



Essence and Ground

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Abstract

When essential values can be grounded in realistic ways, then spirituality is deeply connected to daily life. There is a long tradition in western philosophy which shows the cultural contexts of spirituality. It is important to value these in order to avoid the problems created by pseudo-spirituality, which can feel personal and social narcissism.

Each major form of psychotherapy has developed, in one way or another, its own connection to true spiritual values. Recognising these supports an alternative to a reductive view of psychotherapy, which is dominated by over-materialistic expectations based on quick solutions which ignore the depth of the personality.

Zusammenfassung

Wenn essenzielle Werte auf realistische Art und Weise geerdet werden können, dann ist Spiritualität stark mit dem taglichen Leben verbunden. Es gibt eine lang-jährige Tradition in der westlichen Philosophie, welche sich mit den kulturellen Kontexten von Spiritualität beschäftigt. Es ist wichtig, dass diese Traditionen geschätzt werden, um Probleme im Zusammenhang mit Pseudo-Spiritualität zu vermeiden, welche zu persönlichem und sozialem Narzissmus führen kann. Jede bedeutende Form der Psychotherapie hat auf ihre eigene Art und Weise ihre Verbindung zu echten spirituellen Werten entwickelt. Die Anerkennung dieser spirituellen Verbindungen ermöglicht eine Alternative zur reduktionistischen Sicht der Psychotherapie, welche von über-materialistischen Erwartungen ausgeht und auf Schnelllösungen fokussiert ist, welche die tiefen Ebenen der Persönlichkeit nicht berühren.

Resumo

Sempre que os valores essenciais podem ser alicerçados (grounded) realisticamente, a espiritualidade fica profundamente conectada com a vida do dia-a-dia. Existe uma longa tradição na filosofia ocidental que aborda os contextos culturais da espiritualidade. É importante valorizar esta tradição de modo a evitar problemas gerados pela pseudo-espiritualidade, que podem levar ao narcisismo pessoal e social. As principais correntes de

psicoterapia desenvolveram, de alguma maneira, uma ligação com genuínos valores espirituais. O reconhecimento destas conexões espirituais oferece uma alternativa à visão redutora da psicoterapia, que é dominada por expectativas materialistas e soluções rápidas, que ignoram os níveis mais profundos da personalidade.

Part I: The Cultural Contexts of Spirituality

1. Spirituality, mystery and religion

The history of spirituality is as old as human culture ever since the first stone age men buried their dead and painted ritual symbols on the walls of their underground caves.

The word spirit comes from the word for breath and is related to inspiration.

The fifth element of the Greeks was known as «aitheros» and was a fine energy more subtle than air. To be spiritual was to be in touch with this subtle essence of the cosmos and of oneself.

The contact with one's own heart, and with this subtle essence, was not a process that could be reached by intellectual means, it lay beyond rationality, and the conscious thought processes of the brain, and was in this sense a «mystery». The philosopher Gabriel Marcel set up the polarity between what he called the «problem» level of experience, and the «mystery» level which underlay the problem. From this deeper level come the possibilities of healing.

The original meaning of religion, from Latin *religere*, was to reconnect, to get back into contact with a deeper source of being.

In my studies of religion and nature during the early nineteen sixties (Boadella, 1956, 1958). I defined three layers which can be found in each of the world religions: I called them the exoteric, the esoteric, and the essential levels. At the exoteric level we can find the outer forms of a religion, which over time often loses touch with the message of its founder, and becomes encrusted with dogmas and fundamentalisms which are anti-humanist in spirit. One has only to think of the Catholic Inquisition, the Zionist fanaticism, or the Islamic fundamentalism, to see this degeneration of an originally creative spiritual tradition into a rigid political movement which spreads persecution and preaches violence and the twisted ethics of a just war against the infidel whoever he may be. The current world political scene, from Ireland, to Bosnia, and the middle east provides ample evidence of the troubles created and fuelled by the degeneration of religion when the exoteric form has lost touch with its foundational message, or by the political exploitation of religious differences.

The mystery aspect can also be distorted into «esotericism», the developing of exotic energy-raising practices which take short cuts to the alternations of consciousness, and are associated with the formation of closed groups with a tendency to develop into cults and sects.

Modern examples will be looked at later in this article. Early Christian examples can be found within some of the extremes which developed during the Gnostic period.

The essential aspect of religion is the heart of its spirituality. It is nearly always simple, is a message for all peoples, it is related to the heart, it is connected to love and compassion, and it has a unifying effect rather than a dividing effect on people.

Hans Kung in recent years has spearheaded the formation of a Global Ethics Foundation in which representatives from all the major world religions came together and found a common

core essential ethic to which they could all subscribe. This Ethic has since been accepted by the Parliament of World Religions (Kung, 1955), and reaffirmed in the Unesco Declaration on the Contribution of Religion to the Culture of Peace, in Barcelona, December 1994.

Over the past seven years I have studied some of the thirty foundational texts from the major spiritual traditions, and made my own renderings of these. They represent what I call the «Earthlight» tradition, the connection between spiritual insights, symbolised by «light», and material reality, symbolised by «earth». What is striking about these texts is the basic identity of their message, even when the cultural forms and the individualised expression of the message is highly divergent.

Formative and deformative traditions: the work of Adrian van Kaam

Over the past fifty years a remarkable project to study spirituality has been developed by Professor Adrian van Kaam, originally from Holland, but supported by many years at the Institute of Formative Spirituality which he founded at Duquesnes University, in Pittsburgh, USA. Van Kaam showed the relationship between traditional formative teachings from the world's religious movements, and the insights developed by the human sciences and by transpersonal psychology. He saw the formative spiritual traditions, because they were open to the «mystery» level of human experience, as able to go deeper than the purely humanistic or purely psychological or even transpersonal. Van Kaam was also stressing the unifying aspects of these formative traditions (Van Kaam, 1894-1955).

Van Kaam also studied the conditions under which traditions became deformed, and lost touch with their simple and compassionate origins, and in turn became deformative of others.

Awareness of the deformative aspects of deformed religious teachings had been one reason for the rejection and mistrust of the entire religious heritage of mankind by modern «scientific» reasoning, in spite of the many congruences and confluences between humanistic science and the grounding insights of the spiritual teachings.

The opium of the people, the future of an illusion and the mass psychology of fascism

From Spinoza and Nietzsche, to Marx, Freud and Reich.

One of the first western thinkers to expose this deformative side of religion was Baruch Spinoza, who received a curse in consequence from the defenders of the Jewish establishment at that time (Spinoza, 1989). Spinoza was seen in consequence as an atheist, a precursor of Nietzsche, Marx and Freud. Spinoza in fact was a highly spiritual person as a careful and unprejudiced reading of his «Ethics» will readily reveal. Nietzsche defended the pro-life aspects of religion, which he saw vividly expressed in the life and teachings of Zarathustra (E. Henberger, 1976), and was critical of the dead-hand of religious moralising which he saw as anti-life. Nietzsche became nevertheless mistakenly associated with the notion that God was dead, of no more meaning to the modern man, Karl Marx, a humanist who fought against the alienation of man under patriarchy and capitalism, was aware of the deformative side of religion and spoke of it as the opium of the people, a tranquiliser for their pain, the offer of paradise not on earth but in some fantasy hereafter. Sigmund Freud (1927) wrote an entire book on the «Future of an Illusion», looking at the way deformative religious ideas can

benchored in our unconscious and used to bolster our defence systems. Wilhelm Reich (1945) studied the misuse of religious mysticism in Nazi Germany, and saw the connections between authoritarian repression supported by religious dogmas, and the mass psychology of fascism.

These great philosophers and psychologists correctly understood the deformative side of religion, but none of them were hostile to the essential aspects of spirituality.

The biospiritual tradition in Western spirituality

The formative tradition of spirituality in the West was often driven underground and persecuted by the established church, or the established political power. Its revolutionary implications for change in human life styles was well recognised by the authorities.

The capacity for mutual cross-fertilisation and enrichment between the Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions reached its peak during the early middle ages in Spain, as Gunther Scholem (1987) has shown, only to be repressed and destroyed later, with consequences as tragic for the development of Western culture as the Catholic destruction of the Cathar culture which culminated in the burning of the defenders of the chapel of Montsegur, in 1244 AD.

