Spiritual psychotherapy


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Abstract (Document Summary)

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[Headnote]

The author proposes the practice of spiritual psychotherapy, which transcends but does not preclude traditional modalities or strategies of treatment. The terms soul and spirit are distinguished as different transpersonal abstractions, yet are inextricably linked. The former aims at revealing the mystery of relatedness and intimacy in everyday life, the latter at finding the divine in universal life. For the spiritual therapist, these concepts are applied to a therapeutic context of care and compassion-which means love and belief beyond oneself. More specifically, the way to soulfulness requires Love of Others, Love of Work, and Love of Belonging, whereas the way to spirituality requires Belief in the Sacred, Belief in Unity, and Belief in Transformation. By cultivating a soulful and spiritual existence, thus conducting one's clinical practice on the basis of these six tenets of transcendence, the therapist can guide the patient to reach his or her own authentic self.

There is no organized and structured school of spiritual psychotherapy; that would be antspiritual by definition. Spiritual therapy may frame other therapies, but is itself frameless. This means that it cannot be contained by the human mind, just as the mind may comprehend something about itself but does not reach the ineffable depths of self (i.e., the soul). As the philosopher Karl Jaspers (1) observed in his Way to Wisdom, man is fundamentally more than he can know about himself, because the way to self-knowledge is twofold: the person "as object of inquiry, and as existence endowed with a freedom that is inaccessible to inquiry" (p. 63). It is the latter that is both the subject, and the object, of spiritual psychotherapy. As such, this type of therapy does have its own tenets, not as principles of treatment but as principles of existence. Moreover, although certain nonspecific therapeutic practices may emanate from its precepts, spiritual therapy at best becomes not what the spiritual therapist does, but what he is, in Lasch's (2) words, a virtuous
man who has little to repent of or apologize for at the end of his life.

How does one arrive at this exalted state of virtue? According to the fourth of Chopra's (3) seven spiritual laws of success—the Law of Least Effort—such an individual tries to do nothing; he just is. He accepts people, situations, circumstances, and events as they occur, life as it unfolds. He does not struggle against the moment, in the same way that "Grass doesn't try to grow, it just grows. Fish don't try to swim, they just swim. Flowers don't try to bloom, they bloom. Birds don't try to sing, they just sing" (p. 53). For the therapist who aspires to such a soulful and spiritual existence, it reflects a natural and quiescent state, a union with nature characterized by the principles of fewest words (i.e., profound silence) and least actions (i.e., inner harmony).

Venturing beyond the boundaries of science and medicine, life of the spirit and soul is directed toward devotional belief in the influences of the ethereal, incorporeal, and immaterial aspects of beings, as distinguished from the influences of one's physical, concrete, and evidential existence. Comparing the essence of both of these perspectives, the sacred and the nonsacred, it can be said that spirit is to the soul what blood is to the body. More specifically, spiritual psychotherapy conceptualizes care and compassion within the dual contexts of love and belief beyond oneself—Love of Others, Love of Work, and Love of Belonging, Belief in the Sacred, Belief in Unity, and Belief in Transformation. In this context, a clinician who belongs to any school of psychotherapy or profession can become a spiritual therapist, if regardless of his own ardent allegiances, he conducts his practice according to these six tenets of transcendence.

An overview of the vast variety of psychotherapies of the last century reveals their attempts to resolve the individual's past and present conflicts and remedy his or her deficits by three major change agents: cognitive mastery, affective experience, and behavioral modification (4). Yet even when this entire armamentarium is applied, psychological conflicts are relatively resolved, deficits filled, and defects corrected, ultimately patients still experience posttherapeutic dysphoria, a loss of meaning or sense of emptiness, a nonluminous hollow. These diverse strategies have shed limited light and left patients bereft, because in the process of treatment (if not the psychopathology itself) the person's soul has been neglected and spiritual connections severed.

Of course, all therapies may provide at least transitory relief simply by the presence of someone who is interested in the patient, provides an explanation for his or her condition, offers some semblance of comfort and support, and even expressly teaches coping mechanisms in the form of alternative modes of thinking and behavior. However, traditional approaches eventually reach an impasse, a place where the therapist himself resides and in which he and his patients can become irretrievably trapped. This invariably occurs when confident clinicians, regardless of their respective schools, present themselves as prototypes of health and salvation for their recipients to emulate. Alas, they are limited by an inherent constraint: they can take their patients only as far as they themselves have come. Then the question—and the quest—remain: How does the therapist get beyond this barrier; more aptly, how does he venture toward, and eventually attain, a soulful and spiritual existence?

