is in a completely different scientific context, in that here both the science of the early twentieth century, which formed a new world view and view of humans, atomic physics and depth psychology, were brought together. This theoretical aspect was first formulated in the transition from the 1940's to 1950's through collaboration between Jung and Wolfgang Pauli; a Nobel Prize winner for Atomic Physics. Jung was also familiar with Einstein and Heisenberg's concepts, which also contributed. It was about an understanding of the so-called "synchronicity phenomena". Jung used the term as follows:

"I am therefore using the general concept of synchronicity in the special sense of a coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events which have the same or a similar meaning." (Jung, 1952a, CW 8, § 849)

The endeavour to construct a theoretical connection between mind and matter was new and corresponded to the spirit of the times, in that Jung – throughout his life as a university teaching scientist – was in on-going exchanges with other scientists from various faculties.

The Epistemology Criterion

Jung was aware of the epistemological threshold that he found himself in with these considerations. Jung, as well as Pauli, described their theory as a myth of their time (Jaffé, 1979, p. 67). It was helpful as a metaphor, which Jung did not mould in matter or announce it as objective truth. The following quote shows Jung's understanding of his world-view and image of humanity:

"Everywhere one hears the cry for a Weltanschauung; everyone asks the meaning of life and the world. [...] But, if we do not want to develop backwards, a new Weltanschauung will have to abandon the superstition of its objective validity and admit that it is only a picture, which we paint to please our minds, and not a magical name with which we can conjure up real things. A Weltanschauung is made, not for the world, but for ourselves. If we do not fashion for ourselves a picture of the world, we do not see ourselves either, who are the faithful reflections of that world. Only when mirrored in our picture of the

world can we see ourselves in the round. Only in our creative acts do we step forth into the light and see ourselves whole and complete. Never shall we put any face on the world other than our own, and we have to do this precisely in order to find ourselves.” (Jung, 1931, GW 8, § 737).

This quote is representative for many in other places of Jung’s work and shows – to a large extent – a constructivist view (Schlegel, 2006, p. 189), that world-views are not objective things, and that (for him), it was primarily about the recognition of knowledge. In addition, it shows how Jung links this conclusion with the (archetypal) human need for self-knowledge. We recognise (by following his logic) in a mirror of our own projections, which are the result of our creative abilities, in which we find freedom, and create worlds that allow us to be fascinated by them.

With respect to characterising the concept of archetypes, Jung in his “Definitions” refers to the key word “image” (cf. Jung, 1960, CW 6, §743). He couldn’t have made a clearer demarcation, as everything falling under the key word “image” must be understood as a symbol or a metaphor. So, to name an example, with the archetype of the ‘god image’ is a symbol for the psychological contents and not an objective one, per se.

The Distinction between a Metaphor and the “Real World”

Making the distinction between a metaphor and the “real world” appears to be very difficult, even undesirable, for many people due to their fundamental religious needs. Two representatives of Freudian Psychoanalysis reported under the title, “The Energy Must Flow” about a research project where the colleagues, who had been trained in a scientific psychotherapy procedure, and who had migrated professionally towards an esoteric form of therapy, after a turning point in their lives when their psychotherapeutic orientation was questioned. The authors came to the following conclusions:

“It appears to be a human need to place their life history in a more or less coherent narrative connection, which gives their biography meaning and sense and provides them with a feeling of identity [...] Our investigation also shows that psychotherapists, who change from conventional to spiritual procedures, in just about every case a very personal moment in the search for meaning played a role. [...] He had through psychotherapy found a cosmic substance, which was communicated to him. In most cases this substance is represented by energy.

Now what must be admitted is that concepts such as the unconscious, repression or drive naturally also have the tendency transfer from the world of metaphor into the world of being. However all these concepts have often been questioned and challenged, and the psychoanalyst who acts as through an unconscious exists as a place or a power is not at the right level of discussion. If he does this then he is unlikely to distinguish between healers who rely on higher powers who guide them with healing (In this connection C.G. Jung is often abused).

Precisely this distinction is of central importance. Freud’s meta-psychology owes its scientific theoretical place to the fact that Freud was also not naive as to confuse his conceptualisation with real existence. The concept of ‘drive’ was also described by Freud as a mythology.

This position allows for fundamental and permanent doubt. This one cannot remove in that one replaces scrutinised models with intuitive knowledge [...] in this sense spiritual healers are simply pre-modern (which they are keen to invoke!). Regression means: falling back to an earlier stage and to tasks already achieved. Cognitive regression in this sense could mean: not taking any notice of the Enlightenment (Jaeggi & Moeller, 2000, p. 34 ff).

Analytical Psychology does not allow its own concepts to be switched over into the “world of being” but rather in addition shows – quite to the contrary – the symbolic aspect of concepts that are traditionally anchored in the “world of being” as with the conceptual pair “God” and “God image”. The emancipatory aspect in psychotherapy is founded – last, but not least – on this distinction.

Within psychotherapy procedures, these concepts can – to all intents and purposes – definitely have different meanings and evaluations, as with the example of the concept of God in the psychology of Freud and Jung demonstrates: with Freud, it is treated as a form of regression, whereas with Jung it is as a psychological function assimilated in the individuation process.

The Epistemological Criterion and Psychotherapy as a Science in its Own Right

By means of the scientific theoretical criterion: “Methodicity” psychotherapy is investigated:

“The question what constitutes science can be answered that a scientific skill is characterised by a high level of methodicity. By “methodicity” I understand a scientific methodological reflectivity, i.e. the reflection of a science on its own basis its fundamental concepts and fundamental differentiating features, the manner and methods of gaining knowledge, theory formation, structuring and presentation of knowledge gained as well as the development of implementation procedures. Methodicity can also be a boundary setting criterion when compared to other forms of knowledge like everyday knowledge or the mythical knowledge.” (Erismann, 2016, p. 7)

Psychotherapy also has its own scientific form emerging out of the practical work in therapy, where the subject and object cannot be separated, as can be done in pure objective science:

“An important role in exploring the logic of change is thereby played in the relationship of the therapist to patient, i.e. clients and the work on their psychological processes (e.g. dreams, thoughts, fantasies, feelings and behaviour). The work on these psychological processes is closely interwoven with the experience of the person in therapy during the therapeutic sessions. This in turn is dependent on their personality.

Psychotherapy is thereby based on an inter-subjective event. It investigates the patient’s consciousness, identity, and subjectivity on the basis of an affective relatedness and a biographical connection to others: thinking in relationships complements thinking in intra-psychic concepts. The investigation of this relationship (therapeutic relationship) where the subject and object cannot be considered separately and the resulting theory construction is an important part of the scientific work and a research object of the specialist area of psychotherapy.

This scientific work allows one to work analogously with the unconscious parts, e.g. dreams and fantasy creations, none of the events having a detached objectivity. Objectifying comes through critical reflection on the part of the therapist and is achieved with respect to their own experience and perceived through reference to the

theory. Thereby it stands on an unbreakable dialectic between an encounter and objectifying the client and their self.

It thereby becomes clear that psychotherapy has its own methodological access to the object of its research and can thereby be distinguished from objectifying disciplines. The involvement of the subjective as well as the establishing the logic of changing psychological intentional systems is essential to the uniqueness of psychotherapy from the epistemological perspective.” (Swiss Charter for Psychotherapy, 2016)

We turn now to an illustrative example of this criterion from Analytical Psychology: as early as 1935, Jung published the following passage, which anticipated the main finding of research today – that the therapeutic relationship is the main agent of change – he says:

“[...] that psychotherapy is not the simple, straightforward method people at first believed it to be, but, as has gradually become clear, a kind of dialectical process, a dialogue or discussion between two persons. Dialectic was originally the art of conversation among the ancient philosophers, but very early became the term for the process of creating new syntheses. A person is a psychic System which, when it affects another person, enters into reciprocal reaction with another psychic system. This, perhaps the most modern, formulation of the psychotherapeutic relation between physician and patient is clearly very far removed from the original view that psychotherapy was a method which anybody could apply in stereotyped fashion in order to reach the desired result. It was not the needs of speculation which prompted this unsuspected and I might well say unwelcome widening of the horizon, but the hard facts of reality.” (Jung, 1935, GW 16, § 1).

“ [...] the therapist is no longer the agent of treatment but a fellow participant in a process of individual development.” (Ibid., § 7).