The western spiritual tradition began with the teachings about the intelligence of the heart in Ancient Egypt (Schwaller de Lubicz, 1977) and the ecologically aware and non-dualistic teachings of Zarathustra in Persia (Mehr, 1991). From there they were developed by the school of Pythagoras in Greece (Boadella, 1998), and carried forwards, for over a thousand years until the time of Damascius and Proclus in the fifth century after Christ. Ammonias Saccas (1988), the enlightened teacher of Plotinus from Alexandria, was also the teacher of Origen (12), one of the most creative and non-divisive of the early Christians. These two traditions passed through Augustine in the West, and through Gregory of Nyssa in the east, and fused in the person of Dionysius, the Syrian monk (Dionysius the Areopagite, 1980). This tradition passed into the West, as opposed to the middle East, through the Irish philosopher, John Scotus Eriugena (1971-1981), who travelled in the Rhine valley and inspired generations of Rhineland mystics, including Hildegard von Bingen (1987), the earliest philosopher of body-soul integration in German literature; and Johannes Eckart (1944) who is a focal figure in the history of Western spirituality, as he was exposed to Kabbalistic influences from Judaism, Sufi influences from Islam, and Franciscan influences linked with persons like Robert Grosseteste (1970) and Roger Bacon (1929) in the thirteenth century who were foundational figures not only in regard to spirituality but also in the beginnings of western science. Eckart and Eriugena stand behind the pivotal figure of Nicholas of Cusa, born 1401, who taught the heliocentric theory a generation before Copernicus and was a key figure inspiring the Italian renaissance, and the revival of a non dualistic neo-platonism and a life-affirmative hermeticism (de Cusa, 1970). Giordano Bruno was the heir to this triple legacy of hermeticism, neo-platonism, and Christianised Kabbalah. He was two hundred years or more before his time, and was sentenced to death by the Catholic church for heresy in 1600 AD (Bruno, 1976).

Giordano Bruno is a figure who will not go away. He was inspirational for Jacob Boehme and the German pietists who foreshadowed Immanuel Swedenborg, as well as for Goethe, Leibniz, Spinoza, and Schelling (1984), and into this century for Wilhelm Reich (1952), the father of body-psychotherapy, as well as for Eugen Drewerman (1992), the Jungian theologian who has written so prolifically on politically aware aspects of spirituality.

Science, scientism and the death of the Self

Science means knowledge. Thus we can have natural science, human science, or spiritual science, the last named appearing as the respectable discipline of «Geisteswissenschaft» in the German language. The earliest science in the West, the Pythagorean exploration of the relationship between musical sounds and the lengths of the strings on the guitar (kithara) was part of an overall **view** of man which understood him as a microcosmos meaningfully connected to a macrocosmos (Boadella, 1998). This view was revived and rediscovered in the Renaissance. The giants of seventeenth century science, men like Johannes Kepler, Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, were fascinated in the mystery that lay behind the problems they wrestled with, whether it was the movement of the planets, the gravitational force, or the combustion of matter in chemical interactions. Knowledge of the subtle and the hidden forces of nature was considered as important as knowledge of the outer and measurable properties of nature. Kepler was in one sense the last of the ancients and the first of the moderns, as Koestler (1988) has demonstrated in his epic work «The Sleepwalkers» on the birth of modern astronomy. Newton was fascinated by alchemy, and the numerous scholia which he wrote to accompany his description of the physical laws of gravitation would be classed nowadays unquestionably as «esoteric». Esoteric knowledge is in fact the mother of science (Dennis, 1992). Galileo's researches into the dynamics of moving bodies, which overthrew the two thousand year old domination and stranglehold of Aristotelian cosmology, laid the basis for modern physics. From now on quantity was regarded as objective, and qualities were regarded as properties of perception, not as aspects of nature. When Descartes shortly after bifurcated nature into matter and mind, *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, consciousness was reduced to a property of human beings only. All else including animals, and the human body, were machines. The cosmos was despiritualised and the road towards scientism was opened.

Scientism, as opposed to science, is the viewpoint that only the measurable, the objective, only what is empirical to the five senses and their extensions by measuring instruments (telescopes, microscopes, spectroscopes and all else) is real. The inner world, the inner fabric of the cosmos, becomes regarded as some land of subjective fantasy, of imagination, a realm open only to poets, and painters, romantic dreamers, and writers of fiction.

In the early Renaissance it was possible for a person like Leonardo da Vinci to excel in both art and science, as it had been in the era of the ancient Greeks. A figure like Wolfgang Goethe, who was both poet and the founder of the science of morphology, reflects the approach to nature before the bifurcation, even though he lived a century after it.

Immanuel Kant, wrestling with a way to understand a universe reduced to what was known through our senses, divided the world into the phenomenon and the noumenal, the first was knowable, the second was not. The essence behind the ground of appearance could never be grasped. Our nearest approach to it was in our sense of morality, and our sense of the aesthetic. Kant sought to rescue the importance of value, from an empirical phenomenal world from which value had been excluded. Atoms are after all meaningless, in scientism, the void is empty, matter is blind. Kant struggled with the two parts of himself, one preparing the path for a modern world view, one still fascinated by the search for the elusive noumenal.

His alter ego was Immanuel Swedenborg, a generation older than himself. Swedenborg was both a foremost scientist of his age, and a person open to his own spirituality, as well as a person who was parapsychologically gifted. Kant devoured all the books of Swedenborg (1984), wrote

an admiring letter about him, then attacked and ridiculed him in his first book «The Dreams of a Ghost Seer» (Kant 1992), but then adopted many of Swedenborg's key insights in his own inaugural lecture on «Mundus Intelligibilis and Mundus Sensibilis» (Kant, 1894).

Kant's rejection of Swedenborg made scientism respectable, and spirituality became either a purely private matter, or it was the reserve of the traditional upholders of values; the Church.

A century later the evolution theory was developed by Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace.

The evolution theory was taken as one more blow to any belief in an ordered cosmos. Man himself was the product, like the universe, of cosmic forces operating by chance. The fact that Wallace was an ardent spiritualist, in the Swedenborgian tradition, was beside the point: spirituality was after all only a private matter of personal opinion. The way was now open to the death of God movement, and within existentialism, the death of the Self.

We will see later how these issues apparently resolved in the post-KQntian universe, are current burning hot issues of controversy within the new sciences of consciousness.

New age movements, cults and sects

In a world where God is dead, the Self is a personal construct, and the Church is largely empty, where Scientism has become the new religion, a vacuum is created, and into this vacuum came the new age movements, offering a superficial mishmash of pseudo:-spiritual methodologies for self-realisation. From astrological counselling, to tarot readings, from channeled teachings purporting to be broadcast to chosen individuals by non-living entities, to crash courses in the most spectacular methods to be found by westerners in the far-eastern religions. New prophets arose, known even if they were western, by the Indian word «guru», teacher. New power structures arose in which belief systems quickly ossified into fundamentalist cults; and the groups sharing these beliefs developed a kind of spiritual apartheid and degenerated into sects. Here developed a new mass-psychology of fascism, no longer as in the case of Nazism, a State Credo, but the totalitarianism, subtle, or less subtle, of the sect leader, or cult hero. In my articles «Violence in Therapy» (Boadella, 1980 a) and «The Death of the Ego» (Boadella, 1980 b), which later appeared. as the book «Toxic therapy, religion and cults» (Boadella, 1994), I studied some specific examples of these processes, and was invited in 1990 to the House of Lords at Westminster to a conference on «Cults and Sects» in which the psycho-political aspects of these deformative movements were described.

The presence of such forces, seemingly antiquated, and very much on the fringe of established culture, became a serious hindrance to the survival of genuine spiritual traditions outside the exoteric religious frame. And nowhere was this more problematic than in the area of healing.

Healing or therapy?

At the birth of western culture, healing and therapy were the same. Healing meant to make whole. Psychotherapy meant the care of the soul, as I have detailed at some length in my article «Attunement and the Care of the Soul» (1998 a). The Hippocratic tradition of mens sana in corpore sano was a biospiritual tradition which sought to care for the spiritual well-being of the patient, as well as his mental and physical state.