A SOULFUL AND SPIRITUAL EXISTENCE

The soul and the spirit are frequently used interchangeably as equally rarified concepts. Although they reside neither in consciousness nor unconsciousness, they may be “found” (i.e., infused) in objects and events from the sacred to the secular, from the divine to the ordinary. They are related as transpersonal abstractions, but are also quite different. According to Hillman (5), the soul calls one "down and in" whereas the spirit calls one "up and out" (p. 26). The soul immerses itself within the world through intimacy, relationships, pleasure and pain, and aspires to egoless attachment and engagement. It views human suffering and illness with reverence, by "honoring symptoms as a voice of the soul" (6, p. 3). It is personal as much as transpersonal to the extent that it cultivates depth and sacredness in everyday life. Alternatively, the spirit aims for the impersonal and towards detachment. As Kovel (7) has pointed out, "Spirit is the more general term, connotating a relation between the person and the universe; while soul is the more self-referential term" (p. 33).

Moreover, the soul is the seat of human emotions and sentiments with all its lowly limitations and descents, whereas the spirit is the repository of the moral and religious; it has the highest inspirations and can soar. In addition, the spirit's road can be straight and well paved, while the soul's road is more rough and roundabout. Moore (6) refers to the latter as meandering, likened to "the odd path of Tristan, who travels on the sea without oar or rudder, making his way by playing his harp" (p. 259). Based on the myths of the ages, Campbell (8) suggests a more difficult and demanding route, referring to "a dangerous journey of the soul, with obstacles to be passed" (p. 366). Moore (9) clearly contrasts their dual courses: "In spiritual literature the path to God or to perfection is often depicted as an ascent. It may be done in stages, but the goal is apparent, the direction fixed, and the way direct. Images of the soul's path are quite different. It may be a labyrinth, full of dead-ends...or an odyssey, in which the goal is clear but the way is much longer and more twisted" (p. 259).

In sum, they are both archetypally distinct entities from the physical body and physical world. They are immaterial in
nature, but can make their appearance in all earthly matter. The soul penetrates the plain particulars of life, the spirit transcends them. The soul gazes at life inwardly, while spirit gazes beyond it. The discovery of our true self is only possible by allowing our soul to wander and wend its way, and however circuitous, bring us closer to our spiritual selves. Whereas the soulful and the spiritual each may be pursued separately, one opens the door for the other. In tandem, they form a divine union.

At the same time, the therapist must tend to the patient's soul as well as his own. In early Christianity, tending needs of people was known as cura animarum, the cure of the soul, and the role of the curate was to maintain the individual in a religious and spiritual context, to sustain him for the inevitabilities of fate. The care of the psyche and soul thus began as a sacred act by its practitioners and priests. Then medicine and psychology as secular science started to differentiate the two. In fact, these sciences removed the soul from their vocabulary by objectifying subjective experiences. They even went one step further, emphasizing the individuation of the person at the expense of belonging and believing. Thus modern man was subjected to the demise of his soul-making connections. As a result, not only did the original illnesses not disappear, but they were compounded by the individual's lack of spirituality and faith. The colloquial cure was worse than the disease itself. In ancient Greece, "therapy" meant service to the gods. In modern psychology, however, it has more often meant coming to terms with the death of God-and its success has brought with it the impoverishment of the soul. Indeed Moore (6) refers to "loss of soul" as the great malady of the twentieth century (p. xi).

The ways to soulfulness and spirituality inhere in our basic ontological disposition. Yet these fundamental capacities tend to get overlooked, if not destroyed, in contemporary living. Thus they need to be cultivated if they are to be preserved, bearing in mind that they are separate, albeit often overlapping, and at times, even contradictory roads. More specifically, the way to soulfulness is achieved by transformation of the extraordinary to the ordinary-and its only required ingredient is love. Comparably, the way to spirituality is achieved by transformation of the ordinary to the extraordinary-and its only required ingredient is belief. Taken together, they respectively comprise six tenets of transcendence:

Three on The Way to Soulfulness-Love of Others; Love of Work; Love of Belonging, and three on The Way to Spirituality-Belief in the Sacred; Belief in Unity; Belief in Transformation.

THE WAY TO SOULFULNESS

Love of Others

The love of others is, first, a matter of self-differentiation. Love demands attachment, yet requires a healthy distance. Here the subject is separate from the object, heading toward subjective selflessness. For such love to occur, one must make sure that the other's separateness is secured independent of one's own. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke eloquently advised, each person has to protect the solitude of the other. As explorations of intimacy inevitably reveal, it is only by being separate that one can truly be together with another; enmeshment is not intimacy. Love that strips the other person from his or her sense of self, in which privacy is invaded and boundaries are blurred, is not real love. Indeed, getting to know and love someone deeply may require not seeing too clearly or being too close. In this sense, the magic of any loving relationship is in part maintained by taming one's desire for fusion, not obliterating the other through merging-in short, honoring each member's freedom. In revering the wonders of love and relatedness, it has thus been wisely proffered that "the soul. . .needs flight as much as it needs embrace" (9, p. 21).