The Separation of the Inner and the Outer Perspectives

The ability for reflection on one's own experiences means the capacity to distance oneself from oneself and so to say; to perceive oneself from the outside, belongs to one of biological basic human faculties of humankind. However, when a critical or the relativized reflection is also seen as part of this basic facility, it requires additional training in a suitable social environment in order to develop and unfold. In order for there to be a simultaneous reference to a theory and its critical questioning and further development requires, in every case, a special cultural education.

This recursive process can be well illustrated by taking as an example the treatment of the archetype. It is about the separation of the inner and outer perspective, which avoids the crossover of psychological experiences from the “world of metaphor” in the “world of being”. Jung describes this process in two interconnected paragraphs (naming of the perspectives have been included by the author). From the third person perspective, he adheres to the following:

“Of course this term [the archetype (MS)] is not meant to denote an inherited idea, but rather an inherited mode of psychic functioning, [...]. In other words, it is a pattern of behaviour. This aspect of the archetype, the purely biological one, is the proper concern of scientific psychology.

[From the first person perspective he continues as follows]:

But the picture changes at once when looked at from the inside, from within the realm of the subjective psyche. Here the archetype appears as a numinous factor, as an experience of fundamental significance. Whenever it clothes itself in suitable symbols (which is not always the case), it seizes hold of the individual in a startling way, creating a condition amounting almost to possession, the consequences of which may be incalculable.

[Finally, there is another change to the third person perspective]:

It is for this reason that the archetype is so important in the psychology of religion. All religious and metaphysical concepts rest upon archetypal foundations, and, to the extent that we are able to explore them, we can cast at least a superficial glance behind the scenes of world history, and lift a little the veil of mystery which hides the meaning of metaphysical ideas. Metaphysics is, as it were, a physics or physiology of the archetypes, and its dogmas formulate the insights that have been gained into the nature of these dominants—the unconscious leitmotifs that characterize the psychic happenings of a given epoch. The archetype is metaphysical because it transcends consciousness.” (Jung, 1948, GW 18/2, § 1228-1229).

The first section is the theory of archetypes, the scientific perspective that is devoid of every emotion. In the second paragraph, reflecting on oneself and one’s own experiences from a critical distance; and in the third paragraph, theoretical considerations are made as to the consequences of the experience from the first person perspective for collective phenomena (moreover this quote shows that Jung assigns metaphysics and transcendence to the unconscious; and not as customary to an area that transcends biological existence).

A conflict between the first person and the third person perspective belongs to people in the tradition of Enlightenment. We can always take both perspectives, and move between them (i.e. in contrasting positions). Art and philosophy often show this ‘Janus face’ between knowledge (outer perspective) and belief (inner perspective). Jungian psychology also moves in this proximity, which – admittedly – is part of its charm.

Spirituality and Psychotherapy

“Within the framework of psychotherapy Jung took into account religious needs as fundamental human needs and of great importance. Thereby for him it was not about dogma, but rather about the religious experience, which he saw as constituting a sense of meaning in life.

Even if Jung repeatedly emphasised that religion does not mean confession, both concepts are close to one another and can lead to misunderstanding. Today, there is the opportunity to use the expression <spiritual> for <religious> in the Jungian sense, even when this expression in Jung’s time was not in use. It is about a liberal open spiritual practice – a relationship between the outer and inner. It is about experiences, which moves us deeply emotionally.” (Kast, 2008, p. 67)

Is there a definition of spirituality today? Even professionals from various fields who are concerned with spirituality, are unified in as much that it is a difficult question:

“A conceptual determination of spirituality is simultaneously necessary and difficult.” (Steinmann, 2011, p. 49)

Traditionally, “spirituality” had – in ordinary parlance – a transcendent dimension, today there is also the opinion that it can be based as a worldly meaningfulness alone:

“Even though spirituality is generally referenced on something above the immediate ego and its goals and needs that goes beyond the understood dimensions, currently there is no scientific (and also no ideological) consensus about the exact understanding of this multifaceted concept.” (Koenig, 2008)

“For example, the question is open as to whether a relationship to a transcendental dimension must be given explicitly in order to speak of spirituality in the narrow sense, or an ego overriding, altruistic humanistic world orientation is sufficient to talk about spirituality in a wider sense.” (Kohls & Walach, 2016, p. 135)

In the context of psychotherapy, this isn’t even a proper question because psychotherapy is committed to the process of Enlightenment: it is itself an Enlightenment project. From this position, the “ego-transcending, altruistic-humanistic value orientation” is the decisive criterion that accounts for spirituality within psychotherapy.

This is also how psychotherapists who describe themselves as religious see it. For the Jewish psychotherapist, Gabriel Strenger the concept of “spirituality” is inclusive. On the occasion of a radio broadcast in connection with the publication of his book, *Jewish Spirituality*, he answered the question what spirituality is, as follows: “*When I am permitted to generalise then there is only universal spirituality, but there can only be particularistic containers for spirituality*” (Strenger, 2016).

He assumes that the goal of working on oneself spiritually, of doing good, is only within the context of one’s own religious culture, that means can only be realised as: “tradition which also has to do with the collective unconscious of humanity (Ibid.). In spite of this personal conviction, he does not mix therapy with belief.

It is important to establish that a personal view about spirituality also with religious therapists does not lead to corresponding interventions in treatment, because they do not see their role in the context of religion as is the case with a pastoral counsellor. Strenger clearly goes a step further. For him, it is not only a role but also about a theoretical boundary setting. Although he describes himself as a religious Jew, he speaks of a “universal spirituality, which also exists outside of the religions:

“Spirituality for me means bringing humanity back to their true core. That is for me as psychologist so important, because in psychotherapy that is specifically what I do: I try to work through the shell which has been formed through fears and complexes and traumata, to arrive at the innermost core. In this respect for me psychoanalysis and religious spirituality are actually very similar.” (Ibid.)

Strenger goes from the position that – in the case of religious examination – it is also about getting to the “true core”, in spite of this the psychotherapeutic process is somewhat different. This boundary setting is indispensable for scientifically-orientated psychotherapists, as it is not about wounding the

“innermost core” of the autonomous individual, as it only thereby that resilience is permanently strengthened.

To quote another example, the same position is also brought by Nicola Gianinazzi, psychotherapist, former monk and current member of the ASP executive, who also said in an interview as to the relationship between belief and psychotherapy. He was asked:

“Are spiritual questions in your work frequently a theme, perhaps: even more frequent as with others because you also have a spiritual background? Do you find spirituality important for your work as a psychotherapist?”

He responded as follows:

“I do not believe that, on the contrary: it seems to me that increasingly the dichotomy between mind and so-called matter is being overcome. What does it mean to have a spiritual, Christian, Franciscan background, if not that one gets involved with men and women one meets in life or develops curiosity for nature and science?

I believe that it is what is within me and also with many colleagues; others like to put emphasis on other aspects, everyone lives in terms of his own, personal style in the context of his own subjectivity and we know that plays an important role in the therapeutic relationship.” (Gianinazzi, 2014)

This statement shows that even religious therapists do not allow their beliefs to flow into their role as psychotherapists. It also demonstrates the non-judgmental nature of the scientific position, because also the patients are then supported when they want to work in the framework on their own culture and contents of beliefs:

“In therapy tried and tested principles of abstinence, the therapeutic framework and the reflection of the transference and counter-transference events are proven protective factors, in this connection abstinence must also be reticence with ideological questions in that I support the patient in finding his own way. The therapeutic framework stands for relinquishing presenting oneself as a spiritual teacher or guru, no matter how subtle.” (Raak, 2016, p. 447)

Truthfulness in Respect of Oneself

To find one’s own “true core truthfulness” is an absolute requirement, not only for patients, but also for therapists, it is however often in precisely those moments in the therapeutic process, in which they admit they don’t know how to proceed, where the patient is encouraged to activate their own resources. These are also the special moments in therapy processes that often develop towards this point. The philosopher Thomas Metzinger derives spirituality out of truthfulness with oneself. According to him a spiritual approach is indicated through:

“That one recognizes the moral duty, of being radically honest with oneself. A very interesting question is; if in the future there will be a secular spirituality? That means a spirituality which is based on direct experience, not on theories, not on concepts, and the facts would be able to be confronted in the same way as the scientific facts about the brain.” (Metzinger, 2011)

With his assumption of a spirituality concept, based on experience and the recognition of the biology of the mind, Metzinger is in agreement with Jung:

“One of the most important achievements of analytical psychology is undoubtedly the recognition of the biological structure of the mind [...], something that has taken many years to discover.” (Jung, 1923, GW 17, § 101)

“The archetype is pure, unvitiated nature” (Jung, 1954, GW 8, § 412).