Modern medicine has become increasingly specialised in an approach based on surgery, or

chemical treatment based on what Rene Dubois called the «magic bullet», the pharmacological pill. Spiritual and psychological factors fall by the wayside.

Complementary and holistic medicine grew up in the spiritual vacuum created by school medicine. How the political powers reacted to them is a fascinating sociological study in itself.

In the USA it became politically dangerous for a doctor to prescribe health foods. In Germany in the Nazi area the natural healer, the «Heilpraktiker» was allowed, because Hitler was surrounded by esoteric advisers who were open to such alternative methods. Paradoxically this Nazi law on healing is the most liberal in Europe. In Austria a new law was passed last year which made the practice of healing without a medical degree a criminal offence. Meanwhile the World Health Organisation came to appreciate the value of traditional healing methods that had survived in pre-modern cultures (such as the barefoot doctor tradition in China) and to value these as worthy of support. Many of these traditional healing methods, far from being new age, preserved some of the best insights from thousands of years of experience from holistic-spiritual traditions, like the acupuncture system in China, Ayurvedic medicine in India, or the shamanistic traditions from Asia, Africa, or pre-columbian America.

Henry Ellenberger (1970 a), in his monumental history of dynamic psychiatry, devotes his first chapter of 50 pages to the ancestry of dynamic psychiatry in shamanistic understanding of body-mind-spirit integration. He writes, in his opening paragraph:

«Although the systematic investigation of the unconscious mind and of psychic dynamism is fairly new, the origins of dynamic psychotherapy can be traced back in time through a long line of ancestors and forerunners. Certain medical or philosophical teachings of the past, as well as certain older healing methods offer a surprisingly high degree of insight into what are usually considered the most recent discoveries in the realm of the human mind» (p 1).

Ellenberger devotes some space to the description of the pre-modern notion that what we would call neurosis is related to what they would call «loss of soul».

«Among all primitive disease theories» he writes «probably none is stranger to us than the idea of soul loss. Nothing is further from our principles of treatment than the restoration of a lost soul to a patient. And yet, if we ignore the cultural element, and seek the roots of facts, we may find a common ground between those primitive concepts and our own.»

Between abnormal and paranormal: the roots of facts in the history of dynamic psychiatry

If one studies the origins of modern psycho-dynamic therapy in the decades before the work of Sigmund Freud, a surprising level of integration will be found between the understanding of physical, mental and spiritual health or illness. Psycho-analysis, as I showed in an earlier article (Boadella, 1997) grew out of the psycho-physical analysis of Pierre Janet. Janet and Freud were heirs to what Ellenberger calls an unbroken continuity from mesmerism, to hypnotism, to modern psychotherapy.

Franz Anton Mesmer, the founder of mesmerism, and the originator of the path towards modern dynamic psychotherapy, was strongly influenced by Immanuel Swedenborg. In the studies that the early hypnotists developed, following Mesmer, it was increasingly found that what from one aspect could be considered a psychological disturbance or abnormality could, from another standpoint) be understood as an expression of para-normal ability. Many of the earliest psychotherapy clients were what we would nowadays call «mediums» and

were then called «sensitives». Sensitives were people who were open to super-sensory forms of communication, such as clairvoyance, or who had contact through super-normal abilities to other worlds of reality than the material. Swedenborg, the first phenomenologist, and the first great dream researcher, had recorded in many journals such experiences. Now they were turning up in the consciousness of the patients who were treated under hypnosis. What were the early psychotherapists to make of these levels of apparent reality?

What we find if we explore this period in the second half of the nineteenth century is that the study of psychology and the study of parapsychology continuously overlap. There was a climate of understanding that other levels of reality exist, and human beings have direct access to them the exact inverse of what Kant had taught when he placed the noumenal out of reach. The early pioneers in psychodynamic understanding, Janet, Richet, Myers, were closely interlinked with key philosophers of that era, in particular William James (1882) and Henri Bergson (1891) who explored the body-spirit interface, and with biologists in the tradition descended from Goethe, such as Hans Driesch (1908). To this network belonged Gustav Fechner (1836), the founder of psycho-physics, and a number of major physicists such as William Crookes, Johann Zollner and Oliver Lodge. All of these individuals were concerned with the study of parapsychology and psychic research, and were particularly open to the spiritual dimensions of existence.

Frederick Myers (1903) studied altered states of consciousness several decades before Pierre Janet died in 1947. The birth of the current century was to witness an increasing divergence between the understanding of body, mind and spirit. The study of the body passed to modern medicine, and the various para-medical physical treatments. The study of the mind became the preserve of psychotherapy, which struggled to distance itself from its shamanistic and para-psychological origins. The approach to spirit was reserved for the traditional religions or became the hunting ground of the new age sects and cults. Psychotherapy at all accounts had to defend its frontiers not only against the body, but against the interface with esoteria.

Esoteria was not only the mother of science, but also the mother of psychotherapy. We all know what deep defences and disturbances are associated with matricide.

In spite of this tendency for these new forms of bifurcation, in part II all this article, I will show how spirituality retained a place within psychotherapy, albeit a reduced one.

Part II: Spirituality within the Mainstreams of Psychotherapy

Oceanic feelings and the future of an illusion

Although Freud recognised the reality of what he called oceanic feelings and longings, his tendency was to view these as a regressive reexperiencing of an original unity with the mother.

According to Henri Ellenberger: «Freud's philosophy was an extreme form of positivism, which considered religion dangerous and metaphysics superfluous. In 1907 (in an article on «Zwangshandlungen und Religionsübung» in the Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie, no 1), Freud compared obsessive compulsive symptoms of neurotics with religious rituals and creed, and concluded that religion was a universal obsessional neurosis, and obsession an individualised religion. Twenty years later in the Future of an Illusion Freud (1927) defined religion as an illusion inspired by infantile belief in the omnipotence of thought, a universal neurosis, a kind of narcotic that hampers the free exercise of intelligence, and something man will have to give up» (Ellenberger, 1970a p. 525).

We can recognise here a clear recognition by Freud of the deformative effects of the deformed religious traditions that had ossified and rigidified. What Freud does not recognise here is the formative side, of the spiritual traditions. In throwing out the bathwater of obsessional compulsion in the exoteric side of religion, he has also thrown out the baby of the essential heart of human spirituality.

This omission was rectified and recognised by Otto Kernberg, the President Elect of the International Psychoanalytic Association in a keynote speech at the World Council for Psychotherapy Congress at Vienna in 1996. Kernberg saw that Freud's reduction of all religious and spiritual impulses to the product of neurosis, eliminated any other ground for ethical principles than rationality, and this was the illusion in Freud's perspective. Ethical conduct and compassionate actions sprang, for Kernberg, not from the rationality of the intellect, but from a deeper, more essential or spiritual level of the person. Kernberg argues that religion, in its formative aspects, deals with the fundamental ethical aspects of human existence, and offers a universal value system that encourages feelings of responsibility, care, and compassionate understanding, respect for the rights of others, and tolerance for their differences. With his keynote speech Kernberg (1996), re-opened the door that psychoanalysis had slammed shut to the inclusion of spirituality within psychotherapy as a key area of focus, and concern, a source of potential healing of wounds, rather than a defensive compulsion to be analysed away.

Unity, cosmic influence and the courage of the heart

In the individual psychology of Alfred Adler certain principles were emphasised as basic. One of these was the principle of unity, emphasising that a human being was an integrated unity of body-mind and soul. A second principle was the principle of «Zielstrebigkeit», the emphasis that the human being was motivated by the search for the, meaning of life" (the title of one of Adler's books) and the search to actualise values. A third principle was the principle of cosmic influence, emphasising the interconnectedness between the individual and the larger cosmos. A fourth principle was the principle of what Adler called «mut» which he related to the Greek term thymos. Thymos meant the courage of the heart, a quality which the Greeks considered to be part of the essence of the soul «To impart thymos to child would be the basic concern of the educator, as well as that of the psychotherapist, regardless whether his patient is a child or an adult» (Ellenberger, 1970a, p. 609).

In 1932 Adler wrote a book together with the German pastor Ernst Jahn from Stieglitz near Berlin, on «Religion und Individual Psychologie» (Adler & John 1932). The book was banned and destroyed by the Nazi party as soon as it appeared.