Love also means forgiving. The soul soars when one concedes to one's loved ones their freedom and cherishes what they are willing to give without asking more. There is no categorical goodness or badness, and one must expect failings, betrayals, and also (if one is fortunate) expressions of contrition. Then one must forgive. After any ethical transgressions, the slate must be wiped clean and the relationship permitted to continue as if the wrongdoing never existed. Humanness, we know, is always imperfect, relative, and tainted by sin and folly. This view might help us to tolerate our own shortcomings and many uncertainties, including interpersonal, moral, or religious waywardness. Forgiving would free us from the corrosive effects of anger, hate, humiliation, and embarrassment. It would allow us to save otherwise unsalvageable relationships among spouses, parents and children, and friends. At bottom, love means totally accepting the other. As Adam was formed out of the mud of the earth, so are the rest of us. Any attempt to destroy the impurities of nature also removes the fertile soil that can be nourished to grow.

Love of Work

Work is "liber mundi," monks said, a life literacy, whereby their religious duties were highly intertwined with daily labors. Both activities could be paths to divinity, provided that they were carried out with the same profound regard. Although contemporary secular work is far from early monastic life, it could be equally sacred if we were to accept its special calling. Every act of labor, no matter how seemingly commonplace and trivial, if attended to with a depth of devotion,
can open the path to soulfulness. In this sense, God is not only in the details of prayers, but also in details of everyday chores. Not only through the rituals of the temple, but through the hard work of ordinary tasks, does one enter a higher plane. Rituals of the church (liturgy literally means "the labor of laity") and the divine acts of the worshiper need to be transported to the commonplace. The ultimate purpose is not to differentiate between the sacred and the secular, but to bring a reverence to everyday living.

One cannot search for soul only from within; it cannot be divorced from one's relations in the outside world. In the quest for coherence of the self, Storr (10) has suggested that work in the form of creative acts, such as making art, music, or literature, or other human interests and labors that may be more mundane, can also serve as a substitute for good objects. They may function as reparation for early losses or later difficulties in fruitful interactions with others, in Eagle's (11) words, "interests as object relations" (p. 527). One of the indispensable ingredients of the transmutation into soulfulness is the sheer love of work, through which the self and other can be unified. In cultivating depth and sacredness in everyday life, "The love that goes out into our work," says Moore in his Care of the Soul, "comes back as love of self" (6, p. 187).

Love of Belonging

Belonging is living together; it is outer communion-convivium, celebration of "the sweet communion of life-the demonstration of love and splendour, the food of good will, the seasoning of friendship, the leavening of grace" (9, p. 104). Conviviality requires some degree of sacrifice of one's self-centeredness and being part of communal life. It means not focusing on one's own success, but that of the society at large; not striving to possess things individually, but viewing all of life's riches as shared. It means appreciating the simple life, honoring basic virtues, and above all, promoting selflessness. One does not lose one's self by such conviviality; in fact, it is the only way that one can truly find one's self. As Kovel (7) has pointed out, "the group is the larger being from which individual being emanates and to which it returns...the group, be it family, clan, tribe, class, nation, or church, becomes the intermediary representation of being to the self, a way station between the isolated particle of consciousness and the universe" (p. 78).

Belonging means believing together. It provides communal meanings and finds faith through kinship and mutual accord. Expressions of faith, however, need not always be strictly religious. In his book Gods and Games, which aspires toward a theology of play, David Miller (12) describes faith as "being gripped by a story, by a vision, by a ritual...It is being seized, being gripped by a pattern of meaning that affects one's life pattern, that becomes a paradigm for the way one sees the world" (p. 144). It is difficult for every individual to formulate such a personal paradigm, and religion provides a ready-made one. Such a shared world view is more likely to facilitate an identity of universal being, embodying the spiritual power of belonging to the group.

Kovel (7) further suggests that religions always engage spirit, but to differing degrees; they are particular historical ways of binding spirit and socially expressing it. But to the extent that they are an institutionalization or regimentation of spirit, they ipso facto become less than fully liberating. Although religious institutions, at least superficially, serve the process of belonging by believing, at bottom spirituality has the capacity to transcend religion in that "the quality of spirituality, religious or not...depends...on the social relations it advances" (p. 4). Thus religious congregations can perform the role of communal cement, a shared belief system serving to establish and reinforce cohesiveness relationships. As the rabbi Harold Kushner (13) concluded, "One goes to a religious service, one recites the traditional prayers, not in order to find God (there are plenty of other places where He can be found), but to find congregation, to find people with whom you can share that which means the most to you" (pp. 121-122).

THE WAY OF SPIRITUALITY

Believing in the Sacred

This refers to believing in the sanctity of everything around us, whereby ordinary things are experienced as truly extraordinary. Seeing the luminosity of nature transports all of our experiences, including health and illness, pleasure and pain, joy and sadness, gain and loss, success and failure, birth and death. They become life events that are not dualistic, but reflect a dialectic of the ineffable, equally worthy of veneration. Such sense of sacredness demands detachment from worldly possessions, yet endows them with the wonder of life. As in the poet Pablo Neruda's (14) famed exaltation, Odes to Common Things, one looks at everyday objects as one might at stars in the sky. It is a beholding of the universe in all its majesty. It is an epiphany that may come as a form of revelation, not as a matter of logic, just as God surpasses logos and is exempt from proof or disproof, in Jaspers' (1) words, "distant,...hidden..., and undemonstrable" (p. 50). Rather, "God is accessible not through thought, but through faith" (p. 41).