In Analytical Psychology, Jung’s corresponding road to the “true core is the individuation process, and the method for following this route is “ radical honesty with oneself as the method when going this route”. We must face facts, and – in addition – this also happens through the connection (‘religio’) of human nature in working with archetypal images, which emerge from the unconscious in the course of therapy process in dreams and fantasies. They show the biological structure of the soul and symbolise above all the many different, interpersonal and individual situations:

“There [what is referred to here is the archetype (MS)] is a mystical aura about its numinosity, and it has a corresponding effect upon the emotions. It mobilizes philosophical and religious convictions [...] and draws the subject under its spell, from which despite the most desperate resistance he is unable, and finally no longer even willing, to break free, because the experience brings with it a depth and fullness of meaning that was unthinkable before.” (Jung, 1954, GW 8, § 405)

The route to individuation is spiritual, in as much as it goes beyond the immediate ego and its goals and needs and connects with fellow men to their own natural core. Ethics is (in addition) also indispensable, as well as meaning, finding meaning and emancipation, if the individual and the community wish to develop productively.

Jungian Psychology is not a Transpersonal Psychology

Jungian Psychology positions itself clearly within scientific criteria. To answer the question, ‘Is it a Transpersonal Psychology?’, the answer must therefore be “No”. On the contrary, it is obliged to provide an explanation that shows that the religious symbols represent a visual expression of psychological processes and that they demonstrate their fundamental biological nature. So, Jung’s representations do not refer directly to “God” but to “Images of God”. Eckhard Frick, medical practitioner, psychoanalyst, Jesuit, and was the first occupant of the chair for “Spiritual Care” in Germany. He said in his discussions with Bruno Lautenschlager, who is also a Jesuit and a psychoanalyst:

“I maintain it is indeed one of Jung’s greatest services, bringing back the question of Job from a metaphysical firmament onto the ground of an existential discussion.” (Frick, 2009, p. 28)

Hans Schaer also saw this in a similar way, in his time as theology professor, and religious psychologist at the University of Berne. For him, the meaning of Jungian Psychology exists therein that it is an existential discussion in the psychology through the “reality of the being affected “given space. (cf. Schaer, 1947, p. 12). It is about experiences that move us deeply emotionally, which is expressed in the above mentioned quote from Kast.

The reason that Jungian Psychology is regularly confronted with the suspicion of being esoterical is perhaps that Jung doesn't make a clear distinction in all his texts between ‘God’ and ‘images of God’:

“Yes, I have the impression that with Jung this distinction is often pushed into the background. This is also one of the sources of misunderstanding. The readers, particularly critical ones think that Jung is speaking about God and criticise his behaviour.” (Frick, 2009, p. 27)

I think that the misunderstandings generally present themselves as Jung's epistemological position is not sufficiently taken into account, or isn't recognised - which probably often the case with representatives of metaphysically orientated directions. To compound matters, concepts like religion and belief in our culture already have metaphysical associations and it requires conscious effort, if not indeed challenging, in order for it to be understood purely psychologically. Accusations on the part of theology are likely to be so understood.

In the following quote of Jung's, the boundaries to Transpersonal Psychology are made very clear:

“Within the confines of a scientific psychology and its tasks, an idea characterized as metaphysical can claim the significance only of a psychic phenomenon. Equally the psychologist does not presume to say anything metaphysical, i.e., transcending his proper province, about his subject-matter—that lies outside his competence.” (Jung, 1947, GW 18/2, § 1475)

“Psychological truth by no means excludes metaphysical truth, though psychology, as a science, has to hold aloof from all metaphysical assertions.” (Jung, 1952b, GW 8, § 344)

Whereas, Jungian Psychology does not concern itself explicitly with metaphysics, it is, in terms of definition, within the domain of Transpersonal Psychology.

Spirituality within the Science of Psychotherapy is Secular

The secular view of spirituality in scientifically based psychotherapy justifies itself not only with enlightened, humanistic ideals, which protect the patient's autonomy and emancipation. Spirituality has its roots in the anthropological constants of mammals' empathic and altruistic behaviour and their cognitive abilities, in particular primates on the basis of which humans and their culture have developed. New empirical ethological and evolutionary anthropological findings show that specific

human nature is built on these qualities (cf. De Waal, 2006). It is a specific form how we humans relate to each other, which means, our ...

“[...] particular form of social cognition, which allows humans to understand their fellow humans, as having an intentional and intellectual life as they do. This understanding enables them to be able to put themselves in the intellectual world of the other, so that they can not only learn from the other but can also learn through the other.” (Tomasello, 1999, p. 6)

“This adaptative achievement is at the same time the basis for our special form of shared intentionality and cooperation that enabled the first human culture.” (cf. Tomasello, 2014).

The ancient phylogenetic ability to notice the emotion of one's counterpart in oneself, combined with the exclusively human ability to reflect about ourselves cognitively and emotionally, so that we can infer that of the others, sets up in us a complex reciprocal balance of perception and projection that enables the mutual understanding. From the psychotherapeutic perspective (cf. Schlegel, 2013), these findings from evolutionary anthropology correspond with the capacity for “mentalising”, a new formulated concept in psychotherapy. The reciprocal exchange that takes place and generally occurs completely intuitively also forms the basis of ethical and moral impressions like solidarity, social shared responsibility and fairness, without which the human form of cooperation would not be possible. It is these ego-transcending qualities, which form the basis of our culture and have led to an altruistic humanistic value orientation. This form of spirituality is part of human nature, which in turn builds an ecological niche in which people can further develop and their culture unfold. It is this same value orientation to which belongs to the basic configuration of religions.

It is this part of human nature, the relatedness to the other is at the centre of psychotherapy. It belongs to the therapeutic process as – in the above mentioned quote of Jung's from 1935 illustrates, in that the therapist is no longer described as the acting subject, but rather as a participant in the patient's individual developmental processes.

The Implications of a Secular Spirituality

A spirituality, which does not derive from a higher authority, leads to an absolute, non-transferable responsibility, i.e. towards the other and nature. It makes the individual a part of the whole. It is through accepting this personal responsibility that his autonomy and ethics lie; and the magnitude of the secular spirituality. It facilitates emancipation, finding meaning and individuation.

Honesty with oneself however shows the abyss of one's own egocentricity, which strongly challenges moral and ethical feelings. It is incumbent upon taking responsibility and a personally critical examination of one's own motives and collective norms, as to which impulse one decides to follow.

On a societal and cultural level, the combination of inter-subjective human abilities leads to a humanitarian ethic and respect for the individual, in the form of universal human rights. When one extends the viewpoint beyond psychotherapy, it becomes apparent that – without spirituality – we face an uncertain future. The natural sciences have given humans so much power, that we have become a danger to our own livelihood. Without a sense of responsibility towards the creation and without the corresponding morality and ethics, we are hardly in a position of applying the technological instruments through to the selective intervention into the genetic material for the benefit of all. This power to be a creator needs the value standards of spirituality, whether it is conditional on secular or religious beliefs.

Today, due to the current political mega-trend of xenophobic populism, it is clear that without empathy and understanding for foreigners we are steering towards retrogression and chaos. The spectre of fascist tendencies is already looking through the window into our living room, in that populist leaders who fuel in-group preferences by fomenting fears of strangers. A dangerous archetype is emerging, and Jung's words:

“[...] menacing power that lies fettered in each of us, only waiting for the magic word to release it from the spell. This magic word, which always ends in “ism“ [...]” (Jung, 1954, GW 8, § 405)

In this sense, this contribution is also meant politically, in that populism directs itself against human rights, as it shrinks its power. We psychotherapists can make our contribution in as much as we contribute to exposing unconscious projections, so that they are not transferred to the “world of being”.

Is Transpersonal Psychotherapy a Scientific Procedure?

Transpersonal Psychotherapy is based on the assumption of an absolute transcendental reality:

“Transpersonal Psychology is a branch of academic psychology that is devoted to the relationship between people and the transcendental by means of psychological methods and theory, whereby the existence of the transcendental is an assumed given.