Viktor Frankel was a prominent Adlerian who suffered but survived the experience of being confined in the concentration camps. He developed what he called «logo therapy», (40), the therapy of meaning and values, out of his study that it was a connection to a deep sense of inner meaning that had helped him and many other camp-inmates to survive the experience emotionally, morally and spiritually. In Frankel's logotherapy it is not hard to see the influence of Adler's emphasis on the importance of cultivating thymos the courage of the heart.

Stanley Keleman (1974) studied at the Alfred Adler Institute in Zurich and developed later his concepts of the formative process, and of self-formation which have been one of the major sources of inspiration within body-psychotherapy.

The Archetype of the Self and the energies of the subtle body

In 1917 Rudolf Otto published his book

«The Idea of the Holy», which was a major contribution to the psychology of religion. Otto defined a fundamental experience basic to all religious experience which here fated to a sense of awe in the face of our createdness, and a sense of confrontation with unsurpassable value.

According to Henri Ellenberger, Jung took over this sense of the numinous from Rudolf Otto, and related it to his concept of the archetype. Dionysus the Areopagite, who we have seen was a key transmitter in the formative spiritual tradition of the west, had used the term archetype for essential qualities of our experience, in the fifth century AD, and Jung acknowledged him as one of the sources of his use of the term archetype.

Jung distinguished between the persona, (the outer manifestation of a person), the shadow, (the repressed unconscious), and the archetype of the self which was seeking individuation. In his Zarathustra seminars in the nineteen thirties (Jung 1934), he opened himself to insights from the subtle body tradition of the west as transmitted through the neoplatonists, in particular Plotinus. The subtle body tradition postulates a spectrum or continuum of states of being from purely physical, through the intermediate states of energy fields experienced as subtle bodies, to the essential self.

Spiritual homelessness and spiritual re-connection

Otto Rank (1939) is best known for going beyond Freud in his description of neurosis as being related to the traumas of birth. Rank is the founding father of the interdisciplinary science of pre and perinatal psychology. It is less well known that he also defined neurosis as a form of fragmentation that created a spiritual homelessness disconnecting us from our spiritual roots. If neurosis is understood as the desperation contrasted with the void, then religion in its primary meaning as reconnection was the exact opposite. Rank writes in his last book, *Beyond Psychology*, written in 1939, the year he died, and published two years later:

«By rediscovering in our own life, lost or disguised spiritual values, which still have to give meaning to our biological and social existence, we intend to show how both the individual personality and his culture emerge from the same need for immortalisation».

Whereas Freud had placed the emphasis on the id, as the reservoir of primitive needs, and the ego as the repository of rationality, and the superego as the voice of the culture, Rank introduced what he calls a «third principle» which combines the rational and irrational elements in a world view based on the supernatural. Rank links this third principle to the «(Vital need for spiritual values» and sees this need as felt by primitive man with his magical thinking and as particularly important, though often repressed or denied in our highly mechanised civilisation.

Object-relations, self-psychology, and the dynamic cycle of being.

Object-relations, originating out of psychoanalysis, stressed the importance of human relationships to the development of personality. In its descriptions of the growth of the capacity to love out of the security provided by loving and self-affirming primary relationships object-relations theory was in fact an exploration of the essential grounding of love in the human being through the capacity for relatedness. Nowhere was this emphasised more explicitly than

in the psychodynamic writings of Harry Guntrip (1971), one of the major therapists within the British School of object relations.

Harry Guntrip was a key influence on Frank Lake, a Christian psychiatrist who developed a model of psycho-dynamic health modelled on four aspects of the personality of Christ. He called these being, well-being, power and communication. Lake's lifework was the creation of a highly active school of psychodynamics which he called «clinical theology» (Lake 1966). He complained that psychiatrists and theologians could not understand his writing, but housewives loved it. Lake's use of the archetype of Christ as a symbol for the essential ground of personality, its spiritual heart, may bring echoes of Jung use of this archetype in his book «Aion» (Jung 1955), or of Wilhelm Reich's use in his book «The Murder of Christ» (Reich, 1952).

Unfortunately the form of theology that Lake adopted was a somewhat restrictive form of Anglicanism, and his way of cross relating theological and clinical issues will be found by many to be somewhat oppressive, despite the brilliance of his psychodynamic, characterological and peri-natal insights (Lake also stood in the tradition descending from Otto Rank).

A far more revolutionary and liberating theology, righth with psychodynamic insights into the polarities between basic trust, and dreadful angst is to be found in the work of the theologian-psychotherapist Eugene Drewerman (1992), a German pastor with a prolific output, and acute socio-political awareness. Drewerman who was feared and banned by the Catholic Church from teaching in their name, was one of the key-note speakers at the first World Council for Psychotherapy, Vienna, 1996.

Andres Nino, a psychologist at Harvard University, in an article on Restoration of the Self, in Volume 27 of the Journal Psychotherapy, in 1990, has described the relevance of the self psychology of Heinz Kohut, to the theme of transcendence. Kohut, in Nino's understanding of him, «focussed on the self, the significance of the search for the realisation of values and ideals, represented in the 'Tragic man' and the crucial role played by empathic relationships in the restoration of the self suffering from 'inner emptiness, isolation and unfulfilment». Nino writes:

«Kohut's psychological system asserts that the self, which is at the centre of the psychological universe, is made up of two major constituents: a pole of ambition, from which emanates the basic strivings of power and success and a pole of inner values and ideals», which Nino sees as related to the individuals struggle for spiritual survival. Kohut had in fact identified the nuclear self with «that continuum in time which contains the individuals most enduring values and ideals, together with his most deeply anchored goals, purposes and ambitions» (Nino. 1990).

Life and Religion: psych contact and vegetative current

Wilhelm Reich, as we have already seen, was a strong critic of the deformed and deformative religious traditions, in the lineage of Spinoza, Nietzsche, Freud and Marx. In the course of his investigations into the human energy-system, Reich became increasingly involved in the process of vegetative streaming in the tissues of his patients, and saw psychic contact and connectedness as rooted in free-flowing libido. Freud has used the metaphor of an amoeba reaching out in pleasure" and retracting in anxiety¹ and Reich took this literally and investigated what he called the «basic antithesis of vegetative life» looking down the microscope at the plasmatic pulsations of unicellular organisms.

His researches led him to investigate man's roots in nature, and the interface between biological processes and cosmic processes, as mediated by the atmosphere which was both a

key factor in the metabolic processes of living organisms, and an envelope of the earth with a cosmic and astrophysical history. Reich's cosmic energy investigations led him to realise that what religions has studied as «God», what physicists had studied as «ether» and what he studied as cosmic energy, we-re inter-related (Reich, 1949).

Reich's earliest colleague in the period that he developed vegetotherapy, the foundations of all forms of body-psychotherapy that were later developed, was Ola Raknes, a Norwegian philosopher, linguist and psychoanalyst, who had studied William James (1982) concepts on religion us experience, and came to the conclusion, in an important paper that he gave to the 5th scandinavian Psychology Conference, in 1956 (Raknes, 1970), that the vegetative streamings that appeared during body-psychotherapeutic work were related to the oceanic feelings described by Freud, and to many of the experiences of persons on spiritual paths who sensitised their bodies to the perception of different energy fields of awareness of subtler dimensions of existence, as was found in the varieties of religious experience, described by James. Sexual experience and deep spiritual experience, were therefore deeply connected, as those in the bio-spiritual traditions had always claimed, and as against the deep devaluation of sexuality in the deformative religious traditions, and against the deep devaluation of spirituality in the scientific traditions.

Part III: Between psychology and spirituality

1. Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic psychology grew up in the fifties, partially based on the theories of group interaction derived from Kurt Lewin, and the Gestalt psychotherapy of Fritz Perls, partly on inspiration from the foundation of Esalen Institute in California, and partly through the work of Abraham Maslow (1952). Maslow postulated a hierarchy of basic needs, from irrlmediate survival needs, through emotional and cultural needs, to spiritual needs. One of Maslow's key concepts was the concept of the «peak experience» as an experience which took a person much more deeply into contact with himself, with others, or with nature. The humanistic movement was open to spirituality in a rather general way. Maslow referred to this movement as a third force. in psychology, out of which in the nineteen sixties grew the so called «fourth force» of transpersonal psychology, lauhched by Abram Maslow and Anthony Sutich.