The sacred experience demands some detachment from others. As soulful as belonging is, it does not mean never being alone. Man also needs solitude for his spiritual growth. Being with people for long periods of time, no matter how loving, wonderful, or interesting they might be, interferes with one's biopsychological rhythm, with one's synchrony with
the nature, with one’s own authenticity. Solitude synchronizes the body with nature and reinforces man’s belonging to a
larger presence. Private religious devotion provides similar harmony, in that the person who prays in private feels
himself to be alone in the presence of God.

According to Storr (10), who posits a return to self through solitude, this is a way of putting the individual in touch with
his deepest feelings. In a reciprocal process, the more one is in contact with one’s own inner world, the more he or she
will establish connections with the sacredness of the outer world. It is only by becoming a part of the sacredness of
nature that one may unearth one’s spirituality. It is there waiting for transformation. In his attempt to transform the
everyday into the sacred, the visible into to invisible, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke said in an early letter, that our task is
to ‘stamp [the] earth into ourselves. deeply...so that its being may rise again invisibly in us’. Miller (15), who presents
a program for achieving balance and contentment in a demanding world, offers Albert Camus’ wise words on the road
to discovering the magic of ordinary existence: "If there is a sin against life, it consists perhaps not so much in
despairing of life as in hoping for another life and eluding the implacable grandeur of this life."

Believing in Unity

Believing in unity means a sense of being undifferentiated from the outside world-natural and supernatural-in Buddhist
words, "a feeling of oneness" (16, p. 4). This unity brings meaning and serenity to the self, as life’s burdens become
too heavy to bear if one can find no universal meaning. Universal meaning, of course, is not a quantifiable and
measurable entity. As Jaspers (1) noted, "Unity cannot be achieved through any rational, scientific universal. Nor does
unity reside in a universal religion. ...Unity can be gained only... in boundless communication" (p. 106). It is a sense of
responsibility for all, a sense of total commitment, a selfless way of relating to the world around us. Moreover, believing
in unity ultimately reflects the seamlessness of mind, body, and spirit. As Kovel (7) put it, "If mind-body is a unity, then
spirit can be read as the coming-to-be of that unity. And this coming-to-be depends on the way we act and on our
relationship to the world" (p. 20).

Rinpoche (17) refers to an “unfolding vision of wholeness” (p. 352), a sense of a living-and implicitly loving-
interconnection with humanity. The glue for that mysterious unity is a kind of love that dedifferentiates ourselves from
other persons, other things, and finally, from the universe, extending our limits, a stretching of our boundaries.
According to Peck (18), "In this way the more and longer we extend ourselves, ...the more blurred becomes the
distinction between the self and the world" (p. 95). We become identified with the transpersonal and we begin more
and more to experience the same sort of feeling of ecstasy that we have when we ‘fall in love’, but instead of having
merged temporarily with a single beloved object, we have merged more permanently with the universe-a primordial
unity.

Such transpersonal love is praised by religions and exalted as the ultimate goal to be attained, surpassing one’s
knowledge, skills, power, and all worldly possessions. "I may understand all mysteries and have all knowledge. I may
even have enough faith to move mountains. But if I don’t have love, I am nothing" (19). Variations of love, be they
passionate love, maternal love, affectionate love, or spiritual love, are at times differentiated and even mutually
exclusive, but if you don’t love others, you cannot love God or vice versa, you don’t love animals, you couldn’t possibly
love humans and all of nature. There is an undifferentiated base of faith and love from which other variations spring.
This love is not possessing, not capturing, it isn't doing something. Love is a way of existing, a way of being with
people, animals, nature, and God.

Such unity brings compassion. This compassionate unity is inculcated by all religions. Jesus’s crucifixion is to awaken
our heart to compassion, and turn our minds toward shared suffering. Such is the Hindu story of Menon:

When Menon arrived in Delhi to seek a job... all his possessions. were stolen at the railroad station. He would have to
return home on foot, defeated. In desperation he turned to an elderly Sikh, explained his troubles, and asked for a
temporary loan of fifteen rupees to tide him over until he could get a job. The Sikh gave him the money. When Menon
asked for his address so that he could repay the man, the Sikh said that Menon owed the debt to any stranger who
came to him in need... The help came from a stranger and was to be repaid to a stranger (20, p. 152).

Believing in Transformation

Believing in transformation is believing in spiritual continuity and rebirth. We may be finite in our presently expressed
form, but eternal in our true nature. As Rinpoche (17) concludes in The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, “in death all
the components of our body and mind are stripped away and disintegrate. As the body dies, the senses and subtle
elements dissolve, and this is followed by the death of the ordinary aspect of our mind, with all its negative emotions of
anger, desire, and ignorance. Finally nothing remains to obscure our true nature, as everything that has clouded the
enlightened mind has fallen away. And what is revealed is the primordial ground of our absolute nature, which is like a
pure and cloudless sky” (p. 259). For Campbell (8), transformation is a brave "reconciliation with the grave" (p. 356),
We inherit spiritual as well as physical and psychological elements from our parents as well as from the previous generations. Similarly, each generation is endowed by the experience and knowledge of all the prior ones. Whereas our physical and psychological qualities carry the assimilated elements of past lives, wherever and with whomever they have been, they are relatively limited to genetics and familial life. When these are inhabited in us, they give us our unique physical and psychological essence. Our spiritual essence, on the other hand, possesses the assimilated elements of past lives of the community, history, arts, cosmic world, and beyond. When these spiritual elements are inhabited within us for the duration of our corporeal life, they give us our soul.