Concepts like <transcendental> or <transcendence> i.e. <the holy one>, <the numinous> (according to the scientist in the field of religion Rudolf Otto) describe a reality that goes beyond our material existence as biological being in a physical world and world of matter.” (Harnack, 2016)

According to Kohl and Walach:

“one can describe spiritual experiences as outer or inner experiences, whose origins are to be understood in the relationship to an absolute, transcendental reality, however this is not necessarily to be interpreted within the framework of a traditional religious system.” (Kohls & Walach, 2011, p. 137)

Correspondingly, therapy takes place in a “Transpersonal consciousness space”, where the therapists lead patients (as is the case in Shamanism), through a changed state of consciousness. In addition to

the fact that the relationship to an “absolute transcendental reality” can – in principle – not be a scientific object, professional ethical and legal questions arise as the therapist takes on an additional role as a spiritual leader, which encourages the patient to become dependent on him or her. Uninfluenced, would they perhaps find themselves being led to a very different form of spirituality. Current science is by definition not responsible for: *“a reality that goes beyond our material existence as biological beings in a physical world of matter”*. Both Kohl and Walach admit that Transpersonal Psychology hasn’t been able to legitimate itself scientifically (cf. Kohls & Walach, 2011, p. 136). In as much it has failed to establish itself as an own division in the American Psychological Association (APA) (in addition, see: Raack, 2016, p. 444).

From a therapeutic perspective, the search for the “true core” in one’s own development and the development of sustainable resilience is hampered, if not disabled, through transcendental undertakings. As the patients are orientated to such (always normative) ideas instead of their own feelings, they stand in their own way regarding radical honesty. An enlightened humanitarian, unprejudiced and scientific position on the part of therapists requires a special form of honesty.

Techniques that support the patient’s self-awareness are based on the principle of mindfulness towards oneself and others. In psychoanalysis, it is free association, working with dreams and fantasies and imagination. Recently, the practice of mindfulness (with meditation techniques taken from Buddhism) have been widely applied and released from any ideological background.

Science is in the Service of the General Application of Psychotherapy Procedures in State Health Systems

By taking a critical epistemological attitude, no judgement is made about the appropriateness or the value of transcendental spirituality, similarly the healing power of spiritual practices is not denied. The results of research into the salutogenic effects of religious and spiritual practices are recognised by science (cf. Kohls & Walach, 2011, p. 136).

The scientific nature of any particular healing method is no precondition for healing in individual cases, but certainly for general application in state health services. They require provable and discussable criteria in practice and theory, and so deliver – at the same time – guarantees of an informed position, which protects the individual from fictitious encroachments. These criteria the transpersonal consciousness space (cf. Hofmann, 2011, p. 180-183) with his spiritual phenomena must also face (cf. Kohls & Walach, 2011, p. 138).

With respect to the effectiveness of spiritual practices, there are important findings from research into placebos:

“There are indications that with spiritual or <religious practices> a physiological placebo effect is involved for their neurobiological effectiveness [---] Placebo

treatments [---] demonstrably change the model of brain activity, in particular also in the deeper parts of the limbic system - and much more. Belief and positive expectations – combined with positive experiences or conditioning from the past – are naturally important ingredients or actually conditions of the placebo effect. Every experience-triggered placebo mechanism appears to involve morphine like signal transmission.” (Esch, 2011, p. 31)

From the evolutionary biological perspective, the placebo response corresponds to the relaxation response (stress – relaxation – response), which compensates the stress reaction. However, we are consequently not only reliant on external help or activity, as we have the ability to create inner worlds that give us security and that we can attempt to influence to our advantage as for example relationships to archetypal figures. It is the expectation that helps. In this case there is a fundamental difference between a medicine without an active ingredient, as the agents are psychological contents or images, which are built into the construction of reality and thereby unfold their effectiveness. It is therefore essential which values the inner images are orientated towards.

Over the past years, psychotherapy has developed a professional stress-management, which supports the relaxation response:

“A significant element in just about all stress reduction concepts are [---] relaxation techniques. Hereby what is meant are techniques is the so-called relaxation response that is a physiological counter player the stress response. These techniques such as meditation, autogenic training, progressive muscle relaxation etc. – are generally easy to learn and are suitable within the framework of a viable everyday self-help regime. Numerous studies have over and above proven the effectiveness of relaxation and meditation techniques in stress associated illnesses.” (Esch, 2011, p. 28)

In this sense, the effectiveness of methods that operate on transcendental assumptions, can be explained scientifically (or reductionist). The transcendental contents and practices are on the basis of these reasons presented, unscientific.

Concluding Considerations

Although, at the start of writing this article, it was only to find valid criteria for Analytical Psychotherapy’s scientific character and it’s demarcation from other paradigms, which are not in the jurisdiction of science. However, it became clear during the examination of this theme, that it is basically, not only about science but also the process of emancipation and freedom of thought.

Finally, with psychotherapy, it is not only the removal of symptoms, but also strengthening and maintaining resilience, which also depends on the personality and social environment (cf. Barwinski, 2016, p. 64). People have very diverse abilities and are very different, and find themselves in various inner and outer life situations, and are shaped through their cultures and social environment. For many, safety and security come before emancipation and freedom. This cannot be interpreted simply as regression, especially as there are persons who do not have the courage for

freedom: all of these points need to be taken into account – in the case of psychotherapy. In therapy, with people from other cultures, this even more essential. (cf. Missmahl, 2006). Success in psychotherapy is always based on scientific knowledge about the functional connections of the psyche. In psychotherapy, science serves the emancipation, which means freeing the patient up from dysfunctional patterns and unfolding of their own potential.

The individual's uniqueness, and his relationship to the collective, are at the centre. In this sense, I would like to allow Rudolf Buchmann (who gave the initial boost for the Swiss Charter for Psychotherapy and for many years contributed to its wider development) the opportunity to speak:

“Psychotherapy - it's practice and it's research - emphasises the uniqueness of every person and represents this access to the research into people and human qualities, corresponding to the tenets and attitudes contained in the Declaration of Human Rights (Buchmann, 1999).

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Psychotherapy & Spirituality: What is a ‘Spiritual Psychotherapist’?

COURTENAY YOUNG

This is an extended and revised version of a plenary presentation: *"The Place of Spirituality in Psychotherapy"*, given at the UKCP 6th Professional Conference: **"What is Psychotherapy? - Exploring the Boundaries"**: Warwick University, England, in September 2000. It was first published in the UKCP 2000 Conference Proceedings, edited by Jenny Corrigan.

It is published here – in this IJP Special Issue – to introduce a perspective from outside of that of any reactions to the Austrian Ministry of Health's Guidelines, as it was mostly written and presented about 14 years earlier.

It is also written from a very personal perspective. At the time, I was living in a spiritual community, as a (sort of) resident psychotherapist and dealing – quite frequently with people in crisis and spiritual emergencies (see Young, 2011).

I was also involved in helping establish the EAP's Statement of Ethical Principles, and to assess different 'modalities' of psychotherapy, according to the criteria of the EAP's 15 Questions on Scientific Validity. This was long before I got involved as lead writer in the EAP's Project to Establish the Professional Competencies of a European Psychotherapist. So, this is an historic document, suitably updated.

Preamble

I would like to start by first setting a direction and then declaring some personal assumptions. The direction of this article is to look at what constitutes being a "Spiritual Psychotherapist". This is because I think that this is the most efficient way of exploring the overlap of the areas of psychotherapy and spirituality, especially to an audience of psychotherapists, many of whom may already be very spiritual or practicing in a spiritual manner.

I hope that you will agree with this direction and maybe find some resonance within yourselves. Just to reassure you, I really and truly hope that I am not going to presume to tell you what your spirituality should be: that really is your personal business. But, in this arena, where we are considering the place of spirituality within psychotherapy – or whether it should be within psychotherapy, it is also our professional business and it is also deeply concerned with the client's business. And these agendas may, or may not, overlap.

So, I would like to explore this question from this particular perspective. A "Spiritual" Psychotherapist can mean either a psychotherapist who is spiritual within themselves, and/or it can mean a psychotherapist who practices a form of psychotherapy that is spiritually-orientated – if you like, a form of "Transpersonal Psychotherapy": i.e. one that might attract a client who is searching for

something spiritual, or religious-based; rather than relationship-oriented; body-oriented; psychodynamically-oriented; or behaviourally-oriented.

As another form of definition, I am also clear that I am making a couple of assumptions here. We happen to have a problem of consensual language (or lack of consensual language) in this field: not all our definitions of ‘spiritual’ and ‘psychotherapy’ are the same¹; so, I will try and clarify mine.