2. Transpersonal psychology

In the European Association for Psychotherapy transpersonal psychology is recognised as the sixth of nine mainstreams. Transpersonal psychology has a number of roots in addition to the inspiration derived from humanistic psychology. One of these is clearly the work of Jung, which is referred to above. A second root goes back to Karlfried von Durkheim who is the founder of Initiatory Therapy (1973). Durkheim studied with Heidegger, and later in Japan with the Zen Buddhists, He developed his understanding of the «twofold» heritage of man, from the lesser self, or world ego, and from the Greater Self. Durkheim founded a community at Todtmoos in the Black forest of Germany. One of his students was Stanley Keleman referred to above.

A third root to transpersonal psychology is through the work of the Czech psychiatrist, Stanislav Grof (1985), whose principal work was in peri-natal psychology, but who became interested in altered states of consciousness opened up in states of deep regression. His work with holotropic therapy is based on a multi-dimensional model of man that is open to trans-egoic levels of experience. In recent years considerable interest in his work has been shown by some people within the Durkheim community.

A fourth root to transpersonal psychology is the work of Robert Assagioli in (1965). Assagioli moved away from psychoanalysis towards what he called psychosynthesis, a means of integrating various levels within the human being. Psychosynthesis, although it developed many important insights on the integration between spirituality and the daily life, tended to ignore and leave behind the psychodynamic insights into human problems. Recent developments in psychosynthesis, led by John Firman have sought to reintegrate the best insights of psychosynthesis into the spiritual aspects of man, with the understanding of human problems derived from psychodynamics and object relations. During the early fifties Assagioli had a meeting with Francis Mott, (1948), a leading configurational psychologist in England, who worked in the tradition of Otto Rank with perinatal and embryological insights. Mott asked Assagioli what kind of work he did. «I do psychosynthesis». Mott replied, and gave an overview of his work. What kind of work do you do, Assagioli asked Mott. Mott replied «I practise biosynthesis». Biosynthesis was the name Mott used to describe his unique grasp of the embryologic origins of many aspects of human behaviour. After Mott had died leaving no direct successors I adopted his term «Biosynthesis» for the particular form of spiritual body-psychotherapy that Silvia Specht Boadella and I have developed over the last quarter of a century (Boadella, 1987);

A different direction in Transpersonal psychology has been taken by Ken Wilber, (1985) integrating many lines of psychosocial, philosophic, and spiritual development. Wilber was influenced by Jean Gebser (1985), the Swiss philosopher who saw the whole of human culture as showing a gradual evolution through stages in the direction of a more holistic or ecospiritual awareness. Wilber's systematic and rigorous working through and integrating of his many sources is one of the major achievements of the twentieth century. The criticisms of Wilber's approach by Michael Washburn (1995), and the answer to them will be the subject of a separate section of this article (see below under Integral Psychology).

Adrian van Kaam from the Institute of Formative Spirituality at Duquesnes University pays tribute to the achievements of both humanistic and transpersonal psychologies, but in his opinion they stop short of true spirituality because of their attempt to derive an understanding of spirituality from rational psychological principles, rather than to ground it in the foundational teachings of one of the major spiritual traditions. One of the key issues would seem to be whether the transpersonal psychologies have developed a methodical practice that enables people to develop their contact to their own spirituality or not, and how this methodology would compare with the methodologies available within the religious traditions.

Immune to this critique are therapeutic modalities that have developed within any of the major religious traditions. The work of Frank Lake within the Christian tradition has already been referred to Martin Buber's dialogic therapy of encounter (1958) owes much to his roots in the Hassidic culture of Judaism; and the bodypsychotherapy approach of Almaas, in California, (1996), has deep roots in the essence traditions of sufism. Durkheim's initiatory therapy in turn has roots in the long zen tradition of Japan.

One of the most interesting developments in the last quarter of a century, has been the application of Tibetan Buddhist insights to the process of psychotherapy, and the attempt to translate these insights into forms understandable within the west. In Europe the work of Tarab Tulku, who is Director of the Tibetan Studies Department at the University of Copenhagen is important to be aware of Tarab. Tulku who is the director of the Tarah Ladrang Institutes in Denmark, France, Belgium, Germany and, Austria. He gave a keynote speech at the World Congress of Psychotherapy in Vienna in 1996 on spiritual approaches in relation to psychotherapy (Tulka, 1996). A colleague of Tarab Tulku's, Lene Handberg, is current! Engaged in comparative research between Buddhist and Western psychotherapy principles at Copenhagen University.

Across the Atlantic a similar interest in psychotherapy has been developed by Tenzin Wangyal (1993), at the Ligmincha Institut for the Preservation of Religion and Culture, in Charlottesville, Virginia, USA. It is beyond the scope of this article to be more specific about the Tibetan forms of psychotherapy.

3. Cognitive and existential psychology

Cognitive psychology is normally understood to be, with behaviourism, part of the second force of psychology, with no particular relationship to spirituality. However the cognitive sciences span an interdisciplinary field which has begun to overlap with the rapidly growing area of consciousness research, One of the major figures in this field is the Chilean Nobel-prize winning biologist, Francisco Varela, and his collaborators, Eleanor Rosch and Evan Thompson (Varela et al., 1991).

Varela describes the interdisciplinary nature of cognitive science, and consciousness studies, embracing specialisms from the neurosciences and the quantum physics of mind, through cognitive psychology and psychodynamics; to phenomenology, epistemology; psycholinguistics, and studies from the contemplative traditions. Varela himself is a Buddhist and draws on the two and a half thousand year old Abidhamma tradition of Buddhist psychology to illuminate his insights.

Calling for a «transformative re-embodiment» of consciousness, these authors stress the importance of en,active cognition as an embodied form of active knowledge integrating neuroscientific understanding of human behaviour with direct life-experience coupled with pragmatic self-reflection founded in the tradition of spiritual awareness. The transformative potential within this self-reflection contains both a meditative element aimed at deepening interpersonal awareness and global mindfulness; and a call for the reembodiment of psychotherapy by connecting our reflective consciousness to its spiritual developmental foundations, in sensory-motoric, somatic emotional, interactional, and imaginal levels of experience.

The transformative path that Varela and his co-authors envisage as essential for the overcoming of our planetary problems is a path of insightful compassion-ate action: that is a path blending clear understanding, contactful feelings and mindful behaviour.

Varela was a teacher in the Summer Science Programme of the Naropa Institute at Boulder Colorado, and his work was supported by a research grant from the Stiftung zur Forderung der Philosophie. The work was developed at the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris, and presented at a conference organised by the lindsayfarne Program for Biology, Cognition and Ethics, in the USA, who also supported it with grants. As the work developed into a major bridging between cognitive psychology and spiritual insights, it became additionally supported by the Centre de

Recherche en Epistemologie appliquee and at the Centre Nationale de Retherche Scientifique both in Paris. Evan Thompson's collaboration in the project was supported by the Department of Comparative Philosophy at Amherst University, and by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto, and the Centre for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University, USA. Eleanor Rosch's participation was supported by the Cognitive Science Program at the University of California in Berkeley. This impressive list of scientific support bases for a basic bridging between spirituality and cognitive science, is given as reassurance for those who identify spirituality with esoteric illusions.

Varela and his co-authors stand firmly in the trans-dualistic tradition of the Kyoto school of Philosophy as represented by Keiji Nishitani (1983). Nishitani is Professor of Philosophy in the Zen Buddhist tradition of Nagarjuna, and his own teacher, Nishida. Nishida, (1987), was the founder of the Kyoto philosophical tradition that seeks to present an integration between eastern and western philosophical understanding and embodiment of reality. Just as Varela stands in the phenomenological tradition -of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, Nishitani was a direct student of Martin Heidegger, and indirectly of Nietzsche.

Just as Varela emphasises the overtheoretical nature of phenomenological psychology, (even when it talks of embodiment it has not evolved a practice of embodiment), so Nishitani moves beyond the field of nihilism or groundlessness opened up by existentialism, and comprehends a deeper level of actualisation which transcends object-subject splitting. Here Nishitani's transformative approach has many links to the philosophy of organism, originating with Goethe and Schelling, both of whom he greatly admires, and continued by Bergson and in the process philosophy of the English scientist Alfred North Whitehead (1978).