The soul evolves in a particular existence. After the death of the person the soul fragments again to its spiritual elements and coalesces again in someone else. Every culture is rich with the telling of this process of transmutation. Their mythology, their songs, their religion, their rituals gravitate towards that spiritual realization. The Chinese tell of a crossing of the Fairy Bridge under guidance of the Jade Maiden and the Golden Youth. The Hindus picture a towering firmament of heavens and a manyleveled underworld of hells. The soul gravitates after death to a story that assimilates the whole meaning of its past life. When the lesson has been learned, it returns to the world, to prepare itself for the next degree of experience. Thus gradually it makes it way through all levels of life-value until it has broken past the confines of the cosmic egg. Dante's Divina Commedia is an exhaustive review of the stages: "Inferno," a misery of the spirit bound to the prides and actions of the flesh; "Purgatorio," the process of transmuting fleshly into spiritual experience; and finally, "Paradiso," the degrees of spiritual realization (8, p. 368).

Transformation starts by coming to terms with one's ending. Coming to terms with one's beginnings is difficult and ambiguous; it may occur in different ways (regression, analysis, self-reflection) and mean different things (forgiveness, charity, or simply the end of an addictive ity against the past). Coming to terms with one's ending, one's finiteness, is clearer but even harder. Socrates said, "Practice dying" to youngsters asking for wisdom of life. On a less lofty level, Rinpoches (17) speaks of the necessity of "letting go of attachment" (p. 224). In fact, Moore (9) paradoxically views loss of love and intimacy as a form of initiation, suggesting that although initiation means beginning, the most powerful initiations always involve some sort of death.

At bottom, all endings are potential beginnings and all beginnings have an end. To the soul, death is the ultimate beginning, for all the particulars of precious ordinary living creatures, famous or not, human or not, are still transformed into another form. As Chopra (21) says, in nature "death is part of the larger cycle of birth and renewal...Our atoms are billions of years old and have billions of years more life left in them. In the remote future, when they are broken down into smaller particles, atoms do not die but just get transformed into another configuration" (p. 303). Similarly, our body is programmed to cease as a specific functional unit, but its elements are capable of taking quite different physiological forms: animals, flowers, ice, salt. Substances that make up living and nonliving things are one and the same. We are not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, but one product. This ultimately reflects the reanimation of life, finding the soul in everything, anima mundi.

Our most cherished thoughts of eternity are the bright side of our ending in this world and are often associated with beauty and light. Its realm and its nature change from one culture to another, from one religion to another, but it is typically a transporting destination. It is being forever, and can hold the promise of a state of ecstasy or grace, an intrinsic radiance, or a hidden fellowship with other immortals, and even rebirth. Death, on the other hand, is often construed as the dark side of our ending, an oblivion, nothingness.

Full joyful living now and in eternity nonetheless requires understanding of this nothingness, in Rinpoches's (17) phrase, "living in the mirror of death" (p. 3). In fact, only "nothingness" can become everything. And one cannot enter into this nothingness without giving up everything. The spiritual self is obtained by the negation of the ordinary self, letting go of the subjective sense of being. This subjective selflessness is not an absolute state of non-being or non-existence. Rather, it is a state of nondifferentiation from overall existence and reflecting deeply on impermanence. It is giving up differentiating self-awareness from the universe. It is living everywhere and in every thing. It sees our own flesh in continual exchange with the whole of nature.

To reconcile "being" and "nonbeing" simultaneously, to live within the external world while striving for inner transformation, and to search for the grail while not grasping its nature, provides a transcending state. Salvation for ordinary mortals is not radical negation of living; nor is it waiting for a better life. Rather, it is an embodiment of the contradictions of life and death as a transformative harmony. Believing in transformation also applies to our selfhood. More specifically, Christensen (22) talks of the "dialectical self," borrowed from Buddhism. It does not deny that the self exists, but rather has diametrically opposed qualities, in sum, 1. has structure (form) and is impermanent (empty), 2. is unsatisfactory (associated with suffering) and also liberated (joyful), and 3. has no separate essence (interdependent), and is also separate. In the harmonious words of Shobogenzo Genkoan, Zen Master Eihei Dogen: "To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be at one with ten thousand phenomena. To be at one with ten thousand..."
THE MAKING OF A SPIRITUAL THERAPIST

The healer status is bestowed upon the individual by his or her society. As such, professional degrees for the practice of psychotherapy, including their credentialing and academic requirements, are forms of social sanction. However, too much attention is often paid to the professional training of therapists and not enough to their personal formation. Maybe this is because there are so many teachers eager to teach. As one supervisor sardonically said, "Psychotherapy cannot be learned, but thank God it can be taught."