A. A Client’s Search for Self is Legitimate

The initial assumption I am going to make is this:

- (1) The client's search for their own sense of spirituality is as much a legitimate topic for psychotherapy, as them exploring their grief at the loss of a loved one; as working through the somatised reactions of an unresolved trauma; as trying to minimise the effects of a phobia; or as trying to establish a sense of self from exploring one's personal & psychic history.

The legitimacy of any client’s search for his or her own sense of spirituality is, for me, is an essential preliminary assumption: if they want to do this, this is a legitimate ‘goal’ of psychotherapy. The psychotherapist who caters to that goal cannot be criticised or legislated against. Conversely, the psychotherapist who ignores or glosses over the client’s often tentative explorations and the various verbal (and non-verbal) cues coming from the client about: their belief systems; or metaphysical constructs; or loss of faith; or search for meaning; or whatever; is not, according to my definition, a spiritual psychotherapist, nor even a very good non-spiritual psychotherapist.

The belief systems within which one operates are, for me, an essential component of working with a client; and therefore, I would want to know as much (or more) about these, as indeed I would want to know about their medical or psychiatric history, or their early childhood. This does not mean that I would necessarily cater to these, or discriminate against these: I would just like to know – perhaps in the same way that I would like to know what medications they are taking. I would not – or could not – recommend anything different, or try to get them to change, as this would be stepping outside of my professional remit.

A client's inner world is often the most important thing – to them. And the richness of their life is often measurable when their inner world and their outer world begin to have a certain similarity, harmony, and/or con-jointed-ness. Behaviourism apart, some people would even argue that the eventual ‘cure’ for any client coming to therapy is when their connections with spirit, or their own

¹ See also: Young, C. (2011). *Twenty Different Definitions of Psychotherapy*. *IJP*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 50-61.

spiritual path, are sufficiently and satisfactorily re-established: as well as them being able to 'solve' or reconcile themselves with their financial, relational or occupational status.

Statistically, it has been found that recovery from alcoholism, and other forms of addiction, is much better (about 65% effective, I recall) when a 'belief' system like the 12-Step programme is involved, rather than when it is not. This is a form of a spiritual path; but it is also very psychotherapeutic: The First Step is a necessary acknowledgement of the addiction and the 'crisis'; please also consider the Second, Third and Fourth 'Steps', as – in this light – this 12-Step programme can also be considered as quite an effective form of a 'spiritual psychotherapy' even though there are no professional psychotherapists involved (unless they too have been addicts):

- (1) We admitted that we were powerless over (our addiction) – that our lives had become unmanageable.*
- (2) We came to believe that only with the aid of a Power greater than ourselves could we restore ourselves to sanity.*
- (3) We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of that Power, or God, as we understand him.*
- (4) We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

(AA Big Book Online: p. 59¹)

B. No One Way is Correct

The second assumption, and I hope that I am **not** going to offend any believers in the One True Faith (whatever that is), or any psychotherapists wedded to their particular methodology, is that:

- (2) There is no "One Way". There are very many long-followed, and perfectly valid, 'spiritual' paths. These are very well suited for those who follow them, or for the children of those who follow them, or for those who happen to choose them. They should not be imposed on any adults, nor any other non-believers.
- (2a) There are many, many paths up this particular 'mountain' (of belief or faith) that we are calling 'spirituality' and all of them are totally legitimate; some are perhaps more effective than others for different people; at least one of them may be what is 'right' for that person at that moment in time. Some belief systems seem to claim to have a fast escalator – "all the way to the top", but that is their 'belief'. I am therefore assuming – and I'll be open about this – that this particular claim is as much 'hype' as the claim that using a certain soap-powder or buying a particular refrigerator will transform your life.
- (2b) The view from the top of the mountain is pretty much the same, whichever way up you went. And you may be surprised at the view as it can be a lot bigger and different than you ever imagined.
- (2b) I am also assuming that one's spiritual path, or your spiritual growth, doesn't have an obvious end, so perhaps the mountain top isn't the best analogy: the Celestial City in John Bunyan's *A Pilgrim's Progress* is also just a metaphor, but it is still powerful after all these years. Many other belief systems consider the spiritual path as a form of a journey.

And, if these assumptions are true, it means that, for me, the journey itself becomes the really rewarding factor. Is this not close to a similar commitment to the psychic process of therapy, growth and change? This assumption clearly takes us quite a long way away from notions of a particular belief causing redemption of sin; of eternal salvation for those who believe in Whomsoever, or even from the superiority of CBT over psychodynamic processes, or any other psychotherapeutic modalities.

C. The West has Lost Touch with Spirit

Here is my third set of assumptions, and I will develop these a little more fully later on in the article:

- (3) That the society and culture that we currently live in (i.e. in the nationalistic, materialistic, goal-oriented, secular Western world), actively predicates against spirituality: so much so that we do not really have a proper language for much of this material.
- (3a) Our concepts of spirituality and religion have been conditioned for so many centuries by several different tyrannies in the form of various sorts of religion; and, being so conditioned, we now may not know what 'spirituality' really is, even when we see it: *"If you meet the Buddha, kill Him"; "The Tao that you can see is not the Tao"; "If Jesus came back now, we would probably crucify him – again."*
- (3b) That a particular 'religion' may, and for many does, touch a person's 'spirituality', but this is not necessarily so for all; and many times = and for many people – 'religion' is insufficient in itself: it is a form, rather than an essence – it can contain and help people towards spirituality, but it can also lead people to hate and kill. There needs to be something better – or richer – or more satisfying – than just the form.
- (3c) That many people in the West are increasingly realising something of these aspects and thus are searching for something 'better' and more 'satisfying' in their lives: i.e. their own path of spirituality.

Eventually Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' kicks in at some point, and we start looking for something much more satisfying and longer-lasting; something that touches our truth; our essence; our spirit; or our soul.

This search for spirituality can often be diverted (into the wrong sort of 'spirit') and even take the form of various other addictions; "retail therapy" shopping; chasing "success"; having affairs; getting involved with a sect, or fundamentalist belief system, that promises instant enlightenment – or whatever; and it can also be assuaged by what I call "the smörgasbord approach to therapy" (shopping around, tasting a little bit of everything, here and there), which is equally ultimately unsatisfying.

So, what I would like to do now is to use a slightly Socratic method and pose a number of questions, centred around a main question: *"What is a spiritual psychotherapist?"* And I have to say that I do not have an answer, or The Answer, or indeed any answers to this question; what I want to do is share some of my personal explorations around this theme.

Given all that, and it is a lot, and maybe some people will want to challenge some of these assumptions later, and I hope that there will be a suitable opportunity, I come back to the question: **What is a Spiritual Psychotherapist?** As I said, I don't have a specific answer, but I do have a number of questions, and so I will try to use them in a sort of dialectic and didactic method, and see if we can get somewhere:

- **Question:** If a client is presenting themselves in a fairly chronic depressed state, with no seemingly relevant exogenous causes, or series of life-traumas, and without an effective response to medication, can a "spiritual" psychotherapist legitimately ask them about their belief systems - could a possible diagnosis be some sort of "loss of faith". Incidentally this category appeared in DSM IV, so maybe a non-spiritual psychiatrist might even be allowed to ask it as well.
- **Question:** If a client starts talking about their explorations into (say) Anthroposophy; Buddhism, Alternative Therapies, and (Heaven defend!) even New Age communities: is a legitimate question for a "spiritual" psychotherapist to ask – "What are you *really* looking for?" or should we see this as some form of pathology, or avoidance of reality, or an intrusion into 'proper' psychotherapy?
- **Question:** If the client is expressing that they are having difficulties with (say) having been brought up in an established church or religion, can one – as a "spiritual" psychotherapist – legitimately question – with them – the relevance of that particular set of beliefs, for them, at this time in their life, especially if one is also a member of that same church or religion; or if one is not?

I am trying to present some of the questions that have come up for me when I am working in a particular area of therapy with a client; an area, which is loosely called 'spirituality', and for which there was very little training or preparation in my psychotherapeutic training and modality of origin. Indeed, in society at large, there is a general presumption *against* questioning someone about their beliefs.