Nishitani's brilliant bridge building between Western Science (objectivism) and Eastern spirituality (subjectivism) shows a philosophy of the organism that unifies scientific, ethical, religious and political areas of human experience in an outstanding way. The transcendence of the splitting between the «eco» realm of the outer environment (which we threaten to turn into an outer desert), and the «ego» realm of selfish character-dynamics (which Wilhelm Reich called the «inner desert»), also links Nishitani's work closely to the approach of Ken Wilber which will be returned to below. Nishitani's work is supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education Aid Grant for Scientific Research Results, and by the Departments of Philosophy at both the State University of Kyoto and the Department of Philosophy at Otani University, Kyoto.

4. Systemic understanding and cybernetic psychology

Modern systems thinking originated in the work of Ludwig Bertalanffy, who was inspired by the holistic ideas arising within the process philosophy of Bergson and Whitehead. Bertalanffy in turn was a major influence on Norbert Wiener, the founder of the science of cybernetics. The connections between these important disciplines has been well described by Friedhof Capra (1996). A major systems thinker within the field of psychotherapy is the German psychologist Gunter Schiepeck, (1996), who has proposed that the different levels of organisation of human experience can be visualised as a vertical hierarchy of layers of order, with information passing between them. A similar view has been developed by the father of psychosomatic medicine in Germany, Thure von Uexkull (1994). The Dutch psychologist Douwe Tiemersma (1989), who studied the body-schema and body image from both experimental and phenomenological

perspectives, relates these vertically organised dimensions of experience to the subtle-body concepts of the western spiritual tradition, (see below).

The National Institute of Health in Bethesda Maryland, which is linked to the World Health Organisation, set up an Office of Alternative Medicine, to encourage the study of alternative forms of medical treatment, -and healing. This Office established close links with the Institute for the Study of Suptle Energy and Energy Medicine, (ISSSEEM), in the USA, which for the past many years has been studying the interlinked systems within the human organism, personality, and consciousness. The studies at this Institute confirmed the thousands year old traditional teaching from both west and east about the existence of the subtle energy-fields of the body. A six volume study of the history o.f the subtle body, over all continents, through the past five millenia, was completed by the Dutch professor Jan Poortman, at Amsterdam University (1978). The findings of the Energetic Medicine Institute are the subject of a separate article on

«Subtle bodies and organising fields». In the pages of the Journal of the ISSSEEM there is considerable discussion as to whether the so called «energy» fields are physical or para-physical fields, or are nonphysical levels of information (Green, et ali, 1992). The First International Conference on the Psychology of Consciousness, Energy Medecine, and Dynamic Change, took place in 1997, organised by the National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioural Medecine, in Connecticut. The conference introduced «groundbreaking developments in the clinical application of intention, intuition, consciousness and the integration of spirituality». The advisory council which includes specialists from the Universities of Arkansas, Massachusetts, Stanford, and Manchester, writes that «the new sciences have the potential to bring our professions fresh new ways of looking at change. Bohm's notion of the implicate order, Sheldrake's idea of morphogenetic fields, or Dossey's concept of non-local mind, when applied to the dynamics of human change, bring a subtle but fundamental shift in our understanding of who we are, how we change and the mechanism by which this occurs.»

Ole Vedfeldt, (1996), a Danish psychologist, has looked at the whole field of human consciousness and experience in terms of interacting levels of information in a hierarchical ordering, in which higher levels of organisation cannot be reduced to lower levels. There is a constant flow of information transfer takes place between lower and higher levels. Such a view is consistent with many of the principles of systems theory, and also colresponds to the understanding developed in psychobiology of the immune system, which is considered later in this article. In Vedfeldt's model, as in the model of Thure von Uexkull, the spiritual dimension of experience i's a natural part of the organisation of the human being, but it functions at the highest level of that organisation. The systemic-psychological approach has many areas of overlap with the Spectrum Psychology of Ken Wilber, to which I will return in due course.

Contemplative psychology

Contemplative psychology is defined by Han de Wit, (1991), professor of theoretical. Psychology at the Free University in Amsterdam, as the oldest psychology, since it has been developed not by practioners of academic disciplines, but rather by intelligent and sensitive practioners of the contemplative and spiritual traditions, whether linked to a specific religious formation, or not. A contemplative psychology is a spiritual psychology of development, with specific prescriptions of practices that are recommended to attain that development Using a tripartite model for the aspects for the stages of development, de Wit outlines three categories

of thought, deed and act, as a basis for organising a contemplative psychology of mind, of communication, and of behaviour.

As in Biosynthesis, this tripartite division, with its ancient roots both in Buddhist and Pythagorean psychology, defines three divisions of mainstream psychology: the cognitive, psychodynamic and behavioural domains. De Wit comes from Holland, and like Adrian van Kaam, with his formative science of spirituality, Jan Poortman, and Douwe Tiemersma, is a leading figure in what we could call the Dutch school of spirituality. Like Varela, De Wit developed many of his ideas at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. De Wit contrasts the objective aspects of the third person psychology, as seen for example in the psychology of religion as typified in University studies, with the subjective firstperson psychology of the meditator, or spiritual practitioner. He sees contemplative psychology as unifying these two traditions. The beauty of his approach is that it is applicable to the essential teachings and practices in all the formative spiritual traditions without being limited by the dogmatism associated with the exoteric form of any particular religion. The development of this modern form of contemplative psychology has been supported by grants from the Dutch Organisation for Pure Scientific Research, and by the Fulbright Foundation. Professor Han de Wit makes explicit linkages between his own work and the transformative re-embodiment of Francisco Varela, as well as the integral psychology of Ken Wilber.

A second school of contemplative psychology has arisen in Denmark, primarily around the spiritual developmental psychology taught by Robert Moore, (Gamborg, 1991), an Irishman who worked for some time in the doctor-healer network in London, before moving to Denmark in 1973.

Moore's contemplative tradition is not linked to any specific religious tradition, but is based on systematic training in a variety of interlinked meditative practices designed to sensitise the practitioner to the presence of states of mind and consciousness in different dimensions of his physical body and the energy fields surrounding it. Moore's Work, which is one of the most extensive and serious of all western attempts this century to ground spirituality in daily life, has led to high level discussions with leading Buddhist teachers, and with the Dalai Lama himself, even though Moore's background is thoroughly western. The work he teaches on psychosomatic integration, in the light of meditative awareness, encompasses insights into the flow of information within the subtle energy system, that has aspects in common with the work of the Institute for the Study of Subtle Energy and Energy Medicine, described above.

Jes Bertelsen (1978-1983), a psychology professor from Aarhus University in Denmark, studied with Robert Moore, and unlike Moore who published no books on his teachings, Bertelsen published a series of books outlining his own version of depth psychology in the contemplative tradition. Bertelsen had a background in transpersonal psychology, with a thesis on individuation in the Jungian sense, and has made many links to other contemplative traditions in his exploration of the many paths between energy and consciousness. The work of Moore was the subject of a research project organised by the Institute for Creativity and Culture, at the University of Aarhus, under the direction of Dr. Hans Fink, and was also a major inspiration for the cybernetic psychology of Professor Ole Vedfelt, described above. After the work in body-psychotherapy of Wilhelm Reich, and his followers, of Stanley Keleman and of Biosynthesis, Moore's work has been identified as a major form of body-psychotherapy, a spiritual body-therapy, because of the depth to which it enables students in contacting their

spirituality in non-sensational ways, and in the massive support it brings to the contact with essential qualities and their manifestation in daily existence.