The formation of the therapist encompasses personal growth, a broad education that goes beyond psychotherapy per se, and a life philosophy. It is for the therapist-as it is for everyone else-the issue of being and becoming, insofar as the therapist can help a patient grow only as much as he, himself, has grown. That is why what really matters is not schools of therapy, but the psychotherapists themselves. Although one's theory is generally reflected in the particular modality he or she chooses to practice, "the person" of the therapist overrides both theory and school to which he or she is attached. In fact, the therapist's technical skills are contextually tailored manifestations of his or her personality, although the therapist's self is frequently lost in the quagmire of polarized theories and allegiances. Indeed these theories have often replaced philosophy, and even religion, in extreme cases. For example, those who believed in Freud, "where ego was, there shall id be," themselves behave like an alter-superego to their patients, whereas those who believe in Fritz Perls', "where id was, there shall ego be," become an alter-id to their patients. Similarly, the traditionalists value the mind over the senses, while the experientialists say that you should lose your mind and come to your senses.

Either way, both the traditionalists and the experientialists set man against himself (i.e., neurotic), or for himself (i.e., narcissistic), because they compartmentalize man and do not view him as part of a whole. Instead of 'where ego was, there shall id be', or vice versa, the spiritual therapist in effect replaces these with, where it was, there shall I be.' It is that whole, the collective us, comprising nature and the supernatural. Unfortunately, psychotherapists of the past have frequently thought of religion as a mass neuroses, if not a communal delusion. A single exception was Jung, who embraced spirituality, but considered religion a defense against the experience of God. Religion, however, will always remain a common ground toward spirituality; religion is also part of the it.

Those therapists who become overcommitted to the sciences of psychology, biology, or sociology, invariably end up underplaying man's ethical and spiritual dimensions. Other therapists, by overemphasizing specific techniques, whether analyzed or behaviorally manipulated, also make man impersonalized, compartmentalized, calculated (and most recently, "managed"), thereby diminished. The contemporary therapist needs to regain his innocence by not being too scientific or too regimented about people, love, and pathology. He must maintain a certain free margin, an openness, credulity, and even ignorance.

The spiritual therapist is one who is concerned with man's anguish of isolation and alienation, sense of meaninglessness and existential guilt over forfeiting one's potential. Real pathology is "human diminution," says Maslow (23), and this is especially the case regarding one's spiritual diminution. Thus the spiritual therapist is one who must himself transcend into a universal consciousness, in order to practice psychotherapy that itself opts for such a higher state of consciousness and growth and that targets the spiritual center of man. That target is approached by fertilizing one's self with broad curiosity and engagement, by expanding interest while seeking informed simplicity, by anchoring the self within through solitude and without through intimacy, by belonging and believing, and finally, by grounding one's soul in the serenity of spirituality.

The spiritual psychotherapist is also someone who identifies past and present conflicts and deficits, not in order to resolve, but to transcend them. He accepts the person with all his limitations, at the same time does not settle for that as an end in itself. Moreover, the spiritual therapist doesn't just apply various techniques toward the resigned acceptance of human dilemmas, but helps the person toward harmonious emancipation from them.

Spiritual existence is a spectrum state. At the near end (earthly and accessible), it is a theology of secular man; here the therapist is a minister of everyday life. At the far end (celestial and inaccessible), it is a theology of cosmic man; here the therapist is a knight of sacred faith. He is at one with the numinous, a part of the incorporeal continuum. At both ends of the spiritual spectrum, the therapist cultivates a set of values, beliefs, and practices in veneration of the divine in life. He relates to the world with ethics of conviction, and like the advice given to physicians by Paracelsus, shall have the courage to "speak of that which is invisible, unnamed and immaterial" (6, p. 165).

The Patient

For the spiritual therapist, there is no "patient" or "client," but rather, an uninitiated human being. The spiritual therapist rejects dualistic terms and discriminatory labels, like normal-abnormal, sane-insane, and all other diagnostic attributes.
in the form of binary categories. When such duality is transcended, its form disappears. This is the wisdom of non-duality, which is the foundation of the spiritual therapist's philosophy. He/she thus opens all unrecognized directions and sees the person not with psychopathology, but with human frailty. Implicit here is a predisposition for growth and strength, wherein our best potential resides not at the pinnacles of our accomplishments, but at our breaking points. These are the fractured places at which we may begin to mend.