This (possibly quite rightly) stems from periods of religious intolerance and historical persecution; but please remember, it is the client who is often coming with these questions. So, do we just refer them back to their minister, their priest, their rabbi, or their imam? Or do we dare to tackle this subject – as a "spiritual" psychotherapist? I don't know whether you, the readers, have a different set of experiences: maybe we could have a (sort of) discussion group – maybe on Linked-In – about who has had specific input in their 'training of origin' about working with some of this material? ²

So, let us also approach this area from another direction. One of the principles of any exploration; psychic, scientific or geographic; is to discover where the 'edges' are, where the limits are, and then that helps us to define the size and position and extent of the area that we are investigating,

before plunging straight into the middle, and maybe getting a little lost. That is what I am trying to work with here. It is not easy, and I am fumbling a little bit; it is not really through lack of confidence, mainly through lack of effective tools, or even proper words.

The next set of questions comes from where there is a potential – not conflict, but let us say – ‘difference’, between our own set of beliefs and is becoming clear are the client's beliefs. Maybe you are Catholic, they are Protestant, which might not be too problematic working in England, but in Northern Ireland, or around Glasgow, it may be. Or (say) the client firmly believes in an afterlife (or even reincarnation), and you don't. Maybe this doesn't arise in the therapy for a while, but then the client discovers (say) that they have a potentially terminal illness and then this suddenly becomes a relevant and immediate topic. Or, what happens if it is the other way around? You believe in reincarnation and/or an afterlife, and they don't: and they (or you) have the illness.

- **Question:** As a "spiritual" psychotherapist, how do you work with this difference of belief systems? How conscious are you of your own belief systems? How careful are you not to impose these, even by assumption, or by absence of question, onto the client? If you have the same (broadly similar) belief systems, how collusive are you in this? Maybe the client is looking for, or needing, something else? How convinced are you that, if only the client could see or understand *this* or *that* (your belief), then they would feel better?
- **Question:** When one works as a "spiritual" psychotherapist, do you lead, or do you follow? How directive are you? Is it ‘legitimate’ for you to suggest a particular text: (say) *The Road Less Travelled* - an excellent psychological / psychotherapeutic text on Love and Spirituality by M. Scott Peck; or perhaps *Peace is Every Step* by Thich Nhat Hahn (a Zen Buddhist Vietnamese monk), which is a book on Mindfulness practice in everyday life, rather than something like *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn (an American psychologist, and – by the way – the preface to the book is by Thich Nhat Hahn)?

Maybe, any of these are O.K.: but then what about the teachings (or writings) of Krishnamurti, or Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, or Carlos Casteneda, or Freud, and Jung, or Shirley MacLaine, or Ron Hubbard? Or maybe all of them are valid? But this topic is perhaps only touched on when the client is needing (or asking for) some form of guidance. What do you offer? Personally, I would offer a short ‘product-warning’ on at least two or three of these authors’ writings.

- **Question:** When the client is struggling with something within their own belief system, something that you may not hold to or agree with: let us say the sense of shame around indulging in pre-marital sex. Maybe they are Catholic, or fundamentalist Protestant, or Muslim, and this is a ‘big issue’ for them, especially if the client is female. Maybe you are male, and maybe you were around in the Hippie culture of the late 60's and early 1970's, so – maybe – you come from a different culture or religious background. Anyway, you have a different set of mores; different belief systems – about this particular issue.

Do you tell them, "*That's nonsense: everything is fine! If you want to, just go ahead.*" or do you say something like, "*What would you really like to do? It's your body; It's your life*". Are

you 'breaking' down their belief system? Are you 'stepping outside' of your own professional boundaries?

But, then what about someone who is struggling with their conscience about (say) "whistle-blowing" – there is something seriously 'wrong' going on at work, and they feel they 'should' tell someone, but this may mean betraying their friends and colleagues; or what about "environmental activism" – anti-social (and possibly illegal) actions: both are being considered by the client because of their own personal belief-systems, and these are possibly, radically different to the prevailing socio-political or consensual one: maybe these are very different from your own belief or value systems.

Is the actual 'angst' of the pre-decision-making process a familiar topic within therapy, but what about the: (i) the impetus to do this; or (ii) the long-term consequences? I think that pointing out some of these may be relevant within psychotherapy, whether it is from within a "spiritual" belief system, rather than just a systemic, cognitive or psychodynamic one, or whether it is more 'reality-based' (like losing one's job, or getting arrested).

At this point, I would like to tell a little story: - a sort of case history. For those of you who don't know much about me, for about 17 years (1986-2003), I had been living within an international spiritual community in north-east Scotland, called the Findhorn Foundation. For quite a while, I was the (only) 'resident' psychotherapist. About 2 years after I got there, a man in his late 20's came to see me for a session. He was a visitor, just passing through; he had a rucksack and guitar case and shoulder-length 'dreadlocks': he looked very like a 1970s hippy. He said he wanted some help.

His story was that he had studied Tibetan Buddhism a lot: he had actually been into Tibet, to visit some of the monasteries still remaining there (this was in the 1970s, when Tibet was still pretty much 'closed'). At one of the monasteries, he had been 'told' by the Head Lama that, in a previous lifetime, he had been a Tibetan monk; one who had done something dreadful - really horrible - perhaps killed somebody (maybe another monk). I don't think that he actually told me what it was that he was supposed to have done then, possibly he was too ashamed. Anyway, he was told that now, as a punishment, he was on the "wheel of suffering". He had also been told that he had been (back then) excluded from all monasteries for several lifetimes and (even now) he was still 'barred' from all contact with Tibetan monks, because of this 'crime'. This – please understand – was his story; his belief system.

His immediate problem – as he related it – was that (as a result of this experience in Tibet) he felt that he could not (actually and physically) be in the same city as any Rinpoche (senior Tibetan monk). He had very severe psychosomatic symptoms whenever this happened. He almost felt cursed. There was, for him, a sort of 'exclusion zone' around these senior Tibetan monks. And, apparently, it was getting worse, as he now could not come within about 200 miles of any Rinpoche. Well, there is a large Tibetan community³ (with many 'Rinpoche's) in the Scottish Borders, about 250 miles south of Findhorn, and there is not much else beyond us to the north, except the Highlands, the Orkney &

Shetland Isles, and then Iceland and Greenland. He felt very cut-off from his main spiritual source, and he was also quite desperate. He was also planning on leaving the Findhorn community tomorrow, because he had heard that one of the 'Rinpoche's from this Tibetan community was going to come to Findhorn. Could I help him in any way?

Well I said that I had listened to his story and I had no help or advice for him at this time; and I said that I would have to consult with someone (a colleague); and could he come back at such a time tomorrow, which was just before he was due to leave. I would see him then. He agreed to do this. I did not know what else to do, except to talk with a fellow community member who was familiar with the whole Tibetan Buddhist scene, and who had lived at this Tibetan community for a while.

My colleague confirmed that – within the tenets of Tibetan Buddhism – his story was indeed possible – even credible ... if you were a Tibetan Buddhist, or of that faith and culture. However, this guy might also be totally paranoid, and deluded, etc. So, we both 'meditated' a bit about this guy's story, and his problem, and we both came up with a similar sort of 'insight'. So, when this man came for the session, I told him this ... in almost exactly these words:

"I don't know if this can be of any help to you at all, but when this friend of mine (who is familiar with Tibetan Buddhism) and I both considered deeply (meditated on) your situation, we both separately got this particular insight.

If, as you say, you are currently "banned" from Tibetan Buddhism for several lifetimes, and, as you seem to have "chosen" to be born into the Western world - for this lifetime, at least: in order not to interrupt your spiritual growth, why not concentrate more on the Western ways of spirituality for a while, (instead of trying to keep to the Tibetan Buddhist way) and see what you get out of that?

Apart from the variety of established Christian churches, and the more esoteric Gnostic tradition, there is the whole field, for example, connected to the Celtic mystery tradition, that is a very long-established spiritual path. And then there is also the North American shamanistic tradition, etc.

Some of these have many similarities with some of Tibetan Buddhism, and yet they are also very different. Maybe, just maybe, this can become a significant beneficial part of your karma, and that you can still grow as a result. Even if 'adopting' another path may feel heretical at first, or it may initially feel like a different form of punishment, maybe, just maybe, you have been ignoring these areas (more relevant to your present life-time) than those in favour of your old path, or previous life."

I expanded on this theme a little and also suggested a few books that he could read, or even purchase in the community's bookshop, which was an excellent one. That was the end of the session, and he then left the community. I never heard from him again, which may or may not be significant. But I still feel reasonably content with the intervention or advice, and the way that I obtained it.