Psycho-biology and Bio-feedback

The work of the early hypnotists in the last century had many links to para-normal states in patients, as has already been indicated. The second half of this century has seen the growth of psycho-neuroimmunology a new science that shows some of the transformative linkages between different levels of body, mind and spirit. At the bodily level the immune system demonstrates the bodily readiness to fight back, which in turn proves to be related to our psycho-emotional state, which itself may be coloured by our ability to access or not such qualities as faith, or the will to live. A cancer patient has an immune system which is not eradicating naturally any malignant cells that might exist, the reason for which in some cases is related to links between cellular suffocation and emotional resignation or depression as seen in the work of Wilhelm Reich. This emotional resignation may in turn be related to the loss of a sense of future, or the sense of meaninglessness in life. The work of Carl and Stephanie Simonton (1980) has shown that in some 40 percent of cancer patients, it is possible by positive visualisations and imagery, to counteract the cancer process. The work of the Simontons, as presented in the 2nd Congress in the series Visions of the Human Future in Bremen in 1995, is deeply related to the therapist's ability to counteract sources and resources of spiritual renewal in a patient. In this way a process of non-chemical healing may be initiated.

Biofeedback, which began as a behavioural process of conditioning human beings or animals to control and therefore regulate bodily processes that are normally not subject to voluntary control has evolved in a direction that supports the Simontons' work, and suggests that by a form of meditative training in self-awareness of bodily processes it is possible to initiate healing tendencies to counteract disease processes. This form of demonstration of apparent control of mind over matter is related to certain yogic practices which have been of particular interest to biofeedback researchers. Yoga is a form of psychophysical awareness training arising from a specific formative tradition many millenia old. A popular form of this mind-matter control is seen in the practice of fire-walking, where practitioners demonstrate the ability to prevent the feet from heavy blistering by developing specific states of meditative awareness that have much in common with spiritual practices, and an attitude that when applied to another could be more useful in supporting a process of healing. Thus bio-feedback research also, with its origins in behaviourism, has an important interface with the contemplative spiritual traditions and practices. Dr. med Daniel Benor, who founded the Doctor-Healer Network in Great Britain, wrote a four volume book on Healing Research in which he not only described the new bioenergetic and psycho-spiritual paradigms, but gave detailed reports on 137 controlled scientific experiments on subtle energy healing processes on plants, animals and human beings. (Benor, 1992-1993).

At the California Pacific Medical Centre in San Francisco, the director of the Psychosocial Oncology Research Unit, Dr. Elisabeth Targ has studied spiritual healing in relation to Aids Patients. At the Esalen Institute Study of Exceptional Functioning, Michael Murphy made a study of over 1000 scientific investigations between meditation and physiological reactions, many of which involved improvements in the immune system. David Felton, the Chairman of the Department of Neurobiology at the University of Rochester has confirmed that «anything

involved with meditation and controlling the state of the mind that alters hormone activity has the potential to have an impact on the immune system.»

The Journal of the American Medical Association in May 1995 published an article on «Spiritual Aspects of well-being considered», which reported on the results of an important medical conference on the theme of «Spiritual Dimensions in Clinical Research».

Movement-therapy and postures of the soul

One of the earliest of the various movement-therapies developed this century was originated by Rudolf Steiner (Mac Dermott, 1987). Steiner was inspired by Goethe's researches in morphology and optics, and by the work of Carl Gustav Carus (1970) in psycho-embryology. He took from Ignaz Troxler, (1928); a Swiss psychologist born in the last decades of the eighteenth century, the term «anthroposophy» to describe the particular form of spiritual science that he developed.

Arthur Zajonc (1993) has shown in a fascinating study, the long history of the formative tradition from which Steiner emerged. Steiner developed a particular movement form «eurhythmy» which was a movement practice intended to rebalance the body, re-tune the emotions and revitalise the spirit. Gerda Alexander from Denmark developed her own form of movement-therapeutic exercises which she called «eutony». A student of Gerda Alexander, Volkmar Glaser in Germany (1980) went deeper into the physiology of Eutony, and explored the relationship between muscle tone and breathing, and intentionality. The moment we begin to deal with intentionality in movement, a vast field of research in itself, the interface to spirituality becomes apparent. Glaser developed certain movement forms which opened a feeling which he called «transensus», and that were designed to encourage students who practised them to get more closely in touch with deeper states of self-contact and transcendent experience. In Biosynthesis we evolve such movement forms through deep therapeutic work of an individual process nature, and when they have this quality of bridging dimensions we call them postures of the soul. From the Tibetan tradition Tarthang Tulku at the Nyingmapa Institute in Berkeley, has taught a movement system called «Kum Nye» (Tulku, 1978) which is a kind of soft moving yoga with the emphasis on the sensation within the movement and the qualities of spirit within the posture.

In Japan we have the living example of the «butoh dance» developed by Kazuo Ohno, (Viala & Masson-Sessima, 1988), its founder. Butoh dance works also with extreme sensitivity to intentionality, the balance between inner and outer, and the ability of the dancer to integrate subtle and dense worlds of experience and expression in the movements and postures he or she unfolds. Butoh dance as Butoh therapy has been evolved by one of Ohno's students, Silvia Specht Boadella, into her own particular form of therapeutic meditative movement work that has been one of the major inputs to and inspirations for the development of Biosynthesis in the last twenty five years.

Integrative psychotherapy and Spectrum Psychology

Integrative therapy may indicate a therapeutic system blended together from many components. When the components are congruently related in a consistent way such an

integration may be very powerful and effective. When not we may be faced with an eclectic mixture presented by a therapist who is jack of all trades but master of none.

Quite different in origin and intent is the integral psychology, formerly called spectrum psychology, developed over the last twenty years by Ken Wilber in the USA. Wilber's model has many roots in both eastern and western formative traditions, as well as in systems theory, developmental psychology, sociology and philosophy. Wilber is anything but eclectic, and weaves his ingredients together into a rich tapestry that is one of the great works of the twentieth century. In his epic trilogy, on the theme of Kosmos, Wilber (1995) covers the entire history of the human race, and the development of human culture in stages proposed by Jean Gebser, but developed further. Wilber works with the polarity and dialectic between cultural currents of influence that overvalue spirit at the expense of matter, and descending streams of thought that overvalue matter at the expense of spirit.

Wilber's model is not only intellectually derived but is the fruit of many years of meditative practice. It is conceptually clear imaginatively vital, spiritually alive, and politically awake. No one writing about the cultural contexts of spirituality in any continent or century can afford to ignore him. A critique of Wilber's model has been given by Michael Washburn, and this will be the subject of an independent review.

Wilber has been very interested in the parallels between findings in modern quantum physics and morphic biology, and the teachings of spiritual masters. He published a book illustrating the parallels. Whereas according to a reductive understanding the spiritual can be reduced to the psychological, the psychological to the neuro-biological and the neuro-biological to the quantum-physical, modern holistic and systemic thinking shows us a picture where the smallest particles of matter dissolve into waves of probability, showing non local connectedness, and in some cosmological models appearing out of hyperdimensional levels of reality. Energy itself The field of consciousness research seems to encompass the paradoxes and puzzles at the interface of matter and mind.

It is certainly notable that some of the most important of the physicists this century have been involved with deep debates over the meaning of reality with significant spiritual or transpersonal figures. One can think of Einstein's interchange with Rabindranath Tagore (1996), of David Bohm's book length dialogues with Jiddu Krishnamurti (1995) or of the mutual cross-fertilisation of insights between Wolfgang Pauli and Carl Jung (1995), resulting in their joint book on synchronicity.

The interface between spirituality and politics has independently of Wilber been evolving at global level, since the Unesco Conference of Parliamentary and Spiritual Leaders in 1992, which published a manifesto containing many globally unifying principles, and a condemnation of violence acted out in the name of religion. Since his retirement as President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev (.1997) has devoted much energy to supporting the annual State of the World Forum which his Foundation instigated as a think tank calling for deeper ethical values, higher states of consciousness, and a new spiritual understanding of and attitude to the meaning of civilisation in the attempts to resolve the major human problems of the planet. Wilhelm Reich (1952) wrote, towards the end of his book on the murder of christ, «civilisation and culture have not been yet».

Spirituality and Psychotherapy today

Spirituality is part of our human birthright and is not Owned by any of the formative traditions within which practices and principles have been developed. Nor can spirituality be reduced to a subset of psychotherapeutic methods. In my article on «The Quality of life and the Matrix of Transformation» given at the 2nd Congress on Visions of the Human Future in Bremen (Boadella., 1998b) I described the tendency of psychotherapy to make too hard a barrier against the spiritual traditions, partly because of its fear to be contaminated by association with the «esoteric». As we have seen, notwithstanding this, there is a long history of spiritual attitudes within the psychotherapy mainstreams, and in recent year this rapprochement has increased. I give some examples below.