Moreover, the spiritual therapist exemplifies two overall orientations or attitudes toward the patient that reach beyond diagnostic limitations. This refers to a "dual search for the unique (selective) and universal (shared). The former looks for what makes the person singularly special, at his or her worst and best; it seeks those individual qualities that define and distinguish the person from all others. The latter orientation takes a seemingly quantum leap in the other direction to locate what he or she has in common with others, not... within the framework of psychopathology, but on the larger level of what fundamentally binds or connects him or her to all humanity with similar struggles" (24, p. 16). Beyond this, the clinician's knowledge is independent of his own experience of reality; it is Kantian "a priori knowledge" not supplied immediately by the senses (25, p. 116). For the spiritual therapist, the person is as he is because the "whole universe is as it is" (21, p. 157). Beyond this, the uninitiated is a person who is becoming. He or she is not only to be analyzed, interpreted, desensitized, confronted, explained, or managed. Ultimately, spiritual therapy is a stepping stone to the larger universe-the spiritual therapist only points the way.

Theory of Mind and Its Psychopathology

Spiritual psychotherapy considers all theories about the human mind as temporary attempts of filling the gaps of knowledge and, at times, justification of their therapeutic techniques. Nevertheless, even contradictory techniques, i.e., the resolution of past and present conflicts (when there is no before and after), or the remedying of deficits and strengthening the individual's capacity to cope, are all potentially useful-provided that one recognizes their relativity. The spiritual therapist thereby sees no contradictions amongst various schools. In fact, such conflictual polarities invite an offering of faith. Then psychopathology, as defined by all these schools, becomes merely the surface reading of the human condition; similarly, symptoms of conflicts and deficits thus become manifestations of problems at the deeper levels of the soul-spiritual arrests, conflicts, and deficits.

Similarly, for the spiritual therapist, the mind does not comprise only conscious and unconscious forces (the prohibitive superego, the impulsive id, or the executive ego), but also collective spiritual forces that are prestructured to love and to believe. This makes our mind not a simple mechanical mind, but a spiritual one. It carries with it a remembered oneness, a sacred belonging. There is no royal road to it, simply a sacred one.

The Therapeutic Relationship

The therapist's relationship to the individual in spiritual psychotherapy at times carries some elements of that of doctor to patient (or client), teacher to student, friend to friend, parent to child, or lover to lover, but most of the time it has none of these. The spiritual therapist's therapeutic role is not that of transference figure, cognitive structurer, behavioral trainer, supportive counselor, or empathic selfobject, although at times it may resemble any or all of these alliances.

Rather, the spiritual therapist's type of relatedness is primarily a redemptive one and superordinates all other forms of relationship, that is, two persons mutually confirming each other's underlying sense of common destiny without blame or debt. Such redemption is not geared to common sin and guilt, but to a more benevolent restitution and liberation. There is no finding of fault, no punishment, and in effect, no need for forgiveness. It is the rescue of self and other, an emancipation from the confinement of ordinary human attachments and entanglements, and deliverance from the imprisonment of mind and body without soul. It is a peaceful and restorative union.

The Role of Technique

The spiritual therapist has no technique of his or her own. Instead, as Moore (6) depicted it, "Its rituals are effective ex opere operato-from the things done-rather than because of the intentions of the performing the rite" (p. 227). He or she considers the application of specific strategies to another person, especially engaging in deliberate measures to change the other, as an exercise of bad faith, an inauthentic act. Nonetheless, under that spiritual umbrella, he may borrow from any or all other schools of therapy as a basis for "technique," because they are equivocal. That is, utilizing interpretation, confrontation, cognitive training, hypnosis, catharsis, role playing, encounter, free association, dream analysis, regression, meditation, or praying, within the context of a working alliance, erotic transference, and selfobject relationship, makes no difference because spiritual therapy is a way of being with someone in a soulful manner that targets the spiritual center of man.

The spiritual therapist does not treat an illness, or try to cure a person who has an ailment; instead he remains with a person who is in the process of becoming. The spiritual therapist and the uninitiated person are a contextual unit—a single entity, and although this single entity can have external and internal dialogues, it relies primarily on what is not
said. This is consistent with Jaspers' (1) two paths of philosophical life: the path of solitary meditation and the path of communication with men, a "mutual understanding through keeping silence together" (p. 122). If words are also deeds, as the philosopher Wittgenstein (26) proposed, then by plumbing the depths of spiritual solitude, silences are also words.

WHAT SPIRITUAL THERAPY IS NOT

Spiritual therapy is not religious counseling. The Church and its religious counselings typically represent a structured and organized form of spirituality with highly specific traditions, proscriptions, and rites; they impose God as a separate and superior theological conception, accompanied by required rituals of seeking His hand. By contrast, spiritual psychotherapy rejects strict formality and substitutes flexibility and freedom. It embodies a contemporary religious view that is universal and nonsectarian, best portrayed as perennial wisdom or philosophy (27) or the transcendent unity of religions (28). Accordingly, it warrants no piety, nor worshiping. Rather, in Campbell's (8) words, "The contemplation of life thus is undertaken as a meditation on one's own immanent divinity" (p. 319). In short, the divine being is viewed as a revelation of the omnipotent self that dwells within everyone. Sheikh and Sheikh (29) put it as follows: "All of us have the potential for transcendent experiences. The great saints and sages of human history are said to differ from the rest of us by virtue of attainment and realization, not by some unsurpassable God-given ontological divide that forever sets them off from us as a separate order of being" (p. 546). Similarly, spiritual psychotherapy makes no godly claims beyond man's own human realization. Spirituality is a path of quiet contemplation, in which we find the divine in the given world and and within ourselves. The lesson is "know this and be God" (8, p. 319). Spiritual existence-and spiritual therapy-is a journey; one makes the way by going.