Within the framework of his belief system, which I would have no possibility of altering even if I wanted to, there was little else I could say or do: there was no other positive suggestions or advice or

direction that I could give. To do (or say) nothing did not seem to be a legitimate option – for me, at that time. He had also expressed a strong resistance towards any form of psychiatric or medical intervention – even if that might have been deemed suitable (by a psychiatrist). I judged not so, as he seemed pretty self-sufficient, albeit though feeling somewhat ‘lost’. He was very rational (even in his story) and seemed to be no danger to anyone else. So, back to the questions:

- **Question:** What is a spiritual psychotherapist? How does such a person actually help somebody with his or her spiritual path? Is this possible?

In John Bunyan's (1678) classic book, *A Pilgrim's Progress*, the Angel offers the prospect of only one choice, other than that of destruction: it is to get to the Celestial City. No other goal (or salvation) is offered, except various forms of failure, on the way – as ‘Christian’, the pilgrim, encounters various obstacles: the Slough of Despond; the Hill of Difficulty; the Narrow Gate; the Valley of the Shadow; Vanity Fair; etc. So, he really had no choice: in modern parlance, he got ‘stitched up’ somehow by the times he was in. Within Christianity, especially then in the early 17th century, there was still the concept of only ‘One Way’, one Path to follow. There is now – also – the concept of a Spiritual Director, a person who ‘directs’ (or helps you with) your spiritual path – from within the particular faith or belief system. This person ‘helps’ you to keep to the straight and narrow – within that system. Nowadays, I prefer the wider choice of this ‘image’: of being a mentor; or a guide (leading from behind); or maybe even having a midwife (facilitator) approach to someone’s emerging spiritual process; or maybe just helping the client to “travel well”. Here are a few more questions:

- **Question:** As a Spiritual Psychotherapist, how does one actually help, assist or guide someone along *their* spiritual path without getting in the way of it, without directing it, "guiding from behind" – or imposing your own belief system?
Reflection rather than direction, seems more relevant, perhaps: giving the person an open choice. But I'm beginning to answer my own questions and I didn't want to do that.
- **Question:** As a Spiritual Psychotherapist, how can we relate – with integrity – to where someone is ‘at’ – unless we have had similar experiences ourselves? Does this begin to define a quality (or professional competency) of a Spiritual Psychotherapist? And working with clients exploring different areas of spirituality, how eclectic does one have to be?
- **Question:** As a Spiritual Psychotherapist, what tools do we need in our tool bag? Do we – for example - need experience of Art Therapy and Dream Therapy, as many people explore these realms whilst on their spiritual path?
As psychotherapists, do we need awareness of aspects like: Christian Science, Esoteric Healing, New Age therapies, or Shamanism – as for many, the body is intimately involved or affected (health-wise) in many subtle ways by one’s ‘spiritual path’?
What about (legal) techniques that help to "blow your mind" or take you to different spaces; LSD is now not a legitimate therapeutic technique, (though it was when I was first sent to a psychiatrist at the tender age of 15). Therapies like: Re-birthing, Holotropic Breathwork,

Hypnosis, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), are somewhat more acceptable nowadays, but – whilst they may be ‘spiritual’ – they are not really ‘proper’ psychotherapies.

There are also a whole realm of: meditational techniques (Mindfulness, Vipassana, etc.); body-oriented techniques (Yoga, Tai Chi); etc. that can be seen as legitimate adjuncts to any form of spiritual or psychotherapeutic work. Do we need expertise, or awareness of, these?

There is another area, with which I have become quite familiar – almost an expert, one might say – but which often still takes me by surprise, and that is the area called “Spiritual Emergence” processes and “Spiritual Emergencies” or “Spiritual Crises”. These are phrases originally coined by Stanislav & Christina Grof. Stan Grof was a Czech psychiatrist, who was part of the early research into and psychological experimentations with, LSD (when it was still legitimate). He devised a number of theories about the benefits of this form of drug-induced or ‘psychedelic’ therapy, as did many others at the time (viz: Timothy Leary, Bill Wilson, R.D. Laing, etc).⁴ After the legitimate use of LSD ended, Grof subsequently discovered certain breathing techniques (definitively non-drug based) that seemingly have similar beneficial results. He was working in the community at Esalen, in Big Sur, California, for a while, and had a number of cases that started to fall into certain groups or categories; so, he developed this concept, which I find very useful. I hasten to add that I do not use, nor indeed totally approve of, his actual methods of working therapeutically, called Holotropic Breathwork (nor of LSD, either), though – as mentioned – some of his intellectual concepts are quite useful.

The concept of a Spiritual Emergence ‘process’ suggests that there is a latent spirituality within everyone that usually emerges at a certain – more mature – point in one’s life (but also sometimes earlier). The hypothesis is that this is a natural part of human psychic development: just as, usually somewhere between the years of 12 and 14, adolescence and puberty is a natural physical emergent phase, prior to developing full adult sexuality. This ‘spiritual emergence process’ is more of an emotional maturation, usually happening (in the West) sometime between about age 30 and 50. Many cultures actually – and practically – recognise this process; the symptoms are known and respected; and the various aspects of a spiritual emergence process are built into the culture, and even ritualised.

However, in our culture, in the Euro-American Western world, this doesn’t happen quite so easily. Christianity has effectively killed it; some of the more shamanic practices that do recognise it, are denigrated. So, at this point, I may be speaking about quite concepts foreign or alien to you. The symptoms of this emergence process are therefore often seen as something of a ‘deviance’, or an ‘aberration’, or even as ‘pathological’ by our Western materialistic, pharmacological and medicalised culture.

Please imagine, just for a moment, a culture or society where the process of physical maturation, adolescence and puberty, is socially and psychologically denied: a society firmly fixed in the pre-pubertal stage. In such a culture, the growth of breasts becomes a deformity needing surgery; facial and pubic hair are seen as an aberration, not to be spoken of, and thus depilation becomes a social requirement. Other ‘symptoms’ – like ‘puppy fat’ or acne – would require liposuction and face creams. The relatively normal symptoms of adolescence; dizzy spells, puppy fat, facial spots, etc. are thus all seen as abnormalities – needing different forms of ‘treatment’.

My hypothesis is that our present Westernised society treats the symptoms of ‘spirituality’, or an emerging spiritual developmental process, quite similarly and the process itself is seen quite pathologically. If you hear voices in your head, you are / must be schizophrenic. If you start to emulate the behaviour of a wolf, then you are psychotic. If you think that you can predict certain events, you are deranged. If you hear God speaking to you, then you are ... what?

Physiological processes that wrack your body; that might make you seem pregnant without so being, are therefore all psycho-somatic, rather than being effects of a Kundalini-type process. The actual physical manifestations that often accompany changes in spirituality are almost totally denied, or wrongly ascribed; changes of job or partners, lifestyles, etc. are seen as a ‘mid-life crisis’ and are often denigrated. They could also be seen as attempts to ‘escape’ a form of normalised conditioning process.

Now, in a society and culture that ignores much of spirituality, or dismisses it as a New Age phenomenon, we will – inevitably – find certain aberrations built into that society. The mystics and people of undefined (or ‘other’ forms) of spirituality are often persecuted. Someone who has visions is not elevated to the priesthood, or made a seer, or a shaman; instead, they are given tests and a possible psychiatric diagnosis. Even if their visions are eventually confirmed, the Catholic Church (a state institution) might eventually beatify or sanctify them, but usually long after they are dead.

Unless you have been effectively “shunned” by business partners, family, friends and society around you, you cannot imagine sometimes how hard it is to experience any of the many manifestations of spirituality, as well as the attendant social disapproval, isolation, rejection, etc. The spiritual emergence process is hard enough anyway, as many have told: let alone to be subjected – additionally – to the antagonistic, disbelieving (or convenient) reactions from those around one.⁵

Here’s another little story from the 1980s. A good friend of mine was then responsible for the Spiritual Emergency Network, a phone-line reference network for spiritual psychotherapists dealing with Spiritual Emergencies in the USA. She got rang up one day by a little old lady from somewhere in Texas. This person said: *“Can you help me? God came and sat in my head last Christmas.”* My friend asked her what were the effects of this, what did she actually mean by ‘God sitting in her head’. The

lady replied, *“Oh. I know what people are thinking when they come towards me.”* (Pause) *“But my Minister thinks I am of the Devil; my women’s group think I am a witch; and my husband just doesn’t want to know.”* So, the question that I have for you, in this case, is, *“Who has the problem?”* For the lady, it was obviously a spiritual and psychic experience as “God” came and sat in her head at Christmas time. She didn’t seem to have much of a problem with that: she didn’t say, *“I am going crazy.”* She had accepted it. But, for everyone else around her, it seemed to be something of an aberration or unacceptable.