The International General Medical Society for Psychotherapy was formed in 1935, and changed its name in 1954 to the International Federation for Medical Psychotherapy. In 1991 the name was changed again to the International Federation for Psychotherapy. The explanation is given as follows in the literature of the Federation:

«The original objective of the Federation was to promote psychotherapy within the field of medicine. However in the mean time psychotherapy has come to include a wide field of professions both scientifically and in practice »

In 1993 at Seoul in Korea the Federation held its 17th international congress in which a major focus was placed on the relationship between psychotherapy and the major spiritual traditions of the world, including taoism, buddhism, sufism, hinduism, and pastoral counselling within Christianity.

The Institut for Grenzgebiete der Wissenschaft held its 42nd international Congress at Innsbruck, also in 1993. It was organised by the psychologist Dr. Andreas Resch, and the theme was «The Worlds of the World-Builders». In this Congress the paradigms of the scientific mainstreams were presented alongside the paradigms of the major formative spiritual traditions. One of the main speakers at the Congress was Dr. Erwin Nickel (1994), who spoke on the relationship between the «Humanwissenschaft» of psychology and the «Geisteswissenschaft» of the spiritual sciences.

The International Association for Spiritual Psychiatry was formed in Lyons in 1994. Its aims are described as follows:

«The purpose of this association is to establish the bases of an open and dynamic psycho-spiritual medicine, in which the psychological suffering and psychopathological suffering and psychopathological disturbances will be separated no more from the contexts of spiritual maturation characteristic of each individual. The word psychiatry is used here in its nobler etymological meaning, the meaning of a medicine of the soul, of a medicine of the psyspirit.»

This Association, which is based in Paris and Jerusalem, has so far organised three international congresses: the first in Lyons, in March 1994, on « The Spiritual Approach in Psychiatry: Meditation and Psychotherapy». The second, in Paris; in 1995, in «Psychotherapy and Self-Realisation: Ego, Suffering and the End of Suffering». The third congress was in Montreal in 1996, with the theme: «Spiritual Approaches in Depressions : Depression, Suicide, and the Death of the Ego».

The World Council for Psychotherapy was formed in Zurich in 1995, and held its first World Congress at Vienna in July 1996. The formation of the World Council was the first time in the history of psycho psychotherapy that all the mainstreams of psychotherapy came officially

together in spirit of cooperation rather than of conflict and competition. Four thousand therapists attended the Congress, from seventy countries in all continents. One of the several Pre-Congress Workshops was a two-day presentation by Tarab Tulku, the Tibetan psychotherapist, on Psychotherapy in a Spiritual Context.

At the official opening of the Congress, the President, Dr. Alfred Pritz, gave a short speech on the importance of psychotherapy in the world today in which he commented that one of the major problems from which people suffered was «spiritual homelessness». It was significant that the first Keynote speech was offered to Viktor Frankel, who was then over ninety years old, in recognition of his life's work in support of the essence of meaning and the ground of values as key issues within psychotherapy. Dr. Pritz was eager that psychotherapy should not be seen as a Eurocentric profession; He had invited shamans, as representatives of Asiatic psychotherapeutic methods, to be present, thus demonstrating the contemporary evidence of the historical relationship between shamanism and psychotherapy which Henri Ellenberger had demonstrated. I have already commented on the important keynote speech by Otto Kernberg, the President-elect of the International Psychoanalytic Association; on Psychoanalysis and Religion, in which he argued that contrary to Freud's belief spiritual needs were not illusory. Eugen Drewerman also gave a keynote address on the importance of genuine spiritual attitudes within psychotherapy, and the need to keep firm boundaries against dogmatic tendencies stemming from the authoritarian side of religious movements. In these ways the newly formed World Council showed a great openness to the utmost relevance of spiritual issues and approaches to psychotherapeutic understanding.

I became a leading figure in the World Council for Psychotherapy's Working Party on Psychotherapy and Spirituality, where the original version of this paper on Essence and Ground was first presented in Paris, in 1998.

The European Association for Psychotherapy was formed in 1990 on the basis of the Strasbourg Declaration on psychotherapy as a highly qualified profession in its own right, and not as a compartment of either medicine or psychology. It has over 50,000 therapists from some 27 European countries. In 1996 the Association set up a Working Party to explore the relationship between «Psychotherapy and Spirituality», under the leadership of Andres Nino; a clinical psychologist from Arbor Health System, who had begun his work on this theme at Harvard University, and had presented on it at the 6th European Conference on Psychology and Religion, at the University of Lund in Sweden, under the title «The assessment of spiritual quests in clinical practice». Andres Nino, in an article on «A Psychological Perspective on Spiritual Concerns during Adulthood», in the magazine of HRI Hospital in Brookline, Massachusetts (August 1966), writes as follows about his viewpoint:

«One point of departure is the observation that adults are often involved in a process of search, evaluation, and reconstruction of important experiences taking place throughout their lives. It is characterised by an urgency for introspection and the formulation of ultimate questions that include those regarding personal destiny, happiness, ethical concerns, God, suffering and death. Principally this process is oriented toward establishing inner coherence and purpose in one's life and may be considered as part of the 'fundamental striving of a person toward the realisation of values, ambitions and ideals that Kohut (1977) and others identify as central to the core self. Ignoring the role that spirituality plays in these processes would jeopardise the integrity of a professional intervention» (Nino, 1996).

The European Association for Body Psychotherapy was formed in Oslo in 1988 and has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. It is an organisation of many schools of somatic psychotherapy that grew up following the work of Wilhelm Reich. Body-psychotherapy has earlier roots in the psycho-physical synthesis of Pierre Janet, as I showed in my article on «Awakening sensibility, recovering motility» (Boadella, 1997). Janet was also open to the -spiritual dimensions of the person, and we have seen this to be true also in the case of Wilhelm Reich and his colleague Ola Raknes, the founder of the Scandinavian school of Character-analytic Vegetotherapy. It is not surprising that most of the schools of body-psychotherapy within the European Association have also developed their own contact, in one form or another, with traditions emphasising the importance of spiritual development in a way that remains grounded, realistic, and non-illusory. In the journal *Pulsazione*, founded by Dr. med Peter Bolen, a President of the European Association, there has been an important three part article on «Spiritual Aspects in Body-Psychotherapy» by Barbara Jakel (1996).

In the pages of the German edition of the international journal *Energy und Character*, which I founded over a quarter of a century ago, will be found a series of papers by Margrit Grossman, (1995-1996) an existential psychotherapist, and by myself (Boadella, 1995) on the relationship between the concepts of essence and existence. This debate received a contribution by Adrian van Kaam (1996); and a long and major article on Discovery. and Development (Wehowsky, 1997-98).

In the particular form of somatic psychotherapy that we have developed over the past twenty five years, which is called Biosynthesis, spiritual aspects of therapy have been in the forefront from the beginning, and many articles have been published on this theme.

The specific principles, practices, and procedures involved in our therapeutic and educational and formative work will be the subject of a later article on Spiritual Grounding in Biosynthesis.

«First published in the *International Journal of Psychotherapy*, Vol 2, No 1, March 1998».

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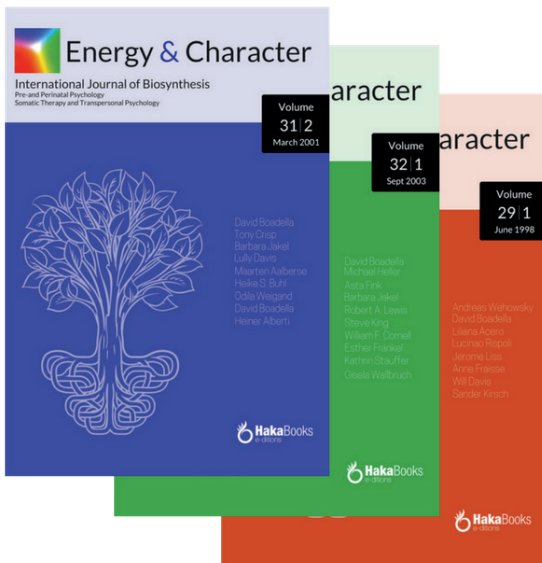
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