Spiritual therapy is not existential psychotherapy. Existential therapy negates the spiritual to the extent that its fundamental negativity, anguish, doom, and sense of man's finitude are diametrically opposed to an emphasis on beauty, rebirth, and reanimation of life. In addition, with its phenomenological reduction to immediate experience as the only valid data, it deliberately doubts all notions that are inferred, invisible, or carried over from the past-those that are easily embraced by spirit. Since it believes that "human living is torn from the un-self-consciousness of objects or plants and animal existence" (30, p. 233), it construes consciousness as making human life qualitatively different from that of any other species, thus setting man apart from the unity of nature. And although its method of doubt is intended to create freedom from existential isolation, instead it can generate freedom from faith. In contrast, the spiritual therapist is a perpetual beginner, whose uninitiated positivity generates hope, creates harmony with one's self, and continuity with the universe.

Spiritual therapy is not like analytic psychotherapy. Analytic psychotherapy is founded on the model of sickness. It is pathomorphic; it makes diagnoses; it seeks cure of patients' illnesses. In addition, it is deterministic (if not overdetermined) and is concerned with etiology and cause. In particular it has a mission; it seeks to crack personal unconscious codes in linear time. In its most orthodox form, analytic psychotherapy is an artificial induction of therapeutic illness by transforming form (the transference) into content. It aims at knowing, i.e., insight, and such selfknowledge is its end point. Thus any puzzlement or obscurity must be undone. Furthermore, as the analyst makes transference-driven demands on the patient, he paradoxically creates an iatrogenic hot house that itself cultivates psychopathology.

By contrast, spiritual psychotherapy is founded on a model of health; it is normative; it eliminates (if not transcends) diagnoses. It is interested in salvation and healing (not cure). It is undetermined, transformative, and noncausal, a transpersonal journey in omnidirectional time. In its most ardent form, spiritual psychotherapy is the induction of stillness, the cultivation of quiessence and harmony between mind, body, and soul. Spiritual psychotherapy aims not at "knowing" but at enlightenment, whereby self-knowledge is not the culmination, but the starting point. In so doing, it seeks the regaining of lost innocence in order to experience-not answer-the eternal riddles of life. In fact, the spiritual therapist stays observant, until things gradually become obscure. He knows that puzzlement is a necessary state that precedes enlightenment.

Spiritual therapy is not like academic psychotherapies. Spiritual psychotherapy cannot be standardized in operational manuals that homogenize all treatment. It is not based on large-scale bureaucratic research requirements, efficacy, efficiency, or cost-effectiveness. It does not steer in shallow water, is not superficial or strictly short-term; it does not prescribe and predict. Rather, it is highly improvisational and fully accepts (if not promotes) heterogeneity. Its N equals one and is by definition immeasurable. It is not a matter of science and proof, but belief and faith. It steers in deep waters.

Spiritual therapy is not like New Age therapy. New Age psychotherapies promote search for the self-but never get beyond it. They are geared toward self-actualization, self-protection, and self-love (in the smallest sense of the word). They primarily offer quick-and-easy answers that derive from pleasure, not insight or enlightenment. In fact, they don't ask questions or look beneath the surface-of one's own myopic life. In this sense they are selfish-never selfless. In
seeking instant gratification, they are indulgent, excessive, and exalt only the immediate moment—never eternity. They reject the simple life and instead urge their recipients to indulge hedonistic desires and pleasures, to seek narcissistic gains. In short, you can only get there by riding others.

In contrast, spiritual therapy seeks the self beyond itself, in order not to be self-preoccupied; in short, it is egoless. It is geared toward self-transcendence, the love of others in a universal, timeless, and spaceless field. Spiritual therapists help their recipients to relinquish self-serving actions, to express compassion and forgiveness. And you get there by carrying others.

CONCLUSION

In the consolidation of a soulful and spiritual existence, the therapist continues to come closer to an authentic self. Only such authenticity contains really meaningful therapeutic tools, because what endures ultimately emanates from within. Finally, alas, the therapist must recognize that this is not a field for spectacular successes (if any field is); as Freud early warned us, every therapy is a relative failure. The tranquility of the therapist thus largely depends on his or her ability to live with optimum disillusionment and still maintain profound faith in all persons, with all their vulnerabilities and strengths. Then spiritual psychotherapy becomes not so much a profession as a way of being in a harmonious relationship to man and infinite nature. In Kovel's (7) words, "We do not have a spirit; rather, we are spirit" (p. 20). This does not mean, however, that we reside in a realm that is lofty and elusive, unable to be touched. Instead it is a unified quality of mind and heart and soul, a commitment to a spiritual existence.

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