Many people think that they are going crazy, or that there is something wrong with them, when these ‘symptoms’ of the spiritual emergence process happen to them, as we do not have a form of acceptance of these symptoms, and we often do not really recognise the process.

By the way, many people I see who are (effectively) ‘overloaded’ by stressful – though ‘normal’ – life events, also think that they may be going crazy because they are depressed, or anxious, or both; or have developed some psychosomatic symptoms; etc. Anyway, I have some more Socratic-type questions for you:

- **Question:** As a Spiritual Psychotherapist, what (extra) training might you need in order to be able to recognise the many different manifestations of these Spiritual Emergence processes? How feasible is it to introduce such modules into present day psychotherapy training programmes and [professional competencies? If we continue to ignore these phenomena, how many more people will continue to end up being wrongly diagnosed – often ending up with a psychiatric diagnosis, or in a psychiatric ward? Is an actual experience of shamanism, mysticism, channelling (or a semi-psychotic episode), a possibly necessary ‘qualification’ for a Spiritual Psychotherapist?
- **Question:** As a Spiritual Psychotherapist, how easy or difficult is it to ‘buck the trends’ of society that requires that everything gets put back into the box (so to speak) after a crisis or a break-down, and instead to relish and encourage some these phenomenological changes that emerge in your client: – even at the risk that they may be judged (by the rest of society) as psychotic, mystical; New Age, aberrations, or whatever? And – if one does so – are there serious risks of being ‘judged’ as being professionally incorrect’? ⁶
How brave are we, as Spiritual Psychotherapists, to support the individual growth of our clients with their spirituality against the mores of the surrounding society? If you had been Martin Luther King’s, or Nelson Mandela’s, Spiritual Psychotherapist long before they became who they are now, how would you have fared? Could you have stood up to your more conservative supervisor?

Now the last point that I want to make is about actual spiritual experiences themselves. Grof, in *The Stormy Search for Self*, categorises them into about ten different types, and I don’t want to go down that list particularly for the moment, but there are some startling similar characteristics that are often found in another’s list of spiritual experiences. Joan Borysenko, in her book, *Fire in the Soul*, describes one character, Fritz, who had a spiritual experience – whilst in hospital, intravenously receiving a high-calorie feeding solution. His perspective suddenly expanded and *“...he knew at the deepest level of his*

being that everything was perfect. Everything that was happening was perfect.” Please think about that for a minute.

Have you ever had a realization that the whole beautiful terrible crazy drama of life was perfect? What might that do to your ‘world view’? He also had a realization of his own inner purity. Please think about that! How might it feel – for you – to know that, despite all the times that you have felt foolish, unworthy, bad, or just plain ‘not good enough,’ you suddenly saw that your ‘core self’, your soul, was perfect, pure, without blemish, and filled with light. This is often the described experience of seeing or realizing the Higher Self; of becoming in touch with the true nature of who we really are.

It is far removed from just improving one’s self-esteem. These sorts of things can just happen in this type of psychotherapeutic process – if we are open to them. And they happen to a lot of ordinary people. You do not often hear about them, because, when the person reports these experiences to others, close friends, family, etc., they can often experience some very strange reactions. So ... they shut up, and they may even deny these, or forget about them, and just carry on “as normal”: there is some value in that as well: a spiritual experience does not have to change your emotional life.

The pupil says to the monk: “*What did you do before Enlightenment?*” The monk replied: “*I chopped wood and I carried water*”. The pupil says: “*What did you do after Enlightenment*”. The monk replied: “*I chopped wood and I carried water*”.

However, there is also some evidence that ‘extraordinary’ people have all had some sort of a spiritual ‘awakening’: Pierro Ferrucci wrote about this in his 1991 book, *Inevitable Grace*.⁷ Maybe it is this ‘awakening’ that made them extra-ordinary!

- **Question:** (and this is the final one from me). If we want this sort of experience for our clients, (and possibly for ourselves) how can we best support this? What do we need to do to help and maybe even encourage our clients in this direction? Do we teach them meditation? Do we require them (or cajole them) so that they have times of reflection and introspection outside of the therapy room, as a regular practice? Do we suggest to them that they might like to read certain books? Are we, as Spiritual Psychotherapists, proactive when we hear of these phenomena happening to our clients?

I am going to answer this question: I believe that we should – (with a caveat) – when it seems appropriate. I believe that we need to help people to change, and we should not – by our actions or inactions – proscribe or limit the direction of that change. My professional association, the UKCP, was founded as a reaction to the sect (or cult) of Scientology in the mid- to late-1970’s. The many people attracted to such sects were, and still are, definitely looking for something more than society currently provides. We should, maybe even must, be starting to provide understanding, acceptance, help or guidance towards this sort of goal, and with this phenomenon. But how?

How do we provide a much-needed impetus towards spirituality, rather than towards a sect, and also without avoiding it, through many years of psychotherapy, religion, or the materialistic thinking that pervades our culture? So, I make a plea for more direct action from the profession of psychotherapy, now.

Psychotherapy is – along with other social forces like the feminist/anti-sexist movement, the ecology movement, the peace movement, the anti-materialistic, ant-capitalist protest movement (against the ‘G8’ meetings), gather to decry corporate greed and demonstrate for environmental causes and against globalisation; and other ‘grass-root’ pressure groups – a people-powered movement (as are the recent petrol blockades, anti-war marches, pro- and anti-hunt parties, the animal rights movement, and so forth), as well as mass movements against oppression like the Arab Spring of 2010-11). Society desperately needs this type of change. The individual members of society – and they are growing in number – desperately want more personal autonomy and less ‘governmental’ control; they are attracted to ‘populist’ politicians who ‘promise’ this and then don’t deliver this kind of change, this diversity of choice, and increased well-being or enrichment. They are prepared to inconvenience themselves considerably – to the point of rebellion, exile and even death. I don’t need to quote you the statistics; they are ever-present in the newspapers. The planet – and our future generations – also desperately needs this type of change from us humans – now: to stop eradicating species; polluting the earth and the seas; warming the planet; and using up all the natural resources; and we, as individuals on this planet, all need to recognise this and ourselves become the agents of change, in our own ways.

We cannot just objectively support these things, as and when they happen in our clients, or if we want to march in protest in our free time. These ‘symptoms’, these ‘practices’; these ‘approaches’; are not necessarily aberrations or pathologies. I do not support them all – just because some of them call themselves ‘spiritual’. If we are truly Spiritual Psychotherapists, we will respect these stirrings in our clients, even though we may differ; and hopefully support them, even though we may disagree.

I can now state that I believe that, as a profession and as professional people, we must move away from complacency and apathy, towards a higher level of conscious awareness and compassionate action. I believe that spirituality is the source and the pathway for many of these movements and that without an active and alive spirituality, psychotherapy will become dry and dead and going nowhere.

Note of Acknowledgement: There is an interesting article on this topic that I found helpful in the shaping of my ideas for this talk:

Dishington, L.F. (1996). Spirituality and Psychotherapy: In: *Progress: Family Systems Research and Therapy*, Vol. 5, pp. 99-110. Encino, CA: Phillips Graduate Institute.

Young, C. (2011). *First Contacts with People in Crisis & Spiritual Emergencies*. AuthorHouse.

Endnotes:

¹ AA Big Book On-line: www.aa.org/bigbookonline/en_bigbook_chapt5.pdf

² In the 2000 conference presentation, about 25% indicated by a show of hands.

³ Kagyu Samye Ling Monastery and Tibetan Buddhist Centre, in Eskdalemuir, Dumfriesshire, DG13 0QL

⁴ For more information on psychedelic therapy: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychedelic_therapy

⁵ In the month that this talk was originally given (Sept 2000), the Dalai Lama was not invited to a major international conference on world religion on the political and economic grounds that it might offend the Chinese government.

⁶ See the 2014 Austrian Ministry of Health 'Guidelines' on (not) working as a 'spiritual psychotherapist'.

⁷ Ferrucci, P. (1991). *Inevitable Grace: Breakthroughs in the lives of great men and women: Guides to your self realization*. New York: Tarcher.